

PRE-ASSIGNMENT SECURITY ASSESSMENT

The Committee to Protect Journalists developed this template from original material prepared by security experts at Human Rights Watch. This template is provided for guidance only. Note that each journalist and news organization faces unique circumstances that will require modifications of this template.

1. ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Identify dates of travel, itinerary, and names of staff members, freelancers, and others (including locally hired consultants) who are participating in the assignment.

2. RISK ANALYSIS

Identify potential security risks associated with carrying out the assignment.

2.1 HOSTILE SUBJECTS

Assess the chances that you, your team, or the local contacts interacting with you on the ground will be targeted for surveillance or attack.

Identify potentially hostile actors, including government authorities, organized crime, rebel groups, and irregular forces. Identify the relative degree of cohesiveness and any prior and possibly relevant hostile actions or attacks.

2.2 LOCATION RISKS

Identify risks associated with reporting in the location. Such risks could include outbreak of hostilities/escalation of conflict; abduction/kidnapping; interactions with hostile authorities (problems crossing borders/checkpoints, arrest, detention); physical or electronic surveillance; confiscation/misuse of sensitive information; health risks; dangers associated with various means of transportation; common crime.

2.3 SECURITY FOR LOCAL CONTACTS

Identify risks that people working or interacting with you (local translators, drivers, sources, witnesses, etc.) may face. Assess the possible actors who could be involved, and include any such prior surveillance, actions, or attacks.

2.4 RESEARCH RISKS

Specifically address the risks associated with conducting your work (conducting interviews, taking photographs, filming, visiting news scenes, obtaining and carrying documents and photographs that may have evidentiary value).

2.5 PROFILES

Explain how your own profile, the profiles of other members of your team, and that of your news organization may increase or decrease the risk.

2.6 INFORMATION RELIABILITY

Explain whether the team has access to the latest security updates for the area, what and who have been the main sources of information for the risk analysis, and the degree to which the available information may be outdated or otherwise limited.

3. PROPOSED MEASURES TO MINIMIZE RISK

Describe measures that will be taken by you, your team, headquarters, and others to minimize the risks associated with carrying out the assignment.

□ **3.1 LODGING**

Identify all hotels, guesthouses, private homes, and other types of accommodation in all locations for the duration of the trip. Explain why the proposed lodging option is considered safe. (Is security present? Is it used by international workers? Is it located in a safe area?) Indicate whether the lodging has functioning communication (phone lines, Internet access). Provide contact information for the lodging.

□ **3.2 TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

Describe transportation arrangements for the trip. If planning to use public transportation or taxis, indicate whether there are any risks associated with this and how they are going to be addressed. If hiring a car, explain how the driver has been or will be selected. Provide the driver's information in **Contacts** section below.

□ **3.3 COMMUNICATION**

Describe whether you or your team will use an international cell phone, local cell phones, satellite phones, land lines, and/or portable radios, and describe any problems associated with the use of each method of communication. (Such problems could include the absence or potential interruption of cell phone coverage in various locations; satellite phone coverage and any legal or security problems in using such phones; and phone surveillance.) Indicate whether the team will have regular Internet access. Identify the best means of communication should the situation on the ground require a detailed follow-up conversation with headquarters.

□ **3.4 PROFILES**

Describe whether you or your team plans to operate with a high or low profile in the country and the measures addressing the risks associated with each approach. Describe how you and your team will enter the country and present yourself at various situations (at the border, at checkpoints, during other interactions with authorities).

If there are any risks associated with the team members' individual profiles (such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual orientation), describe whether and how they can be addressed and whether any additional measures need to be taken to minimize the risks.

□ **3.5 RESEARCH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Describe how you or your team plans to carry out its reporting in a manner safe for you and your subjects. If relevant, indicate whether specific measures are necessary to ensure anonymity of certain subjects and what method will be used to contact subjects to avoid undesirable exposure.

□ **3.6 SECURITY OF INFORMATION**

Specify measures to protect sensitive information while on assignment. Indicate whether you or your team will use electronic devices for information gathering and storage (voice recorders, cameras, computers, etc.) and measures to ensure the security of information in case the devices are confiscated or otherwise compromised, or in case of other unauthorized access to information.

If using only hand-written notes, specify what measures will be taken to protect them from unauthorized access or loss.

□ **3.7 SECURITY OF OTHERS**

Based on the risk analysis above, describe proposed measures to ensure security of people working or otherwise interacting with your team—these include but are not limited to local consultants, interpreters, and drivers.

□ **3.8 OTHER SECURITY MEASURES**

Describe any additional security measures that may be necessary to minimize the risks associated with the mission. These may include measures to address health risks (necessary inoculations, advanced first-aid kits, etc.) and, if relevant, procedures for possible emergency evacuation from the area or country.

□ **4. CHECK-IN PROCEDURES**

Specify check-in procedures for the assignment:

Regularity and times (whether multiple locations, long travel, etc., for each location and travel segment); when indicating time, specify both the time in the area of travel and the time at location where the security check-in person is based.

Method (phone call from landline/cell/sat phone; text messaging; e-mail)

The individuals responsible for security check-in. (When designating such people, consider appropriate time zones, as well as the level of risk associated with the assignment, the volatility of the situation of the ground, and your team's experience performing check-in tasks; if appropriate, designate different team members for different parts of the assignment.)

Procedure for action in case you or your team does not check in. The usual security interval for check-ins is one hour, meaning follow-up action will be taken if after one hour from specified check-in time contact with the team has not been established. Indicate whether a certain segment of the assignment (e.g., border or checkpoint crossing) would require a shorter interval. In addition, specify:

- If an associate is responsible for receiving check-ins, at what point he or she should notify the supervisor;
- If and when the news organization should attempt to reach emergency contacts on the ground;
- What further action the news organization should or should not take (which may include notifying relatives, notifying other media, or contacting the embassy).

□ **5. CONTACTS**

Provide contact information (mobile and landline phone numbers, email addresses) for the following:

- Staff traveling on the assignment
- Staff conducting check-ins
- Supervisors and other back-up contacts in headquarters
- Non-staff participants (consultants, interpreters, drivers)

□ **6. EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

Contacts in-country: (a) indicate a designated in-country security contact (a trusted colleague, for example) who will be kept regularly informed of your plans, movements, and locations; (b) provide a list of additional contacts in the country who would be able to assist the news organization in case of a security incident, loss of contact with the team, or other emergency situation (these may include contacts in relevant embassies, U.N. or humanitarian staff, local NGOs, friendly local officials, and law enforcement authorities).

Other emergency contacts: If available, provide other contacts who would be able to assist the news organization in case of a security incident, loss of contact with the team, or other emergency situation.