



## IFJ Safety advisory Yemen

**Introduction:** Due to the current risk to journalists operating in Yemen the IFJ has produced this safety advisory, which describes best practices, and procedures that should be adopted in conflict zones to mitigate and avoid dangerous situations.

### Operational Media Task Planning

- Planning is the most important part of newsgathering in regions of conflict.
- Before any deployment can commence, detailed prior planning must take place to ensure the success of the assignment, reduce the risk and retain control.
- Planning allows you to anticipate events and create a threat and risk analysis with countermeasures.
- It reduces reaction time and enables you to start immediate implementation of your proactive plans.
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- When you are planning you anticipate events and you plan accordingly.
- It allows you to anticipate risk when you are in a volatile environment.
- Successful planning means that the person has a principle plan and countermeasures
- It provides layers of protection
- Planning according to the information present
- Each plan has an aim, objective and response.
- Communication plan whom are you going to contact.
- Know how to use and implement the plan.

## **Conflict analysis**

What are its consequences of newsgathering in this environment?

- Is it conventional or asymmetric conflict?
- Analysis of actors involved.
- Who are the conflicting parties
- What are their capacities? Alliances?
- What capacities do the conflict parties have to continue the conflict?
- What factors contribute to prolonging the conflict?
- What factors may impact on our personal security?

## **Personal Equipment**

- **Clothing:** Journalists should take into consideration the surrounding environment. Consider clothing to blend in with the community; female journalists should be culturally aware with regard to clothing.
- **Footwear:** Pair of well-broken in, comfortable, water-resistant boots, which give good ankle support and are flexible with good tread, is essential in all environments.
- **Military Equipment:** Do not dress in military equipment or carry military bags otherwise individuals may be mistaken for military combatants.

## **Personal Equipment to be carried at all times.**

- Personal protective equipment
- Navigational Equipment.
- Personal First Aid kit.
- Communications Equipment.
- Camera and Recording Equipment.
- Food and Drink.
- Press Identification.

## **Ballistic Protection**

### **Personal protective equipment**

- Body Armor
- Ballistic Helmet

### **Types of Static cover**

- Sand banks
- Earth Banks
- Rocky Areas
- Shell scrapes and trenches
- Large concrete constructions

### **Vehicle protection**

- Only use the engine block as protective cover!

### **Small arms and heavy weapons safety distances**

- Pistols - 50 meter safety distance
- Rifles - 300 meters more than two people firing at you 600 meters
- Sniper rifle - 800 – 2000 Meters
- Light machine Gun – 600 - 800 meters
- Heavy machine gun – 800 – 1000 meters
- RPG - 100 Meters and 360 degrees of weapon
- Mortar – 300 – 800 meters

- Artillery - up to 16 km

## **Reaction to small arms fire**

- React immediately to incoming fire get down and crawl into protective cover.
- If you are moving on foot move in short burst in a zig zag movement.
- Avoid taking cover where there has been a firer or a person is firing
- Outgoing fire attracts incoming fire
- Never look over the top of cover to observe get low and look around cover.
- If taking cover never get up from the same position you went down crawl back then get up at a different angle a firer may be watching you position.

## **Sniper countermeasures**

Possible sniper positions

- Rooftops
- Kill holes (Combat strike holes in buildings)
- Deep in windows
- Sewers
- Derelict buildings
- Deep vegetation

## **Countermeasures**

- When moving in open ground keep moving
- Keep exposure down to a minimum
- Always be looking for protective cover when moving
- Do not silhouette yourself on high ground

- Long range shooting requires the shooter to be able to judge the wind. Avoid areas with flags, ribbons or plastic bags which could aid a shooter

## **Heavy weapons**

### **Mortar safety measures**

- If mortars are incoming immediately do to ground cover our head with your hands and stay where you are until mortar attack has stopped.
- Never run about when there is a mortar attack you will get hit.

### **Artillery attack**

- As per mortar attack.
- Try to seek protective overhead hardcover if possible.

### **Airstrike awareness**

- Always be observing for potential airstrike.
- Observe for jet engine smoke in the air and aircraft sound.
- Check weather reports, as aircraft may not fly in low cloud or inclement weather.
- Do not expose yourself in open areas.
- Do not silhouette yourself on high ground.
- Try not to locate yourself near strategic targets (Military or Opposition forces)
- Be aware long-term use of your communication equipment you can be located by triangulation and your position compromised especially smart phones.

- Do not travel in large or military vehicle convoys.

### **If you are caught in the open during an air attack**

- Never run about you will be subject to more risk from airstrike
- Drop to the floor cover your head with your hands, open your mouth do not hold your breath as your eardrums could be damaged.
- Try to crawl into overhead protective cover.
- Do not move until you are confident the airstrike has finished.

### **If you are caught in a building during an airstrike**

- If you are in a building, drop to the ground and move away from windows immediately. Seek immediate cover under a staircase or supportive corners of room. Be aware of falling structures and roofs.

### **If under attack whilst driving**

- If driving, decide whether to accelerate out of the bombing zone, or abandon the vehicle and seek immediate cover.
- If the attack is on your current route seek alternate route or your vehicle is directly attacked or you are stuck in a convoy you should get out and seek cover away from the vehicle.
- Keep observing the skies when driving for signs of aircraft.
- Do not travel in convoy in high-risk areas & always assume that your vehicle will be targeted.

## **Travel Safety**

Factors to consider:

### **Safe driving**

Safe driving is main dynamic in vehicle movement. There are a number of factors that influence the safe driving techniques. Animals, cyclists and local population may all share main roads with vehicles, roads may be under repair may not be marked and roads may not be lit at night; rural tracks may be muddy, and mountain roads dangerous; all these factors constitute a real challenge.

### **Speed**

- Unless an extreme emergency (for example where there is crossfire), at all times speed limits must be respected at all times. Risk of road collisions increases with speeding and reckless driving.
- Seat belts should always be worn. Only in circumstances where a quick exit from the vehicle may be in order, for instance during an aerial attack or an armed robbery should seat belts not be worn, so people say you stand out in many countries if your seen wearing a seat belt the choose is yours, they will have to be looking very closely to identify such indications.
- Only essential travel should take place after hours of darkness in conflict zones as risks of ambushes and kidnapping increase and road safety and observation decreases
- Route selection and security: When you travel by vehicle you are vulnerable to attack, especially in high-risk areas, especially if the route is unsecured.
- Check serviceability of vehicle and seat belts
- Keep doors always locked also make sure tailgate doors are locked on SUV vehicles, get into habit of locking them (brief driver)
- Any attractive items placed out of sight (Laptop, cameras, Tripod etc.)
- Remain alert throughout the journey
- If threat is high -make sure that work colleagues know your route and timings
- Always know where you are throughout the journey
- Always Be aware of alternate routes in case of changes in planned route inform the news desk of any alternate route changes.
- Study the route and all possible problem points (checkpoints encountered).
- Estimate travel times and distances, and plan the journey so that you arrive well before nightfall or curfew hours.
- Emergency options: are there alternative routes, or safe places where you might get help or find sanctuary where is the nearest medical facility?

### **Checkpoint Management**

- Keep doors and windows locked if 4x4 do not forget rear door.

- Do not approach a checkpoint a speed and turn off headlights
- Do not film checkpoints.
- Put on your interior light in hours of darkness.
- Approach with caution tries to identify what type of checkpoint it is.
- Communicate with base you are approaching a checkpoint.
- Hide camera equipment inside vehicle.
- Have your Press ID Ready
- Keep your hands visible, and make no sudden moves.
- Avoid displays of anger, rudeness or aggression.
- If instructed to leave the vehicle, do not attempt to take anything with you (except for a personal bag).

## **Kidnap and special risk awareness**

### **Kidnap management**

Being kidnapped is a huge psychological and sometimes also physical ordeal. A kidnap may last anywhere from a day or two to as long as months and sometimes years. The most dangerous moments are the immediate period after the victim is snatched , during a siege situation and during release. At these times kidnappers will feel threatened and tense, and will therefore be more prone to violence. Stay calm and avoid adding to the kidnappers' tension. Victims may also be submitted to psychological torture, such as false promises of imminent release or fake executions.

Prepare yourself mentally as best you can. Remind yourself that the vast majority of kidnap victims are ultimately released, and that the human body and mind have considerable powers of adaptation and resilience, allowing victims even of long-term hostage situations to endure the ordeal physically and psychologically, and to recover from it once it is over.



## **Risk reduction**

- Avoid routines and travel times
- Reduce your exposure in high risk areas
- Sticking to the plan
- Correct risk analysis
- Wear plain clothes look like the other people around you
- Don't be ostentatious
- Don't wear expensive clothes, watches, or jewelry
- Don't drive a new and expensive car
- Don't display fancy electronic devices
- Avoid appearance of wealth...
- Travel safe routes
- Don't get lost
- Avoid driving the same route
- Be unpredictable
- Change vehicle frequently
- Change the times that you arrive and leave
- Keep gas tank full
- Travel during the day
- Never stop your vehicle for accidents etc they could be staged.
- Keep doors closed whilst travelling

## **Surviving a kidnap situation**

- Kidnappers are nervous and unsure, easily irritated, often irrational so no sudden moves.
- It is a psychologically traumatic moment for the hostage.
- Violence may be used even if the hostage remains passive, but resistance could result in death.
- You may be blindfolded, drugged, handled roughly, or even stuffed in the trunk of a car
- If taken hostage passive cooperation is best.
- Try to have a rapport with your captors .
- Do not talk about politics or religion.
- Maintain dignity and respect at all times.
- Manage your time and personal health.
- If you need medical attention tell them.
- Do not try to identify your captors they could kill you for this.

## **Escape**

- The percentage of people that do escape is very low so weigh up the consequences of escape.
- You must know where you are geographically.
- Be fit enough to escape
- Hide by day and only move by night.

## **Surviving a hostage rescue**

- The termination of any kidnapping incident is very dangerous
- Remain calm and hit the floor keep away from doors and windows as the assault team might use them for explosive entry.
- Make no sudden moves and wait to be identified.
- Follow all instructions you are given.
- You may experience rough treatment be prepared.

## **Emergency Contacts**

Ensure you have with you the following contact details in case of you need to report arrest or detention and require assistance:

- *Your country's Embassy or Consular Office in the country of location.*
- IFJ affiliate in the country of residence or location.
- IFJ Secretariat in Brussels on: **+32 2 235 22 00/ +32 2 235 2203/7**

**ICRC 24 hours/day Hotline for Assistance to Journalists: +41 79 217 32 85/ +41 22 730 3443**

**The ICRC hotline may be used whenever a journalist on assignment:**

- disappears;
- is captured or arrested;
- is detained

**The ICRC can be alerted by:**

- the journalist's family;
- the journalist's editor;
- the journalist's national press association;
- regional and international press association.

**When contacting the ICRC, please provide the following information:**

- the name and correct details of the person filing the report;
- personal details of the journalists, including:
  - full name;
  - full name of father;
  - date and place of birth;
  - nationality;
  - contact information while on assignment;
  - contact information for the journalist's family and for other people concerned
- Circumstances of the incident:
  - what happened ( disappearance, arrest, etc.);
  - where the incident occurred and under what circumstances;
  - where and when the journalist was last seen or heard from;
  - nature of the assignment;
  - steps already taken, and by whom;
  - any other information that might be useful.

**The ICRC can do the following:**

- disappearance: seek to obtain information from the parties to the conflict and any other sources.
- once the detaining authorities (which may or may not be a government) have confirmed the journalist's capture, arrest or death, inform his/her family. The ICRC can also pass on the information to the authorities of origin and press association(s) concerned, but only if the family agrees.
- captivity and detention: request permission for an ICRC delegate to visit the journalist, accompanied by a doctor if necessary.
- enable the journalist and his/her family to exchange family news, possibly via Red Cross messages, which are collected by the ICRC and forwarded to the addresses.
- When the journalist is released: repatriate him/her if no other intermediary is available.

Source: [www.icrc.org/eng/addresses](http://www.icrc.org/eng/addresses)