

# **Towards a Code of Ethics For Journalists in the Maghreb Region**

## **Preamble**

The journalist must endeavor to ensure the promotion of Human rights in their universality.

The right to information, to free expression and to criticism is a fundamental freedom to any individual. The journalist defends these liberties. The independence of journalists is an essential condition for the free flow of information.

Journalists must always be aware of the consequences of the information they disseminate. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of the credibility of journalists.

The right of the public to high quality information is the underlying foundation of the duties and rights of journalists.

The key duties of journalists to research, write and comment on events are:

## **I- The duties of the journalist**

### **1) To comply with facts**

The journalist is bound to comply with facts. He/She should publish only information, of which the origin, veracity and accuracy have been duly verified and proven. In case of doubt, he/she pledges to express a reserve in accordance with the professional standards applied in similar situations. He/She should also pledge to refrain from altering the texts or documents being used to back up the data he/she is disseminating. Any modification to documents used should be disclosed to the public.

### **2- Origin of information**

The journalist should do his/her best to avoid using any unfair manner to obtain information of any kind.

The origin of the information being published should be clearly identified.

In case data can only be collected by refraining from disclosing the status of the journalist or the nature of his/her activity, he/she should explain this decision to the readership.

### **3- Separation between comments and facts**

The journalist is bound to distinguish between facts and comments.

### **4- Relationship to the sources of information.**

The journalist adheres to his/her critical spirit and distances himself/herself from any source of information and communication services, be they public or private. He/She insists on remaining totally unbiased vis-à-vis his/her sources of information and avoiding any form of dependence, collusion, seduction or gratitude.

### **5- Plagiarism**

The journalist should avoid any form of plagiarism and pledge to disclose his/her sources of information.

### **6- Information and advertisement**

Information and advertisement should be kept separate. Any effort based on advertisement should be referred to as such.

### **7- Incompatibility and Conflict of Interest**

The duty of a press-attaché, public relations officer and other similar duties are incompatible with the multi-layered professional functions of a journalist.

### **8- Professional secrecy**

The journalist should abide by professional secrecy and refrain from disclosing any confidential information.

### **9- Corrigendum and right of reply**

The journalist should rectify as soon as possible and in a clear and honest manner all the inaccurate information that he/she might have published. The right of reply is guaranteed as provided for by the law.

## **10- Respect of private life and human dignity**

The journalist respects the rights of individuals to enjoy privacy and dignity. He/She respects the presumption of innocence and strives not to put into question, without reliable data, the reputation and honour of others. He/She refrains from resorting to slander, libel, insult or unfounded accusations.

## **11- Calling for violence and racial, ethnic or religious hatred**

The journalist strives to avoid any form of discrimination or prejudice towards individuals, minorities or specific groups. He/She shall not report reactions coming from readers that exacerbate these feelings. He/She refrains from propagating crime and resorting to any form of complacency whenever he/she writes about violence and the exploitation of other people's emotions.

## **12- Respect of Religions and Beliefs**

The journalist must respect all religions and beliefs.

## **13- Constraints imposed on information**

No information should be altered or deleted as long as it does not contradict the provisions spelled out in the present code.

## **14- Protection of minor children**

The journalist respects the rights of minor children and vulnerable people. He/She should not exploit the frailty or distress of people to provide him/her with information or documents.

## **15- Collegiality**

The journalist refrains from using any publications, or any other communication aid, to settle accounts with his/her colleagues.

## **II- Rights of the journalist**

When doing his/her job, every journalist should claim the following rights:

### **16- Free access to information**

When doing his/her job, the journalist should have access to all forms of information and be authorized to carry out free investigations about all facts that fall within the scope of his/her duties.

### **17- Conscience clause**

When doing his/her job, the journalist is entitled to invoke the clause of conscience. He/She shall not be compelled to undertake any action or express an opinion that might contravene his/her convictions or conscience.

### **18- Protection of the journalist**

The journalist is authorized, without conditions or restrictions, to enjoy the security of his/her physical entity, working equipment, legal protection and the respect of his/her dignity.

### **19- Contract and remunerations**

In addition to the benefits granted to him/her by collective bargaining, the journalist is also entitled to a set of benefits contained in a private work contract that provide him/her with material and moral security, as well as a remuneration that offers him/her economic independence and safety.

The journalist is entitled to decent working conditions as well as to the right to continuous training.