

# Safety Plan – to mitigate the risks

## Involve your editor

- Researching as a lone wolf makes you an obvious target. You must involve your editor and colleagues in the coverage and the specific risks.
- Discuss the risk assessment and the safety plan with your team leader or a trusted colleague.
- No journalist should go alone to a dangerous event. You should always have someone who will look out for you. You may decide to cover the event with a colleague from your medium or to go with one from another medium.

## Make an operative safety plan for the research

- For any risky story, safety considerations should be part of the research plan.
- In the research plan you normally list the sources, plan when and how to contact and meet them, list the documentation you need get hold of, plan when and where to go, plan what to record on video or audio or photo, plan what to.
- Now, with a risky story, you use the research plan and the “Critical Reporters’ Checklist” to assess the risks at every specific level of the research. Then consider the safety precautions. And bingo: Now you have a safety plan to discuss with the editor.
- In general, be aware of who you associate with during the research. Even small favors, such as a lift, a meal or an introduction can label you as a reporter for the other side, or a spy for the “enemy”. As they say in South Sudan: Don’t sleep with the snake, even if you are careful.

## Plan the fieldtrip with safety precautions

- The “Event Risk Checklist” can help you to make a safety plan for any fieldtrip, whether it is an interview assignment or a spot-reportage.
- Other precautions could include:

## Before you leave office

- When relevant, make a contingency plan with your editor or colleagues – just in case.
- Because, if you know the steps that your editor or colleagues will take to come to your assistance, it will help you to stay calm and make sensible decisions if you get threatened, attacked or detained.
- Check standard operational procedures for such situations – just to remind yourself on how to react, just in case.

## Pack light – and pack the right equipment

- Pack light, so you are able to run.
- Only bring the needed professional equipment and what you need for safety, e.g. band aid, protection for teargas (a cloth, water, lemon).
- Pack to make it difficult for pick pockets, who always are to expect in the crowd

## Security in a pocket

- Bring press card and/or other ID.
- Have emergency numbers pre-set for speed dialing on your mobile phone – for your editor and for the colleagues accompanying you.
- Bring a whistle to blow to alarm colleagues or security.

## Dress properly

- Good footwear, so you are able to run, without getting your feet hurt
- Loose clothing that cover arms, legs and neck – and still allows you to move freely. Let it be of cotton or other non-flammable, natural fibers.
- Dress to blend in: Don’t wear party colors at rallies. Do not wear bright colors that will make you a target. Avoid army-like dressing, so you won’t be mistaken for a soldier.