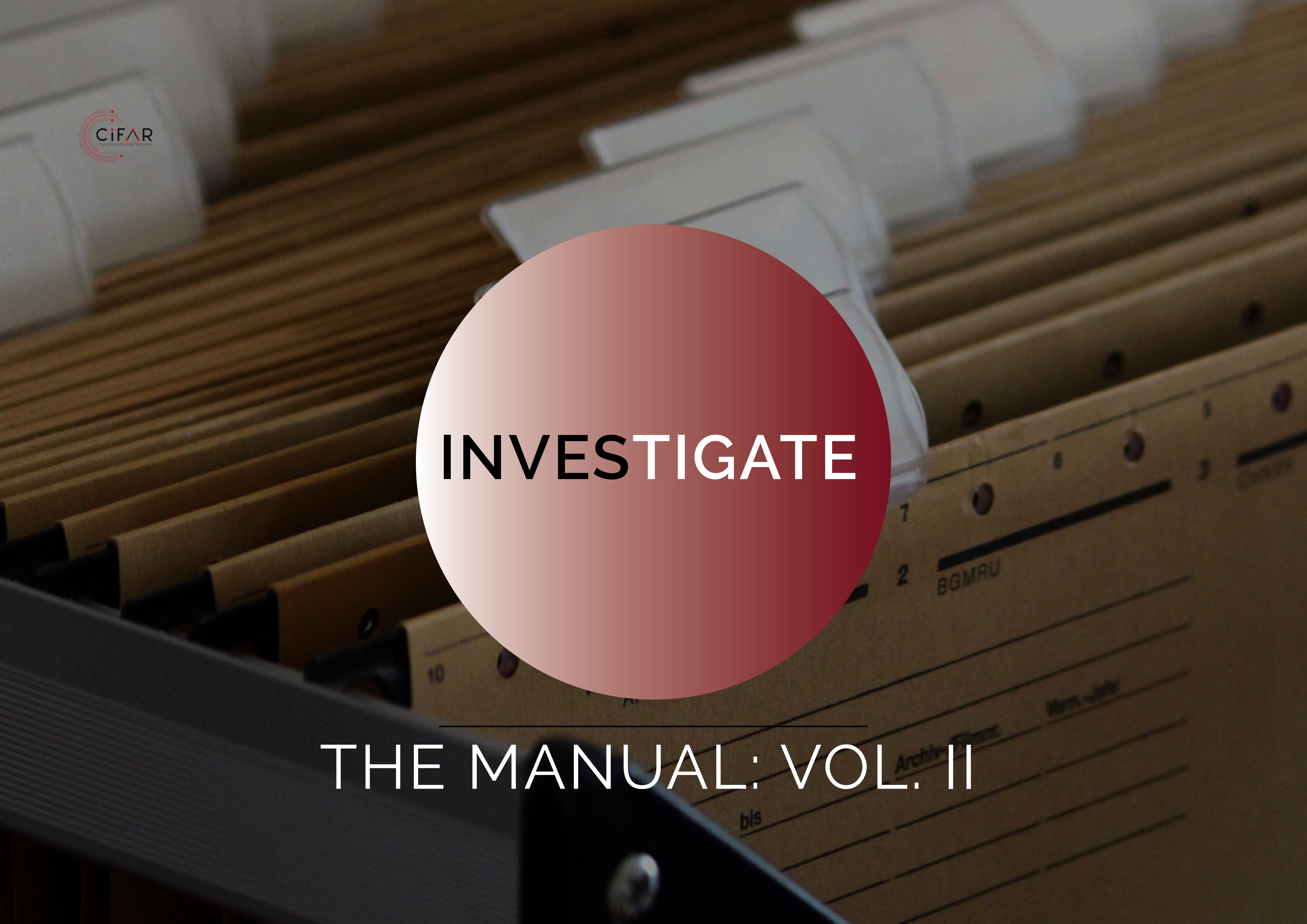

CiFAR

# INVESTIGATE

## THE MANUAL: VOL. II

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

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# ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is the second instalment of *Investigate: The Manual*, which was first published by the Civil Forum for Asset Recovery (CiFAR) in 2021. The Investigate series is designed to provide readers with an overview of state-of-the-art practices in investigative journalism, with a focus on illicit financial flows and asset recovery. It is designed for those with introductory-to-intermediate level knowledge in this field and is the result of over four years of collaboration between CiFAR and investigative journalists. The first training and mentoring program, Investigate the Mediterranean, launched in 2017, followed by Investigate the Western Balkans, carried out from 2019 to 2021, and Investigate West Africa, which took place in 2021 and 2022.

This second volume of Investigate aims to provide additional knowledge and tools that are particularly relevant for investigating grand corruption, financial crime and asset recovery. It includes an overview of integrity and legal protections for journalists, outlines the fundamentals of fact-checking investigations, and addresses physical safety for investigative journalists. As gender imbalance continues to be a major challenge in journalism, there is a chapter dedicated to current challenges faced by women journalists working in newsrooms, including tools to mitigate gender disparities in the field. As a successor to our previous manual published in early 2021, we hope that this volume will prove useful and will be widely shared.

This manual has been developed with the support of German Cooperation, implemented by the GIZ - the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, through the Anti-Corruption and Integrity Programme and the Global Program Combating Illicit Financial Flows.



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The analysis, results and recommendations in this manual represent the opinion of the authors and are not necessarily representative of the position of GIZ, German Cooperation or the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## WHAT IS CIFAR?

CiFAR was founded in 2015 to support civil society to campaign across borders to prevent public asset theft and for accountable and transparent asset recovery. Our vision is a world where public officials are unable to steal public money and hide it overseas. Our mission is to end cross-border corruption and to ensure transparency and accountability in asset recovery.

CiFAR was founded after realising a gap existed in support for civil society – in a broad sense – to work on cases of cross-border corruption, both in terms of understanding how the process was supposed to operate and in making connections with civil society abroad. These issues were, and still are, particularly prominent in countries of origin – countries where the corruption case originated – as the exposure of a large case is often the first asset recovery process local civil society has worked on.

The aim of CiFAR from the start has been to address this gap and be both a capacity building and network-support organisation. In that line, since our founding we have worked to train civil society activists and journalists, networked together actors working on different parts of ongoing cases, developed tools and engaged policy makers on asset recovery reform. While continuing in that role, we also have expanded our mandate as more and more actors have come onto the scene and as cases and returns have become more varied.

## CIFAR AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

At CiFAR, our goal is not only to support civil society organisations to work more effectively and collaboratively across borders, but also to build broad-based coalitions to fight against public asset theft and for the recovery of stolen assets. The Panama Papers, published in April 2016, exposed how hundreds of politicians and other public figures are systematically using offshore companies to avoid paying taxes. The same schemes are used by corrupt officials and private persons to channel and launder billions in assets stolen from public bank accounts or obtained through other criminal activities.

While these investigations have drawn public attention to illicit financial flows, they have tended to be centred on the Global North and, except for a few examples, voices from countries in the Global South have been much less prominent. There is a risk of not only missing the perspective of people from the Global South, but also of putting too great a focus on the Global North, thereby misrepresenting the scope of the challenge when it comes to illicit financial flows.

CiFAR's work focusses on investigative journalists who are at the beginning of their career, and aims to support them in developing their expertise in investigating and reporting on cases of grand corruption and on the processes for returning that money. We also help them to develop and pitch stories for publication in leading news outlets.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Alice Chambers

Alice Chambers is a European Studies graduate from Trinity College, Dublin. She started her career at an anticorruption NGO where she worked on projects related to public procurement and grand corruption. She then pursued a master's degree in journalism at the Columbia Journalism School in New York as a fellow of the Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism. She currently works as a journalist in London and specializes in disinformation and visual fact checking.

### Rouguyata Sall

Rouguyata Sall is a French journalist and data-journalist, and member of Youpress, a collective of freelance journalists. Her field work most often takes place on her laptop, where she plays around with data and reads scientific papers. Rouguyata focuses on science, research, labour, inequalities, and the African diaspora in France. In 2021 she contributed to "Sexism's toll on journalism", published by Reporters Without Borders. She was trained in cross-format journalism at the EMI-CFD in Paris and has a master's degree in biology. She has worked with Mediapart, Le Monde, La Déferlante, AEF info, Liaisons sociales, Libération, Bondy Blog and Politics Watch.

### Toby Mendel

Toby Mendel is the Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy, a Canadian-based international human rights NGO that provides legal and capacity building expertise regarding foundational rights for democracy, including the right to information, freedom of expression, the right to participate and the rights to assembly and association. Prior to that he was Senior Director for Law for over 12 years at ARTICLE 19, a human rights NGO that works to defend and promote freedom of expression and the right to information. Mendel has collaborated extensively with inter-governmental actors working in these areas – the World Bank, the UN, and other special rapporteurs on freedom of expression: UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe – as well as numerous governments and NGOs in countries all over the world.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Vlad Lavrov**

Based in Riga, Latvia, Vlad Lavrov works as chief editor for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), covering the Baltic region. He has worked on stories such as The Proxy Platform or Offshore Crime, Inc., for which he received the Daniel Pearl Award for Outstanding International Investigative Reporting. He also investigated cigarette smuggling through the Ukraine-EU borders, and participated in ICIJ's project Tobacco Underground, winning the Tom Renner Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Award, the Overseas Press Club of America Award, and the Online Journalism Award for best web coverage of international affairs. Vlad Lavrov also worked on the documentary Killing Pavel, the 2017 IRE medal winner investigating the murder of Pavel Sheremet. Previously a staff writer for Kyiv Post, he wrote stories from the Kyiv frontlines, and was a leader of the famous YanukovychLeaks campaign, whose goal was to publish thousands of documents on the former Ukrainian president online.

# INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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# INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

*Toby Mendel*

This chapter describes the key features of the right to freedom of expression under international law, and examines the two main systems for addressing harmful speech, namely complaints systems covering the media, and legal restrictions on content. As these areas are vast, the chapter focuses on providing an overview of the different types of complaints systems for the media, and some of the key areas for content restrictions, such as defamation, privacy, hate speech and national security, as well as two areas in which states should not restrict speech, namely criticism of religion and false news.

In doing so, it seeks to provide an overview of key considerations that will be vital for undertaking your work, whether or not these standards are adequately respected in your jurisdiction.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The key language enshrining the global guarantee of freedom of expression is found in Article 19(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[1]:

> **Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.**

Similar guarantees are found in Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR)[2] and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).[3] The guarantee under Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)[4] is rather different, but authoritative interpretation has brought it into closer alignment with the other guarantees.[5]

Seven key characteristics flow from this definition and its authoritative interpretation:

1. **It has both negative and positive aspects.**
   Its "negative" aspect obliges states not to interfere with the right of individuals to express themselves – this is the idea that most people associate with the right to freedom of expression. However, freedom of expression protects the wider flow of information and ideas in society. It is not enough for states to refrain from interfering. Sometimes they must take positive steps or put in place systems to protect the right. For example, states need to put in place a specific regulatory system for broadcasting to prevent chaos in the airwaves and to promote diversity.
2. **It belongs to everyone.**
   The word "everyone" in Article 19(2) means that states are required to protect the right of everyone to freedom of expression, including foreigners, prisoners and children, among others.
3. **It applies regardless of frontiers.**
   Everyone has the right to receive information from abroad (i.e. to use the Internet or to import books). Indeed, with the Internet, this is one of the more important features of the right..
4. **It includes the right to seek and receive information.**
   The most common interpretation of freedom of expression is the right to speak (or "impart" information and ideas); but it

also covers the right to “seek” and “receive” information (i.e. it protects the rights of the listener or viewer). Indeed, this is very important. For example, during elections, political parties need to be able to communicate with voters, and voters, need this information in order to make a decision about who to vote for. If a state interferes with a journalist's freedom of expression, that likely also interferes with people's right to receive information..

5. **It covers all kinds of information and ideas.**
   The right is not limited to statements people are comfortable hearing, but includes ideas that some may find offensive. This is crucial, since provocative ideas are more likely to need protection.

6. **It covers all means of dissemination.**
   For purposes of international law, it does not matter how you share information – whether through the media, the Internet, or Morse code – the expression is still protected.

7. **It covers direct and indirect interference.**
   States can interfere with freedom of expression not only directly but also indirectly, for example by refusing to allow advertisements in a newspaper simply because they are critical. Both forms of interference are prohibited by international law.

The right to freedom of expression is however not absolute and this need to be kept in mind in your work. It creates a broad presumption in favour of free speech, but allows states to place restrictions on it. The test for restrictions is set out in Article 19(3) of the ICCPR as follows:

> The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
>
> (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
>
> (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

This imposes the following strict three part-test on any restrictions:

1. **They must be provided by law.**
   Only elected representatives may limit this important right; other actors, such as the government or the police might abuse this power. Also, requiring restrictions to be enshrined by law gives fair warning of what may and may not be said. Laws must also meet certain conditions, including that they: make it clear what is prohibited; are accessible; and do not allocate too much discretion to officials (since this would be tantamount to letting officials set the rules).

2. **They must aim to protect one of the interests listed in paras. (a) or (b) of Article 19 (3).**
   Only the important interests listed under Article 19(3) – the rights and reputations of others, national security, and public order, health and morals – can override freedom of expression. This list is exclusive (i.e. restrictions to protection of other interests are not permitted).

3. **They must be necessary to protect said interests.**
   This part of the test, which is the most important, is complicated, and involves the following considerations:

   i) The interest must represent a pressing social need; minor threats are not enough;

ii) The measure must be the least intrusive and most effective way to protect the interest;

iii) The measure must not be overbroad, i.e. they must only capture harmful speech;

iv) The measure must be proportionate, i.e. the benefit of protecting an interest should not undermine freedom of expression. This also covers sanctions.

*Do restrictions in your country meet these standards and, if not, what are the discrepancies?*

## SYSTEMS FOR COMPLAINTS AND ETHICS IN THE MEDIA

In most countries, individuals may lodge a complaint about media behaviour. In some cases, the bodies that determine the validity of these complaints are run entirely by the media or a media sector, while in others they are established by law. Overall, these systems may be classified into three main types: self-regulation; co-regulation; and statutory regulation.

All of these systems have the following elements:

1. A set of minimum standards for media behaviour such as a code of conduct against which a complaint will be assessed;
2. A complaints system or body that will investigate grievances;
3. A set of consequences or remedies/sanctions for breach of the code.

The key feature of a self-regulatory system is that it is run by the media on a voluntary basis without the backing of a law. These systems are more common for print media than broadcasters. Their strengths include that they tend to be independent and sensitive to the challenges of media work. Their weaknesses include that they can be difficult to establish unless the media are very well organized; they are often ineffective in dealing with hard cases; they lack teeth because the sanctions are limited and anyone can pull out since it is voluntary in the first place; and they can be seen as too media-friendly, and hence lack credibility.

The key feature of a co-regulatory system is that it is run by media, or with very significant media involvement, but it has the backing of a law. This approach is more common in the print media sector, but can also be found in broadcasting. Some key strengths of co-regulatory systems are that they tend to be quite independent; they are typically sensitive to the challenges of operating a media outlet; they have more teeth but are usually not unduly imposing; and they are easier to establish than self-regulatory systems. A key weakness is that the specifics depend heavily on the quality of the law that establishes them (e.g. relating to their independence and the appropriateness of the sanctions they can impose), so there needs to be appropriate political will.

One example of a successful co-regulatory system is the Indonesian Press Council. It has nine members, three of which were nominated by journalists' associations, three who were nominated by owners, and three, including the chair, who are members of the public, nominated jointly by journalists and owners. The Council has been robustly independent since it was first created in 1999. The main sanction is a requirement to publish its decision, but it can also order compensation.

The key feature of a statutory system is that it is created by law and tends to include leading citizens rather than media actors. This approach is more common for broadcasting. The strengths of statutory systems include that they have the full power to impose sanctions (although this can also be a weakness if they are too heavy-handed); they can be fairly sensitive to the broadcasting environment; and they can cover licensing as well as professionalism. A key weakness, as with co-regulatory systems, is that much depends on the law that establishes them. In practice, many of these bodies lack independence, which is problematic given the extensive power they exercise.

Ethical standards for the media can be divided roughly into three main areas:

1. Content standards, or what types of content should be avoided, perhaps subject to circumstances, such as striving for accuracy and respecting privacy..
2. Standards around media behaviour when collecting news/information. Protecting the secrecy of confidential sources and not using subterfuge are examples of this.
3. Standards around how media treat people, often in vulnerable situations, such as showing respect for grief or protection of children.

These standards, especially content standards, often overlap with legal rules and, in most cases, the substance of both sets of rules is not very different. One exception is in the area of hate speech, where ethical rules are often far more stringent. For example, under ethical rules, media may be required not to encourage discrimination or to avoid prejudicial statements, whereas legal hate speech laws should only prohibit incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence.

> *If a complaints system is not already in place, you could consider working to establish one. Think carefully about what would likely work best in your context.*

## LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Most countries have a large number of general restrictions on content, whether under criminal or civil law, which apply to the media and to everyone else. It is not possible to look at all of these areas here. Instead, we will focus on a few key areas, namely defamation, privacy, hate speech, national security, blasphemy and false news. The standards outlined here are international standards, as laws by country may vary.

### *Defamation*

The essence of defamation is that there is a communication concerning a third party that harms the reputation of the person involved in the eyes of that person. There are several important elements that should limit the scope of defamation laws:

- There should be no liability for innocent publishers, such as a newspaper distributers or online intermediaries.
- While human beings and private businesses should be covered by defamation laws (i.e. have their reputations protected), these laws should not extend to cover symbols, flags, objects, states, and public bodies.
- Defamation should be part of civil law, not criminal law. Criminal defamation laws are unduly harsh, prone to abuse, and unnecessary; civil defamation laws provide adequate protection for reputation. Imprisonment should not be imposed for defamation.
- There should be a short period within which a legal case may be brought forth for defamation (e.g. one year). Anti-SLAPP (strategic litigation against public participation) rules should be available. These allow for abusive defamation cases to be

dismissed quickly so that they do not cast a long shadow over the defendant, so as to prevent powerful actors from bringing bogus defamation cases in order to silence defendants.

- There should be no special protection for officials; indeed, officials should be required to tolerate greater criticism than ordinary citizens.
- Truth should be an absolute defence in all cases where proven. In other words, no one should bear liability in defamation law for statements that are true.
- Even the very best journalists sometimes make mistakes. International law thus requires states to recognize a defence of reasonable publication which applies to statements on matters of public concern, even if false (inaccurate), if it was reasonable in all of the circumstances for the defendant to make the statement. For journalists, it is enough if they acted in accordance with professional standards.
- Statements of opinion should benefit from even greater protection than statements of fact, and defendants should only be liable if they had absolutely no factual grounds on which to base the opinion.

Excessive sanctions also represent a breach of freedom of expression. The main aim of defamation sanctions should be to redress the harm done, not to punish. Courts should take into account any remedies already provided, such as a right of reply or an administrative complaints remedy. Monetary damages should be kept at a reasonable level, taking into account the actual harm done to the plaintiff..

### *Privacy*

Privacy comprises both an objective element – whether it is reasonable to expect the matter to be private – and a subjective element – whether the plaintiff in fact treated the matter as private. In addition to laws restricting the unwarranted disclosure of private information, corporate actors also have a responsibility to protect private information. While privacy can conflict with freedom of expression, it also supports freedom of expression (e.g. by limiting state surveillance). When statements that expose private information contribute to a debate about a matter of public interest, that contribution should be balanced against the interests of privacy by looking at a number of different factors, such as:

1. the prominence of the person(s) involved and the importance of the subject covered;
2. the prior conduct of the person(s) involved;
3. the content, form and consequences of the publication (e.g. was the information limited to what was necessary to contribute to the debate); and
4. the overall circumstances.

> *Think about these factors when you consider exposing private information.*

### *Hate Speech*

Hate speech is one of the only areas where international law requires states to impose restrictions on freedom of expression, as expressed under Article 20(2) of the ICCPR. The core idea here is that it is essential to protect equality, which is vital to the protection of all human rights. Hate speech laws should involve four key elements:

1. the speaker must have acted with the intent to promote hatred;
2. the grounds for hate are based on nationality, race or religion (although other instruments are broader in scope);
3. the statements must incite others, which implies that there is a close causal connection between the statements and the prohibited results; and
4. the statements lead to three prohibited results, namely discrimination, hostility and violence.

*National Security*

National security is one of the areas where restrictions on freedom of expression are most often abused. One challenge is that it is difficult to define national security. The Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information[6] set out clear standards for national security laws, which should only apply when:

1. a statement is intended to incite imminent violence;
2. it is likely to incite such violence; and
3. there is a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the likelihood or occurrence of such violence.

The latter should be assessed via the language used, the temporal proximity of the statement and the risk, the causal relationship between the statement and the risk, and the overall context. In addition, security should be narrowly defined and the law should incorporate an intent requirement.

*Blasphemy*

Hate speech laws protect members of a religion, while blasphemy laws protect the religion itself. From the perspective of international law, this is akin to shielding an idea from criticism, which is not considered to be legitimate. In other words, it is appropriate to protect believers against hate, but not to protect the ideas, even deeply held ideas, of a religion.

*False news*

Disinformation and misinformation can be very problematic. However, blanket banning of false news is simply not effective – in part because this can be done anonymously and even via automated means – and would be prone to abuse. As the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, and the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information stated in their 2017 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and "Fake News", Disinformation and Propaganda have stated:

> **General prohibitions on the dissemination of information based on vague and ambiguous ideas, including "false news" or "non-objective information", are incompatible with international standards for restrictions on freedom of expression.[7]**

At the same time, it is legitimate to ban false statements in certain limited contexts, including in the cases of false and defamatory statements (as discussed above), perjury or forgery. But general bans on incorrect statements cannot be justified.

# FACT-CHECKING YOUR INVESTIGATION

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# FACT-CHECKING YOUR INVESTIGATION

*Alice Chambers*

The success of your story hinges on the fact-checking process. An investigation is not about what a journalist believes, it is about what they can prove to be true. You must start with facts.

## FACT-CHECKING AND DISINFORMATION MONITORING TOOLS

- Open Source tools directory : Bellingcat – To keep track of new open-source intelligence resources.
- Verification Plugin : WeVerify – for GIF, image and video verification.
- Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior : EU Disinfo Lab – A manual to track down fake and automated social media accounts.
- Metadata extractor : Amnesty International – To retrieve metadata from YouTube videos.
- Tin Eye – For reversed image searches and verification..

## WHAT FACTS ARE WE CHECKING EXACTLY?

I like to think of facts as existing at different levels of evidence. The first set of facts consists of basic, verifiable information, such as date, name, age, and the accuracy of quotes. Sometimes these facts are available publicly and are easy to check, and other times they are disputed and require verification through multiple sources; but generally they signify information that is either objectively right or wrong.

Another level of consideration when it comes to reporting, is whether and how to present information that may be factual, insofar as it refers to events that indeed took place, to words that were spoken, etc., but which may contain information that is false. For instance, a quote may be a fact in the sense that the person did indeed say those things but printing it without any verification or context may be problematic. Classic political fact checks deal with this type of fact. For example, a newspaper may choose to quote a politician verbatim, but if the information that the politician provided was inaccurate, this introduces questions regarding the responsibility of journalists and newspapers. Former President Donald Trump posed such a problem for media outlets, as journalists had to decide how or whether to reproduce his false statements. From the start of his candidacy to his tenure as president, headlines evolved from quoting him directly, to later paraphrasing his words and noting that they were erroneous. Another example is a company that gives you a statement about their activities; you will want to include that in your story, but you need to provide the appropriate context so that the reader can determine whether they should believe it.

A story that presents both sides of an issue may be factually correct, and yet remain inconclusive in terms of what actually happened. This is sometimes called "bothsidesism" and is often a dissatisfying form of journalism for a reader, leaving them without knowing what to think at the end. While we are primed to be sceptical of powerful actors, it is important to apply the same level of scepticism to what our less powerful sources tell us; a source might believe something to be true, but it is the job of a journalist to present that belief in context. It can be helpful to ask yourself whether you are dealing with a "true fact". That might sound redundant, but it can be a reminder to parse what is true from what people tell you is true.

The final level of assessment in your fact-check is to examine the accuracy of your narrative to ensure it is true and fair. The narrative makes sense of facts; it links them together into the story you are trying to tell and puts them into context. A story will never contain all the facts, and the ones you choose to leave out are as important as the ones you choose to include. There is a tension, then, between facts and narrative, because the narrative structure of a story forces a journalist to interpret the facts – elevating some facts, and downplaying the importance of others. For example, if a tender in a public procurement process only had one bidder, is that a sign of corruption? It depends. You would need to do more research to find out whether that is typical. Choosing to include that fact, which is true, without the context of a baseline, might constitute misleading the reader. Statistics are often a good example of potentially useful facts that become useless or even dangerously distorted without context.

When fact-checking your story, it is important to consider what, for you, is an acceptable standard of proof. In criminal law, there must be proof "beyond a reasonable doubt", which is the highest standard of evidence there is. A journalist doesn't have the same powers of a court of law, and may not have access to all the available information on a given matter; does that mean we can tolerate a lower standard of proof in journalism? It depends on what allegations your story makes. Reporting on a key piece of damning evidence based on a single source may be risky. Less explosive claims may need fewer sources.

### HOW TO FACT-CHECK: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Large media organisations often have a fact-checker to ensure stories are bulletproof before being published; most journalists don't have this luxury. Besides, leaving your fact-checking to the end is risky; facts that prove to be incorrect could change the conclusion of an investigative piece. It is much better to fact-check as you go – confirming facts with different sources, going back to your sources multiple times, asking for documents that buttress your sources' assertions.

Before you begin, you should be sceptical of your own knowledge, understanding and biases, as well as those of your sources'. You want to understand a world you likely know little about, or open your mind beyond your existing assumptions. Be prepared that your hypothesis might be wrong, or that you have fundamentally misunderstood something.

Remain vigilant in recognizing your own biases and theories. That is, while you might think something happened a certain way, it is vital to ask yourself what the story would look like if it happened a different way, and adjust your methods and pursue other leads accordingly. You can and should collaborate with your sources. During interviews, ask them if your understanding of what they've said is fair. If it is possible to reveal information to your sources, you can also ask them to tell you what they think of facts you have already learned.

Be careful to log what you have learned on or off the record. Part of your fact-checking process must involve keeping track of the facts you're able to use according to agreements made with your sources. If you've built trust with your sources, you may be able to get previously off-the-record facts onto the record.

Once you have a first draft of your article, use a red pen to go through your story word by word and check for accuracy and fairness. Even words like "a" and "the" matter to the meaning (a contract vs the contract). You should go back to your sources to tell them what you have found and what you intend to write. Using sources to fact-check each other is vital, so ask them whether the facts you have uncovered seem correct, and whether you've put them into context correctly.

At this stage, if you haven't already done so, you should try to obtain a comment from anyone who appears unfavourably in your story.

Quotes are key elements to fact-check. I often read or send quotes back to a source before publishing. This doesn't necessarily mean I will change anything if a source disagrees with how I have quoted them, but I prefer to know and discuss in advance why they're unhappy. If it's because I've misunderstood something, I might choose to make adjustments. If a source is displeased because they appear in a negative light, I'll ask them if there's anything factually incorrect with what I plan to publish. If that is not the case, or if I disagree with their assertions, I will proceed with the story as planned.

I recommend you aim for transparency and replicability in your stories, where possible. Being transparent with your sources, and in your writing (i.e. describing or linking to the sources of your information), and demonstrating clearly how you arrived at certain conclusions (e.g. with data or consensus among sources) helps your own fact-checking process, but also makes it easier for readers to fact-check your work. Providing enough information to substantiate your claims is an excellent way to make your work bullet-proof and build trust with your readers. It also means other journalists and news outlets can reproduce the facts, and the story can be disseminated widely.

### ORGANISATIONAL TIPS

The fact-checking process can be arduous if you can't identify where your facts came from. For stories that are complex and ongoing, involving multiple sources, organisation is critical. Discuss with your team what kind of documents you anticipate collecting (e.g. interview notes, emails, Freedom of Information Requests, corporate documents, news clips, etc.) and how to file them. Google Drive folders are one way of doing it, but identify and use the software and organisational systems that work best for you.

It can also be helpful to keep minutes of your team meetings, as well as document your own activities. This provides a record of observations and questions, and a chronological sequence of events for reference later.

### VISUAL FACT-CHECKING

Increasingly, useful investigative information comes to us visually, through user-generated content (UGC), especially when conducting research on social media. It is tempting to think that videos and photos are more reliable sources of information because on the surface they appear neutral and objective. However, videos and photos can be as misleading as other sources of information and are often more pernicious because of the speed at which they circulate and assumptions about their reliability. Videos and photos must be verified to make sure they have not been tampered with, and to ensure you are accurately interpreting them in the context of your story.

### A SOURCE SHARES SOME VIDEO WITH YOU, WHAT NEXT?

As with classic fact-checking, you should ask some key questions to start:

1. What is the **provenance** of the information? Knowing when and on which platform a video first appeared online can provide key information.
2. Who took the video? Identify the **original source**?
3. When was it taken? Note the **date and time**.
4. Where was it taken? Ascertain the **location**.
5. Why was it taken? Consider the **motivation** of the person recording the video.

6. What is happening **outside the frame**? Consider what hasn't been captured.

The last two questions are particularly important when it comes to visual media because it is easy to be tricked into thinking that a video shows the whole story. What happened before the camera started rolling affects what is captured on film. Equally, a person holding a camera tends to moderate their behaviour as soon as they know they are recording themselves.

Verifying a video is possible but is much more difficult if you can't identify and contact the original source. By speaking with them, you can establish whether they were likely to have been in a position to take the video, and if they can offer supporting information. Ideally, they would be able to send you the original video so that you can check the metadata, which is one of the best ways to verify the camera model, and possibly when and where the footage was taken.

Metadata provides information about the video or photo. When you record a video, encoded in that file is information about when you took the video, what device you took it on, and – if GPS was turned on – where the video was taken. A video that is shared on social media has usually been compressed to make it easier and cheaper to share quickly. The compression process strips metadata and reduces the quality of the file. In an ideal world, you don't want a source to share a video with you via WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger, but rather by email, WeTransfer, or with an iCloud link.

However, even metadata can be tampered with, and sources can be hard to track down, mistaken, or mendacious. It can be helpful to use the information at your disposal to identify and assess the person who took the video, and to verify its legitimacy before talking to them.

## HOW TO SPOT A FAKE – STEP 1

In your quest to establish the veracity of your video, you can look at the account that posted it, and at the video content.

### Account

- Has the user posted from this location before?
- Does the user regularly post similar content?
- Do their profile photos look real? What does a reverse image search reveal?
- Does the user have other social accounts with the same username? Do a search online to see if the person exists off social media.
- What do the comments say? Often your debunking work has already been done or you by people in the comments.

### Video content

- Is there text overlay? This could indicate a video was originally posted to TikTok or Snapchat, etc., which may give you a clue as to the source.
- Are you able to identify the source through geolocation? That way you can independently verify where it came from. Look for clues in the footage (i.e. street signs, car license plates, foliage, what people are wearing, etc.).
- Can you ascertain the time of day based on the amount and direction of light? What is the weather like?
- How is the video quality? Low video quality usually indicates that it has been shared widely across social media platforms; each time a video is sent via social media it's repackaged and compressed, degrading the quality.
- Unfortunately, there is no reverse search tool for videos, but you can take a frame from the video and do a reverse image search on it.

## HOW TO SPOT A FAKE – STEP 2

Remember you are a journalist, not a programmer. After gathering whatever information you can, following the guidelines above, it's time to dig into the story and speak to sources. Ask yourself who else you could call who would know something about events in the video. Local police or fire departments may be able to provide information about crimes. If the video was filmed at a business, find an employee or representative willing to speak to you. Public figures have press offices that you can call for comment. Try to think laterally; find people who attended an event and show them the video you're trying to verify for corroboration.

You should also follow other media outlets who might be reporting on the same story. If your video involves a large public demonstration, you should be able to find coverage.

## MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Misinformation is false information shared inadvertently. Disinformation is false information created and shared deliberately to deceive. Much mis/disinformation online spreads in conjunction with photos or videos that are used to support a false claim. Being able to analyse misinformation in a structured way can aid the fact-checking process. The following list includes different types of misinformation compiled by First Draft News. While not exhaustive, it can be a useful analytical tool for assessing content online.

- Satire or parody – There is no intention to harm, but possibility to fool.
- False connection – Headlines, visuals or captions don't support the content.
- Misleading content – Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual.
- Imposter content – Genuine sources are impersonated.
- False content – Genuine content is shared with false contextual information.
- Manipulated content – Genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive.
- Fabricated content – Content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.

When people hear the term "fake news" they often assume that it's content that is completely fabricated. But often misinformation has an element of truth, which is what makes it so pernicious; seasoned journalists have been caught out by parody accounts and repurposed or mislabelled videos.

Forewarned is forearmed, and if you approach information online with the knowledge that it can fool you in many different ways, you will be less likely to be duped!

4

# PHYSICAL SAFETY FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

# PHYSICAL SAFETY FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

*Vlad Lavrov*

All over the world journalism is becoming an increasingly dangerous profession. According to a special report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) , in 2020, twenty-two journalists were murdered as a result of their work, which is double the figure from the previous year. What makes matters worse is that in more than eighty percent of cases, the murders remain unsolved. This situation calls for a drastic change in the way journalists and newsrooms handle reporters' security.

Up until now it's become common practice in many parts of the world for journalists – especially those involved in high-risk investigations or based in countries with authoritarian regimes – to receive training in digital security. And though levels of awareness regarding how to keep online communication secure and minimize one's digital footprint remain inadequate, there has been progress.

These days when investigative reporters work on a cross-border or even cross-newsroom project, the use of secure messengers and encrypted email communication is common. Even if there are discrepancies among the team members as to how to communicate online, more often than not, there is consensus that more secure, albeit less convenient channels, should be used.

Unfortunately, this approach to mitigating the dangers faced by journalists is not universal. In many parts of the world, the safety of journalists is still viewed as something that should be dealt with by law enforcement and safety watchdogs.

This attitude is problematic and dangerous for a number of reasons. Even if a reporter works in a country where law enforcement is generally trusted, often authorities lack the resources to properly investigate cases when journalists suspect being under physical threat. In the most optimistic scenario, they would offer a journalist protection; however this is only a short-term solution, as it drastically limits a person's freedom of movement and ability to work.

Excessive reliance on international NGOs that specialize in journalism security issues is also problematic. These organisations have their own internal procedures for reviewing cases, which takes time. Therefore, NGO assistance is useful for longer-term security solutions, especially when it comes to relocation or the purchase of security equipment, but it can hardly be relied upon when it comes to emergency situations or high-risk projects.

While each media outlet has to evaluate the potential danger of a particular project, there is general consensus that any story involving **organized crime, corrupt governments, large businesses, rogue actors in government or businesses, terrorist groups, or extremist groups**, requires security protocols to be in place.

It is imperative that journalists and media organisations involved in potentially risky projects are proactive with regard to physical security, and that they adopt some basic procedures, which will be outlined below.

## NEWSROOM SAFETY

Despite a major global shift towards remote work caused by the global coronavirus pandemic, the traditional newsroom format remains the preferred option for many media organisations around the world. As a rule, a newsroom's address is in the public domain, which makes it an easy target for potential hostile actors. The following set of procedures is recommended to mitigate these risks and ensure the organisation is prepared for emergency situations:

- **The newsroom's door(s) should be locked and monitored by staff at all times** – This basic rule is often ignored.
- **Newsrooms should have a security door and alarm system or panic room** – It's highly recommended that each employee have a personal alarm code, to make it easier to investigate cases of unauthorized entry.
- **Surveillance cameras should be installed** – When choosing a specific type of equipment based on a given layout and budget, it's preferable to have a system that can store 30 days of footage online, rather than on a local disk. This backup measure is critical in the event the newsroom is broken into.
- **Newsrooms should be located in high-traffic areas** – The location should be convenient in terms of day-to-day reporting and should also be a reasonable distance to an international airport.
- **Cars should be parked in a safe, monitored area** – Car bombings are one of the common ways in which journalists are killed. Parking lots also serve as a convenient surveillance spot for hostile parties to monitor the activity of reporters and potential sources.
- **Information about staff should never be shared with anyone** – It's very important that all staff are trained to follow this rule. Phone enquiries are a common way to gather information about schedules and work-related travel. Using so-called social engineering techniques, hostile parties can pose as old friends or classmates wanting to reconnect.
- **All visitors should be escorted** – This also includes employees of phone or utility companies who come to do maintenance or check meters.
- **All suspicious calls or visits should immediately be reported to an editor** – Under no circumstances should journalists engage in suspicious or threatening conversations or become confrontational. The hostile party might record the event and use it in the case of legal proceedings as proof of your organisation's prejudice towards them.
- **Employees should be aware of their surroundings when it comes to suspicious people or activities** – Raising awareness about any potentially dangerous situations around the office would help staff detect signs of surveillance. It's especially important to monitor parking lots that face the office entrance. It's advisable to monitor what cars are parked there regularly and keep track of visitors' cars, especially those that have people inside for long periods of time.

## ROLE OF EDITORS IN CHIEF

In addition to adopting newsroom safety rules, media organisations should ensure these rules are followed by all staff and that they receive proper training. To achieve this, one of the senior editors should be responsible for the security of the newsroom and have the authority to discipline staff who fail to follow the security protocols.

It's also very important that the editor has the full trust of reporters, who feel comfortable discussing even those observations and suspicions they are not sure about. Staffers should never be ridiculed for overreacting.

Instead, the editor should listen, help them stay calm, and assess their concerns.

Overall, the role of editor should entail:

- **Complete responsibility for newsroom safety** – The responsibility for newsroom safety should be assumed internally, as opposed to relying on police or NGO support.
- **Holding safety meetings** – Whenever reporters begin working on high-risk projects, the editor should activate a "safety mode" within the newsroom. All discussions about high-risk projects should be limited to a smaller circle of people: the reporters directly working on a project, their immediate editor, the editor responsible for safety, and the chief editor. It's imperative that these discussions are held outside the regular editorial meeting, and that they occur frequently to keep the safety response team updated on all developments.
- **Require the reporting of risks** – As potentially high-risk projects are launched, it's very important to gather sufficient information about investigation targets: who may be a threat to life and how is not, how these threats may materialise, what could set them off, what has happened in the past and why. It's highly advisable that the editor makes sure this information is collected early in the investigation.
- **Designing safety protocols and enforcing safety guidelines –** This includes procedures for routine functioning of a newsroom as well as protocols for emergencies.
- **Communication with reporters about the risks** – An editor should establish trust with reporters and be available 24/7 to discuss any risk-related issues. This also involves keeping in touch with reporters during high-risk interviews or source meetings.
- **General newsroom safety awareness** – Editors should know the whereabouts of their reporters at all times, either by establishing call-in times, or using sign-in sheets. If a reporter is working on a high-risk project, editors should know what meeting and interviews they have lined up and what requests for information they are filing.
- **Regular training in safety procedures** – It is advisable to hold regular newsroom safety meetings to discuss ongoing developments that could impact the security situation of journalists and/or the organisation. These meetings should review basic safety procedures and expose any potential barriers in implementing them.
- **Discipline reporters who don't follow rules** – Repercussions are especially important when it comes to so-called "cowboy reporters" who demonstrate recklessness and disregard for safety protocols.
- **Doing everything within their authority to protect reporters from harm,** and assuming responsibility for the consequences caused by a failure to put the proper protections in place.

## NEWSROOM COMMUNICATION: INFORMATION ON A 'NEED-TO-KNOW' BASIS

One of the editor's most challenging tasks in trying to ensure reporters' safety is building proper systems of communication within a newsroom. As mentioned earlier, any reporter should feel comfortable discussing their safety concerns with an editor, no matter how exaggerated those concerns might seem. But even more important, no staffer should feel excluded when issues related to high-risk projects are discussed within a smaller security team, rather than in front of the entire newsroom.

One should not ignore the possibility of leaks. Any office could be vulnerable to listening devices, which are readily available on the market, cheap and easy to install. Therefore, more discrete discussions, perhaps even held outside the office, are an obvious way to mitigate security risks.

As newsrooms are universally considered a space for collective brainstorming and decision-making, smaller gatherings held outside the general editorial meeting could be perceived negatively, leading other staff to feel excluded. Therefore, open communication with staff around the purpose of these meetings is another important responsibility of the editor.

The newsroom should remain a place open for free discussion and information exchange. At the same time, for the safety of all staff, security issues should only be discussed among the staff members **directly involved in a particular incident**, those responsible for **handling security issues**, and those who **require executive approval** to resolve them.

## DANGEROUS MEETINGS

Situations in which a reporter has to carry out a confrontational interview with a potentially dangerous target, or attend a meeting with a source that might likewise turn out to be unsafe, requires adept planning and coordination by an editor, who must also act as an emergency contact for reporters.

High-risk meetings should be conducted as follows:

- **Reporters should go in pairs** – While one reporter does the interview, another is there primarily to take charge of communication with other colleagues. It's important to keep this activity as discreet as possible, so the second reporter should also try to engage in the interview and participate.
- **All meetings must be held in a public place** – Under no circumstances should reporters agree to change location at the suggestion of the interviewee. Citing the strictness of their editor's rules, they should insist that they stay at the original location, even at the risk of losing the interview.
- **A third person should monitor the meeting** – This person should arrive early, and choose a spot with a clear view of the location where the meeting is to be held (i.e. the entrance). The reporters should agree in advance on a system of gestures – signalling green, yellow and red alerts. At the red alert sign, the third person should interfere and end the interview.
- **Police or security should be on call** – If possible, only trusted contacts in those agencies should be employed.
- **Editors should monitor the situation** – They should be in direct contact with all reporters at the meeting and be prepared to act quickly in case of emergency.
- **There should be a way to track reporters' whereabouts at all times** – Ahead of the meeting, editors should have complete

information about the location and the meeting participants. In- and out-messages are mandatory. It's also critical that reporters alert the editor if the meeting takes longer than expected.

- **When in doubt, insist the meeting be held at the interviewee's lawyers' office, or by phone or video conference.**

### PERSONAL SAFETY

The most common misconception about safety as it pertains to journalists, can be illustrated by a common question posed to reporters across the globe: "Have you ever been threatened?"

People outside the field of journalism, as well as reporters themselves, consider verbal threats to be a major indicator of risk to a journalist's physical safety. In reality, most reporters who have been killed were never warned or threatened. Thus, reporters and their editors have to put preventative measures in place for a threat they often don't know about.

There's another dangerous assumption that prevails in the media industry with regard to journalists' safety. It's often thought reporters need to take part in trainings on how to work and travel in a hostile environment. As such, trainings originally designed for war correspondents were regarded as a "magic bullet" solution for all reporters at risk. However, more than ninety percent of murdered journalists worked locally,[8] and were not on assignment in hostile environments when they were killed. As such, we need to rethink and redefine the signs of danger that investigative reporters should watch out for. The following list captures some of the key signs of danger journalists should be aware of:

- **Surveillance** – This is the most dangerous sign. Many murdered journalists reported being observed in the weeks prior to their deaths. Unfortunately, in many cases this wasn't taken seriously. Surveillance is used to gather information about a target's daily routines, habits and communication bubble. While there could be other reasons a reporter is put under surveillance – from gathering intelligence on sources to psychological pressure – a potential target for murder should always be the first consideration, requiring further investigation, and protections if confirmed.
- **Inquiries or social engineering** – Colleagues and relatives suddenly being approached by strangers presenting themselves as former friends, classmates or colleagues trying to obtain information about a reporter. The callers are often manipulative and use social engineering techniques to lure people into helping them.
- **Unusual interest from friends, acquaintances with whom a reporter rarely communicates with otherwise** – People who are well informed about your current work without explanation. It's also quite common for them to make veiled threats or use cryptic language, such as "stay out of trouble".
- **Threats or veiled threats** – Although, as discussed earlier, verbal threats are often not the most telling sign of danger, receiving a threat in any form should never be ignored. These must be reported directly to an editor and discussed during editors' meetings. It's also mandatory that a reporter refrains from any sort of confrontation with the threatening party.
- **There may not be any signs** – In this case the response should be based on knowing that the target of the investigation is very dangerous.

**What to do when you recognize signs of danger**

- **Notify your editor immediately** – Try to provide as many details as possible. In case of surveillance: age bracket, sex, build, the details of what exactly alerted you. Try to take photos or videos, but only if there's no risk of exposure.
- **Be discrete** – Your main task at this point is not to alert potential surveillance that you have noticed them. The editor in turn, must alert the security team, and set a time for a meeting.
- **Try to identify the threat** – At this stage, your task is to come up with a list of potential threats, based on your current and previous work. Try to determine which aspect of your work might interest potential hostile parties.
- **Change your routine** – Use alternate routes, limit walking, switch to working from home more often, share rides with colleagues and friends, use taxis more often. Make sure to observe your surroundings when exiting your home or office. Do not return home unaccompanied in the evenings.

**If there's reasonable proof that you've spotted possible surveillance at its early stage, consider applying basic counter-surveillance methods to deny or confirm being followed:**

- **Unplanned route** – Where a target realizes he may be under surveillance and calls upon a team (or person) to clear his back to either confirm or deny if surveillance is present.
- **Planned** – Where a target walks/drives a pre-planned route through a series of turns monitored by a third party team to either confirm or deny if surveillance is present;
- If you are **able to confirm surveillance**, warn anyone you've identified by telling them you know they pose a risk – This should be done based on a decision by the editor and relevant parties after analysing all evidence collected during counter-surveillance. It's very important that all evidence is analysed and that the team reaches a consensus on the presence of surveillance.

- **Implement a safety plan** – Based on conclusions about surveillance and risk, protections need to be put in place to keep the reporter safe. The options range from: having the reporter work from home; ensuring they are escorted by colleagues at all times; temporary relocation within the same city, to another city, or abroad.
- **Reassign reporters** – The reporter at risk should be removed from the project, at least when it comes to interviews and filing information requests. It is highly advisable to consider creating an international team to complete the work.

# GENDER DISPARITIES IN JOURNALISM

5

# GENDER DISPARITIES IN JOURNALISM

*Rouguyata Sall*

**Impunity.** This is the key word used by Christophe Deloire, Secretary General of the French NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in his foreword to *Sexism's toll on journalism*,[9] published in March 2021. The report compiles responses from a survey of 112 correspondents and gender-focused journalists from countries around the world on the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) on women journalists, not only in the field and online, but also in newsrooms. More than two thirds of those interviewed (71%) are aware of discrimination towards women in journalism. Nearly half of respondents recognized that one of the consequences is women journalists censoring themselves and avoiding certain subjects.

RSF defines sexism as encompassing all forms of GBV, including discrimination, insults, sexual harassment, physical and verbal aggression of a sexual nature, threats and rape. It should be pointed out that the majority of responses came from men (57%), reporting their observations of their female colleagues' experiences.

Among those surveyed:

- 36% consider their country unsafe or very dangerous for female journalists;
- 24% note that women have to modify their attire in order carry out their work; and
- 8% report that women journalists cannot work under their true identity.

This section sets out some of the challenges particularly focussed by women in journalism and which should be reflected on in your investigations.

**Female journalists suffer specific violence as well as multiple forms of discrimination**. Even within the newsroom, they are underrepresented in senior positions (few women work as publishing directors or chief editors).

In the 2021 study *Women and leadership in the news media 2021: evidence from 12 markets*[10] researchers from the Reuters Institute for Journalism Studies analysed a sample of 240 major online and offline media outlets from all over the world, showing that women hold only 22% of chief editorial positions, while representing 40% of journalists in the markets surveyed. South Africa is the only country with a higher proportion of women in top positions (60% in 2021).

Similar findings were made in a two-year study,[11] by 150 researchers, undertaken by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) in research partnership with UNESCO, who analysed women's status within media, identifying glass ceilings, particularly in middle and senior management positions in 20 of the 59 countries studied.

The Covid-19 crisis has only made matters worse. According to a 2020 study[12] by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) gender inequality in newsrooms worsened during the pandemic. Three quarters of respondents reported increased stress, while half of women reported that their health had been impacted, mostly as a result of sleep problems.

## GENDER DISPARITIES IN DEPTH

The stress and negative impacts on health that women in the media are experiencing may be compounded by the current health crisis, but they extend beyond it.

Women journalists face many kinds of violence, such as sexual harassment (84%), sexual violence (30%), rape threats (27%) and rape (7%). according to the report of the RSF. Similarly, according to an IWMF study into the impact of harassment and violence against women journalists, 70% of women journalists have been harassed, threatened or attacked in their professional careers.[13]

The RSF report found that aggression against women took place in all areas female journalists work: in the field, online and in the newsroom. In the RSF report, Laurence Geai, a French photojournalist, shared her experience with harassment in the field, suggesting that it is common to be touched by men and to be the victim of inappropriate behavior.

Online, the appropriation and sexualization of images of women journalists has become a common form of harassment, and was reported by 65% of respondents in the RSF report. Further, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, a project of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, has identified two forms of cyber threats targeting journalists: email account hacking and publication of personal data.[14] Female journalists however face intense trolling as well, enduring negative and often violent and misogynistic comments online. According to the IWMF study one out of three female journalists has considered quitting their job because of online harassment.[15]

A UNESCO  report on the safety of women journalists echoes these impacts, noting that studies have shown that female journalists are more often targeted online than their male colleagues. Moreover, it highlighted that the threats they face are clearly sexualized, aiming at their physical features, ethnicity or cultural background rather than their work. As a result, it suggests that those threats tend to silence the voices of female journalists and undermine their right to freedom of expression by interrupting their work It argued that this distorts the media landscape, threatening diversity and perpetuating inequalities within both newsrooms and society.[16]

### Danger is also found in the newsroom

As the RSF report revealed, many women journalists endure various forms of GBV in their own workplace. Of those who reported incidents of discrimination and harassment, 58% experienced this behaviour at work. Respondents indicated that the perpetrators consisted of superiors (51%) colleagues (46%), members of the government, state institutions or the army(50%), activists or members of political parties (46%), and anonymous persons (46%).

### Intersectionality: Some women are targeted more than others

Being a woman, a journalist and being part of a minority, unsurprisingly, poses an increased risk for violence.

“Misogyny adds up to other forms of discrimination: for instance, black women journalists, lesbians or women of a certain religion are much more discriminated”[17] said Saorla McCabe, senior adviser for the development of communication, information and media at UNESCO, to the France-Presse agency,[18] “While 64% of white journalists say they have experienced online violence, this rate jumps up to 81% for black journalists. The same goes for sexual orientation: online attacks affected 72% of heterosexual journalists, and 88% of lesbian journalists.”[19]

The RSF report also raises this concern, noting that lesbian, bisexual and trans journalists are among the individuals most vulnerable to violence. It should also be noted that motherhood adds another dimension of discrimination for women journalists. Clémentine Sarlat, a sports journalist, shared that while working for France Télévisions, harassment increased after returning from maternity leave. She eventually resigned.[20]

### Within investigative journalism

Women investigative journalists sometimes endure attacks after the publication of their stories, as revealed in the UNESCO discussion paper *The chilling global trends in online violence against women journalists*.[21] Ferial Haffajee, then editor-at-large of HuffPost South Africa, was libelled and vilified in 2016, after she published an investigation about corruption. The report stated that, "The attacks on Haffajee leveraged disinformation tactics that included accusing her of being a journalist working for "White Monopoly Capital". This attempt to discredit her was particularly potent in the South African context. Haffajee describes "raw racism and misogyny" including taunts that she said she had never experienced before, such as "Go back to India, this is not your country."[22]

More recently, many of the female investigative journalists who gathered at the 11th Global Investigative Journalism Conference #GIJC19 in Hamburg, reported that "while working as an investigative journalist is hard, working as a woman investigative journalist is harder: it adds layers of complexity, aggravations and even harassment."[23] Stress and burnout were central themes in the intervention of Miranda Patrucic, an investigative journalist from Bosnia and regional editor for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Miranda Patrucic discussed her work on difficult cases over an extended period of time and how it led to her burnout. "It came with memory loss, panic attacks, inability to focus, fuzzy thoughts and exhaustion." She took six months off to recover, to sleep again and to learn to take it easier on herself. The testimony of Finnish television investigative journalist Minna Knus-Galán was similar. She urged women journalists to document everything, to let criticism slide, and to share unpleasant e-mails with both managers and colleagues.[24]

Asha Mwilu, investigative journalist and chief editor for Kenyan Television Network, learned to have boundaries. ""I learned to say no," Mwilu said. Say no unless the investigation is funded properly, don't work alone (she recruited a male journalist she works closely with), build a community, and take responsibility for your own security. "At the end of the day it is about your life. The story is important but you are even more important."[25]

## IMPACTS

For the victims, personal outcomes are disastrous. Respondents to the RSF survey reported on the topic of motivation and work quality the follow consequences:

- Stress (79%)
- Anxiety (65%)
- Fear of losing one's job (54%)
- Loss of self-esteem (50%)
- Fear for one's life (49%)
- Temporary or permanent shutdown of social media accounts (43%)
- Depression (36%)
- Moving away from home (11%)

Professional repercussions are also concerning.

Nearly half of the RSF survey respondents (48%) reported that "the journalist censors herself and choose not to address certain topics anymore". 37% of them mentioned a drop in motivation, 21% the end of the specialty and 21% resigned or refused to renew their contract.

### Impacts on representation and coverage

Gender disparities in newsrooms also have an impact on the representation of women and can lead to bias, for instance when it comes to topics about women and feminism. The IMWF points out the underrepresentation of women in the informative medias in its report *The missing perspectives of women in news*: "This alarming marginalization is clear in all areas of the news media: women are underrepresented in newsroom leadership, gender equality stories are going untold, and men remain the vast majority of quoted experts and sources."[26]

The relationship between the number of female journalists and managers in media outlets, and news coverage presenting women as protagonists and as experts in news gathering is also not linear, according to the report.[27] Meaning that stories with female protagonists or that use female experts does not increase in line with increased female journalists.

Soecifically turning to corruption and illicit financial flows (IFFs) investigatons, for instance, it is rare to find analyses of how IFFs specifically affect women, how women can contribute to fight IFFs, or how they are involved.

## TOOLS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the many forms of violence and discrimination female journalists face, campaigns and recommendations are trying to prevent or mitigate the consequences of these huge inequalities.

### Recommendations

Several recommended practices within the newsroom can help to address gender disparities in reporting, including in relation to corruption investgations:

- Assessing women's place as protagonists, without the biases mentioned above and/or as expert sources, is an important way to improve the situation. In France, the website Les Expertes,[28] gathers expert profiles in all specialties, and helps to fight against source discrimination
- It is also necessary to pay attention to the presence of topics on gender equality, incldugin in relation to corruption invstigations
- One newer example is to hire a gender editor, specialized in gender issues, in order to address media treatment of women's rights or to ensure there is no discrimination within the newsroom
- Human resources policies addressing gender parity and bias in recruitment are critical, whether they address parental leave, returning to work, sexual harassment, child care assistance or work flexibility. It is advised to assess and to set goals about pay and job position parity
- Implementation of human resources protocols in order to fight impunity is also pressing. According to the RSF survey, in 61% of the answers, exposing violence did not lead to any specific measure within the staff, and only 9% reported a charter of good behavior or training against violence.

### Useful tools

Several tools can also be of use in helping to ensure that your investigation addresses gender disparities.

- The IFJ has outlined several steps that can be takent to work on addressing gender-based violence at work, specifically for the media sector.
- In France, the association Prenons la Une was established in 2020 as a support hub for journalists[29] suffering sexist and sexual violence at work. There are other ways to report abuses, such as the webpage Paye ton journal, which gathers testimonies of harassment and sexist comments in the media. The RSF report author also mentions the feminist survey #NousToutes, as well as #EntenduALaRédac, which allows women to share their stories anonymously.
- The IWMF provides many online resources for protecting one's privacy and identifying trolls online. There are also courses on harassment designed by digital security experts, journalists and online education specialists, with strategies to help journalists preparing.
- GIJN also has online resources[30] for women journalists on security matters and discrimination, as well as very useful tips for investigators. At the 10th GIJN world conference on investigative journalism, women journalists shared eight tips to succeed[31] in a world traditionally dominated by men. These include:
    1. Protect yourself with accuracy;
    2. Be fearless;
    3. Ditch the guilt;
    4. Keep a low profile;
    5. Trust your female instincts;
    6. Mentor other women in the workplace;
    7. Build a network of social support;
    8. Grab and create your own opportunities.

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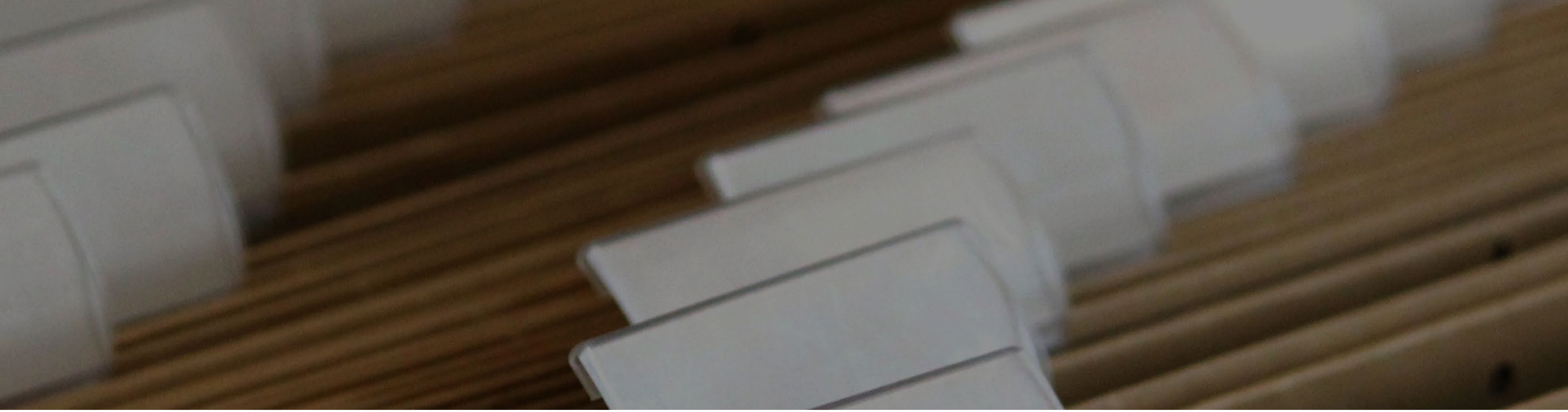

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