



PFUJ's Safety Protocols and Guidelines for Women journalists in Conflict Zones

In this era of digitalization, journalists are easy targets and extremely vulnerable. They are fighting on more fronts than ever before.

The traditional conflict zones have expanded, and are no longer restricted to offline but spread online increasing the impact of the threat.

Women journalists are the main targets as they are considered to be vulnerable thereby softer targets. The virtual conflict zones are as dangerous as conflict zones in real-time, if not more as the attackers have anonymity giving them more power.

Over the past couple of years, Pakistan has seen an uptick in attacks and threats against women journalists leading to many muting or self-censoring themselves online.

The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and its affiliates across Pakistan have developed guidelines and protocols, safety measures, guidelines, and safety agreements for the safety of women journalists in conflict zones.

Few media houses have taken steps to protect their teams in the field by providing them with protective gear. However, nothing has been done to protect them online.

Keeping the welfare and safety of women journalists working in conflict zones, PFUJ put together some safety protocols and guidelines.



7 Safety Protocols

Women journalists covering conflict areas should be aware of the customs, religious traditions and other social aspects regarding women being in public places. They can refuse to go to an area where they feel uncomfortable, threatened, vulnerable and stand out due to their gender.



1a

Women journalists will not be forced to report where they can become a target, this will not affect their overall performance.

It should be mandatory for media houses to provide protective gear to journalists working in conflict zones.

2



2a

Journalists should be aware of the situation on ground in conflict zones; be aware of dangers and also the weapons if any being used.

Journalists should demand protective gear when going into conflict zones and have the right to refuse without fearing any backlash.

2b



7 Safety Protocols

2c

Media outlets and unions should collaborate and organize training workshops to inform journalists about the problems in conflict zones, explore conflict before going there, and also have an escape plan.

2d

Wear appropriate attire and shoes

2e

Prior study of conflict zone before going into field.

Journalists and teams going into the field should be insured by media houses and all steps taken to ensure their safety.

3



4

Every team/reporter should carry first aid training and the basics needed to deal with first aid needs.





7 Safety Protocols

5 

Media houses and unions should develop digital safety guidelines in line with the existing laws. In case of online threats and abuse, as well as on live transmission media houses and unions should support journalists.

6 

Media organizations and unions should come together and formulate industry-wise guidelines for online abuse and threats.

7 

Capacity building and safety workshops for women journalists working in conflict areas should be a regular feature organized by media outlets and unions.