

Every Human Matters - Comments on the Occasion of the Terrorist Attacks in America

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Suggested Citation: President, Prof. Dr. Jutta Limbach, Federal Constitutional Court, *Every Human Matters - Comments on the Occasion of the Terrorist Attacks in America*, 2 German Law Journal (2001), available at <http://www.germanlawjournal.com/index.php?pageID=11&artID=85>

[1] On Tuesday of this week we were purposefully forced to witness deadly attacks, which demonstrate the vulnerability of a free, democratic society. It is the goal of such terrorism to fill us with dread and fear. It accomplishes this goal with a form of brutal violence that takes no account of individual lives. Terrorism seeks to move us to give up on our civil virtues such that we renounce the freedoms of civil society and the necessity of tolerance, which are the foundations of our democracy.

[2] But powerlessness and hate are neither promising nor recommendable answers to acts of barbaric terrorism. The images of celebrating Palestinian children make clear the consequences of an upbringing in which the (supposed) enemy is no longer characterized as a human. The chances are slim that we can overcome terrorism when we repay these attacks in like manner. Blind revenge and hate only bring self-destruction. If the civilized world hopes to be victorious it cannot allow itself to compromise its respect for its fundamental values. Especially the recognition of the dignity and freedom of humankind distinguishes democracy from totalitarian ideologies. Human dignity and human rights know no weapons; rather, only citizens who make the observation of human dignity and human rights an obligation.

[3] We grieve together today over the still uncounted victims who have died as members of a society which aims for the highest ideals of human dignity and peace. We honor these victims best when we understand their deaths as a challenge to our shared, fundamental Western values; and we respond by championing these values. In this way, in our parting with these victims, we guarantee that every human matters.