SAFETY AND JOURNALISM
Erick Fernández Saldaña

This course aims to analyse the context in which journalists and communicators are working at local, national, regional and international level, and to help them to identify potential risks, to learn safe protocols and to know about those institutions and procedures that can help them.

Level: This course is aimed at undergraduate students studying journalism.

Background and rationale: The rights to speak freely and to be able to access information are crucial for the development processes of any society, and underpin its ability to exercise scrutiny and to demand accountability from power holders and its core institutions. The work of journalists and communicators is key to ensuring that such democratic processes are possible. Freedom of expression is a precondition for the safety of journalists because it allows them to expose injustice and non-civil processes without fear of reprisals. An assault on a journalist or communicator is therefore an attack on society itself, as it undermines the right of its citizens to be informed, to learn, to communicate and to make free, independent and informed choices.

In recent years threats, attacks and crimes against journalists worldwide have increased and no region of the world has been exempt. In addition, intimidation against journalists and communicators, including those who use internet platforms, is often undertaken with impunity because there is a lack of attention accorded to such actions by governments and judicial authorities. Such a climate of impunity further endangers journalists and communicators because a lack of sanctions against perpetrators of intimidation and violence makes journalists and communicators easier targets.

Different analyses from various national and international human rights organizations are consistent in saying that attacks and threats directed at journalists and communicators alongside a climate of impunity create obstacles to their ability to facilitate and uphold the right to information for citizens. Consequently, threats, intimation, censorship, self-censorship, kidnappings, attacks, disappearances and deaths of journalists and communicators should all be condemned, because freedom of expression and the right to disclose information cannot be guaranteed without there being a safer environment for journalists to work within.

These are complex issues, but they are also urgent issues. They demand urgent action.

Governments must fulfil their responsibility to try to provide a safe working environment for journalists. The media, legal institutions, and other organizations also have a duty to scrutinize the performance of governments in this respect.

It is also important for journalists to understand the hazards and threats that they may face. Schools of journalism have a key role to play in informing such understanding. Universities and journalism education institutions should include journalism safety in their curricula. A properly functioning curriculum should contain at least one module that is devoted to the subject.

This training module aims to become a useful resource to journalism educators and can be adapted according to local circumstance and norms. It integrates different pedagogical approaches, and it includes basic skills and tools that will allow students and employees to analyse their practices and to change them when necessary.

This module is distributed in the following five units:

▶ the relationship between safety of journalists and communicators and freedom of expression
▶ diagnosis of the safety of journalists (global, regional, national, local)
▶ identification of risks and limitations of journalism´s practice
▶ security and support tools
▶ digital safety.

Course outline

Duration: two hours (one session)

Key topics:

▶ the relationship between freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and communicators

▶ access to information

▶ impunity and the rule of law.

Learning objectives:

▶ to identify the main international documents related to freedom of expression and the right of access to information

▶ to discuss the importance of freedom of expression as a human right and the protection of journalists and communicators

▶ to debate the relationship between impunity and the rule of law.

Pedagogical approaches:

▶ to review several international documents and sources of information about the right to freedom of expression in order to discuss the importance of this human right from a local, regional and global perspective

▶ to describe the singular role of journalists and communicators in society and to recognise the safety of journalists as a basic prerequisite for the exercise of freedom of expression

▶ to discuss the relationship between impunity and rule of law in relation to the safety of journalists and communicators.

Activities:

▶ Review the right of freedom of expression using several key reference books.

▶ Identify the concept of freedom of expression in these instruments:

▶ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

▶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

And, according to your region:

  ▶ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

  ▶ American Convention on Human Rights

  ▶ American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man

  ▶ European Convention on Human Rights.

  ▶ Arab Charter on Human Rights

  ▶ and in the constitution of your country.

▶ Identify, in your country, any limitation, warning or restriction as stated in the constitution.

▶ Debate whether the right of access to information is part of freedom of expression.

▶ Try to find out whether your country has introduced an access to information law.

▶ Identify the role of journalists and communicators in society. Describe the main characteristics.

▶ Discuss whether constitutional restrictions on freedom of expression could affect the role of journalists.

▶ Consider how effectively existing law and conventions are enforced in order to facilitate the work of journalists.

Resources for this unit:

  ▶ Universal Declaration of Human Rights: www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml

  ▶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume per cent20999/volume-999-I-14668-English.pdf

  ▶ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: www.unhcr.org/refworld/type,MULTILATERALTREATY,OAU,,3ae6b3630,0.html

  ▶ American Convention on Human Rights: www.oas.org/dil/treaties_B32_American_Convention_on_Human_Rights.pdf

  ▶ American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man: www.cidh.oas.org/Basicos/English/Basic2.american per cent20Declaration.htm

  ▶ European Convention on Human Rights: www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/D5CC24A7-DC13-4318-B457-5C9014916D7A/0/Convention_ENG.pdf

▶ Arab Charter on Human Rights: www.unhcr.org/refworld/
docid/3ae6b38540.html

▶ Constitutions of the world: www.constitution.org/cons/natlcons.htm

▶ Access to information laws:
overview and statutory goals: http://right2info.org/access-to-information-
laws/access-to-information-laws-overview-and-statutory#_ftnref7

Unit 2: Diagnosis of the safety of journalists

Duration: four hours (two sessions).

Key topics:

▶ the context of the safety of journalists at global, regional, national and local
level

▶ the importance of improving safety for journalists.

Learning objectives:

▶ to identify the level of security among journalists at global, regional, national
and local level

▶ to examine the context in which journalists work, from the perspective of their
security

▶ to debate the importance of the safety of journalists in different circumstances.

Pedagogical approaches:

▶ to review the state of freedom of expression and the practice of journalism at
the global, regional, national and local level world-wide to identify the context
in which journalists are working

▶ to sensitize the group to the conditions in which journalists are working
through knowledge exchange and discussions of various existing reference
materials and texts.

Activities:

▶ Review at least two of the most recent global reports on freedom of
expression, freedom of information and freedom of the press.

▶ Identify in which countries the rate of violence and threats against journalists is higher, and the diverse sources of attacks (war, drug lords, corruption, politics, misogyny, mining industries and so on).

▶ Discover which countries in your region are experiencing violence and threats against journalists and communicators at a high level, and identify the main causes of risks to their safety.

▶ Identify references to your own country within these reports.

▶ Discuss whether a national perspective is the appropriate one.

▶ Search national reports on the issue of the safety of journalists and communicators and evaluate their diagnosis in comparison with international reports.

▶ In relation to your local context, and if it is possible to trust other participants, debate the state of journalism in your country/region/community and whether there are direct or indirect threats against journalists and communicators.

Write about this situation.

Resources for this unit:

▶ Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). 2012. Getting away with murder: CPJ's 2012 Impunity Index. http://cpj.org/reports/CPJ.2012.Impunity.Index.pdf

▶ Reporters Without Borders. Press Freedom Index 2011/2012. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/CLASSEMENT_2012/C_GENERAL_ANG.pdf

▶ United Nations. General Assembly. Human Rights Council. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, A/HRC/20/17, 4 June 2012.

▶ http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G12/137/87/PDF/G1213787.pdf?OpenElement

▶ UNESCO. Media Development Indicators: a framework for assessing media development. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001631/163102e.pdf

▶ UNESCO. Report of UNESCO's Director-General on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity.

▶ www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/images/Themes/Freedom_of_expression/Safety_Report_by per cent20DG_2012.pdf

▶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Human trafficking indicators. www.unodc.org/pdf/HT_indicators_E_LOWRES.pdf

Regional and national resources:

- ▶ Asian Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication (AJIC). 2012. Crimes and unpunishment: the killing of Filipino journalists. Manila: AJIC.
- ▶ www.aijc.com.ph/content/article/14-sample-data-articles/185-crimes-and-unpunishment.html
- ▶ www.article19.org/
- ▶ http://ifex.org/
- ▶ www.newssafety.org/regionselect.php

Unit 3: Threats against journalists

Duration: three hours (two sessions).

Key topics:

- ▶ types of threats against journalists
- ▶ the causes of threats
- ▶ how to reduce and respond to threats
- ▶ the specific threats faced by women who work as journalists.

Learning objectives:

- ▶ to identify the threats facing journalists and communicators
- ▶ to rank threats against journalists and to identify potential ways of reducing them
- ▶ to identify and assess the particular situation of women journalists
- ▶ to identify organizations at the national and international level contributing to the free exercise of journalism.

Pedagogical approaches:

- ▶ to plan the coverage of a high risk situation and discuss the major threats that will be faced by journalists
- ▶ to discuss and build consensus on the measures to be taken to reduce risks during press coverage, including institutions that could give support.

Activities:

▶ Identify a high-risk situation.

▶ Discuss the ways of covering the situation.

▶ Revise the pathway proposed and compare it with the recommendations given by various organizations such as CPJ: http://cpj.org/reports/2012/04/security-assessment-form.php

▶ Plan the coverage.

▶ Identify news mentioning threats to the free work of journalists such as lawsuits, threats and reprisals, killings, attacks, censorship, disappearances, detentions, expulsions, harassment. Have you faced a situation like this?

▶ Read one of the chapters of the following reports and discuss it with other students, emphasizing the issue of security: http://cpj.org/attacks_on_the_press_2011.pdf

▶ Compare the following two stories about violence faced by women journalists:

  ▶ www.newssafety.com/stories/insi/wrw.htm

  ▶ http://cpj.org/reports/CPJ.Sexual.Assault.Journalists.pdf

Resources for this unit:

  ▶ Committee to Protect Journalists. Journalist security guide. http://cpj.org/security/guide.pdf

  ▶ International Federation of Journalists. *Live News: A Survival Guide for Journalists.* www.ifj.org/assets/docs/130/082/d325b82-f8ef152.pdf

  ▶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). *Safety of Journalists Guidebook.* http://www.osce.org/fom/85777

  ▶ UNESCO-Reporters Without Borders. *Handbooks for Journalists.* http://issuu.com/rsf_webmaster/docs/handbookissuu?mode=window&backgroundColor= per cent23222222

Unit 4: **Towards good journalistic practices**

Duration: four hours (two sessions).

Key topics:

▶ reducing risks

▶ good practices.

Learning objectives:

▶ to understand the importance of safe coverage based on good planning

▶ to appreciate the importance of developing a network of trusted contacts

▶ to recognize the existence of organizations and institutions to protect journalists, while stressing that the responsibility for immediate safety depends on the individual

▶ to prepare quality journalistic articles analysing the safety of journalists and the importance of respect accorded to all journalists, communicators and local support staff working on a story.

Pedagogical approaches:

The aim of this unit is to prepare high-quality journalistic materials and tools to be used in order to improve the safety of journalists. It is also aimed at reviewing common elements included in the existing manuals on the safety of journalists as well as other theoretical and practical tools, and rewriting them for a diverse range of formats such as text, audio, video and blog. The trainer will insist that safety tools are included within these articles.

Activities:

▶ Prepare a journalistic feature on an event involving risks for journalists. Check whether it is related to the coverage proposed in the previous unit, and explain how it is related and in what ways.

▶ Explain in which format this feature will be produced and justify the choice.

▶ Explain which journalistic method will be used.

▶ When preparing the feature, incorporate elements of Dart Center's *Tragedies and Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage*: http://dartcenter.org/files/en_tnj_0.pdf

▶ Present and discuss with the tutor and other students the development of this feature article from a safety perspective.

▶ Present the final project.

Resources for this unit:

▶ UNESCO. *The Global Casebook of Investigative Journalism.* http://unesdoc. unesco.org/images/0021/002176/217636e.pdf

▶ UNESCO. *Story-Based Inquiry: a Manual for Investigative Journalists.* http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001930/193078e.pdf

Unit 5: Digital safety

Duration: four hours (two sessions).

Key topics:

▶ surveillance (including browser records, telephone records, malware, ISP records, app records, email records)

▶ disclosures that put the journalist (or sources) in danger

▶ data mining of their published content

▶ threats by telephone or email

▶ data storage on devices, servers and in the cloud

▶ attacks on websites

▶ sensitive data (such as identities of sources)

▶ various responses (monitoring and reporting, safety, hygiene, solidarity, legal issues).

Learning objectives:

▶ to identify the importance of digital safety for journalists and communicators

▶ to identify different tools to reduce threats, cyber attacks and digital snooping

▶ to prepare a contingency plan to reduce vulnerabilities.

Pedagogical approaches:

After considering the importance of the internet and other forms of digital communication for journalists and communicators in their work, it is necessary to understand the paramount importance of safety in a digital context, with the express objective of using computers in order to experiment with different tools to reduce vulnerabilities and threats in cyberspace.

Activities:

Read one of the documents *Digital Security and Journalists: A Snap Shot of Awareness and Practice in Pakistan* or *Digital and Mobile Security for Mexican Journalists and Bloggers* (see resources section). After reading the report:

▶ Enlist personal information and documents and try to answer the following question: from whom are you protecting this information and documents?

▶ Use a freeware anti-virus, spyware and firewall program on your personal computer.

▶ Evaluate how you store important information (hard disk, USB, CD, cloud).

▶ Try a strong password, considering length, complexity and practical attributes, not personal.

▶ Discuss the importance of encrypting information and documents.

▶ Try a freeware open source encryption program and decide to encrypt or not some documents, USB or hard disk.

▶ Select documents and information to back up and compare these with the original list in this unit.

▶ Discuss the importance of storing or destroying information.

▶ Identify the privacy level in your email account and then strengthen it.

▶ Consider switching your email account for a secure provider.

▶ Explain your habits in social networks. Do you post personal information in your accounts?

▶ Consider the strength of your passwords in social networks and using separate accounts for different activities.

▶ Identify privacy settings in your accounts in social networks, and consider which data could be dangerous to others.

▶ Apply the same considerations to mobile and smartphones.

▶ Write a personal plan or check list to reduce vulnerabilities, threats and risk in cyberspace and complete the task enlisted.

Resources for this unit:

▶ *Digital and Mobile Security for Mexican Journalists and Bloggers*: ww.icfj. org/sites/default/files/Digital_and_Mobile_Security_English.pdf

- *Digital Security and Journalists: A Snap Shot of Awareness and Practice in Pakistan:* www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/Internews_PK_Secure_Journalist_2012-08.pdf

- https://securityinabox.org/

- www.frontlinedefenders.org/files/en/esecman.en_.pdf