

# Contingency Plan

Staying in touch means staying alive. Editors should always know your schedule in detail, and at least one trusted colleague should know your plan for coverage so they can act quickly if you fail to return as expected.

In particular, when you research a story in a hostile environment or a conflict area, it would be wise to have someone who can look out for you. If you are a team, pre-arrange contact points and times, should you happen to separate.

A contingency plan may list possible crisis scenarios. Some you can't predict, but most you can.

Plan what will happen if you have not been in touch for a specified period of time. The general experience is that it is absolutely critical to locate a disappeared colleague within the first days of the disappearance.

The contingency plan should list the actions to be taken by you, your family and your editor. Such preparation allows you and your network to keep a cool head and act rationally.

Safety training and preparations can help you to stay calm if you get attacked or detained. To some extent you can prepare yourself on how you will react. The main goal is your survival. But involve the editor, because even on this personal level, it is an editorial matter!

## Editor:

- Make sure that your editor knows where you are going and when you expect to come back.
- If you don't report back to your editorial office, your editor will raise the alarm to GPU, to the network from other media houses to the organizers of the demonstration, and to the police and hospitals.
- Make a plan for debriefing. Your editor must debrief you, as soon as you are back from the trouble – to avoid stressful reactions. Nobody is immune to the emotional impact of threats and covering violence.

## Colleague:

- Make sure that you share the safety plan with an accompanying colleague.
- Agree on a meeting point, if you get separated from your colleague.
- If you fail to meet at the meeting point, your colleague should alarm your editor.

## Reporter:

- It is important not to panic if you get threatened, attacked or detained. Staying calm allows you to assess what is happening and make better choices for your protection. Don't resort to heroism.
- To some extent you can prepare yourself on how you will react in such situation by revisiting the safety training and the standard operational procedures. Figure out what works for you, practice it beforehand.
- Your preparation may take this direction: How can you frame your mind to ...
  - ... Accept fear and other feelings as normal reactions.
  - ... Find a place within yourself, a visual image or a thought, that calms you down.
  - ... Tell yourself to “Observe. Think. Act”: Observe the situation. Think and understand the gravity and the options. Act to protect yourself the best you can.