

The present paper focuses on the prediction of violent recidivism for people convicted of politically motivated violence; terrorism. We argue that assumptions of general violence prediction models do not apply to this group and question the general expertise of mental health professionals in such cases. Furthermore we describe the role of professionals in this field, their expertise, and the use of psychological and psychiatric evidence. We are particularly concerned about the indiscriminate use of psychometric testing and risk assessment guidelines with an evidence-base derived from general violent criminality or mentally disordered offenders. Such practice could be unsafe, both from the perspective of the assessment of the individual offender and from a protection of the public interest. To do so assumes that the motives of terrorism are equal to motives of other interpersonal violent crimes. Making this assumption is likely to be misleading to the legal authorities handling perpetrators of acts of terror and to the individuals undertaking clinical risk assessments. Finally we make some recommendations on the approach used and expertise required in assessing risk in politically motivated offenders.