RAN Victims of Terrorism (VoT) Teachers' Guide

Radicalisation **A**wareness **N**etwork

Workshop Material: Understanding Radicalisation and Terrorism

Dear teachers,
Participating in the competition to design a visual concept for the RAN Victims of Terrorism (VoT) Working Group offers the opportunity to discuss the topic of radicalisation and terrorism with students. What students know, think and feel when it comes to this topic is not always visible to teachers. Children and youngsters obtain their information from conversations with their parents, via stories shared by their brothers and sisters, on the street, in the schoolyard, on the internet, via television, from social media, etc.
The fact that processes of radicalisation can already start at a young age is often overlooked. Since talking about radicalisation and terrorism is not a standard part of the school curriculum, it is key to gain more insight on how attitudes are shaped and what emotions students experience. For teenagers, peer groups such as fellow students play a pivotal role, especially when dealing with an overload of information, including receiving extremist video clips and stories [1, 2].

The classroom creates the perfect environment to facilitate a safe discussion on radicalisation and terrorism because it can be situated in a well-prepared, thought-out and conscious pedagogical strategy. As stated by RAN before, schools are labs for democracy and companions to prevent violent radicalisation through education [3].

Lesson goals

- Gaining a better understanding of what students think / know / feel about terrorism.
- Countering certain "myths" about terrorism.
- Equipping students with an action perspective that is inclusive and harmonious.

For all three parts of this workshop, it is recommended to collect answers in a word web or mind map. It is also useful to first let students think over their answers in silence, before sharing them with others or with the entire class.

(1)   MacFarquhar, N. (2019). *Nazi Symbols and Racist Memes. Combating School Intolerance.* The New York Times, 15 December.
      https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/23/us/extremism-schools-white-supremacy.htm

(2)   Extremists also use social media to spread their ideas and target children:
      http://www.jugendschutz.net/politischer-extremismus/

(3)   Nordbruch, G., & Sieckelinck, S. (2018). *Transforming schools into labs for democracy,* Policy Paper. Brussels: RAN Centre of Excellence.
      https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-edu/docs/
      ran_edu_transforming_schools_into_labs_for_democracy_2018_en.pdf

Part One:
Starting the discussion, activating prior knowledge (15–20 minutes)

In order to facilitate a discussion, it is important to gain more insight on the knowledge level of the students regarding terrorism (and political violence). These questions are helpful to open the floor for discussion.

Who has an example of a terrorist attack?

- If a student shares an example, give room for emotions and ask questions such as: Where were you when you heard it happened? What did you think of it? Are you scared that something like this might happen to you or your family as well? etc.
- If no one speaks up, it is possible to ask first whether they have heard about attacks such as Christchurch (2019), Manchester (2017), Brussels (2016) and Paris (2015). Additional questions are: What happened? Who was involved? How many casualties were there?, What do you remember about it? What did you see on the news? etc.

Who can tell me the difference between a terrorist and an ordinary criminal?

- Although there is no universal definition of terrorism or a definition that is shared by EU Member States, Europol does register offences as terrorism when they are: "specific violent extremist acts ... when these aim to intimidate a population or compel a government or have the potential to seriously destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country" [1].
  In other words: terrorists commit violence in order to force states or political actors to change something or to influence the process of decision-making and/or to intimidate a society. Terrorists are ideologically driven. Besides reaching their goals, they are also committing attacks in order to get attention or broader support.
- If no one in the classroom speaks up, you can spur them on with questions such as: Is robbing a bank considered terrorism?

This depends on what bank robbers would like to do with the loot. If they want to use it to finance terrorism, it is. If they want to use it to buy a luxury car, it is not. So, what makes terrorism different?

If a terrorist attack takes place, how do you get to know more about what happened?

- Not only does this question give more insight in the way students use (online) media and how they validate the trustworthiness of different kinds of media, it is also helpful to get to know more on how they use social media. Do they discuss the topic via social media with their peers? Did they receive or watch graphic content that has not been shown on the news (such as the live-streamed Christchurch video)?
- If there is hardly any response, you can mention different sources (large newspapers / websites, broadcasting channels, social media, messages from parents and peers, etc.) and ask them which source they regard as most trustworthy.

What do you know about victims of terrorist attacks?

- They may share something about people in their circle of friends who have been confronted with attacks (for children in some countries, this is a real possibility).
- They may say something about terrorists killing innocent victims, targeting specific state leaders. This gives you the opportunity to showcase how not only hard targets are being killed and targeted (specific politicians, well-known people, such as Geert Wilders, for example, in the Netherlands, or Ayaan Hirsi Ali) but also societies as such fall victim to fear and distrust. Very important as well is the fact that most victims of jihadist attacks are Muslims themselves. And that in recent years, in the West, right-wing extremist attacks resulted in victims as well, and that minority groups were targeted by these attacks.

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(1) Europol. (2020). *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020*. Brussels: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, p. 8 / p. 94.
https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2020

Part Two:
Myths on terrorism (15–20 minutes)

In the second part of this workshop, students are asked to respond to myths: true or false? Students can raise their hands, use red or green cards, or answer via Socrative or Mentimeter.

Terrorism is a new phenomenon

False. The word "terror" stems from the French word "terreur", meaning "fear". It was used after the French Revolution to describe how the leaders of the revolution established a reign of terror, by beheading opponents. Ever since, the word "terrorism" has had different meanings. Most countries have agreed more or less since the end of the 19th century on the definition of terrorism: a group or individual that uses violence or threatens to use violence in order to pressure governments to do something (or to refuse something) and to sow fear amongst the population. Terrorism is defined by a political or ideological goal.

Terrorism comes and goes in waves; it is not a new phenomenon. The way in which we know terrorism originates from the establishment of nation states. Terrorists violently oppose dominating powers and existing structures.

Terrorism is always religiously motivated

Many academic researchers agree on the theory of David Rapoport: "waves of terrorism". He states that since the rise of nation states, the world has seen four waves of terrorism. Every wave shows an increase and decrease in attacks. The first wave of anarchist terrorism originates from Russia and lasted from 1870 to 1920. Their goals were to oppose nation states and overthrow the political system — e.g. by murdering Empress Elisabeth of Austria in 1898. The second wave of terrorism was defined by ethnic nationalist / anti-colonial terrorism and lasted from 1920 to 1960. Within this wave, terrorists often opposed colonial rule and strived for independence of their countries. The third wave of terrorism is a leftist-revolutionary wave, opposing Western capitalism. Well-known groups were the Rote Armee Fraktion (Germany) and the Red Brigades (Italy), responsible for numerous violent incidents and murders. This wave lasted from the 1960s until the 1980s.

The fourth wave of terrorism is a religious wave that started in 1979 with the Iranian Revolution. This wave became more explicit after the attacks on 11 September 2001, after jihadist terrorists attacked the Twin Towers. Most groups within this wave are jihadist groups, but there are examples of other groups. For example, the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1993 was carried out by a fundamentalist Jewish attacker.

At this moment, there is discussion as to whether there is a fifth wave of tribal terrorism, in which terrorists wish to protect their own ethnic group such as right-wing terrorists. (Of course, there are exceptions and some waves do overlap each other).

Terrorists are mentally ill

False. After an attack has occurred, there is always discussion about whether someone is a terrorist or a mentally disordered person. Some terrorists have had a long track record of mental health issues. But terrorists who have been working together as a group are not suffering more from mental health problems than the average person. Although the effect of an attack (sowing fear) can be the same, it does matter for the verdict whether the attacker had terrorist motives or not. However, someone can be a terrorist and have a mental illness as well.

Part Three:
Action perspective (10–15 minutes)

In the third part of this workshop, the students can reflect on the action perspective. What can be done to combat and prevent terrorism? In smaller groups, students have to discuss and design a poster that reflects what they themselves can do.

First of all, it is important to reflect with the students on the phenomenon of terrorism. As discussed earlier, terrorists have a variety of goals: revenge, forcing governments to act or to refrain from something, create support and draw attention, provoke a reaction, sow fear, disrupt societies, polarise communities, etc. Some of these goals can be opposed by a resilient society. Ask students to discuss in smaller groups what they can do when it comes to the following.

1) Terrorists provoking a reaction

For example, talking to each other about what has happened and listening to experts, instead of ventilating emotions through social media.

2) Terrorists sowing fear

Many academic researchers agree on the theory. For example, gaining more knowledge on how terrorism is being combated by the police and intelligence services and gaining more knowledge on (the amount of) foiled plots.

3) Terrorists polarising communities

For example, fostering solidarity between different groups, remembering victims of terrorism, demonstrating unity, etc.

After discussing similarities and differences in answers, students should propose two different recommendations from amongst the following:
- What could the government do against terrorism?
- What could the police do against terrorism?
- What could a school do against terrorism?
- What could a teacher do against terrorism?
- What could you do against terrorism?

Closing

Ask students what they have learned. Do they have a feeling of what they themselves can do? Emphasise the most important things they can do: live together in harmony, foster inclusiveness, prevent polarisation, and don't live in fear.

Role of the teacher

- To facilitate the discussions and lead the conversation in the right direction

- To track down needs for additional information in order to have a good conversation

- To listen to students and try to identify underlying concerns

- To limit opinions when they turn into unwanted or unconscious insults

- To profile as a teacher and not as an authority on the topic

- To motivate the entire group to participate in the conversation

Dos and don'ts

- Emphasise why it is key to learn from each other's perspectives

- Explain the importance of different opinions and how they can coexist

- Have a conversation at the level of the students

- If students have controversial opinions, instead of judging them, make them the "experts" and ask them to substantiate their opinions with research

- Take time to reflect on the discussion and to make a distinction between facts, opinions and emotions

- Correct factual inaccuracies when they play an important role in the discussion

- Give room for all sorts of opinions in order to foster an inclusive environment

- Downplay stereotypes and monocausal explanations (e.g. the perceived association between Islam and terrorism)

- Do not use graphic images or graphic content

- Give students the option to create their own action framework

What is TerInfo?

This guide was created with the support of TerInfo.

TerInfo is a learning platform that helps teachers in primary, secondary and intermediate vocational education to discuss terrorism and violent extremism in the classroom. It was established after Beatrice de Graaf, professor of International Relations at Utrecht University, got frequent requests from schools to assist when discussing these topics.

The aim of TerInfo is twofold:
1. Exploring what children and youngsters think, know and feel about terrorism.
2. Developing and conveying a historical framework that helps them to put recent events into a historical perspective. Because we have the opportunity to test our learning materials within schools while developing them, our work has strong evidence-based grassroots.

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