

# GENERAL SAFETY GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS DURING DEMONSTRATIONS, PROTESTS AND LARGE CROWDS

## 1 PREPARATION AND PLANNING:

- a. Research: Before attending any event, gather information about the demonstration, protest, or crowd. Understand the purpose, organisers, potential risks, and the general mood of the event.
- b. Identification: Always carry proper identification, including press credentials and identification cards. Make sure your gear is clearly marked as "PRESS" to help identify yourself as a journalist.
- c. Emergency Contacts: Inform your manager about your location and the event you are covering. Share your itinerary and have a check-in schedule.

## 2 SAFETY GEAR:

- a. Protective Clothing: Wear appropriate clothing, including a helmet, sturdy shoes, and a vest that clearly identifies you as a journalist. Consider wearing neutral colours to avoid being mistaken for a protester or law enforcement.
- b. Gas Mask: Carry a gas mask or respirator to protect yourself from tear gas or other chemical irritants that may be used by authorities or encountered during protests.
- c. First Aid Kit: Have a basic first aid kit on hand, including bandages, antiseptic wipes, and any personal medications you may need.

## 3 EQUIPMENT:

- a. Camera Protection: Use protective gear for your camera equipment, like weather-resistant covers, to safeguard it from damage.
- b. Backup Equipment: Carry backup batteries, memory cards, and an extra camera if possible.

## 4 STAY INFORMED:

- a. Local Knowledge: Be aware of the local geography, escape routes, and nearby medical facilities.
- b. Emergency Alerts: Sign up for emergency alerts from local authorities to stay informed about any changes in the situation.

## 5 DURING THE EVENT:

- a. Stay Observant: Continuously assess your surroundings and the crowd's mood. Be vigilant for signs of escalating tension or violence.

- b. Stay Neutral: Maintain objectivity and avoid taking sides or participating in the protest. Your job is to report, not to become part of the story.

- c. Positioning: Keep a safe distance from the frontline or potential flashpoints, such as clashes between protesters and law enforcement.

- d. Buddy System: If possible, work with a colleague or a "buddy" to watch each other's backs and provide assistance if needed.

## 6 COMMUNICATION:

- a. Mobile Phones: Keep your mobile phone charged and have multiple ways to communicate, such as walkie-talkies or satellite phones, in case of network congestion.

- b. Social Media: Use social media to update your location and status, but avoid revealing sensitive information that could jeopardise your safety.

## 7 DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT:

- a. Obey Orders: Comply with orders from law enforcement officers. Clearly identify yourself as a journalist and follow their instructions.

- b. Know Your Rights: Familiarise yourself with your rights as a journalist, both legally and ethically.

## 8 EXITING THE SCENE:

- a. Escape Plan: Always have an exit strategy and know where you can retreat to safety if the situation becomes too dangerous.

- b. Avoid Crowds: Try to avoid getting caught in large, tightly packed crowds where it can be difficult to move or escape.

## 9 AFTER THE EVENT:

- a. Debrief: After covering the event, debrief with colleagues, and share your experiences.

- b. Mental Health: Be aware of the potential emotional toll of covering traumatic events and seek support or counselling if needed.

\* Remember that safety should always be your top priority when covering demonstrations, protests, and crowds. If at any point you feel that your safety is compromised, it's better to retreat and reassess the situation rather than risking harm.