

INDIAN FEDERATION OF WORKING JOURNALISTS

(Founded on 28 October 1950 at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi and registered as Trade Union no: 1992)

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IFWJ call for code of conduct

(Presented by K Vishwadev Rao, Secretary : IFWJ)

Friends

In the very first years of its existence (1950), the Indian Federation of Working Journalists had discussed and drafted a Code of Conduct for journalists at its Kolkata plenary session. While **Mr. Chalapathi Rau** presided, the freedom-fighter and member of Parliament, **Shri K. Rama Rao**, IFWJ vice-president then, had drafted the Code. In course of time its efficacy slid because of chasm between precept and practice. However, the need for a code was always felt by IFWJ members.

Several members from different State unions insisted that a code is imperative in the prevailing anarchic situation in the media world. With the advent of the electronic media the need becomes more urgent. Virtually jungle raj now prevails. The self-regulating mechanism is a sham. The Press Council is dead as dodo, with vested interests dominating.

Therefore, the IFWJ, in an endeavor to sensitize media persons, felt its duty to draft a Code of Conduct. Lest posterity should raise an accusing finger at us for dereliction of duty.

Therefore, a draft is sent to you for your scrutiny.

Basic Assumptions

Let us first begin on certain premises and assumptions. Journalism, a dignified and noble profession, must try to reflect the social responsibility of its practioners. Professional integrity is the corner stone of a journalist's integrity. He/she must believe that pursuit of news is not a license for arrogance. While a newsperson is engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news, he/she must beware of harmful inaccuracies, because a journalist is not merely responsible for narration of events which he/she covers but also the events that occur in their

aftermath. An example is the reporting of communal riots, which demand utmost impartiality and also deep concern for humanity.

Before proceeding to formulate some principles of a draft Code of Conduct, the IFWJ national council, meeting in its 71st session in Jaisalmer, after 12 years in Rajasthan recalls its 61st session held in Jaipur on 24-26 June 2005, where the following resolution was adopted:

IFWJ national councilors had at Jaipur session vowed firmly to ensure media credibility, and consequently, its accountability. Reproduced below is the Jaipur resolution:

Resolutions on Media Accountability

The meeting of the I.F.W.J. national council's 61st session in Jaipur (Rajasthan) on 23-26 June 2005:

Recalling that freedom of expression is an inviolable human right,

Recalling that freedom of the press is fundamental to democracy because of the right of the people to be informed on matters of public interest,

Recalling that the free press should exercise its powers in a responsible manner,

Recalling that the press is accountable to the public, but not to the Government, and

Recalling the important role which the press council can play as part of the "Media Accountability Systems", appropriate in a democracy,

The IFWJ delegates:

Encouraged the IFWJ to continue and to publish its work in making the Press Council genuinely representative.

Supported the right of the people and the press to access to public information without any payment of fees,

Encouraged the IFWJ to continue its investigation and to report on the various systems used in the resolution of complaints against the Media,

Recommended that the IFWJ investigate and report on the methods whereby complaints by the press about conduct towards it are investigated properly.

Recommended that the IFWJ continue to involve professional associations of journalists, editors and publishers in its activities,

Adopted in the City of Jaipur, this 25th day of June, Two Thousand and Five.

Friends, now avoiding clichés, generalities and homilies, the IFWJ points to certain essential practices necessary in today's media world. The aim here is to guide through numerous difficulties, such as conflicts of interest, and to assist journalists in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

They can be summarized as:

1. They shall not allow personal interests to influence them in their professional duties. They shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them.
2. It is not ethical for a reporter to write a news piece on the same topic on which he or she has written an opinion piece in the same paper?
3. They shall do their utmost to correct any published or broadcast information found to be harmfully inaccurate.
4. They shall balance speed and accuracy in different ways.
5. They shall demonstrate powerfully what it looks like when ethics in journalism stands up to financial clout.
6. They shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis.
7. Reporting the truth is almost never libel, which makes accuracy very important.
8. Newspapers or journalists who respond to a complainant's reply other than to apologize or regret the error, must then be prepared to offer the aggrieved party a fresh opportunity to reply.
9. A journalist shall not knowingly promote communal or religious discord or violence.
10. Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
11. Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
12. Private persons have privacy rights that must be balanced against the public interest in reporting information about them.
13. Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort.
14. A journalist shall never reveal a source of information after guaranteeing confidentiality.
15. The use of long-lens or other cameras to photograph people without consent on private or public property where there is a reasonable expectation or privacy is unacceptable, unless in the public interest.
16. The free flow of information is vital for informing citizens; and works to inspire and educate the next generation of journalists; and fights to protect.

Kindly scrutinize above proposal. You may modify, cut, add and make suggestions and email it to us at ifwj.media@gmail.com