

IFJ Coronavirus (COVID-19) Safety Advisory for Media Professionals

With the world on edge amid the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), journalists are likely to be affected at their workplace, in their travel and reporting assignments across the globe. Their health and that of people they come into contact with should be the highest priority at all times.

Trade unions are working with employers and governments to address issues of concern to workers arising from the current crisis and are providing support and advice to their members through local unions.

To this end, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world's largest organisation of journalists representing over 600.000 members in 146 countries, is issuing this media advisory to urge precautions and compliance with health experts' recommendations in these times of health crisis.

1. Health at Workplace

- Media employers should consider the coronavirus outbreak as a health and safety crisis and fulfill their duty of care towards their staff ;
- Journalists and other media professionals as well as their organisations should keep up to date and follow the recommendations and advice for the public issued by the World Health organisation (WHO) to protect themselves and others from the coronavirus disease available on : <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- To this end, serious consideration should be given to working from home so as to reduce the risks of catching the virus at the office ;
- Journalists and other media professionals should claim their right to work in healthy conditions and not to come to their workplace when there is a risk of the coronavirus contamination ;
- Office equipment and space should be regularly cleaned, in particular when they are shared by staff.

2. Travel Arrangements

- Travelling in this crisis can be a cause of concern to media professionals, their families and employers. There should therefore be a frank discussion about the need to travel and medical advice sought based on the traveller's fitness based on their health condition;
- Media professionals have a right to decline, without any risk to their employment, any coronavirus –related national or international assignment when it represents a real danger for their health and life ;
- Journalists and other media workers who must travel need to plan carefully, taking into account numerous travel restrictions in force in many countries, including borders closure, bans on - and suspensions of - entry into some of them to foreign nationals as well as quarantine measures for all passengers;
- Seek out further information about the country of destination, including bans on mass gatherings in several countries ;

- Travelling journalists should expect screening for the coronavirus at arrival and possible checks of other required vaccination, which should be in order before departure ;
- Travel insurance is strongly advised, especially for any travel to most affected countries and regions, to ensure flexible flights schedule.
- Media professionals should keep in regular contact with the airlines to monitor changes or cancellations of booked flights ;
- A Corona virus insurance in the current crisis is also recommended . The IFJ approved insurance company, battleFace (www.battleface.com) ,can provide such cover for travel abroad;
- Some personal protection items (PPE) such as gloves and hand sanitisers may be necessary during the assignment and these should be secured before the travelling as they may not be available in the country of destination

3. Safe Reporting in COVID-19 Affected Areas

- Extreme caution is advised for journalists and media professionals who come into close contact with people suffering from the disease, increasing the risk of contamination. This may be the case when visiting medical facilities ;
- The same risk would arise in proximity with livestock. Regularly cleaning hands with water and soap or alternatively the use of hand sanitisers or wearing gloves are strongly advised in these situations ;
- For studio programmes, it is advisable to organise phone-ins and video interviews instead of in person appearances to limit physical presence in contiguous areas. For outside interviews, journalists should use extension for their microphones to comply with in person social distancing and protect against contamination;
- Journalists should also look out for risk of unrest outbreak as a result of measures ordered by authorities in some situations to contain the virus or the targeting of specific nationals on the account of its origins;
- It is important to monitor local news for public announcements of public health measures such as restriction on local travelling which can be restricted on a short notice ;
- There may also be further restrictions on reporting with journalists targeted with denial of access to areas , of accreditation or withdraw thereof as well as attempts to destroy footage and recording. It is crucial for journalists to prepare a back up by sending a copy of the recording and footage to their newsroom as soon as practicable possible ;
- For local information and advice, please contact IFJ's affiliated unions and associations in the country (<https://www.ifj.org/who/members.html>)

4. Mobilise Support for Freelance Journalists

- Journalists' organisation should lobby employers to support freelance journalists whose income will be affected by the coronavirus by honouring payment for work commissioned and not completed because of the crisis. They can also consider paying a form of retainer to their casual collaborators to cover the period of lockdown in their countries;
- Journalists' organisations should also advocate for freelance journalists to be included in governments' financial assistance packages for affected small business.