Critical Reporters' Risk Checklist

Assess the risks: Yes/No	If yes: Mitigate the risks	Tip to a Safety Plan
People		
Will the story threaten or harm wrongdoers? Will they risk losing face, reputation, position, office? Or getting investigated?	If your story is big, your precautions should be big.	Involve your editor
Is it risky to ask questions and to obtain information – even just to verify that you have a story idea?	Get explicit back-up from your editor. Share with colleagues that you may be exposed to danger.	Nosing around as a lone wolf can make you an obvious target for threats and attacks.
The targets of the story		
Can you list actual persons who may lose, if you publish the story? And is it likely that they will resort to threats or violence?	Assess their possible hostility: Who represents violence? Who doesn't? Who kills? How do they kill?	Face the possible aggressors cautiously. In the end, you need to give the accused the right to reply.
Is it possible to interview the targets of the story?	Consider doing the confrontational interview on phone or in person. Maybe together with your editor to show that you are backed by the editor and the entire news media.	Be cautious. Chose time and place. The subjects may respect that you have the courage to face them. If they don't respect you, they are more likely to hurt you. Plan accordingly.
Do you want to present personal details about the target – to build character and human interest through e.g. anecdotes or quotes with authentic speech patterns?	Balance safety considerations with the narrative details. The target may be more offended by a personal attack than by the actual revelation – and act in irrational anger.	Stay out of personal issues and the private domain. Don't comment on personality or personal appearance. Beware that your sources may be identified because of published details.
The sources		
Do you risk putting your sources at risk by interviewing them or just by being seen with you? Do they risk being sacked, harassed or attacked?	Decide concretely how you will protect your sources. Involve your editor to the decision; meeting in the open or secretly, on or off the record, not-for-use information.	You may decide not to write the names of your sources anywhere, on paper or on your hard disc.
The security		
Is it a risk that the police search your office or home and seize computers and files? Or that the court demand you to submit your research?	Decide how to store your findings, how to communicate with sources, with whom to discuss your findings.	In some cases, it is unsafe to discuss sensitive matters and sources on the phone or by e-mail even with your editor.
Is a risk that your phone will be tapped, or your web communication monitored?	Decide a level of secure communication. Beware how you contact and communicate with the sources. It can be safer to use Skype, chat or anonymous e-mail accounts.	Some reporters communicate via a shared e-mail account, writing draft e-mails that are never send. In other cases, you can use secure techniques like encryption.
The fieldtrip		
Is the place, where you plan interview and research risky to visit? Are there tensions, insecurity or conflicts in the area? Are there any 'no-go' areas?	Pre-research the area: Where are the risks and plan how to mitigate them. Who is in fact in charge of security? If risky, arrange interviews in a public place. Avoid going alone.	Beware, that permissions and introductions from one side of a conflict can incite the other side. Use the tool "Event Risk Checklist" to make a safety plan for moving in the specific locality.