

Reporting alone

Safety Tips



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Reporting extended civil protests will require repeated solo reporting efforts. Even when reporting protests with a group of colleagues, the chances are high that you would be essentially working alone while at the location or can become separated. Thus, it is imperative that journalists reporting alone assess the dangers and take mitigative measures against them.

Preparation



Before you take up reporting, assess any existing security risks that you are facing or could arise due to the impending reporting. Evaluate them and take necessary action before deciding on taking up the new assignment.

Discuss the assignment and possible implications with supervisors and loved-ones.



Location: assess whether the location of the reporting including transport and time of reporting, can create risks for you. If they do, do you have mitigative measures?

Do parties involved in the protests like protesters, security units, and by-standers create security risks for you? Plan out how you will report from the site.



Who else would be reporting with you, can they be trusted? How do you plan to communicate with each other while at the site? At high-risk reporting sites, it is safe to keep colleagues within your eyesight.

Devise and implement a check-in plan. This could be with a trusted colleague or a loved-one or both. The plan should create a chain of messaging at regular intervals where someone who can assist you, will be aware of your movements and reporting circumstances regularly.



Include security and communications protocols to deal with sudden, high-risk situations like getting separated or cut off from others and hostage situations in the check-in plans.

Pay attention to your digital footprint and security. Be vigilant on how you engage on social media platforms, groups and messaging apps. Also be mindful when and how you use location services.



Look after your equipment. Take only what is necessary when going out on coverage. Is the equipment insured? If they are what is the cover? If not, who will bear the loss in case of damages?

Evaluate your physical and mental health conditions. Appraise yourself of any conditions created by the reporting that could adversely impact your physical and mental wellbeing and take appropriate action if necessary.



Create and update plans on how you will support your reporting. These plans should include financial obligations, supplies and logistics.

However long and demanding the reporting assignment will turn out to be, you cannot work without breaks. Plan and implement long and short breaks in your routine.



At sites/while reporting



Pay attention to the mode of transport you will be using to get to the site. Is it safe to take public transport? If driving or riding alone, is that safe? Consider the time of travel and the routes you will take. Also consider the return trip as well.

Have a clear idea of the content of reporting you are doing, move out once you have had sufficient material. Do not linger at high-risk sites.



Set-up safety protocol for the day's reporting that include travel plans, schedules and check-ins with a trusted colleague and/or a loved-one. Stick to the protocol.

Where would you be compiling the material? Is that location safe? If you are working from a location other than your home or office, always consider whether that location is safe and who else would be sharing that space.



At no time, should you compromise your safety or the safety of others for the sake of reporting.

Essentially you have to plan out reporting assignments as solo reporting efforts. Evaluate all plans, protocols and risk assessments with this as the main factor.