



Situation in Germany

- Before the Berlin attack
- The Berlin attack, 19 December 2016
- With a truck
- 12 people dead
- Focus first on rescue and finding the attacker(s)

Europe is sadly no stranger to terrorist attacks and to coping with their aftermath – to caring for the victims. Germany up to Christmas last year did not suffer major terrorist attacks.

This situation changed 19 December 2016.

With a stolen truck and after having killed the driver Anis Amri was cutting his deadly swath through the Christmas market stalls at Breitscheidplatz in the center of Berlin. Hours of uncertainty following the attack on the Christmas market at Berlin's Breitscheidplatz square on the evening of Dec. 19, 2016. 12 deaths and much more wounded. There was chaos and the focus on emergency first aid and identifying and finding the attacker.

Only after some days the authorities identified Anis Amri.

The German authorities knew a lot about the Tunisian Anis Amri. Actually, almost everything.

The suicide mission on Breitscheidplatz stunned Germany. The attack has shaken the supposed certainty that Germany's antiterrorism defense works. Now many Germans and especially the victims doubt that this finely differentiated capillary system of German federalism, with its 36 police and intelligence services, is the best of all solutions. In Anis Amri's case, this system and the state failed.



Situation for Weisser Ring

- In general
- Guidelines of WR
- In Berlin

We at **Weisser Ring** have been supporting victims of crime for more than 40 years now. WEISSER RING is the only nationwide active victim support organisation in Germany. We are independent from state funding and we are committed to help victims of crime. Countless hours of voluntary work were given by a total of around **3.200 well trained volunteers** in nationwide 420 local branches – by offering support in all kinds and by being engaged in crime prevention activities.

My work (and it is work as a volunteer) has always covered **all victims** – to ensure none are forgotten and all have a voice. Yet we also know of different needs, some are more vulnerable. Specific laws and services need to be in place for them. Whether they are victims of domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking or indeed victims of terrorism, we have worked for them all. For example we support more than two third of the families of the deceased in the Berlin attack.

Shortly before the event in Berlin WR we published an information sheet and also gave it to VSE. Thus VSE could react immediately with information. It describes the German structure, medical-psychosocial Support and compensation and the help WR can deliver.

But we also have an internal paper about cooperation and coordination between the local branches. Normally we at WR support victims in our 420 local branches. In cases of terrorist attacks this cannot work. Based on actual cases we therefore developed some guidelines.

Our central office has to step in and to help with coordination and organisation together with the offices in the federal states. Close contact is essential.

What can the central office do to help and what did it?

Give as soon as possible information and guidelines to our offices in the federal states (Landesbüros) and the local branches, helpline and the online counselling. Taking into account that victims do not only live near the spot where the attack happened. All over Germany and the world.

Develop a checklist and information how and whom to contact in a network, such as police, public authorities etc. Because of the German structure this might differ from country to country.

Develop a special structure in order to handle these cases. Foreign victims can have direct contact and support to the specialised staff in the central office. Following our experiences this will be updated.

As we do not have in Germany an automatic referral system we rely on police and media to inform the public and the victims about the help available.

Furthermore it is about collecting **information** on the victims and providing information to the victims and their families, in a very effective, clear, sensitive, efficient and coordinated manner. That means providing information that comes from a single source. Too often you got different information from different people and it can be conflicting and confusing to victims. Only at the official dinner with our State President some victims heard about the possible help of WR.



Situation after the attack

- **For the victims**
- **Who is a victim?**

- **Needs of victims**

We saw that a greater focus on victims was needed in preparing for attacks, in the immediate response as well as in the long term support. We saw that the victims, especially those from foreign countries, were in desperate need of support, information, and access to justice.

In terms of the recognition of victims, the definition of “victim” is extremely important within the policies that governments develop. We need to think about circles of impact. There are the direct victims, those who were there when the attack happened. But we need to think beyond that and recognize that family members, first responders – both professional and civilian – are also victims. But it also applies to bystanders who witnessed the chaos after the attack. The 13 year old boy who saw all this and now is suffering and is traumatized needs help as well. He is not registered as witness, was present but not injured.

The planning that is put in place, needs to consider all of those different people. After the Berlin attack many of the visitors to the Christmas Market wanted support and information and complained about the lack of it.

First of all there is the need to be recognized and to be treated with respect and dignity. This recognition is absolutely fundamental. There have been some complaints in Berlin. How can

a hospital send an invoice about the costs of the post-mortem examination to the family of a deceased?

Next, victims of terrorism need **protection**, and this does not only imply protection against another attack. It is about the notion of secondary victimisation. This means that if you do not get it right at the beginning, if victims are treated in a poor manner, then there is an increase in their suffering and an increase in their trauma. Three times in Berlin a daughter became the wrong information at the police hotline. Therefore she could not see her mother before she died. The victims report poor support and information by authorities. Another Police officer handed back a handbag that was bloodstained without any prior warning and explanation.

These examples show us also how important training is in supporting providers and services to deal with victims in a sensitive manner. In our academy we started to offer this training.

One of the main complaints of the Berlin victims is about the mass of different applications they had to fill in. That's why we at Weisser Ring are trying to help victims in providing them with the help they need going from help filling out papers to receive compensation, providing them with legal assistance, looking for the right organisation to provide specialised support and helping in case of financial need. They need that support throughout, from the aftermath and **very important to a long time** afterwards.

Victims of terrorism need **access to justice** and support there. They mostly have never been in touch with the justice system.

Lastly victims of terrorism need **compensation**, some sort of financial restitution for the losses and damage they endured. Compensation is never a full financial reimbursement but first and foremost a **recognition** by the state of these victims and the harm they were caused by the attacks.



- **Importance of the international aspect**
- **Emergency response planning**
- **Coordination with victim support**

In terms of the responses, it starts with the **planning**. (In every country there are emergency response planning.) But we do not tend to think enough in terms of what are the needs of victims within that planning process. You need to have victim organizations or VS experts within the planning process.

In terms of **coordination**, what is important to know with these multi-casualty attacks or mass casualty attacks, is that there are many different organizations involved. For victims and even for professionals involved there is a real difficulty in knowing who is doing what. Detailed plans including Red Cross, police, crisis intervention teams have been developed and exist. But victim support organisations have not been included from the beginning. According to the Directive this will have to change and we at WR offered now officially our assistance. We can easily for example deliver a website and information about emergency plan.

As I explained before the international aspect is of great importance. In the last two years we at Victim Support Europe have therefore poured our resources and efforts into achieving change at International, European and National level.



Where the needs met?

What are we planning

Especially many of the Berlin victims are satisfied with the help WR could and can provide. But they see many faults and deficiencies from the authorities. Some of them I mentioned already. That is why the government in May installed a Politian as authorized representative. Sadly the victims had the feeling they were not included in the planning. After many discussions we realized again the importance of two things: Victims want to be active themselves. And they want to meet and exchange their feelings and experiences. Therefore, if these needs are not met by the authorities or by specialized organisations we will give them the platform to organize themselves and plan meetings. Our governments must ensure that their planning for attacks, their immediate response and long term care systems are designed with victims in mind and victim support organisations included.

Ladies and Gentleman,

quoting one oft he victims: „Wir sehen uns im doppelten Sinn als Opfer, weil das, was nun mit uns geschieht, unsere Wut noch stärker hat werden lassen!“

This will require a lot of energy, effort and preparation to ensure that when the next attack happens all services respond in a victim friendly way and victims are properly supported.

Role of specialist organisations

Many victims complain, that there is a failure of the state to protect people in their country. There is a contract to the state to protect those people. Victims of terrorism are victims of an attack against the state and society and not directed against these individuals, and that has a very different impact.

Importance of international network – VSE

Special needs of victims of terrorism

Meetings and long term support.