

## Code of Ethics for Globalised Journalism

A major function of journalism is to disseminate information to society. Journalists' role is to create transparency between those in power and the general public. The following codes represent this societal position, however, also take into account the different global attitudes towards journalism. By providing an inclusive universal code of ethics, journalists can be both guided throughout their career and protected.

Journalists should apply the following standards:

1. *Do not fabricate or embellish sources, quotes, information or images*

Journalism is a competitive industry, however the temptation to outdo rival organisations should not come at the expense of truth and accuracy in reporting. Society relies on reporters to act as the Fourth Estate and to distribute facts without manipulation, and journalists should not falsify stories such as that committed by Claas Relotius for German publication Der Spiegel (Connolly, 2018).

Connolly, K. (2018). Der Spiegel reporter who faked stories returns awards. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/21/sacked-der-spiegel-reporter-claas-relotius-returns-awards>

2. *Avoid concealed means of obtaining information*

In order to ensure the safety of journalists, only traditional, transparent and open methods of gathering information should be practiced. It is suggested undercover journalism only be carried out in countries which have a high ranking in the Reporters Without Borders 'World Press Freedom Index'. This code does not prohibit surreptitious methods of gathering information if it is deemed in the public interest, such as the Cambridge Analytica investigation by British television network, Channel 4 (2018), however, extreme caution must be considered depending on the country of practice.

Cambridge Analytica: Undercover Secrets of Trump's Data Firm. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cy-9iciNF1A>

3. *Do not accept bribes, gifts, or benefits from governing organisations*

Due to the global influence of journalism, reporters are vulnerable to bribery. It is vital journalists remain impartial when reporting, and do not fall victim to corruption, such as the payment of columnists in the United States during the Bush administration (Harris, 2005). In a globalised world, maintaining a trusting relationship with news consumers is critical, and the acceptance of bribes, gifts or benefits discredits the role journalism plays in society.

Harris, P. (2005). Third US journalist in Bush payoff scandal. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/30/usa.paulharris>

4. *Do your utmost to represent religion and culture respectfully and free of stereotypical opinions*

A key aspect of journalistic purpose is to represent society objectively.

Journalists must avoid expressions that portray religions unfairly, such as that shown through examples of negative bias against Islam (Pasquale, 2018) compared to favourable coverage towards Christianity (Day, 2016). A commitment towards de-categorization in reporting will improve relationships between the audience and the media on a global scale.

Pasquale, C. (2018). Media bias against Muslims documented. Retrieved from <https://redflag.org.au/node/6241>

Day, A. (2016). The conflict between religion and media has deep roots. Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2016/08/the-conflict-between-religion-and-media-has-deep-roots/>

5. *Do your utmost to maintain accuracy in reporting*

'Fake News' is a production of 21<sup>st</sup> Century journalism, with the phenomenon diminishing trust between the audience and the media. In order to avoid misjudgement, such as that made by Sabrina Erdely for the Rolling Stone (Coronel, Coll & Kravitz, 2015), journalists must hold a degree of scepticism and engage in an appropriate amount of investigation to ensure the information being shared is accurate.

Coronel, S., Coll, S., & Kravitz, D. (2015). Rolling Stone & UVA: Columbia School of Journalism's Report. Retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/rolling-stone-and-uva-the-columbia-university-graduate-school-of-journalism-report-44930/>

6. *Only use legal means to acquire information and sources*

Despite the desire to discover and disseminate truth in society, journalists must resist the urge to operate above the law. By undertaking in illegal acts, such as the phone-hacking scandal by News of the World journalists (2014), the legitimacy of journalism as a global profession is called into question. Reporters should understand and abide by the laws of each country they practice journalism in, to ensure their safety and the legitimacy of their work. Phone-hacking trial explained. (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-24894403>

7. *Show compassion to those who may be affected by news coverage*

Journalists carry the responsibility of what readers, viewers and listeners, are and are not exposed to, in reports. Examples, such as the way particular journalists reported the stories of Yazidi women (Harb, 2018), must be avoided to maintain humanity in journalism. Heightened sensitivity is to be practiced when referring to minors and sexual assault victims and considerations about the treatment of reporting different culture must also be taken.

Harb, Z. (2018). A case of ethical neglect: How journalists failed Yazidi women. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/case-ethical-neglect-journalists-failed-yazidi-women-180308085956708.html>

8. *The publication of information should be made in full and the timing of release should not depend on external influences*

Journalists should make an appropriate effort to release all available information to allow the audience to make their own judgement on events. To

guarantee objectivity in journalism, the judgement made by Eason Jordan for CNN (2003) should not be endorsed, as it crosses ethical lines about the role of the industry. However, this code does not explicitly prohibit the exclusion of information if that information includes sensitive material, or puts society at risk.

Jordan, E. (2003). The News We Kept To Ourselves. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/11/opinion/the-news-we-kept-to-ourselves.html>

Journalism inequality is the reality of the current world, with certain countries categorised as “very bad” regarding press freedom on the Reporters Without Borders ‘World Press Freedom Index’ (2019). Because of this, no one concept or standard can be universally applied (Ward, 2011, p. 49), and this is why it’s difficult to establish a global code of ethics. Borden and Pritchard state that society has little choice but to trust that journalists will disseminate truthful information, which then enables informed and meaningful decisions (2001, p. 75). This reliance on journalism demonstrates the need for a globalised code, however caution must be taken into consideration in implementing universal standards. The above codes have been carefully curated to guide and protect journalists in reflection of different ethical viewpoints shared by various countries. The current state of global journalism practice is not in a position to adopt aspirational objectives; therefore, in order to protect journalists, the above codes represent a holistic approach to global ethical standards.

## References

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