

Rules of Professional Ethics of Journalism

The latest update by the Israel Press Council of its rules of professional ethics.

1. "Newspaper" includes electronic communication, media and the owners, the publisher and the editor responsible for the media. "Journalist" includes the editor. "Person" includes a corporation, an incorporated or unincorporated association and a public body.

Freedom of the Press and its Professional Responsibility

2. A newspaper and a journalist shall be faithful to freedom of the press and to the right of the public to know, in providing the public with a professional service and accurate, fair and responsible reporting of news and opinions.

Integrity and Fairness

3. A. A newspaper and a journalist shall act with integrity, fairness and without fear.

B. Where a newspaper or journalist has promised a source that information provided by him or an opinion expressed by him shall not be published, the same shall not be submitted for publication even if it is of public interest.

Loyalty to the Truth

4. A. A newspaper or journalist shall not knowingly or negligently publish something which is not true, not accurate, misleading or distorted.

B. A newspaper and a journalist shall not refrain from publishing information where there is a public interest in its publication, including for reasons of political, economic or other pressure or because of boycott or threat of boycott of advertising.

C. Statements shall not be attributed to a particular person unless they comprise a direct and accurate quotation of his words or of a document in writing. A letter to the editor may be published not as written if its author did not prohibit this in advance and if in editing there is no substantive change to the contents of the letter or to the implications arising there from.

Examination of the Facts

5. A. Prior to the publication of any item, the newspaper and the journalist shall check the accuracy thereof with the most reliable source and with appropriate caution in the circumstances of the case.

B. An examination of the accuracy of an item aforesaid shall not be waived because of the urgency of the publication.

C. The fact that an item has been published in the past shall not discharge the person seeking to rely on it in a publication from checking the reliability of the item.

Objectivity

6. A. A newspaper and a journalist shall distinguish in the publication between news items and opinion.

B. A news item which is published within the contents of an expression of opinion shall be subject to the rules of ethics concerning news items.

C. The publication of news items shall be fair and not misleading.

D. The headline shall not be misleading.

E. A newspaper and a journalist shall distinguish in the publication between an advertisement and editorial material, in such a manner that an advertisement shall not be published which represents itself as being editorial material.

Rectification of Mistake, Apologies and Reaction

7. Mistakes, omissions or inaccuracies which are in the publication of facts must be corrected speedily and with the appropriate emphasis relative to the original publication. In addition, in suitable cases, an apology shall also be published. In suitable cases a person injured shall be given a fair opportunity to respond to a substantive mistake, omission or inaccuracy speedily and with the appropriate emphasis relative to the original publication.

Privacy and Good Name

8. A newspaper and a journalist shall not, without the consent of a person, publish an item concerning the privacy or good name of the person and which may impair the latter, unless there is a public interest in the publication and to the appropriate extent. Publication of an item as aforesaid will generally require a preliminary inquiry with the person concerned and a fair publication of his reaction.

Casualties

9.A. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish a name, photograph or other identifying details of a person who has died or who has been seriously injured in a war, accident or other disaster, prior to information of the death or injury of the said person being brought to the knowledge of his next-of-kin by an authorized person, unless there are exceptional circumstances of public interest in immediate publication.

B. In reaching a decision relating to the publication of a name, photograph or other identifying details identifying details of a person who has died or who has been seriously injured in a war, accident or other disaster, the newspaper and journalist shall take into account the request of the next-of-kin of the victim not to publish these details and shall weigh it against the public interest in publishing them. The publication shall be appropriate in manner, extent and sensitivity.

C. In reaching a decision relating to the publication of a name, a photograph or other identifying details of a victim of a crime, the newspaper and journalist shall take into account the request of the

victim not to publish these details and shall weigh it against the public interest in publishing them. The publication shall be appropriate in manner, extent and sensitivity.

D. A newspaper and journalist shall not publish an item concerning the health of an injured person, victim of a crime or sexual offence save in reliance on a competent medical source.

Minors

10. A. A newspaper and journalist shall not publish a name, photograph or other identifying details of a person who is under the age of 14, in circumstances which are likely to injure his name, privacy, welfare, save with the consent of his parents, guardian and where there is a public interest in the identifying publication and to the extent which is appropriate.

B. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish the name, photograph or other identifying details of a person who is over the age of 14 and under the age of 18, in circumstances which are likely to injure his name, privacy or welfare, save where there is a public interest in the identifying publication and to the extent that is appropriate.

Ill Persons and Organ Donors

11. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish a name, photograph or other identifying details of a mentally ill person, drug or alcohol addict, organ donor or recipient, or mortally ill person, without their consent or the consent of their next-of-kin, according to the circumstances, save where there is a public interest in the publication and to the extent which is appropriate.

Suspects, Detainees, Charges and Convicted Persons

12. A. In their reporting, a newspaper and a journalist shall respect the fundamental principle that a person is presumed innocent unless found guilty as a matter of law.

B. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish a name, photograph or other identifying details about a person suspected of an offence, prior to his having been brought before court, save with his consent or where there is a public interest in the publication.

C. Where a newspaper has reported a suspicion, the filing of an indictment or the conviction of a person, and the newspaper and the journalist have been authoritatively informed that the suspicion has been lifted or the indictment was not filed or was nullified or the accused was acquitted or the appeal of a convicted person was upheld, as appropriate the newspaper shall report the same with appropriate emphasis.

Civil Suits

13. A. Where the publication concerns civil proceedings, the newspaper and the journalist shall present the position of all the parties. If the statement of defence has been filed, it shall be fairly reported. If a statement of defence has not been filed, a defendant will generally be given the opportunity to fairly publish his position.

B. Where a civil suit has been dismissed or set aside, this shall be given in so far as possible the equivalent publication as reports regarding the filing of the suit.

C. No report shall be made concerning a claim which has been dismissed or set aside as aforesaid, unless the fact of its dismissal or being set aside is indicated.

D. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish questions out of interrogatories in a civil procedure, or any details whatsoever there from, save in proximity to the answers given to such questions.

Discrimination and Racism

4. A newspaper and a journalist shall not publish any matter which contains incitement or encouragement of racism or unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, origin, skin color, ethnic affiliation, nationality, religion, sex, occupation, sexual orientation, illness or physical or mental impairment, political belief or views, and social or economic standing. A newspaper and journalist shall not indicate these characteristics unless they are, relevant to the subject of the report.

Conflict of Interest

5. A. A newspaper and journalist shall not place themselves in a position where there is a suspicion of a conflict of interest between their duties as a newspaper and a journalist and any other interest.

B. A publisher of a newspaper and its owners shall once a year publish a proper disclosure of the substantive business and economic interests which they possess within and outside the field of communications.

C. Where a newspaper has a substantive economic or other interest within or outside the field of communications in a particular matter being reported, it shall make a proper disclosure of that interest in a place adjacent to the said report.

D. The names of the publisher, the owners and the editor of the newspaper shall appear in every issue thereof.

Improper Use

16. A. A newspaper and a journalist shall not make improper use of their position, their work or their power to publish or to refrain from publishing.

B. A newspaper and a journalist shall not make improper use of information which has come into their possession by reason of their work.

Additional Occupation

17. A Journalist shall not deal in any occupation, work, service, public relations, advertising and soliciting of advertisements which give rise to the suspicion or appearance of conflict of interest or of misleading the public.

Benefits

18. A journalist shall not ask for and shall not accept a benefit in relation to a matter connected with his journalistic work, except from the media in which he is employed.

Independence

19. A newspaper and a journalist shall not be instructed in the fulfilment of their functions by any external body which is not revealed and in particular not by advertisers and governmental, economic and political bodies.

Improper Means

20. A newspaper and a journalist shall not, for the purpose of obtaining information use improper means which would bring disgrace to the profession of journalism, including violence, extortion, threats, enticements, unlawful invasion of privacy, unlawful eavesdropping, or any other means of obtaining information which is likely, in the circumstances of the case, to seriously impair the confidence of the public in journalism.

Indicating the Source of the Publication

21. No newspaper or journalist shall present the work of another newspaper or journalist. In every case where Information is quoted which has already been published in another communications medium or by a news agency, the newspaper and journalist shall indicate the identity of the original publisher.

Journalistic Immunity

22. A newspaper and a journalist shall not disclose information which has been disclosed to them on condition that it remains confidential and shall not expose the identity of a confidential source save with the consent of the source.

Ethics in a Newspaper

23. A. A newspaper shall ensure the suitable qualification of journalists working for it, within the field of professional journalistic ethics.

B. A publisher of a newspaper and its owners shall ensure the maintenance of conditions which will enable all journalistic work carried out in a newspaper to be performed in accordance with the principles of professional journalistic ethics.

C. A newspaper and journalist are entitled to request from the Ethics Committee of the Press Council that it render an opinion on a fundamental matter of professional journalistic ethics. The Ethics Committee shall act as an advisory body.

Editor and journalist

24. A. No item or article shall be published In the name of a journalist, the contents of which have been significantly altered by an editor, without the consent of the journalist.

B. An editor who has rejected for publication an article written by a journalist shall not impair the right of the journalist to publish the article in another newspaper.

>> For Additional Reading:

Israel Press Council

www.moaza.co.il/BRPortal/br/P102.jsp?arc=27521