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Journalism education for the 21st century

Roundtable Report

Topic: New models for effective training and resilience building for journalists working in dangerous environments

Host institution: World Journalism Education Council with support from UNESCO

Date: Tuesday 29 June 2021 13:00 -14:00 (London Time)

Guests:

- Diane Foley, mother of James Foley and president of the James Foley Legacy Foundation, USA
- Ayman Mhanna, Executive Director, Samir Kassir Foundation, Lebanon
- Dr Nigel Taylor, International Safety and Security Advisor, British Red Cross and representatives from news safety organisations from around the globe



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Participants

Name of participant	University/ Institution	Country
Colm Murphy	Ulster University	Northern Ireland
Ayman Mhanna	Samir Kassir Foundation	Lebanon
Diane Foley	James Foley foundation Legacy Foundation	USA
Nico Drok	Vice-chair, WJEC	The Netherlands
Leona O'Neill	Ulster University	UK
Michael Napier	Ulster University	UK
Stephen Cargin	International Security Consultant	Northern Ireland
Anne Chevalier	Ulster University	Northern Ireland
Margaret Hughes	Chair, Association for Journalism Education	UK
Dr Marcelle Jwaniat	Yarmouk University	Jordan
Mazen Al Fedawi	Faculty of Media, Middle East University	Jordan
Ola Ogunyemi	University of Lincoln, Trauma Research	UK
Kate Parkinson	Head Set Studio (VR safety training)	UK
Dr Manal Mazahera	Petra University	Jordan
Dr Roderick Orner	Trauma Centre, University of Lincoln	UK
Anthony Val Flynn	European Commission	Brussels
Sami Akeilla	University College of Applied Sciences	Gaza, Palestine
Mohamed Missilmani	Lebanese Canadian University Dept. of Mass Communication, University of	Lebanon
Fassy Yusuf	Journalist association, Lagos	Nigeria
Maria BouZeid	Notre Dame University	Lebanon
Dr Ahmed Meghari	Al Aqsa University	Palestine
Dr Nigel Taylor	British Red Cross	UK



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Summary of discussion

Introduction

The roundtable chair Dr Colm Murphy introducing the event said that the risks to journalists are rising with disasters, epidemics, physical, mental and digital harassment all increasing globally.

Some 1,382 journalists have been killed since 1992 and over 246 are imprisoned. This year alone some 14 have been killed. This has caused a decline in global media freedom and has a detrimental effect on democracy.

To many educators in conflict areas involved in the roundtable like Palestine, Beirut, Jordan, Nigeria and Northern Ireland and elsewhere it may seem there is little we can do to improve the safety of our students and graduates. The little-changed 30-year-old dominant international provision for safety training, the 'military battlefield' model, is used by the world's major news organizations. But this is very expensive and difficult to access and many have found that it no longer serves to mitigate against the real dangers journalists now face. This is because the majority of journalists killed annually are ones working in their own country, who are often who are targeted for assassination. The roundtable, he said, will look at two new models developed for effective safety and resilience training for journalists.

Panel discussion between Diane Foley, Ayman Mhann and Dr Nigel Taylor

In the first 30 minutes of the discussion, Diane Foley, Ayman Mhanna and Dr Nigel Taylor, highlighted the lack of a strong safety culture in journalism and the need to develop a holistic safety vision. As an increasing number of journalists are freelancers, they do not necessarily have the educational background and experiences of larger news agencies that can pay for



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hostile environment first aid courses. That is particularly why it is important to promote a safety curriculum for journalists, such as the one from the James Foley Legacy Foundation or the one developed by Ulster University in all journalist education schools and faculties. Currently, 17 universities in the United States use some parts of the Foley curriculum, and over five hundred students in journalism have been introduced to basic safety skills¹.

All the participants of the panel discussion also agreed on the fact that the current curricula and any initiatives in developing a general environment conducive for a culture of safety in journalism require flexibility and adaptability to the new technologies, the new obstacles, and challenges, as well as the increased threats. Safety in journalism is not just a conflict zone problem, but rather impacts all aspects of journalistic coverage, from protests and civil unrest coverage to investigative journalism, as well as cyberbullying. While many journalists usually recognized major threats such as assassinations, kidnappings, online or ground intimidation, disinformation, or mistrust, they do not necessarily grasp safety in other situations (e.g., safety issues that might happen during demonstrations or during natural disasters). The need for a more comprehensive approach to safety in journalism is much required.

Understanding how the economic cycles around journalism function is another element that was highlighted during the panel discussion. Far from being only a matter for media managers, the establishment of a sustainable economic environment concerns all the actors of the journalistic world and is necessary to reach a state of global security.

Also, the question of developing a worldwide, safe environment for journalism does not stop at translating the material provided by organizations such as the Foley Foundation, but also should be adapted to the very unique situation of every country and region. That is why the Samir Kassir Foundation adapts all the materials to the context of the MENA, which is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists. It is worth noting that the places in the world where the needs are highest are also the places where the supply of knowledge about safety is the weakest. In parallel to the work of the Foley Foundation and the Samir Kassir Foundation, other initiatives such as the one undertaken by Dr Nigel Taylor and the Ulster University aim at providing journalists with essential safety skills. The Humanitarian Holistic model combines and adapts the practice of disaster healthcare workers (in partnership with

¹ The Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is currently one of the leading academic institutions in developing a culture of safety awareness for journalists, piloting a full integration of the modules from the curriculum of the Foley Foundation.



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the British Red Cross), as well as security training with anti-terrorist officers to journalists deploying to hazardous environments. It also included digital safety and cybersecurity.

Eventually, all the participants agreed on the fact that nobody is safe until we have reached a complete and comprehensive vision of holistic safety. This framework encompassing journalism on a global scale requires that all the actors from the public and private sector, to academia, newsrooms, as well as independent journalists and freelancers have this physical, digital, psychosocial, and legal holistic safety awareness and behavior.

Q&A Session

For the last 30 minutes of the roundtable, Samir Kassir Foundation's Karim Safieddine moderated a discussion with participants. Participants addressed a variety of questions including but not restricted to measuring the effectiveness of safety training programmes, adapting the safety curriculum to specific countries, as well as budget concerns.

First, many participants were interested in replicating the safety training/curriculum in their unique environment. Nigeria was used as an example of a complicated country to have safety programmes as it is shaped by “insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and demonstrations.” Also, Northern Ireland had issues related to paramilitary groups that threaten, harass, and intimidate journalists, particularly women journalists. Eventually, it is worth noting that the basics of the ‘safety mindset’ are similar across contexts and the different tools such as having supportive and aware colleagues and a variety of resources at their disposal to protect themselves and their sources start with simple tips that can be easily applicable in many different situations. Specificities need to be addressed, but one should not also forget that the basics of safety measures are pretty much the same.

Another concern raised by the participants was about the effectiveness of training, the grasp of best practices and emerging learning in the field, the gaps in the provision of training, as well as the improvement of the programmes. Working with different providers with proposals adapted to specific needs, using the Connor Davidson resilience index, or using feedback surveys with the delegates are some first steps to continuously update and improve the various safety training programs and tools.

Finally, participants discussed manners in which safety materials are made accessible to



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everyone, especially in universities with low resources and budgets. Providing safety training within the university with various participants such as freelancers, staff reporters and students could significantly lower the overall price for all. Once again, the participants agreed that the key to reaching a global holistic safety in journalism should be achieved by first implementing a culture of safety at the early stage of journalistic education and making sure all the actors are involved while adapting the different variables to every unique situation.

Discussion outcomes/recommendations

To address the challenges of developing an effective safety framework for journalists, participants agreed on several core principles.

First, the Foley Foundation is willing to continue to expand its programme with new partners and improve its free safety education curricula², which serve as the basis for emphasizing the importance of initial/ongoing risk assessment in the field, as well as civil unrest and digital safety. The aim of developing this curricula is to create a culture of safety that raises awareness among all students from the very beginning of their education. Self-care is also an important aspect of the educational programme as many journalists are first responders in times of crises and are potentially facing trauma situations.

Moreover, making available the materials available in English on a worldwide scale by translating and adapting them to regional environments is another requirement to reach global journalism safety. That is why the Samir Kassir Foundation is willing to continue co-operating with the Foley Foundation or the Dart Center at Columbia University (especially in issues related to psychosocial trauma that journalists might face, whether because they are covering conflict or the pandemic). Moreover, the Samir Kassir Foundation reiterated its commitment to protecting the physical safety of human rights defenders and press freedom defenders. Organizations that denounce the kidnapping and arrest of journalists, or unlawful censorship cannot help others get safe if they are not themselves protected. Therefore, building a network and alliances of like-minded institutions that are fighting for safety is

²The education curricula have been undertaken in collaboration with partners from the Alliance for a culture of safety which started in 2015 to protect freelance conflict journalists who were particularly vulnerable. The first course is a graduate-level course composed of three-hour seminars, using the HBO documentary Jim the James Foley story to raise student awareness about the inherent risks of the work of journalists. The curricula are completed by 16 undergraduate safety modules designed to complement or supporting existing courses in any curricula.



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much required. With the development of online harassment, participants also agreed on the need to develop an environment of digital safety within their programmes and policies.

Finally, within the framework of the holistic model, participants agreed on the importance of three different categories of competencies for journalists.

1. Personal competencies which are about the person’s adaptability, self-management in changing environments, personal resilience, leadership, integrity and trust, decision making, problem-solving, time management, and planning
2. Safety competencies such as risk awareness, risk assessment, mind awareness in basic first aid
3. Communication and field skills, which allow journalists to work and operate within hazardous environments and include water purification, sanitation, building, shelter, driving skills

Promotion and visibility of the event

The WJEC used the following visual to promote its event on the different social media and its website:

Photo: Kevin Scott/Bel Tel

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
 Tuesday 29 June 2021 1-2pm, Zoom

Hosted by Dr Colm Murphy, Ulster University, and Ayman Mhanna, Executive Director, Samir Kassir Foundation, Lebanon.

Speakers

Diane Foley, mother of James Foley and of the James Foley Legacy Foundation, USA

John Irvine, Special Correspondent, ITN and ABC News

Ayman Mhanna, Executive Director, The Samir Kassir Foundation, Lebanon

Dr Nigel Taylor, International Safety and Security Advisor, British Red Cross and representatives from news safety organisations from around the globe

The event is part of the Journalism Education for the 21st Century series of global roundtables organised by World Journalism Education



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The event is available on the World Journalism Education Council at the following address:
<https://wjec.net/invitation-to-roundtable-discussion/>

The WJEC, as well as the different partners of the panel discussion created Facebook/Twitter/Instagram posts to promote the event before and after its completion.

6 July 2021