

Journalists' Code of Practice

General provisions

This Code applies to all media (print and electronic, semi-state or private) and all those working for them.

Respect for the truth and the citizen's right to objective and reliable information is an obligation of all media and journalists.

Respect for the journalist's right to unobstructed access to the sources of news and transparency are necessary prerequisites for proper information.

The conduct, dignity, honesty and professional work of journalists should be of the highest standard.

Journalists have an obligation to defend their independence and not to allow interference in their work.

Journalists in carrying out their function:

(a) Respect and promote democracy and other universal values. They respect and promote human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all.

(b) Show the indicated sensitivity in matters that concern national security and will be particularly careful in presenting issues such as violence, crime, human grief and death, as well as information or pictures that could cause panic, or horror, of revulsion.

(c) Always act in good faith and comply with the letter and spirit of this Code.

1. Accuracy

The Media ensure that no inaccurate, misleading, imaginary or distorted news, information or comments are published. If this has happened, they will issue a retraction and/or an apology. The Media, while they have the right to support concrete positions, should draw a clear line between fact and comment or speculation.

2. Right of reply

The Media will give the opportunity for a reply, in the appropriate case, to those affected and particularly when they have been attacked.

3. Private life

The reputation and private life of every individual will be respected. Intrusions and investigations into the private life of individuals without their consent, including the taking of pictures on private property and also the gathering of information through bugging devices, are generally unacceptable and their publication can only be justified in exceptional cases and solely in the public interest.

4. Hospitals

Investigations or the taking and publishing of pictures/images of persons in hospitals or other similar institutions will be carried out discreetly and after permission has been obtained where this is indicated and after the identity of functionaries of the MCM has been duly stated.

5. Mourning–grief

In cases involving mourning, grief or shock, an approach characterized by discretion and sympathy to the utmost degree is necessary, as well as avoidance of any act that may increase human suffering.

6. Obtaining of information

Functionaries of the media should not, as a general rule, try to secure information or images/photographs through false representation or any other fraudulent manner. With the exception of serving the public interest, documents and images/photographs can only be taken with the consent of their object. Functionaries may not obtain or try to obtain information or images/photographs through intimidation or blackmail.

7. Copyright

The media and their functionaries will respect and implement the legislation in force at the particular time concerning the protection of copyright. Where permitted, reproduction from another source will be done with due respect to the author/creator and due credit is given to the source.

8. Bribery–receiving gifts

Journalists will not accept gifts in connection with carrying out their function. Save in exceptional cases covered by public interest, functionaries may not pay or bribe witnesses in criminal cases or persons involved in crime, including members of their families, with the aim of obtaining information or images/photographs.

9. Presumption of innocence

Functionaries of the media will fully respect the principle that a person suspected or accused of having committed a crime is innocent until the contrary is proven in accordance with the law, and consequently avoid publishing anything which may lead to conclusions regarding either the

guilt or innocence of suspects or accused or tends to smear their reputation or publicly humiliate them.

10. Sexual crimes

The Media do not reveal, either directly or indirectly, the identity of victims of rape or other sexual offences.

Especially, in cases involving children the following apply

(a) The identity of children under 16 who are complainants, witnesses or accused in cases of sexual offences is never revealed.

(b) No reference, either direct or indirect, is made to family and other relationship between the accused and the child.

(c) The term "incest" will not be used and the charge will be described as a serious offence against children, or couched in another suitable description.

11. Children

Functionaries of the media, as a rule, may not interview or photograph children under 16 in connection with matters relating to their personal situation or welfare without parental consent or the consent of an adult being responsible for them.

12. Discrimination

The media will avoid any direct or other reference to a person which contains elements of prejudice on the basis of race, colour, language, religion, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property or origin or age or other status, including physical or mental illness or invalidity.

13. Economic benefits

Functionaries may not make use of or pass on, for their personal benefit, and before being made available to the general public, any information of an economic nature obtained by them.

14. Journalistic confidentiality

Functionaries of the media have a moral obligation to observe professional privilege regarding the source of information obtained confidentially. A journalist is not obliged to reveal the source of his information.

15. Public interest

Under this Code, cases which justify deviation from the rule, by invoking the public interest, are mainly the following:

(a) Helping to detect or exposing crime

(b) Protecting public safety and health.

(c) Protecting human rights.

(d) Preventing deception of the public as a result of acts or statements by individuals or organizations.

FINAL PROVISION

This Code can only be revised or amended by the agreement or consensus of all the Parties that have adopted it.