



**GIJTR**  
Global Initiative for Justice  
Truth & Reconciliation

# GUIDELINES FOR JOURNALISTS FROM THE MEDIA AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE ACADEMY



Journalists in Sudan recording audio-visual materials for a documentary film.

## INTRODUCTION

The Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) is a multidisciplinary consortium of nine organizations, led by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, that develop and implement a range of rapid response and high-impact programs, utilizing both restorative and retributive approaches to justice and accountability for gross human rights violations. The Consortium's work in conflict and post-conflict countries has shown that journalists and members of the media, although often overlooked in conflict and the ensuing transitional justice processes, play a crucial role – either as instigators or provokers of conflict, or as key players in raising awareness, putting information about the conflict or the transitional process in the public domain and sharing survivors' stories to support their recognition and broader societal healing. However, despite the significance of their role, journalists and media personnel often do not have sufficient training in relation to atrocity prevention and transitional justice. To address this gap in programming, in 2022, the GIJTR organized

a twelve-month Media and Transitional Justice Academy to promote and address the critical role that traditional and citizen journalists play in sparking engagement on key transitional justice and atrocity prevention concepts. 10 journalists from Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, South Sudan, Sudan and Tunisia joined the training program and were supported to carry out innovative projects related to media and transitional justice needs in their home countries. The following guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive, but, rather, to serve as a resource for continued learning and exchange with other journalists interested in advancing truth, justice and memory after conflict. The guidelines have been drawn directly from the reflections of the 10 participating journalists, based on their involvement in the Media and Transitional Justice Academy.

## GUIDELINES:

### BE THOUGHTFUL AND INTENTIONAL IN FORMULATING YOUR PROJECT GOAL

The goals for your project, report, article or broadcast will dictate your working medium, target audience, interviewees, and messaging. Being clear about your own intentions will help you create a clear plan and clearly communicate your goals when you meet with your interviewees.

### TAKE TIME TO BUILD TRUST WITH SURVIVORS

Work with survivors and victims' family members cannot be rushed. Survivors may have had negative experiences with journalists previously or experience fatigue from repeating their stories over and over without concrete results. Take time to introduce yourself and your project, clearly explaining your objectives, how their stories may be shared, and any risks or options linked to their participation in your project/interview. Explain why their participation is important, but do not make promises or raise their hopes for outcomes you cannot control (e.g. the start of a reparations program). Do not pressure survivors to share their stories or offer them compensation in exchange for their participation. After the interview, follow-up with survivors to see if they have any questions or concerns about

### THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In 2014, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) launched the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR), a consortium of nine international organizations focused on offering holistic, integrated and multidisciplinary approaches to issues of truth, justice and reconciliation. GIJTR works primarily with local populations, civil society organizations (CSOs), survivors and governments to develop transitional justice approaches that are victim-centered, collaborative, and support dignity, respect, inclusion, and transparency in societies emerging from conflict or periods of authoritarian rule. Since its founding, GIJTR has engaged with people from 72 countries, engaged over 680 CSOs and supported more than 320 community-driven projects.

For more information, please visit [gijtr.org](http://gijtr.org).



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Gambian participant, Fatou Ndure, interviews a survivor of the Yahya Jammeh regime.

how their stories will be shared. Continuing to remain in contact with them will help to build trust within the broader community, and survivors may come to recognize you as a talented, trustworthy and ethical journalist over time.

### **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOU CONDUCT INTERVIEWS**

Offer to conduct interviews in a space in which the interviewees are comfortable. This is particularly important when working with survivors. Some may feel most comfortable sharing their stories in their own homes, while others may prefer the safety or anonymity of a secure, outside location. Ask interviewees about their accessibility needs and ensure that there is water or other basic refreshments available if the interview will be time-consuming.

### **ALLOW SURVIVORS TO DRIVE THEIR OWN NARRATIVES AND CONSIDER SECURITY RISKS**

When working with survivors, allow them to tell their own stories at their own pace and in their own way. Do your research before the interview, but don't make the interview feel like an interrogation. Allow survivors and victims' family members to dictate the details that are important for them to share. When publishing survivors' stories, consider whether sharing certain details could pose future security risks to survivors or lead to social stigma against them. Discuss options with survivors for anonymizing stories or excluding unnecessarily graphic details in your final publication. It is recommended to share the final product with the interviewees before the final publication as a way to confirm that it reflects the interviewee's story rather than the interviewer's point of view.



A journalist participant from South Sudan (left) interviews a survivor of human rights violations.

### **ALLOCATE ENOUGH TIME FOR EACH INTERVIEW**

Although survivors or victims' family members may have been informed ahead of time about the project, its objectives, and the interview topic, do not rush them to obtain specific answers during the interview process. Start the session as a conversation and give them enough time to remember, reflect and speak at their own pace, even if this means that the interview runs for longer than initially expected. If the interview addresses a painful experience and is extensive or covers a period of multiple years, it may be better, to protect the mental health of both the interviewee and interviewer, to break the interview into different sessions with time for rest in-between.

## CONNECT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, VICTIMS' ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER ACTIVIST GROUPS

When covering themes related to transitional justice or atrocity prevention, connections with civil society organizations, victims' associations and other activist groups can be helpful. These organizations often have trusted relationships with marginalized communities and can introduce you to survivors interested in sharing their stories or other experts working on the issues you are addressing. Similarly, after your project, report or broadcast is complete, civil society groups can help to ensure that your media reaches the communities likely to be impacted by your reporting and help to organize targeted screenings, discussions, exhibitions or social media campaigns.

## CONSIDER THE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES YOU CAN SHARE WITH SURVIVORS

When interviewing survivors, consider what relevant information or resources you might be able to share with them. This could include referrals for medical or psychosocial support services, information about an ongoing transitional justice process, or connections with other civil society groups or victims' associations that share similar goals and needs. This should not be confused with offering survivors financial compensation for their stories, which should be strictly avoided.

## MAKE USE OF INEXPENSIVE NEW MEDIA TOOLS TO BROADEN YOUR REACH

Social media and other online platforms can help you to reach a broader audience with your story or reporting, without requiring significant financial resources. These platforms can also help to broaden the types of stories that are shared, beyond those sanctioned by traditional media structures. However, it is important to carefully consider your messaging, target audience and potential security risks (to yourself or your interviewees) when sharing information on social media, as facts and information can easily be taken out of context when shared broadly. Refer to GIJTR's publication [\*Make it New: Using Media to Advance Advocacy\*](#) for further resources.



Ramata Taran Diallo, a Guinean survivor, shares her story in a radio program.



Nedjma Benaziza reflects on the circumstances of the enforced disappearance of her grandmother.



Moussa Tamoura, victim of human rights violations in Guinea, shares his experience on a radio program.

## BE ALERT TO ONLINE HATE SPEECH AND MISINFORMATION

Online media platforms are increasingly used to influence people's behavior with micro-targeting, spreading and amplifying disinformation, misinformation, and propaganda. More and more frequently, imposter websites, designed to look like professional outlets, are spreading misleading content, creating new tensions between communities or exacerbating existing ones. It is imperative for journalists to identify and highlight any type of fake news to help mitigate the possible violent outcomes that this information can create and to ensure the reliability of their information sources in their reporting.

## PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE

When conducting interviews related to human rights violations, conflict, or other sensitive issues, give yourself time to process strong emotions, as these interviews can also be quite taxing for the journalists and other professionals conducting them. Aim to schedule no more than one interview per day, and take breaks for yourself and your interviewee as necessary. Speak with colleagues engaged in similar work about your experiences, and seek out self-care tools to avoid burnout. For additional resources on psychosocial support and self-care, please visit the [Resources page](#) on the GIJTR website and see [this toolkit](#) on psychosocial support and mental wellness.

## CREATE A FEASIBLE PLAN BUT PREPARE TO ADJUST

Research the topic you are reporting on and develop an understanding of key concepts related to transitional justice or more specialized issues you may be addressing, such as enforced disappearances. While your goals may be set high, ensure that the timeline and work load you have set for yourself is feasible and will not overwhelm you or cause you to rush your interviewees. Understand that reporting on sensitive and nuanced topics like transitional justice and human rights violations will likely require flexibility, and that challenges will occur. Maintain courage and patience.

## UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF JOURNALISTS IN RELATION TO TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESSES

Sensational stories related to conflict or human rights violations can lead to further division between communities, heighten tensions, or create unrealistic expectations. Over time, this can erode trust between journalists and marginalized communities. Similarly, reporting that does not take into consideration the security of interviewees can lead to distrust or serious security threats to survivors. At the same time, journalists and others working in new and traditional media can help to raise awareness about human rights violations, survivors' needs, or a transitional justice process, putting crucial information in the public domain and supporting broader societal healing. Consider these responsibilities in your reporting, seek outside support or expertise in your work when necessary, and share relevant resources with your peers and younger journalists to facilitate ongoing learning and innovation.



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