



U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

Office of Justice for Victims of Overseas Terrorism

Washington, D.C. 20530

INFORMATION ABOUT VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS (VIS)

What is a Victim Impact Statement (VIS)?

No one knows better than you do how a terrorist act has impacted your life. A VIS can help the foreign Court understand all the ways this crime has affected you and those close to you. It can be an effective, on-the-record way of communicating with the Court. Submitting a VIS in your own words can help personalize the impact of the attack by describing how the attack impacted your health; your finances; your emotions; your relationships; your work; or any other impact that you feel should be expressed to the Court. It is possible the Judge will use it when forming an opinion about the type of sentence a Defendant would receive, but it depends on the laws of the country in question. The Court can consider other factors, but it gives the Judge a unique perspective into the impact of a crime on the victims and survivors.

It is possible that some portions of submitted VIS could be read aloud in court. There may be a particular interest in the personal and financial impact for victims who were physically injured. As such, it could be useful to include information about lost wages, medical bills, etc. If you are comfortable doing so, you may include copies of medical records or bills, but we strongly encourage you to redact any personally identifiable information (PII) such as your address, phone number, birth date, social security number, or banking/credit card information. Please know this information will become a part of the Court's record and will likely be available to both the prosecution and defense as well, so please be aware that it may not remain confidential.

Please contact DOJ/OVT staff if you wish to discuss further, or if we can provide support throughout the writing process. The words must be your own, but we are available to offer assistance.

Guidance on writing and sending your Victim Impact Statements:

1. Please type your letter in a common font and a legible size. There may be certain requirements for certain countries about page length, font, type or margins, so please contact DOJ/OVT to discuss. As it will likely need to be signed by you and notarized, include a signature line for you and a space for a notary signature.
2. Type the full name of the victim in the letter. If this is you, state "I, (your full name), was (injured) or (was a victim present) during the (name of attack)." If this is a family member or next of kin, please state "I, (your full name), am the (relationship) of (name of victim), who was (injured) or (was a victim present during) of the (name of attack)."

This statement will be sent to overseas, so please be mindful of the culture in which your letter will be read, and take into consideration what impact you want your statement to have.

Please use straightforward language. Avoid acronyms or abbreviations, slang, obscenities or pop culture references. While English may be the language of the criminal justice system, sometimes these types of terms have a different (or no) meaning in other cultures. The parties may also translate the VIS into other languages for their use as well.

3. For some people, writing a VIS can be a very emotional experience. You may wish to have the support of a loved one, friend, or spiritual advisor when going through this process.
4. Your statement must be notarized. You will sign the statement in front of the notary, so when typing your letter leave a space to sign and have your full name typed under it. You can find a notary at your bank, many libraries, or some attorney's or prosecutors' offices.
5. Please be advised that VIS may be read by the defendants, made public in the foreign country, and could be accessed by the media. Please do not include personally identifiable information, such as your home address, date of birth, cell phone number, email address, etc.
6. Do not hesitate to email or call if you have any questions or need help with this process. DOJ/OVT can be reached in the following ways:

Email address: nsd.ovt@usdoj.gov / (202)233-0701

Again, thank you for your participation in the case. We at DOJ/OVT hope that this information helps you understand how a VIS can be submitted to and used by the Court. We are sincerely sorry for the suffering that you and your loved ones have experienced, and we are here to assist you through this process. Our goal is to help you pursue justice and accountability.