

Victims of terrorism and the media: an ambivalent relation

With accue interest of the citizen for terrorist attack, it's naturally that the medias exchange with victims to inform society, first concerned by the attack. Nevertheless, the relation between journalist and victims is an ambivalent relation. If the word "media" referred to TV news, newspapers, it includes also social media and blogs.

I. Why reporter talk to victim of terrorism?

The reporters are guardian of freedom speech. So, they must inform and communicate to citizen the actuality of the world and justice reporters have a crucial job: *diffuse the arguments in fact and law exchanged during the hearings*. But to diffuse the reality of the audience, the reporters need also report the voice of victims.

If exchanges between victims and reporters are necessary to inform citizen, the journalist's manners are sometimes criticized.

Actually, in France, during the attack of hyper casher by terrorist, in January 2015, BFM TV, a non-stop information channel, has reveled in live where victims were hided, whereas the hostage taker, watched this tv show at the same time. With this race to information and viewers, journalist took a risk and put in danger the victims.

This exceptional manner gives a lesson to other journalists, which few times later, during the next terrorism attack, acted differently and don't reveal this type of information in order to protect victims.

In this race to information, a balance must be found between the desire to have a lot and exactly information and don't hurt victims. But talk to reporters is also important to victims.

II. Why victims testify with journalist?

For a victim, talk with a stranger about a traumatic attack is very difficult. In add, if this stranger is a journalist, viewed as a runner to race of information, the victim can have a reluctance. However, sometimes, this experience, can be for her, the first step to resilience. That's why, few victims exchange with them.

III. What about mediatic pression living by victims?

The mediatic pression depend on pression exerted by reports on the case. Also, in some cases the mediatic pression applied on victims during decades, as in Gregory case, child was discovered in a river, and his family was suspected to kill him.

Terrorist's cases are always extremely mediatic. So much that a French attorney argues in favor of the creation of a "mediatic damage". In fact, he explained « it not neutral to research a friend, or a parent in woods of camera, to see a lot of micro, to have many calls of report. We can't say that it's an assault but saying that in hyper sensibility feeling, it's an aggravating factor, generating an collective emotion, and systematically exposition to facts can be lived as intrusive experiences”

If this will is only for the moment a project, the associations, as French association of victim of terrorism has decided to play the role of intermediary between victims and reporters. Actually, the association diffuse to victim wishing talks to a journalist, and only to them, the sollicitation making by reporters to interview a victim. Consequently, on the one hand, the interviewers don't talk directly with victim of terrorism and, on the other hand, only the victims wanting to be interviewed. With this filter, the association wishes protect victims of the mediatic pression.

IV. The relation victim-reporters: from the attack to the commemoration

In the aftermath of an attack, a lot of victims are again under shocked and can't talk and explain their pain. Sometimes, the speech is necessary, for example, few minutes after the terrorist attack, the president of France, traumatized by this attack against the nation, as every one in France, had to talk to the population. *We can ask ourselves: how communicate in horrific moments?* This night, the president, François Hollande, using different tips to communicate. First using simple words without exaggeration, had compassion and determination in his words then, and finally doesn't reveal the fear in his speech.

Before the trial, some journalist will try to contact them to prepare their interviews and talk about the opening of the trial. It can be hard because it is for a victim a time of anxiety and huge stress. They are sometimes not ready yet. Moreover, the interview is a very difficult exercise, and the victim needs a training. The French association of victim of terrorism has created a classes of media training. This training has been created in order to help victims to organize their thoughts, and help them to escape trap question. But the interview if the victim is trained can be a step to the resilience.

During a trial, some journalist is accredited, and they have usually in France, specific seats available in the court room. In the terrorism case of 13 November 2015, behind the court of audience, only few journalists have the right to stay from the beginning to the end of audience in principal room. But in equality ways, it's decided to draw lots every day the name of journalist going inside of the audience court. However, in order to protect victim, 2 things have been decided. First, journalist have a specific room to listen the audience where the victim will be not. Second, victim wear specific necklace if they want to talk to reporter. Without this specific necklace, the journalist has the interdiction to interview them. Nonetheless, a victim has to remember that she can refuse to talk to the press at any time and even if the interview has already begun.

If the victim of terrorism is protected by justice and association during the trial, the relation victim-journalist isn't systematically in opposition. Some victims will accept to talk to their anonymously or not, and sometimes, some ones created a specific relation with the reporter. For example, one victim, members of the AFVT, has created a real friendly link with a journalist after an interview.

For commemorations. The medias help society to don't' forgot attacks and victims of them. Consequently, by relaying information of commemorations, and come back to the facts, the media contribute also with victim's family to fight the terrorism.

If you would like to go further, please read a report by UNESCO, "Terrorism and the media: a handbook for journalists". <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247074>