

A background image showing several hands interacting with colorful sticky notes (pink, green, blue) on a glass surface, likely a meeting or collaborative workspace. The image is partially obscured by a white text box in the center.

acos

ALLIANCE

**ANNUAL SAFETY
COORDINATION
MEETING · 2023**

NEW YORK CITY 11-12 OCTOBER

SUMMARY REPORT

INDEX

1	Introduction	3
2	Psychological Safety Meeting Case Study: Texas Tribune	5
3	Presentations: New Initiatives	8
4	Safety in the Newsroom Newsroom Safety Initiatives: Sharing Lessons Learned Principles and Protocols: How to Embed a Culture of Safety	11
5	Safety Training for Journalists: What Works & What's New?	17
6	Presentations: Safety Challenges	19
7	Threats and Forecasts Hotspots: Forecasting the Next Safety Challenges Weaponizing the Law Against Journalism: Threats & Responses	23

All meeting images: Gabriela Bhaskar
Report design: Paula Figueroa





INTRODUCTION

1

Rich, generative, insightful, inspiring, energizing. These are some of the words used by participants to describe this year's edition of the ACOS Alliance Annual Safety Coordination Meeting. Our annual gathering in New York offers a unique opportunity for news organizations, NGOs, journalists and editors to come together in person for a creative and candid cross-industry exchange about safety, with a focus on freelance and under-resourced journalists. This year we gathered 125 participants from 71 organizations and 27 countries, including freelancers and editors from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Ecuador, Kenya, Nicaragua and Ukraine who also took part in a half-day series of practical safety workshops.

This is a working meeting and, as such, is by invitation only. The agenda is crafted in partnership with ACOS signatories, partners and stakeholders, and everyone has access to the microphone. This year the agenda paid particular attention to newsroom safety practices. ACOS advocates for sustained, long-term culture change when it comes to journalist safety, which includes training for news editors and the creation of robust and inclusive safety practices and protocols that leave no-one behind. At the meeting we learned how different news organizations are approaching this challenge, and how an increasing number of NGOs are providing support towards this goal. Working sessions also explored the current state of safety training, the strategies being used to counter the rise in lawfare against independent journalism, and predicted hotspots for 2024.

Presentations from news organizations, journalists and NGOs shared information about new initiatives, rising challenges and recent research. An afternoon was dedicated to psychological safety which included a discussion on the causes and effects of moral injury on journalists and the ways in which newsrooms, NGOs and peer networks could provide support.

This report summarizes recommendations and takeaways from all of these discussions it will be shared across our community and used as a reference to advance safety best practice through concrete, practical initiatives.

None of this work would be possible without the continued generous support from our funders, the Open Society Foundations, the MacArthur Foundation and The Reva and David Logan Foundation, and our fiscal sponsors, the Overseas Press Club Foundation. This year the meeting also benefited from direct support from Ford Foundation which has allowed us to bring a greater number of diverse and under-represented voices. We are also grateful to additional sponsorship support from The New York Times, Dow Jones and Wall Street Journal. Thank you also to Samir Kassir Foundation and International Media Support, who enabled the participation of Afghan and Lebanese freelance journalists and editors.

This year's meeting took place as the Israel Palestine conflict escalated. The war is costing the lives of an unprecedented number of journalists and their families, reminding us of the essential role that journalists play, their courage, and the vital importance of their safety and protection.

Elisabet Cantenys

Executive Director, ACOS Alliance

**“This report summarizes
recommendations
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to advance safety
best practice”**





PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY MEETING

2

Chaired by **Elana Newman, PhD**
Research Director, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma

What started as a small side event to the ACOS Annual Meeting in 2019, has now grown into an essential half-day session attended by 100 people. It reflects growing awareness of the important role that mental health plays within journalist safety and wellbeing, and the need for continued collaborative action to meet the psychological safety needs of journalists and editors.

The agenda included a discussion on moral injury led by Hannah Storm, co-founder of [Headlines Network](#), and Lauren Walsh, Director of the [Gallatin Photojournalism Lab](#) at New York University. It explored the causes and effects of moral injury on journalists and their work, and the ways in which newsrooms can provide better support, with particular reference to freelancers, who are at greater risk. Moral injury is not a mental health condition but left unchecked, it can lead to PTSD.

Pu Ying Huang, Director of Photography at the [Texas Tribune](#) shared experiences and lessons learned by the Tribune's newsroom as it covered the Uvalde School Shooting in May 2022, which killed 19 children and two teachers. [Global Press](#) Laxmi Parthasarathy presented the organization's Wellness Network which is now being accessed by 95% of its journalists.

To conclude the meeting, participants were asked to identify key priorities and actions that will help ACOS stakeholders move forward on this important aspect of safety.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



- Raise awareness of the vulnerability of freelancers regarding moral injury, and position psychological safety as a standard component of freelance contracts
- Craft an ethical charter and share strategies to address psychological safety threats and their effects
- Implement more meaning-making exercises on the roles and responsibilities of journalists and newsrooms and provide more contextualized psychological training for journalists living in authoritarian states
- Conduct a global mapping of psychological safety resources to create a shared toolkit available in all languages for journalists, editors and news managers.
- Invest in training for all ACOS Alliance signatories and allies on the importance and awareness of mental health for journalists, editors and news managers.

CASE STUDY

Texas Tribune Uvalde Shooting, May 2022

Presented by **Pu Ying Huan**, Director of Photography

“We prioritize wellbeing over competition in stories and what ends up happening is we have better stories”

**Brandon Formby,
News Director**

★ THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

The Texas Tribune, a non-profit media organization based in Austin, has shaped much of its safety practice through trial and error and the reporting of stories such as Hurricane Harvey (2017), the George Floyd protests (2020) and severe winter storms (2021).

The mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, which killed 19 children and two teachers in May 2022, created a new set of challenges which led the Tribune to rethink the way in which it managed its newsroom operations to protect its journalists.

When news of the shooting started to emerge, Tribune journalists were thrown into the chaos of covering a major breaking news event as conflicting information flooded social media and messaging apps. Editors also observed the emotional toll on journalists who were reporting from Uvalde and became particularly concerned about reporters who had never covered a mass tragedy and weren't prepared for its psychological and ethical challenges.

This led the Tribune to establish a temporary command center within a house near Uvalde, three hours from Austin, to oversee a small rotating team of reporters, freelance photographers and editors. The editors on-site provided logistical support for meals and lodging, and they were the primary contact

for relaying story developments back to the newsroom. Clear reporting roles and responsibilities were established, and a WhatsApp group for the field journalists was set up to limit information overload from Slack and social media. Editors also respected the emotional and ethical reporting boundaries set up by individual journalists. The field team conducted nightly editorial meetings, which also served as a space to decompress, prevent isolation and create a sense of companionship.

The Tribune went on to win numerous awards for its coverage of the Uvalde shooting and its aftermath and learned important takeaways from the experience which they are incorporating into their safety protocols and practices:

UVALDE: KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A resilient newsroom needs practical systems in place that enable a culture of safety
- Meeting the physical needs of journalists has a direct impact on psychological wellness
- Editor/journalist pre-briefings and debriefings are an essential part of newsroom safety practice
- Psychological safety should be included in freelance contracts
- Respect journalists' personal limits when it comes to difficult stories and offer flexible deadlines
- Therapy should be offered before, during and after a story



The Texas Tribune held nightly meetings with editors and journalists to discuss story ideas at their temporary base in Uvalde. Photo: Pu Ying Huang/The Texas Tribune



Alejandra Xanic of El Quinto Elemento

PRESENTATIONS: NEW INITIATIVES

3

EDITOR SAFETY HUB

David Rohde, Senior Executive Editor, National Security & ACOS Alliance Board Member

The Editor Safety Hub is a free to access online platform from ACOS Alliance and WAN-IFRA that aims to offer safety courses and support for news managers and editors. It will launch in the first quarter of 2024 with its first course, *The Fundamentals of Safe Commissioning*, a self-paced virtual training that provides editors with the tools and skills

they need to practice pre-emptive safety measures, adhere to safety best practices and work effectively to improve the safety of journalists on assignment. The course offers video tutorials with leading editors and journalists, practical exercises and case studies and downloadable tools and templates.

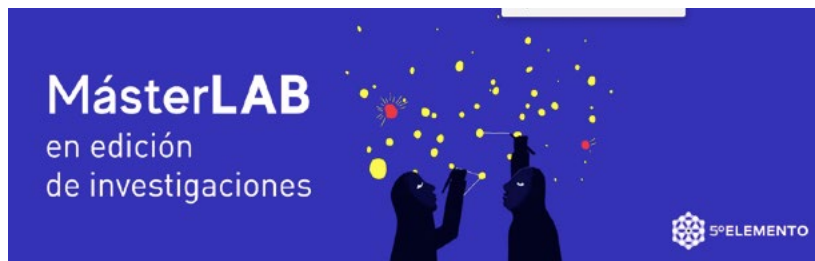
 Editor Safety Hub

MÁSTERLAB

Alejandra Xanic, Journalist & Co-Founder/Editor, Quinto Elemento Lab

[MásterLAB](#) is the only program in Spanish that trains investigative editors with personal mentoring, online classes and a 3-day bootcamp led by some of the world's leading investigative editors and safety experts. It teaches that the safety of journalists and their sources must be managed by the editor, taking

them through all the steps needed to lead an investigation of impact and integrity in a secure and safe way. MásterLAB is also designed to build the solidarity of journalists in Mexico through a group of vetted, trained and trusted editors.



THE FUTURE OF THE SOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM

Abigail LP, Newsroom Services Manager for Digital Security Training, Freedom of the Press Foundation

[The Source Protection Programme](#), created by The Centre for Investigative Journalism and Freedom of the Press Foundation, is a unique operational and information security training course which has been delivered on-line to nearly 1,000 journalists in six countries. As a result of feedback and lessons learned since its launch in 2021, the next phase of programme

will commence in 2024 with shorter, tailored courses that meet the needs of journalists covering elections and volatile political issues, incorporate further adult learning principles into its pedagogy, and include more psychosocial care practices into its training materials. It will run in North America for journalists from local and rural newsrooms in underserved regions.



SAFETY AND SECURITY OF JOURNALISTS GLOBAL MAPPING FIVE KEY FINDINGS

Johannes Metzler, Head of Unit, Mexico, Central America and Caribbean, DW Akademie

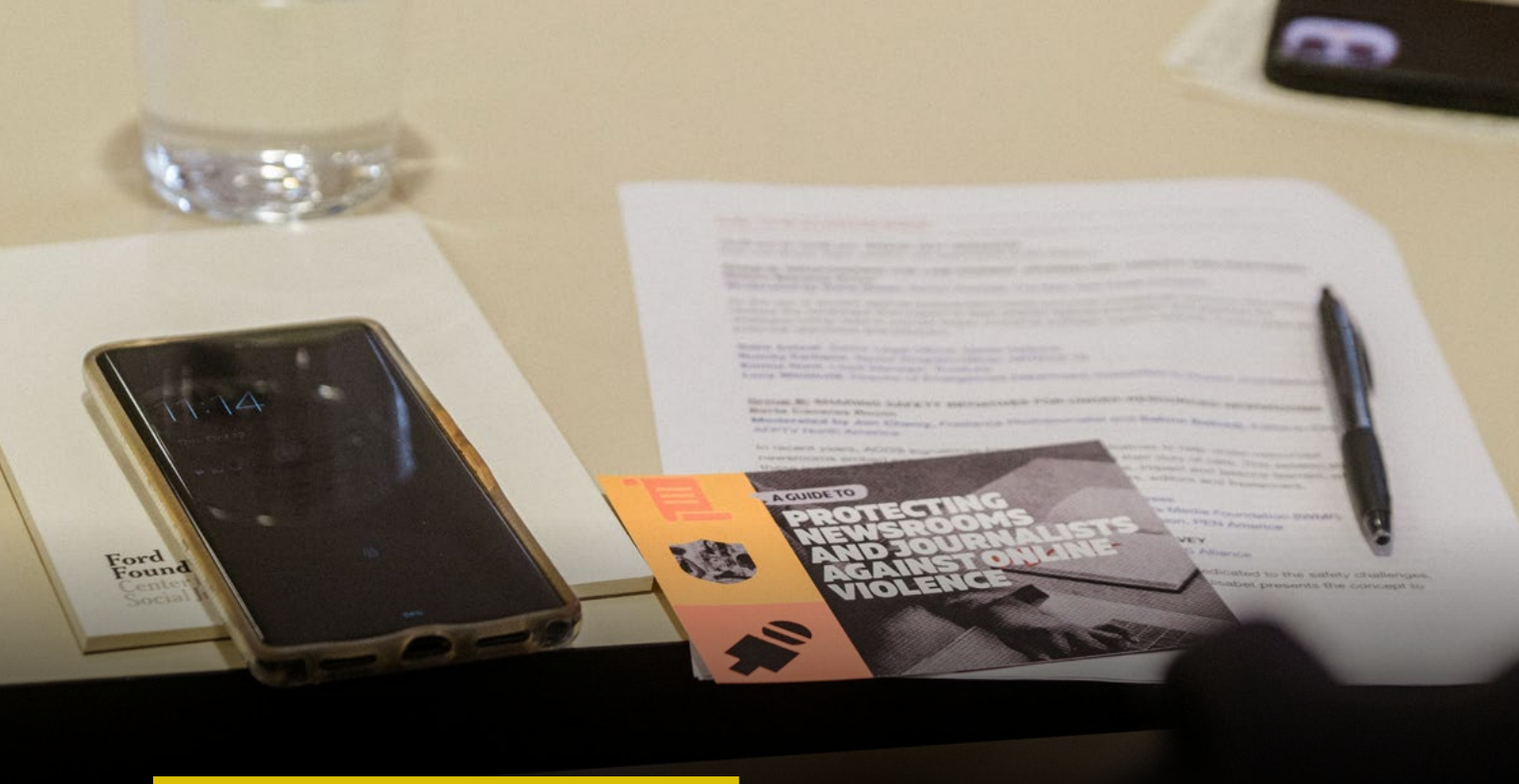
In 2022 [DW Akademie undertook a comprehensive study](#) of the pattern of threats facing journalists globally, surveying 149 experts, international, regional and local organizations. The study led to five key recommendations for promoting safety and security within the media development sector:

1. Think beyond the big stories and consider indigenous groups in remote areas who are providing news for their local audiences. Are these groups being underserved?
2. More needs to be done at country level to engage embassies and governments in journalist safety.
3. In addition to support for journalists forced into exile, organizations need to look for more ways to support journalist safety within country, so that populations continue to be served by independent media.
4. Short term safety support needs to be better aligned with long-term media development goals.
5. Greater focus is needed to deliver a holistic approach. Many organizations are still working in isolation and on only one aspect of safety.

“DW Akademie surveyed 149 experts and organizations on the pattern of threats facing journalists globally.”



Johannes Metzler of DW Akademie



SAFETY IN THE NEWSROOM

4

NEWSROOM SAFETY INITIATIVES SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

Moderated by **Jon Cherry**, Freelance Photojournalist
and **Salima Belhadj**, Editor-in-Chief AFPTV North America

Increasingly, ACOS Alliance signatories are developing initiatives to help under-resourced newsrooms embed safety best practices and improve their duty of care. [The International Women's Media Foundation](#) (IWMF) and [PEN America](#) have been working with media organizations to strengthen newsroom responses to online violence through IWMF's [Newsroom Policy Guide](#) and [News Safety Cohort](#) and PEN America's [Online Harassment Field Manual](#). [Global Press](#) has been helping newsrooms set up in-house protocols through its own Duty of Care Roadmap.

This year's meeting provided an opportunity for these organizations to present their initiatives and share lessons learned with ACOS stakeholders. A clear message from the session was the importance of taking a multi-targeted approach that achieves buy-in from higher management and creates clear policies or protocols for staff and freelancers alongside training.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Training sessions without policies in place are not as effective
- Buy-in from upper management is essential. Creating influential tactics and messages is key to this
- Middle management need to be trained and included in processes from the beginning
- Organization size has a big effect on the level of engagement with safety issues like online harassment
- Help decision makers understand that simple mitigation strategies can improve safety.
- Time is often more of a barrier than \$\$ when it comes to implementing policies and procedures, although financial strain within media organizations can create a barrier to implementation
- Engagement and training in safety needs to go beyond the newsroom and/or safety teams to include human resources, admin and business teams who all have a role in safety implementation. Relying solely on newsroom champions to implement change isn't sufficient, especially in larger organizations. Staff turnover can also be an issue
- Too many resources can be off-putting. There is already a lot of very good information, content and advice out there - for some newsrooms there is too much. Short, clear synthesized information and practical templates are often more effective.



“Engagement and training in safety needs to reach beyond the newsroom. HR, admin & business teams all have a role in safety implementation”

PRINCIPLES AND PROTOCOLS

HOW TO EMBED A CULTURE OF SAFETY

Moderated by **Gina Chua**, Executive Editor, Semafor

There is no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to embedding a culture of safety within newsrooms, and no one way of doing things. So how do organizations know what’s best for them? Semafor’s Gina Chua posed this question to managers from four very different media companies: Their answers provided first-hand insight into the different ways that safety and newsroom managers approach risk within their organizations. Here are some highlights:

Q

Where do you see the balance between principles and protocols?

Tom Meagher, Senior Editor, The Marshall Project, USA

Historically we’ve been about 85-90% principles and very low on policy. When we started 9 years ago we were very small and there was a real aversion to formality. Policies were things with laborious and over-lawyered undertones that nobody ever read. It was important to us to have an ethos that our journalism and safety was sacrosanct and we were small and nimble enough that we could experiment. As we’ve been growing - we’re now about 80 staff plus freelancers - that principles/protocol percentage has started to shift. We’ve had to figure out ways to craft policies that people actually read, that people are aware of and are actionable, that we can share across our organization, so that when new people come in they understand that culture too.

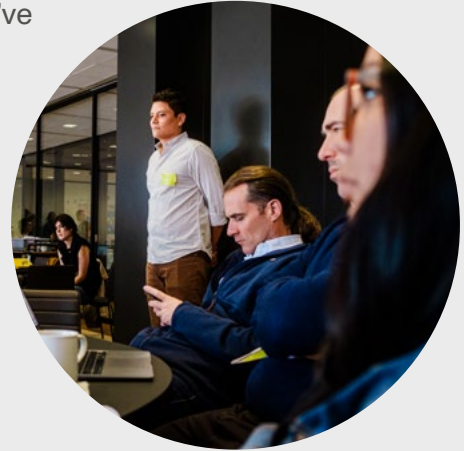
“We’ve had to figure out ways to craft policies that people actually read, that people are aware of, and are actionable”

Tom Meagher



Enrique Gasteazoro, Treasurer and former CEO, CONFIDENCIAL, Nicaragua

I would say about 80-90% principles. But it shifts according to circumstance. To be able to adapt to changing needs has been crucial for us. During the last five years in Nicaragua, we've gone from a very weak democracy, but still with rule of law, to a complete police state where criminalization is absolute, so having flexibility in that spectrum has been key for us. But our underlying common denominator is people. They come first.



Q

How does a principles-based organization ensure it has a steady level of risk that is adhered to by everyone?

Jason Reich, Vice President, Safety and Security, The New York Times Company

We're at about 70% Policy/ 30% Principles, but ideally I'd like to get to 50-50. In my newsroom I'm not worried about the people who are already thinking about safety. The question I ask is: does everyone in my newsroom hold these values and how do you make sure there is a culture of safety in the institution? It's hard sometimes in a large organization to have everyone on the same page. In my view, good policies are about asking the right questions and not about getting to an answer. As long as you are raising the question, "Does this sound right? Are we doing this in the right way?" What I'm trying to find is that everyone in the newsroom is aligned on safety principles, which isn't always the case.



"I'm not worried about the people who are already thinking about safety. The question I ask is: does everyone in my newsroom hold these values and how do you make sure there is a culture of safety in the institution?"

Jason Reich

Tom Meagher, Senior Editor, The Marshall Project, USA

It's about having evangelists across the organization, including in business and HR, who can regularly bring up risk and safety issues, and also about having our top editors in the discussion. I think it makes a huge difference when it's your editor in chief who is coming into the meetings saying, 'We need to seriously look at this issue, our journalists are facing these threats'. So it's a combination, not of writing down large policies, but making safety part of the conversation in our newsroom. We've created a team in the last couple of years - six or seven people - who meet every month and help to filter out policies and information across the organization in a less rigid way.

Q

How do news organizations with a high policy or protocols-based structure respond to changing situations?

Nathan Puffer, Senior Vice President, Risk & Resilience, Dow Jones (Global)

Dow Jones is about 80% Policy, 20% Principles. Having a safety policy or protocol doesn't negate the application of creativity. If you have a policy and you are thinking about implementing that policy as a box-ticking exercise for after-action and ass-covering, you are not approaching policies in a useful way, you're creating a checklist. Policies aren't about creating artifacts and over-burdening people with paperwork. To some extent it's about what is the diligence we're exhibiting here? What is the process we're going through that fits with our values and the way we want to approach safety or risk or whatever the case may be? So if something does go wrong you can go back with honesty and say I went through a process that I agreed with that reflected how my organization thought about risk, and how I need to approach this specific situation. People can go overboard with policies and bureaucratize them and they can become quite limiting, but the function of a policy is not to put a break on best endeavors, but to enable them and how to approach them.

“People can go overboard with policies and bureaucratize them and they can become quite limiting, but the function of a policy is not to put a break on best endeavours, but to enable them”

Nathan Puffer



Q

How do you think about security if you're an organization whose existence is threatened?

Enrique Gasteazoro, Treasurer and former CEO, CONFIDENCIAL, Nicaragua

We recognised quite early on in the crisis in Nicaragua that failure to keep individual journalists and editors safe was the biggest existential threat to our operation overall.

We work through a lot of potential scenarios. For example, whenever we've done this from a resourcing perspective, and say we needed to make cuts, the first question is "which products do we stop making and how do we downsize in a way that is proportionate?" so that whatever remains does not sacrifice access to mental health services, to health and life insurance, etc. We could never sacrifice those things because we think that's the biggest existential risk to our operation.

It's a tough thing to accept you can't exist in the place where you are doing your work, your own country, but the quicker you realize it and start planning for it the better, and failing to see it several times has been a huge risk for us, but we've learned. It's taken a lot of effort from us, a lot of difficult conversations, but ultimately I guess we've been helped by just how bad the situation has been. With things like social media protocols, it was a case of saying, "If you plan to continue reporting from Nicaragua right now you cannot afford to have an opinion on social media with your name and your face because you will immediately be targeted." So it's difficult to plan for future existential risks and to weigh extreme measures way ahead of time for something that may not even happen. But we have a saying, "we're not going to get f***d for underestimating how much they are going to try to f** us."



Session moderator: Gina Chua of Semafor



SAFETY TRAINING: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT'S NEW?

5

Moderated by **Sally Fitton**, Director, TV and Film Projects, Secret Compass

This working session provided an opportunity for the ACOS Alliance to present its annual mapping of safety training, conducted with Free Press Unlimited, and the results of a small 2023 survey exploring the impact of training on freelancers. Participants discussed the findings and explored more widely what is and isn't working when it comes to journalist safety training: is it fit for purpose and, if not, what needs to be improved so that training meets the needs of today's journalists? Here are the key findings:

What's working?



- Holistic approaches
- Identity & psychosocial-centered training (although not yet embedded across the sector)
- Editors engaged in the training of journalists (although not happening often enough)



- Increased attention to editors' role and safety training needs
- Different training formats adapted to participant's needs and access (coexistence of online and offline training solutions)
- Bespoke 1:1 consultations and clinics as a complement to training.

What's not working?



- There is still a lack of access to safety training, especially among freelancers and local journalists
- Lack of resources / funding remains an issue
- Too much safety training is still based on old-school military models
- Time commitment can be an issue for time-poor journalists, especially freelancers
- Content is not always tailored to the risks journalists are facing (especially in non-western countries).

What needs work?



- More diversity in trainers (geography, languages, expertise)
- Training that is embedded into the job
- Workplace requirements can be a barrier
- Remote implementation
- Greater integration of identity & psychosocial aspects into training
- Safety training embedded into J-schools
- Training that isn't based on the 'leading with fear' model
- More opportunities for refreshers.



Nadine Moubarak of Samir Kassir Foundation

PRESENTATIONS: SAFETY CHALLENGES

6

SUPPORTING JOURNALISTS IN EXILE

Zerxes Spencer, Director, Fellowship Programs, National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

Through its fellowship programs, NED is observing a huge increase in the number of journalists looking for sustained support in exile, most critically those from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Burma and parts of Africa where entire civil societies are being uprooted and compelled to relocate for their own safety. As a result, NED has been looking at how CSOs can cultivate inroads into the media sector in host countries, so that exiled journalists can contribute their talents in a meaningful way. It has begun to

build connections with universities, CSOs and media such as Washington Post and VOA, to find creative and collaborative solutions, and explore how its fellowship program could fund and support groups of journalists and/or media outlets rather than individuals. The key question is funding and how to get the donor community invested in this growing community of journalists. This is an ongoing conversation and NED welcomes any insights and/or collaboration.

“ **The key question is funding and how to get the donor community invested in this growing community of journalists.** ”

THE RISE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN BANGLADESH

Rumky Farhana, Senior Program Officer, ARTICLE 19

In 2022 Bangladesh was one of the 28 countries in the world which saw “very bad” press freedom violations, including the killing of journalists, physical violence and assault. Legal and digital threats, intimidation and other forms of harassment were also rampant. Violence against women journalists in also on the rise. So far in 2023, 13 have

been victimized in 13 incidents, including physical, online and legal attacks. Article 19 is implementing a series of safety initiatives in Bangladesh that are raising awareness of these attacks, building peer and legal networks and providing emergency support to journalists, whilst also developing legal and policy recommendations at government level.

THE RISE OF TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Tamara Bralo, Director of Journalist Safety, Radio Free Asia (RFA)

Increasingly, governments are reaching across borders to silence journalists who live in exile, targeting them through assassination, illegal deportation, abductions, digital threats, Interpol abuse and family intimidation. The late Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi is a high profile example. RFA journalists have also been targeted. In 2018, 50 family members of RFA's Uyghur staff were detained following the publishing

of a report on Chinese internment camps. The Twitter accounts of Chinese journalists and analysts were flooded with thousands of tweets accusing them of being traitors. RFA reporter Yutong Su, who is based in Germany, has been subjected to a huge harassment campaign. Freedom House has just published [the first-ever research devoted to transnational repression](#) and RFA is setting up a coalition group to counter TNR.

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Freedom House has just published the first-ever research into Transnational Repression. RFA is setting up a coalition group to counter TNR.

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JOURNALIST'S INSURANCE IN LEBANON A STUDY

Nadine Moubarak, Research and Program Officer, Samir Kassir Foundation

A 2022-23 survey from the Samir Kassir Foundation reveals that the majority of journalists in Lebanon work without any insurance cover, whilst a very small number work with coverage that falls woefully short of their needs. This poses a significant risk for journalists who are frequently exposed to dangerous situations such as protests, armed conflicts and investigative stories. An alarming 54% of journalists surveyed also

indicated that they would not renew their insurance in 2023 due to financial constraints stemming from the economic crisis and the dollarisation of insurance in the country. These findings underscore the pressing need for comprehensive and accessible insurance policies for journalists in Lebanon and for information-sharing and transparency among media institutions if the situation is to improve.

NOT A LUXURY: SAFETY IN INSECURE TIMES

Andréa Schmidt, Freelance journalist and filmmaker, What Escapes Productions

Layoffs and closures struck the journalism ecosystem in 2023 with a record number of media industry job cuts in the US and global north. As a result, freelance journalists in this region are operating in a landscape characterized by scarcity and insecurity, which means more competition for fewer assignments, lower rates of pay and a lack of power when it comes to contract negotiations, including terms that promote safety. Redundancies within in-house safety teams

are weakening safety expertise, resources and support for commissioning editors and reducing safety training opportunities for journalists - especially those extended to freelancers. It sends the message: "safety is a luxury", and threatens a more vulnerable future for journalists, including a lack of institutional memory within media organizations as safety advisors exit the industry, signaling a potential step backwards for media safety culture and practice.

“

Redundancies within in-house safety teams are weakening safety expertise, resources and support for commissioning editors and reducing safety training opportunities for journalists - especially those extended to freelancers.

”

SOME PEOPLE NEED KILLING

Patricia Evangelista, Freelance journalist and writer

“What happens when truth-telling demands that we step into places where there are no rules and the only arbiter is a rolling recorder? Covering the vigilantes meant that, by extension, I was covering the police and the government that had empowered them.” For six years, journalist Patricia Evangelista chronicled the killings carried out

by police and vigilantes in the name of former President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs for independent news site Rappler. Evangelista spoke to the meeting about her experience interviewing ‘Simon’, a vigilante, from whose words the book takes its name, and the vulnerability of her situation as an journalist investigating Duterte’s deadly campaign.

“**Evangelista spoke to the meeting about her experience interviewing ‘Simon’, a vigilante, and the vulnerability of her situation as a journalist investigating Duterte’s deadly campaign.**”



Patricia Evangelista



Breakout session:
Weaponising the Law Against Journalism

THREATS AND FORECASTS

7

HOTSPOTS: FORECASTING THE NEXT SAFETY CHALLENGES

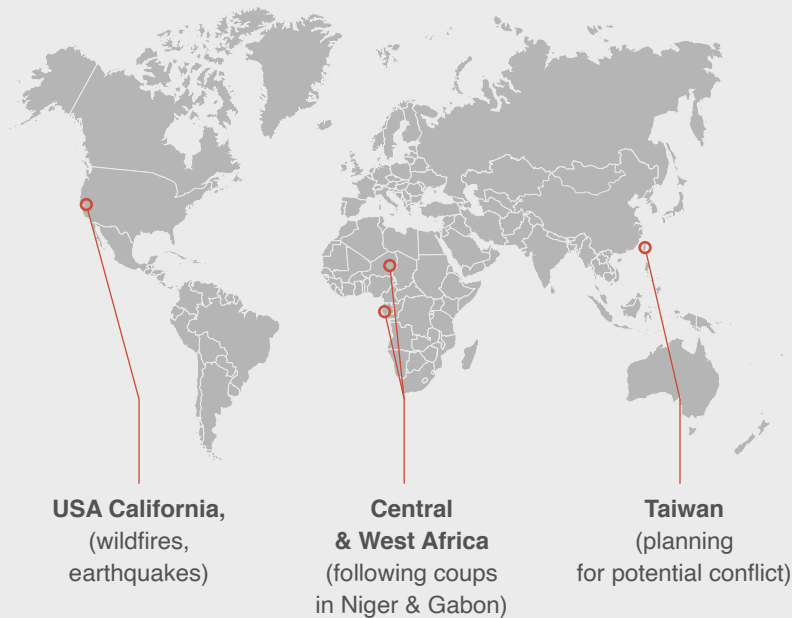
Moderated by: **Marc Perkins**, Investigations Editor, Europe and Asia, BBC World Service

Making predictions for future troublespots isn't easy. Despite this, we brought together three different organizations to share their forecasts and focus areas for 2024, with the aim of building a picture of upcoming safety threats and hotspots, both geographic and thematic. Their forecasts were then opened up to the floor. This session gave continuity to the discussions held last year on large scale crisis preparedness.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE (AFP)

Salima Belhadj, Editor-in-Chief, AFPTV North America

HOTSPOT COUNTRIES



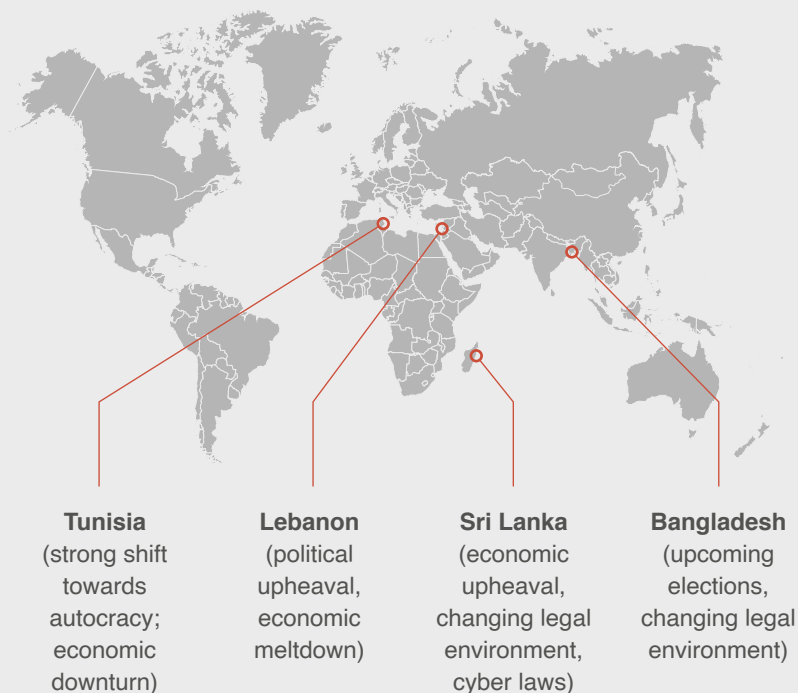
PLANNING FOCUS:

- Bureau set up and staffing
- Recruitment of freelancers and stringers
- Tailored training of local staff and freelancers
- Preparing contingency plans and scenarios, eg. bureau attacks
- Communications and logistics planning
- Balancing resources is challenging.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT (IMS)

Joseph Hamood, Safety and Risk Manager

HOTSPOT COUNTRIES



PLANNING FOCUS:

- Preparedness centered on putting local media and NGOs in the driver's seat
- Partnering with organizations on the ground to provide technical training and prepare strategies
- This approach provides clear leadership, reduces panic and empowers local people so that they can rebuild sustainable journalism.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS (CPJ)

Lucy Westcott, Emergencies Director

HOTSPOTS THEMES:



Environmental disaster

Coverage of flooding, earthquakes, wildfires



Use of Artificial Intelligence

In disinformation and phishing campaigns, doxxing, online harassment



Spyware attacks

Newsrooms aren't prepared



Elections

All of these issues bring an added level of complexity to 2024 elections in eg. Bangladesh, India and the USA, with civil unrest an added concern for journalists in addition to digital and disinformation risks.

PLANNING FOCUS:

- Help journalists and newsrooms plan and train for safety issues associated with coverage of environmental disasters and associated political upheaval
- Help journalists prepare for, and respond to, AI-initiated attacks
- The inclusion of spyware scenarios in risk assessments (Device replacement is a simple solution but resource-heavy).



WEAPONIZING THE LAW AGAINST JOURNALISM

THREATS, RESPONSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Moderated by: **Dana Green**, Senior Counsel, The New York Times Company

With the use of ‘lawfare’ against journalists growing at an unprecedented rate, this breakout session reviewed the range and impact of legal attacks against journalists, raised awareness of the current support options available to media organizations and journalists, and formulated recommendations that could help to fill the current gaps in support and strengthen responses.

THREATS

The 2023 report, [Weaponizing the Law: Attacks on Media Freedom](#) from the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the Tow Center for Digital Journalism revealed that beyond the rise of SLAPPS and defamation lawsuits, there is also an increase in the use of espionage, foreign influence, fake news and financial crime laws to silence and discredit journalists. This trend is happening globally, including democracies such as the USA, Canada, Australia and across Europe. For instance, in Bangladesh, where there is a robust independent press, the government is using the law to silence journalism resulting in multiple arrests and imprisonments of journalists. Three new laws are currently being drafted ahead of next year’s election.

The physical, emotional, and financial consequences of legal attacks are enormous for journalists who face the risk of imprisonment, bankruptcy, deportation, or repeatedly being dragged into court with associated psychosocial impacts on themselves and their families. Left unchecked, these attacks will also have broader impacts, hampering coverage of public interest matters, undermining accountability and eroding trust in journalism.

“

In Bangladesh, where there is a robust independent press, the government is using the law to silence journalism

”

58 %

of session attendees said either they or their media organization had faced legal threats during the last year



RESPONSES

Organizations and groups such as [Trust Law](#), [Article 19](#), [Media Defence](#), [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), [JX Fund](#), [the Legal Network for Journalists at Risk \(LNJAR\)](#), and new initiatives such as [Reporters Shield](#) are providing legal support to journalists in the form of advocacy, projects, assistance, resources, legal expertise, insurance and training. However, as legal threats grow, so do the challenges for organizations working in this space.

Session participants were asked to identify current gaps in legal support



RECOMMENDATIONS



- Expand research into legal threats and leverage cross-industry events to highlight the scope of these threats and how they impact journalists and the media ecosystem
- Expand legal protection and defense for journalists, with a focus on preventative support, such as access to pre-publication legal review, and developing preventative legal guidance and education for at-risk journalists and media outlets
- Recruit more non-media lawyers to help journalists and media freedom NGOs respond to the increasingly complex legal landscape and support development of training, resources, research
- Greater promotion and awareness raising of existing legal support and initiatives such as LNJAR, Reporters Shield, JX Fund
- Collectively lobby funders for more money to address legal challenges and support practical responses



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