

Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct for the Media Sector in Syria

Introduction:

After decades of suppression of freedom of expression and journalism in Syria, the fall of the regime on December 8, 2024, created a significant opportunity to build a sound professional environment, reinforce the values of freedom, and take advantage of this period of openness. It also allows adaptation to the rapid evolution of media tools and addresses the widespread spread of hate speech and misinformation across networks and social media platforms.

For a healthy media environment that balances freedom with responsibility, collective action among all relevant stakeholders is essential to organize the profession at all levels.

This Code of Conduct serves as a reference framework guiding media sector workers, defining their rights and duties, and supporting them in performing their tasks efficiently. It also provides a standard for evaluating their work.

The Code embodies the social responsibility of journalism professionals and clarifies their obligations based on ethical values, standards, laws, and regulations. It defines their duties toward society and all stakeholders affected by or interacting with media work, at both individual and public levels, helping to reduce violations and prevent the misuse of journalistic authority against individuals or society.

The Code includes a set of standards and values that media professionals, institutions, and individuals in the sector must adhere to when collecting, producing, publishing, interpreting, analyzing, and presenting information and opinions, and when engaging with the public.

These standards form the basis for self-assessment and for implementing agreed measures in case of any violations.

The Code applies to media institutions, civil society organizations working in media, journalists, media professionals, content creators, influencers, citizen journalists, and any entity or individual who commits to its provisions and signs it.

Preface:

This Code is founded on the necessity of ensuring freedom of opinion and expression, the public's right to knowledge and access to information, and the right of media professionals to practice their work in accordance with humanitarian, ethical, professional, and social obligations.

It is also based on the principles of media freedom set forth in Article 13 (first paragraph) of the Constitutional Proclamation of the Syrian Arab Republic, issued on March ¹13, 2025. It aligns with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Given the vital role of media and journalism in delivering truth to the public with professionalism and objectivity—without discrimination, bias, exaggeration, or political exploitation—and in supporting development, representing the public in oversight and accountability, and contributing to civil peace, extensive discussions were conducted to establish rules for professional practice in the media sector. These discussions contributed to building a transparent, responsible, and advanced media environment.

Hundreds of journalists, citizen journalists, media institutions, and content creators on social media platforms participated in the discussions, representing independent, official, and private media, alongside members of the public from various social groups.

The participants agreed to adopt a detailed version titled **“Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct for the Media Sector in Syria,”** along with a concise version focusing on core principles under the title **“Honor Charter,”** in addition to an annex specifically for content creators.

Definitions²:

Journalist:

A person who regularly collects news, information, and opinions, verifies and processes them, analyzes or reworks them, with the aim of publishing or transforming them into media content (print, audio, visual, or digital).

¹ Text of the First Paragraph of Article 13 of the Constitutional Proclamation of the Syrian Arab Republic, issued on March 13, 2025:

“The state guarantees freedom of opinion, expression, media, publishing, and journalism.”

² “Functional” Definitions (for the purpose of defining the scope of obligations, not for evaluating individuals)

The journalist provides original content that adheres to professional, ethical, and legal standards, as well as human rights charters, while maintaining independence and responsibility toward the public and the public interest.

Media Professional:

Anyone working in a media institution or publishing platform on which they rely for part of their income, and who participates in producing, directing, or publishing media content—whether through filming, presenting, or management—while adhering to the rules and references of the institution.

Media Activist:

A person with media experience who uses traditional media tools and social media to document events, convey information, express opinions, inform the public, influence public opinion, or support social, political, or economic change.

Citizen Journalist:

A spontaneous witness or contributor who lacks professional media knowledge, reports what they observe without a professional framework or specific objectives, and documents an event or shares information using simple tools, without being a professional, organized, or regular content producer.

Influencer:

A person specialized in a specific intellectual or professional field, who builds a community of followers through social media platforms, traditional media, or public events, and has the ability to exert ongoing influence on their audience's decisions, opinions, attitudes, and behavior, delivering content aimed at shaping perception, awareness, and thought.

Content Creator:

Any person who produces content that involves creative and intellectual elements, requires effort and knowledge in their area of specialization, and is a regular producer. Content may cover areas such as social, economic, political, educational, media, cultural, sports, technological, artistic, religious, environmental, human rights, tourism, psychological, developmental, or public safety topics.

Social Media Content Creator:

Any person who produces original content or republishes existing material, focusing on their personal life, experiences, daily activities, and

spontaneous interactions with others. They rely on social media platforms, often emphasizing emotional engagement, repetition, entertainment, and closeness to the audience, and tend to favor consumer behavior and opinions.

Researcher:

A person specialized in a particular field with academic qualifications, who studies phenomena, challenges, and issues, producing academic or applied research subjected to scientific review, published or documented in recognized journals or research platforms.

Analyst:

A person with an academic degree in their field, possessing expertise and knowledge on a specific topic, capable of interpreting and connecting events and data, and providing opinions grounded in scientific and practical foundations and analytical tools.

Expert:

A person with deep theoretical and methodological knowledge in a specific field, gained through specialized study and extensive practical experience, exceeding ordinary practitioner competency. They have analytical and interpretive skills relevant to their work, enabling them to provide consultations and propose solutions or explanations for complex issues.

Published Material:

Content approved by editorial management and published or broadcast through any of the institution's official channels. This does not include materials under preparation, leaked content prior to publication, or content published by a third party that may have compromised the institution's systems.

Media and Journalistic Institution:

A nationally licensed entity authorized to operate within the Syrian Arab Republic under licenses or exceptions issued by competent state authorities, engaged in disseminating information to the public without restriction. This definition does not include foreign media institutions, even if owned by Syrians, as they are subject to different regulations outside the country.

Platforms, Websites, and Publications:

The means explicitly listed in the institution's license or equivalent official documents, clearly and unambiguously. The institution is

responsible for any platform it uses for publishing and recognizes as an official, legitimate source, and is accountable for the content published through it.

Public Interest:

Any media production or publication aimed at protecting the rights of individuals and groups, enhancing accountability and transparency in finance and administration, exposing corruption and violations, enabling the public to make informed decisions, and supporting stability while respecting diversity.

Civil Peace:

A state of coexistence among all components of society based on equality in rights and dignity, rejecting violence, discrimination, and hate speech. It relies on dialogue, law, and governmental institutions as primary means for resolving disputes, maintaining stability, and fostering loyalty to the nation and shared identity while respecting sub-identities.

Foundations and Sources of the Code:

This Code is based on professional discussions within the Syrian media sector and the Syrian Constitutional Proclamation. It also draws on media principles and ethics outlined in international charters, covenants, and declarations issued by specialized organizations, establishing the foundations that define the professional duties and obligations of institutions and individuals.

Provisions of the Code:

Article One:

Commitment to the rule of law, taking responsibility for societal impact in media discourse, preserving the unity of Syria in land and people, and avoiding producing or circulating any content that may threaten civil peace, weaken social cohesion, or undermine public trust in the media.

Article Two:

Legal and ethical responsibilities of media and journalistic institutions include:

- Media and journalistic institutions are responsible for all content published through their platforms, websites, and publications, in all visual, audio, and written forms.
- Disciplinary actions within the institution must not be based on unverified lists or accusations, and the presumption of innocence

must be respected, while the institution retains the right to temporarily suspend collaboration based on a justified professional risk assessment.

- The responsibility of a journalistic or media institution for its published content is limited to compliance with the national laws in force within the Syrian Arab Republic and refraining from violating them. In cases where these laws are deficient, pointing out or objecting to them does not constitute a legal violation nor is it punishable by law.
- Syrian law shall be applied in defining terms related to criminality, without any distortion, misinterpretation, or use that threatens freedom of expression and the press or leads to any arbitrary measures against media institutions.
- Ethical obligations may exceed the minimum requirements imposed by law when the public interest and the protection of rights so demand.

Article Three: Human Rights

First: Compliance with human rights standards in journalistic practice, with heightened protection for the most vulnerable groups according to United Nations classifications, is not only a legal duty but also an ethical obligation and, above all, a national responsibility.

On this basis, signatories commit to respecting fundamental human rights in accordance with international standards in all forms of journalistic and media coverage.

Signatories also commit to respecting all international charters and covenants ratified by the Syrian Arab Republic, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international legality, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights³, and the International Covenant

³ **Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):**

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right includes the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, whether orally, in writing, in print, in artistic form, or through any other media of their choice.
3. The exercise of the rights set forth in paragraph 2 of this Article carries special duties and responsibilities, and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, provided that such restrictions are established by law and are necessary for:
 - o Respecting the rights and reputations of others.
 - o Protection of national security, public order, public health, or public morals.
 - o Conversely, international law prohibits the publication of any material that incites discrimination, hatred, or violence.

Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

- o The law prohibits any propaganda for war.

on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, along with other conventions that have been adopted or may be signed in the future, also apply. Journalists and media professionals must observe these values and principles when covering issues affecting the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in society, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, while fully respecting international charters, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states.

Accordingly, adherence to human rights is considered part of compliance with national law, as well as a commitment to the humanitarian values and principles that journalists and media professionals must uphold. Since human rights are universal, comprehensive, and guaranteed to every individual, respecting them is a natural extension of journalistic work.

Human rights protect journalists and media professionals, freedom of expression and the press, and the right to publish and produce content. Respecting these rights is therefore essential, as they provide the foundation for practicing journalism freely, safely, and without fear or threat. This respect also ensures the protection of the rights of all individuals without discrimination or exception.

Signatories' obligations regarding human rights are defined based on a set of nationally and internationally recognized charters and documents, which are not in conflict but may differ in the prioritization of rights according to each country's culture and needs.

Given Syria's history over past decades, particularly the fourteen years of violations and foreign interventions, respect for human rights is both urgent and vital. Embedding human rights values in media work is a priority for Syrian journalism, alongside respect for international conventions, including principles of sovereignty and independence of other states.

The press is committed to freedom of expression and the right to access information, provided this is exercised within limits that protect the rights of others and uphold public peace.

- The law prohibits any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.

Second: Definitions and Obligations

Most Vulnerable Groups:

These are groups exposed to higher risks of harm, discrimination, or exploitation, requiring additional protection in media coverage.

Vulnerable and marginalized groups (according to United Nations classifications) include children, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons, religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, the homeless, and economically disadvantaged individuals. The press has a responsibility to provide balanced coverage of these groups, avoiding bias or marginalization.

1. Children:

For the purposes of this Code, a child is any person under the age of eighteen. This definition applies even if it differs from other legal or customary definitions. Signatories commit to the following regarding children:

- When determining the child's best interests, their opinions must be considered according to their age and level of maturity.
- It is necessary to consult with those closest to the child who can assess the political, social, and cultural implications of any report concerning them.
- Refrain from publishing any story or image that could endanger the child, their siblings, or peers, even when identities are altered, obscured, or omitted.
- Children must not be exploited in content primarily aimed at increasing views or generating profit in ways that compromise their dignity, privacy, or physical and mental well-being.
- Do not photograph children or adolescents in situations of crying, fear, domestic violence, extreme poverty, or degrading conditions, nor in contexts of sexual violence, harassment, forced recruitment, economic exploitation, begging, or honor-related issues. If social necessity requires photographing, all identifying features of the child must be obscured.
- When using any visual materials, the identity of children should be fully concealed, including full names, schools, addresses, or any information that could allow them to be identified.
- Do not ask shocking, suggestive, or pressuring questions that may trigger trauma in children, particularly in contexts of violence and conflict. Interactions must be age-appropriate and sensitive to the child's psychological state and abilities.

- When publishing digital content, assess the potential impact of its persistence in the digital environment on the child's future and any possible long-term harm.
- Children's social media accounts must not be used as content sources without informed consent from a parent or guardian, even if the accounts are public.
- Children who produce content and have a large audience must never be treated as "public figures"; they must always be regarded as children deserving enhanced protection.
- If signatories, by virtue of their work, become aware of a child at risk of harm, violence, or exploitation, no details may be published. Efforts must be made to protect the child, report the case to the competent authorities, and document internal institutional procedures.

2. Persons with Disabilities:

The term "persons with disabilities" refers to individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that may limit their full and effective participation in society, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international conventions, which recognize that every individual is entitled to enjoy all rights and freedoms without discrimination.

Any media content that discriminates against persons with disabilities or fails to promote their fundamental rights and respect for their inherent dignity is contrary to ethical journalism values and the core principles of journalistic practice in all its forms.

Support for persons with disabilities is achieved through a sustainable, multi-faceted approach. Accordingly, signatories commit to the following:

1. Refrain from publishing, producing, or sharing any content about persons with disabilities that does not promote:
 - Awareness of the abilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.
 - Recognition and respect for their rights.
 - Positive perceptions of their presence and role in society.
 - Acknowledgment of their skills, competencies, and contributions in workplaces and labor markets.
 - A culture of respect for differences, accepting persons with disabilities as a natural part of human diversity.

2. Do not use persons with disabilities as symbols of pity or tools for emotional manipulation, and ensure they are not marginalized in general media coverage.

3. Women's Rights:

Signatories must adopt a pro-women stance and encourage governments and civil society organizations to support building a society free from discrimination against women. Any form of gender-based discrimination, exclusion, or restriction undermines women's recognition of human rights and fundamental freedoms across all domains, regardless of marital status, and impedes their full enjoyment of rights on an equal basis with men before the law.

Signatories commit to:

- Ensuring objective representation of women in media, both in content and staffing.
- Avoid producing content that confines women to stereotypical roles.
- Exposing violations against women.
- Supporting broader participation of women in political and economic life.
- Promoting equitable access to healthcare services.
- Promoting equal access to education across all levels.
- Avoiding language that diminishes women's status (e.g., "women are weak" or "their natural place").

Stereotypes are a major mechanism of discrimination, shaping public opinion that justifies daily discriminatory practices against women and facilitates gender-based violence. Such stereotypes often depict women in domestic or aesthetic roles, while portraying men as competent leaders in professional and political spheres. Stereotypes are defined here as "generalized preconceptions about the traits, characteristics, or roles assumed to belong to women or men."

3. Rights of Patients, Injured Persons, and Victims:

Signatories commit to:

- Respecting and protecting the privacy of patients and the injured in their homes and public spaces.
- Avoiding filming inside hospitals or operating rooms except in extreme necessity, and only with consent from the patient or their guardians.

- Not displaying images of patients or the injured in a humiliating or shocking manner, while respecting their human condition.
- Not photographing psychiatric patients without considering their feelings and those of their families, respecting their special sensitivities.

Human dignity extends to living and deceased victims, requiring the avoidance of circulating images of the deceased in the media in ways that violate their sanctity. Signatories must:

- Refrain from showing images of victims being retrieved from debris unless all body details are obscured or concealed.
- Images of rescued survivors may be published, provided their dignity is respected, and any physical disfigurements are blurred or obscured.
- Avoid showing images or videos of victims in situations of violence or abuse in a humiliating manner; only still images may be used in bulletins, segments, or news programs, and such content must not be used in artistic works or promotional materials.
- Refrain from displaying images or clips that capture people in extreme distress or unconscious reactions during moments of hardship, to prevent harm or humiliation.

4. Persons Living in Poverty or Vulnerable Conditions

Signatories commit to:

- Respect the human dignity of the poor, displaced persons, and residents of camps, as well as those who have lost homes due to extreme poverty, conflict, disasters, disability, or lack of documentation. Avoid producing content that exploits their circumstances for sensationalism, entertainment, political or economic promotion, or material or moral gain.
- Avoid demeaning language, stereotyping, or commodifying vulnerable individuals, and refrain from linking poverty to negative traits or assigning blame for their circumstances.
- Highlight their issues by explaining the causes and conditions that led to their situation, presenting their experiences in a way that respects dignity, rights, and fairness.
- When photographing vulnerable persons for societal necessity or public interest, obtain informed consent, clarify the purpose and placement of publication, avoid photographing children and women in humiliating situations, and do not pressure them or offer gifts, money, or incentives for sharing their stories.

- Provide vulnerable groups sufficient space to express themselves with their own voice, presenting them as rights-holders and active members of society, rather than objects of pity.
- Protect any information that may expose these groups to danger or retaliation, unless disclosure is necessary for the public interest.
- Content involving these groups must not be used in political, propaganda, or marketing campaigns. If necessary for international response or governmental plans, campaigns must clearly link to their rights and proposed solutions.
- When conflicts arise between the public's right to know and the privacy rights of vulnerable groups, signatories must adhere to the principle of minimizing harm, respecting human dignity, and seeking solutions that protect the rights of both parties.
- Humanitarian or charitable assistance must not be portrayed in humiliating ways, including images of food or money distribution that show beneficiaries in degrading lines, force them to thank donors on camera, or use scenes of poverty and suffering to highlight the publisher.
- Avoid exploiting the circumstances of the poor, patients, or vulnerable persons to generate engagement or popularity under the guise of highlighting their suffering.

Article Four: Duties and Ethical Standards

This article outlines the set of rules and values that media institutions and sector professionals must follow, balancing freedom of the press with the responsibility to provide information transparently and responsibly to the public, society, and the public interest, while respecting individual rights and dignity.

I. Hate Speech

Hate speech represents one of the most dangerous abuses of freedom of expression. Addressing it does not conflict with free expression; in fact, the most harmful hate campaigns often coincide with efforts to suppress free speech by silencing targeted communities or preventing the media from exposing the actions of hate disseminators.

Hate speech often originates from provocative statements, such as a political speech, a social media post by a public figure, or a cartoon, and its effects are amplified through repeated circulation by various actors over extended periods.

It can ignite societal crises when enabling conditions exist, whether due to security, economic, political, or psychological factors, particularly in

polarized societies. The most impactful forms are repeated messages propagated by multiple sources over time, often unnoticed until they escalate near human rights violations.

Historical experience shows that calls for social violence frequently emerge from a prior accumulation of repeated hate speech, much of which initially passes without public concern.

Media represents the first line of defense against attempts to destabilize security, societal peace, and vulnerable groups. Accordingly, it must refrain from engaging in hate speech and work to combat and expose its dangers.

International law prohibits hate speech. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

"Any propaganda for war or any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law."

Hate speech is a real threat because it fosters division, fuels violence, and undermines social cohesion. To ensure that combating hate speech does not undermine public freedoms, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights proposed the "Rabat Plan of Action," providing guidance with a six-part test for identifying prohibited hate speech:

- Social and political context.
- Status and influence of the speaker.
- Intent to incite against a targeted group.
- Content and form of the speech.
- Reach and audience exposure.
- Likelihood or imminence of harm.

Definition of Hate Speech:

Hate speech is defined as any content—verbal, visual, audio, or behavioral—that incites hatred, violence, discrimination, or exclusion against an individual or group based on identity (religion, nationality, ethnicity, race, color, regional affiliation, gender, language, disability, political or social affiliation, customs, traditions, dress, or dialect), or that dehumanizes, demeans, or diminishes their inherent value.

Forms of Hate Speech:

1. Discrimination
2. Defamation, denigration and humiliation

3. Racism, exclusion, and collective marginalization
4. Stereotyping or group stigmatization
5. Dehumanization: describing a group in ways that make them seem less than human, facilitating public acceptance of violence against them
6. Incitement, reverse threat, blame, or explicit calls for violence or exclusion
7. Distortion, erasure, or denial

1. Discrimination:

Hate speech arises when the concepts of "us" versus "them" are used within a society. Excluding a group from the inclusive "we" fosters feelings of non-recognition, and the "other" is treated as an adversary or obstacle.

Discrimination occurs when individuals or groups are considered superior or given preferential treatment based on color, gender, religion, race, or other characteristics, leading to the exclusion or diminishment of the rights of others. This includes calls or hints at acts or practices that may not be explicitly criminalized under Syrian law but aim to prevent individuals or groups from enjoying their full rights as provided in national laws and human rights standards, including recognition of cultural/linguistic identity, union rights, access to public services, and rights of persons with disabilities.

Commitments of Signatories:

- Refrain from any form of discrimination among audiences based on religion, sect, creed, race, language, gender, culture, or color.
- Treat all human beings with dignity and without bias, particularly when covering victims.
- Prohibit discriminatory language in media content, including offensive, biased, or demeaning expressions.
- Avoid unprofessional prioritization or biased coverage favoring one group over another in public matters.
- Do not justify or promote discrimination under the pretext of belief, culture, or custom.
- Do not ignore or marginalize the voices or interests of specific societal groups, or present them as lesser.
- Discrimination among individuals or groups—whether negative or positive—is prohibited when it results in elevating one group in a manner that diminishes, demeans, or devalues another group. An exception applies only when differentiation is intended to remedy

an injustice suffered by a particular group, provided that it does not violate the rights of others, cause harm or offense, and is presented within a clear critical context for a legitimate journalistic or informational purpose, with statements placed in their proper context and their content explicitly condemned when necessary.

- Prevent discrimination at all stages of media production (guest selection, sources, headlines, images, videos, coverage angles).
- Ensure the right of reply, correction, or apology to those directly or indirectly subjected to discrimination.
- Signatories and affiliated individuals must not use personal accounts to publish discriminatory, hateful, or inciting opinions.
- Objective criticism of parties or groups is permitted only if it avoids generalized negative statements about members, does not deprive them of rights, and does not endanger or harm anyone's dignity.
- When reporting offensive or discriminatory statements, present them in context and clarify that the institution rejects and does not endorse them.
- Avoid mocking rights such as education, civic participation, public employment, or governmental functions.

2. Defamation, Denigration, and Humiliation:

- All forms of defamation, denigration, or humiliation against individuals, groups, institutions, or bodies must be avoided.
- **Defamation:** Any public expression targeting others (individuals or groups) that includes insults or contempt, attributed with degrading or insulting traits unrelated to a specific fact.
- **Denigration:** Publicly attributing claims to an individual or group that, if true, could subject them to punishment or contempt (e.g., accusing someone of theft, bribery, or sexual assault), whether expressed verbally, in writing, or visually.

Humiliation:

Humiliation is any statement, writing, drawing, image, gesture, or public expression that diminishes the respect due to others, whether individuals or groups. Media professionals must refrain from publishing any material containing defamation, denigration, or humiliation against individuals or groups, including public figures.

Signatories commit to:

- Avoiding direct insults or offensive and degrading expressions that violate human dignity for any individual or group.

- Refraining from defamation and unverified accusations; allegations of corruption, misconduct, or crime must not be published or repeated without reliable evidence or clear judicial investigation.
- Preventing personal attacks and targeting individuals' reputations through offensive descriptions or expressions unrelated to public interest.
- Prohibiting mockery, sarcasm, or ridicule aimed at insulting persons, groups, or institutions.
- Preventing collective denigration and the generalization of negative traits to an entire group or institution based on the behavior of an individual or a specific incident.
- Avoiding deliberate media distortion by misrepresenting statements or positions of individuals or institutions that harms their image or reputation.
- Preventing arbitrary defamation against public or private institutions or civil society organizations without supporting documents or objective reasoning.

Harm and Damage:

Signatories must exercise caution to ensure that published content does not cause psychological, physical, or financial harm to the audience, or damage their interests, whether intentionally or unintentionally, unless justified by public interest and when no alternative means exist.

Commitments regarding harm:

- Warning the audience when presenting clips or audio that may cause discomfort, distress, or trigger painful memories.
- Exercising care when producing content in civilian areas affected by military operations to avoid revealing locations or private details that could endanger residents.
- During coverage in security operation zones or crime scenes, avoid displaying identifiable features of private property, such as shop signs or vehicle numbers, to prevent potential harm to owners.

3. Racism:

Any media speech or practice that reinforces or assumes superiority, inferiority, or otherness, or that directly or indirectly incites restriction of rights, harm, or violation of equality in dignity and rights, or justifies unequal opportunities based on religion, nationality, ethnicity, race, color, regional affiliation, gender, language, disability, or political or social affiliation, is considered racist.

Racism undermines human values and media's role in raising awareness, promoting justice, equality, and constructive public opinion. It deepens societal divisions and directly harms targeted groups.

Signatories commit to:

- Avoiding derogatory or stereotypical statements or words that demean individuals or groups based on the affiliations mentioned.
- Refraining from calls for exclusion, isolation, expulsion, or denial of rights based on identity.
- Avoiding linking an individual's ethnicity, religion, or sect to crimes or negative behavior without clear journalistic justification.
- When reporting racist statements, present them in critical context, clarify rejection, and highlight accountability of the speaker.
- Not providing repeated platforms to individuals known for promoting supremacy based on affiliation.
- Complying with national law and international anti-racism standards.
- Raising public awareness of the dangers of racism, including its potential to incite hatred, contempt, and the exclusion of others, putting them at risk.

4. Stereotyping:

Stereotyping is describing an individual, group, or social, cultural, religious, or gender category with traits aimed at diminishing their value, influencing public reactions, or reducing an individual or group to a limited set of exaggerated or offensive characteristics, which distorts their true image.

Signatories commit to:

- Maintaining objectivity and accuracy when describing individuals, groups, or peoples, avoiding generalization or attribution of traits, especially negative ones.
- Avoiding repeated references to traits associated with a group without professional justification and avoiding exaggeration that may embed in public perception.
- Refraining from generalizing individual behaviors or limited cases to entire groups, peoples, or regions.
- Raising public awareness of the risks of stereotyping and its role in fostering hatred, rejection, contempt, and exclusion, which may endanger targeted groups.
- Avoiding words or phrases that carry negative, insulting, or demeaning generalizations about individuals or groups.

- Preventing all forms of hate speech that damage the reputation of individuals, groups, or communities.
- Avoid language that reinforces racial, religious, or cultural segregation, and use precise wording that reflects reality without preconceived judgments.
- Avoid visual or narrative stereotyping, such as consistently depicting certain groups in degrading situations or representing women in limited stereotypical images, while emphasizing the positive contributions of all groups.
- Do not produce content that reinforces negative, mocking, or humiliating images of groups frequently stigmatized, such as persons with disabilities, patients, refugees, sexual minorities, or workers in certain occupations.
- Verify published content to ensure it contains no racist or stereotypical insinuations.
- Diversify guests and speakers and seek positive stories that break stereotypes.

5. Dehumanization:

Dehumanization occurs when human groups are classified as undeserving of the same rights, under claims of being less civilized or morally deficient. Historically, comparing groups to animals or “savages” has been central to oppressive ideologies and regimes practicing collective violence, from colonialism and slavery to wars and genocide. It also appears in portraying certain groups as outsiders, justifying their exclusion from moral consideration.

Signatories commit to:

- Avoid classifying human groups as undeserving of equal rights with other groups or implying any symbolic diminishment of their value.
- Refrain from using offensive traits or comparisons for any human group.
- Do not categorize groups within society as outsiders as long as the law grants them citizenship or legal residence in the country.

6. Incitement, reverse threat, and blame:

Incitement:

Calls to violent action are among the most dangerous forms of hate speech, potentially leading from individual attacks to executions and even genocide. Events that provoke anger are often exploited to frame

narratives urging internal groups to act “to protect” themselves or their loved ones. Once hate speech convinces the public that a target group is inherently different, responsible for problems, undeserving of equal rights, and an existential threat, promoters of hatred can ignite violence. Such incitement constitutes a crime under international human rights law.

Reverse threat:

This tactic persuades people to harm a particular group by inverting the reality of threat. Hate campaigns claim that one group is conspiring to oppress or harm another, when the opposite is true, inciting the audience to “defend themselves” against alleged dangers.

Blame:

Hate speech arises when a group is unfairly held responsible for social, economic, health, or cultural crises. Politicians and populist journalists often use this tactic to channel public resentment toward marginalized groups, such as migrants. This blame is frequently built on prior stereotypes and conveyed through narratives portraying these groups as untrustworthy or selfish, which, through repetition and rumor, can evolve into conspiracy theories.

Signatories commit to:

- Refrain from calling for violent action, including inciting an individual, group, or internal/external entity to use force (physical harm, executions, genocide, deprivation of liberty) against any person or internal group.
- Refrain from inciting the public to act under the pretext of “self-defense” against alleged threats.
- Refrain from holding any group, community, or individual responsible for economic, health, or social problems without evidence.

7. Erasure, denial, distortion:

This pattern involves suppressing or denying established facts related to serious human rights violations committed against a particular group, often by perpetrators and their supporters. Historical examples include propaganda claiming that territories seized by colonizers were uninhabited, or dominant groups refusing to acknowledge the existence or names of targeted communities.

Denial:

Any attempt to negate established facts about genocide or mass atrocities,

which is prohibited under several legislations, alongside criminalizing glorification of the perpetrators.

Distortion:

Downplaying or re-framing acts of genocide and mass atrocities in a way that minimizes their severity, weakens accountability, or erases them from public memory.

Even when such expressions do not contain explicit extremist language, they constitute hate speech because they serve the purpose of misrepresentation to insult or harm.

Signatories commit to:

- Avoid glorifying perpetrators of crimes.
- Avoid glorifying periods of oppression experienced by Syrians under the previous Syrian regime, particularly massacres and crimes committed since 2011 or earlier.
- Avoid re-framing acts of genocide and mass atrocities in ways that diminish their gravity.
- Avoid insulting the collective memory of communities subjected to crimes against humanity.
- Avoid distorting the image of victims or minimizing their suffering.
- Avoid portraying perpetrators as role models.
- Avoid justifying ongoing discrimination, exclusion, or hostility.

Media tools to combat hate speech:

1. Verification:

Verifying information before publication is the most important tool against hate speech, which often relies on misinformation.

Journalistic speed or publishing pressure must not precede fact-checking and source validation, and the right of reply must be provided. Unverified information must be explicitly labeled as such, applying the principle of “preemptive protection” of the audience against misinformation.

2. Respect for diversity:

Respecting diversity and acknowledging all communities, their cultures, values, and beliefs is essential in combating hate speech. Language used should be precise, non-provocative, and non-stereotypical when referring to religious, ethnic, gender, or cultural affiliations.

3. Avoiding stereotypes:

Avoid stereotypes that attribute specific traits to any group, and adopt methods that consider sensitivity to unconscious stereotypes and outdated assumptions when presenting content.

4. Representing all parties:

Signatories should represent different stakeholders, not just leaders or majorities, and give a voice to those unable to express themselves. Comprehensive reporting must present perspectives from all affected groups and avoid adopting a single-sided view.

5. Excluding extremist and emotional voices:

Refrain from highlighting extreme or emotional opinions, as such voices often receive disproportionate media attention relative to their actual size, while moderate voices are overlooked. Extremist positions attract attention, resulting in their views being generalized within society and reinforcing fear and hatred.

6. Caution with Inciting Content on Social Media:

Media outlets must not treat emotional or inciting posts on social media as a true representation of public opinion. Comments and opinions on these platforms are often unrepresentative and inauthentic due to the digital divide and platform algorithms that prioritize reach over accuracy and moderation. Signatories must exercise caution when citing or sharing such opinions.

7. Avoiding Exaggeration that Fosters Hatred:

Signatories must avoid exaggeration or value judgments when describing events or phenomena. This helps prevent reactions that fuel hatred, reduces harm, and avoids misleading the audience or prompting false assumptions.

8. Avoiding Harmful or Sensational Headlines:

Media must refrain from using provocative headlines that appeal to base instincts or sensitivities in ways that fuel hatred for the purpose of attracting audiences.

Defamation and Falsehood:

Deliberate lying, misrepresenting facts, or selectively presenting information must be avoided, as must attributing violations or crimes to others without legal proof or judicial rulings.

- **Falsehood (Fabrication):** Creating or inventing events or statements and attributing them to others without factual basis.

- **Defamation (Slander/Libel):** Accusing someone of a crime without justification, which infringes on their dignity, reputation, and honor, and may mislead the judiciary or society, leading to unjust decisions or social consequences.

Signatories commit to:

- Avoid deliberately lying, distorting, or selectively presenting facts, or making unfounded accusations.
- Avoid assuming violations or attributing crimes to others without legal proof or clear judicial rulings.
- Exercise caution regarding the legal consequences of defamation or false accusations against individuals or groups.

Respect for Freedom of Thought, Belief, and Expression:

- **Freedom of Thought:** The right to hold personal beliefs and opinions, and to adopt perspectives or reasoning across fields, provided these do not threaten others, contribute to discrimination, incite hatred or violence, exclude groups, deny rights, or undermine civil peace.
- **Freedom of Belief:** The right to practice or abstain from religious observance peacefully, consistent with human dignity, without coercion, persecution, or deprivation of rights based on religious or ideological affiliation.
- **Freedom of Expression:** The right to express opinions, ideas, and positions through writing, media, art, assemblies, and peaceful demonstrations, without fear of punishment or discrimination, provided such expression does not incite hatred, violence, or infringe on others' rights.

Signatories commit to:

- Refrain from publishing or promoting any form of hate speech, incitement to violence, or discrimination based on religion, sect, ideology, or opinion.
- Avoid contemptuous or mocking language toward any religious, ideological, or political belief.
- Refrain from imposing ideological, religious, or political views on the public through media content.
- Avoid misrepresenting individuals or groups based on their beliefs, ideology, or political positions.

Specifically:

- Do not disclose any personal information related to an individual's beliefs, ideology, or political affiliation without explicit consent.
- Do not exclude or silence opposing opinions, provided they do not incite violence or violate the law.
- Do not promote religious or sectarian rhetoric aimed at delegitimizing or negating others' beliefs.
- Religious and doctrinal issues may be discussed for educational, dialogical, or critical scholarly purposes, using respectful and responsible language.
- Deliberate dissemination of false, partial, or misleading news under the guise of "freedom of expression" is prohibited.

4. Respect for Religious, Cultural, and Societal Values:

Respecting religious, cultural, and social norms is a professional and ethical duty that preserves social cohesion, fosters coexistence, and enriches diversity. Ignoring these values can lead to societal clashes, dangerous polarization, and potential conflicts, undermining the media's role as a tool for communication, understanding, and peace.

UNESCO's 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, affirm that freedom of expression does not justify offense to beliefs or customs and requires responsible practice that respects religious and cultural diversity within communities.

Community Sensitivity refers to the collective beliefs, traditions, and religious, cultural, and social symbols that shape society's interaction with media content and form a fundamental part of Syria's social and cultural reality.

Signatories commit to:

- Refrain from publishing or circulating content that insults or mocks beliefs, rituals, religious symbols, culture, customs, or attire.
- Approach religious topics with respect, objectivity, and understanding, avoiding preconceived judgments.
- Carefully choose language, exercise extreme caution when covering religious issues, and encourage specialized journalists to handle such topics.
- Evaluate imagery and terms that could be perceived as disrespectful toward religions, beliefs, or traditions.

- Present customs and traditions respectfully, emphasizing their role as part of cultural identity and encouraging respect.
- Highlight cultural and linguistic diversity as elements of human enrichment, including historical and social dimensions.
- Depict social practices (weddings, cuisine, traditional clothing, funerals, holidays) as essential elements of cultural diversity that strengthen social cohesion.
- Avoid attributing societal backwardness, economic decline, or human rights violations solely to a custom; address harmful practices carefully and promote correction through awareness campaigns.
- Avoid provoking or offending community sentiments or criticizing entrenched customs disrespectfully.
- Highlight socially contested issues (e.g., women's rights, child marriage) responsibly, considering social and legal dimensions.
- Balance freedom of expression with respect for local societal norms.
- During field coverage, respect local conventions regarding dress, posture, and manner of speech.
- Avoid reporting events that incite hatred against groups based on their community background, culture, or customs.
- Refrain from publishing pornographic or obscene content.
- Present diverse perspectives on religious, societal, or cultural issues and verify accuracy while ensuring content is not offensive or harmful to any group.
- Do not use customs or religious symbols to attract attention or engagement at the expense of community respect and social peace.
- Exercise precision in content related to religions, ethnicities, customs, and local cultures, distinguishing historical practices from contemporary contexts.
- Consult local experts or researchers on culture and society when necessary to understand context, avoid applying preconceived judgments, and include multiple perspectives rather than reducing an entire community to one opinion or image.

Producing Content on Religious and Societal Issues:

When producing content on sensitive religious, cultural, or societal issues, signatories commit to:

- Respecting sacred spaces and camera angles, and avoiding turning rituals into entertainment or mockery.
- Exercising caution when covering religious ceremonies, celebrations, funerals, or highly sensitive occasions (holidays,

mourning events, special rituals) to respect their context and privacy.

- Distinguishing between legitimate critique of customs, laws, or practices that perpetuate injustice, discrimination, or violations, and disparagement through mockery, insult, or humiliation.
- Providing space for diverse opinions on sensitive topics, ensuring neither conservative nor liberal views dominate alone, thereby guaranteeing balanced coverage without offending any party.
- Exercise caution with events (religious, national, symbolic) that carry strong emotional significance, as mocking or ridiculing them at certain times may inflame tensions and harm social peace and the public interest.
- When a socially sensitive issue conflicts with human rights principles, present the rights while respecting human dignity and using language that reduces tension and avoids fueling polarization.

5. Covering Conflict and Transitional Justice:

Establishing professional and ethical standards for conflict-sensitive journalism and transitional justice helps consolidate peace and convey truth during coverage of trials linked to transitional justice and internal conflicts. Covering societal, cultural, religious disputes, political crises, and wars is highly sensitive; irresponsible reporting can increase violence, deepen divisions, or incite audiences, emotions, and mobilization that may lead to crime and fighting.

Signatories, when covering transitional justice trials or conflicts, commit to:

- Respect the presumption of innocence and avoid portraying accused individuals as criminals before judicial verdicts, allowing them to defend themselves and referring to them as suspects or accused.
- Provide sufficient space for victims and survivors while avoiding harm and not undermining peace processes.
- Avoid reducing victims to statistics; always highlight their humanity, stories, and impact.
- Avoid justifying violations or downplaying their significance, ensuring coverage does not provoke revenge.
- Refrain from publishing unverified claims of crimes.
- Conceal the identities of witnesses, victims, and detainees during court coverage, explaining the reason to the audience.

- Avoid disclosing personal details of witnesses, victims, perpetrators, or their affiliations and residences.
- Do not glorify perpetrators of violations in media content, entertainment, series, panels, opinion pieces, or research.
- Cover transitional justice processes (truth commissions, trials, reparations) with high accuracy and balance, ensuring no negative impact arises from coverage.
- Provide space for victims from all sides without equating criminals and victims from the same side, while preserving victims' rights.
- Avoid producing content during trials aimed at influencing proceedings or outcomes.

When covering conflicts, signatories commit to:

- Avoid promoting law violations or reclaiming rights by force under sympathy for war or crisis victims.
- Do not support, glorify, or promote terrorism or organized crime, nor display their symbols triumphantly.
- Provide affected parties (civilians, organizations, victims) space to voice their perspectives.
- Avoid publishing or repeating statements that incite violence, discrimination, or revenge.
- Focus on peace-oriented narratives and historical, social, and political contexts, promoting inclusive discourse and avoiding narratives depicting one side as absolute victim and the other as absolute perpetrator.
- Verify sources and guests' agendas before granting them media platforms.
- Avoid producing content that justifies or portrays violence as a legitimate solution.
- Highlight positive actions that support dialogue, reconciliation, and humanitarian efforts.
- During conflicts, emphasize stories of coexistence, solutions, and positive alternatives instead of amplifying hate speech and division.

Media institutions should ensure their editorial policies include:

- Requiring multiple approvals or ethics committees for publishing highly sensitive material.
- Explaining local laws and international charters regarding hate speech.

- Expanding internal accountability mechanisms for journalists who engage in hate speech.
- Preparing lists of prohibited terms, phrases, and actions, with suggested professional alternatives.

6. Diversity:

Promoting diversity within institutions, content, and recruitment enhances institutional credibility, comprehensive coverage, content quality, audience reach, and sustainability. Syrian society is multi-component, and media practices must respect this diversity; marginalization or exclusion fosters hatred and weakens public trust. Diversity should be leveraged to enrich knowledge and strengthen social cohesion.

Institutions and signatories commit to:

- Implement human resources policies that do not discriminate based on gender, origin, region, disability, national, religious, or political affiliation.
- Represent vulnerable groups, according to UN classifications, in newsrooms and decision-making positions.
- Ensure a work environment free of bullying, mockery, or discrimination.
- Foster professional dialogue and respect for differences.
- Promote diversity in sources, geographic coverage, and societal components within content.
- Link internal diversity policies to coverage policies to ensure different backgrounds result in multiple perspectives and topics, not division.
- Treat all individuals from a perspective of citizenship and equality.
- Adopt editorial policies and language that respect diversity and highlight positive stories across all societal components.

7. Justice:

Justice is a fundamental principle based on equality in rights and duties, ensuring fairness among all individuals and groups without discrimination, holding those who violate laws or infringe on rights accountable, and protecting the weak and marginalized, thereby maintaining social balance and human dignity.

8. Social and Global Peace:

Social Peace:

Social peace is the state of peaceful coexistence among community

components, founded on mutual respect, recognition of diversity, and rejection of violence, discrimination, and exclusion. It strengthens societal security, prevents internal conflicts, ensures community unity and stability, and prohibits glorifying perpetrators of serious violations, war crimes, or militia leaders in interactive/entertainment media or improving their image under superficial humanitarian justifications.

Global Peace:

Global peace is cooperation and understanding among nations and peoples, free from war, aggression, and domination, promoting human rights, international justice, and solidarity in facing shared challenges such as poverty, disasters, and climate change.

Media is prohibited from:

- Inciting violence or war through content promoting armed conflict, civil strife, or inter-state wars.
- Fomenting sectarian, ethnic, national, or political divisions that threaten social peace.
- Justifying war crimes, human rights violations, or any form of oppression or injustice.
- Treating hate speech, discrimination, or exclusion as “free opinion” or granting it equal space with peaceful discourse.
- Deliberately undermining peace efforts or local/international initiatives aimed at justice, reconciliation, and peace.
- Promoting revenge, retaliation, or use of force as a means to resolve conflicts over dialogue and negotiation.
- Exhibiting bias in conflict coverage that legitimizes aggression, injustice, or marginalizes victims, contrary to principles of justice and fairness.

Media must respect international charter principles protecting human dignity, rights of persons with disabilities, minors, women, children, and combat human trafficking. Media must uphold justice, social and global peace, promoting coexistence and human rights, while refraining from justifying violence, discrimination, violations, or inciting conflict.

Article Five: Professional Standards

I. Balance and Fairness:

Balance and fairness require media professionals to maintain a professional distance from all parties involved, avoid bias toward any

individual or group, and present information objectively, independent of personal opinions or assumptions.

Balance does not mean giving unverified claims or hate speech equal space with documented facts, nor presenting two perspectives when one is based on misinformation or denial.

Failure to maintain balance constitutes manipulation of public knowledge, a breach of professional and ethical responsibility, and undermines public trust in media institutions. Maintaining impartial coverage is essential to preserve trust and prevent media from becoming propaganda platforms.

Balance is achieved by providing a comprehensive and clear picture of events and topics, presenting multiple perspectives without exclusion or bias, enabling audiences to form informed opinions based on complete and reliable information.

Signatories commit to ensuring balance, fairness, and impartiality by:

- **Equity:** Presenting core arguments and data from all parties to give the audience a fair and comprehensive understanding.
- **Objectivity:** Avoiding preconceived judgments, relying on verified facts, and maintaining accuracy.
- **Impartiality:** Refraining from taking predetermined stances and ensuring justice and balance in reporting, presenting multiple viewpoints while avoiding personal opinions.
- Handling sensitive issues (religion, politics, human relations, sexual practices, complex financial matters) with utmost accuracy and objectivity, avoiding personal biases.
- Providing genuine balance in presenting opposing and supporting views, covering a wide spectrum of opinions, and not omitting essential data.
- Avoiding exclusive focus on one side and presenting only a single perspective.
- Ensuring opinions are balanced and not allowing gaps that compromise coverage objectivity.
- Avoiding coverage methods that harm or exclude parts of the audience.
- Treating participants fairly and enabling them to answer questions.
- Providing post-publication right of reply to parties whose views were excluded or not represented.
- Not assuming neutrality of experts, academics, or participants; clarify their backgrounds when necessary.

- Clearly distinguishing between opinion and fact at all production and publication stages.
- If immediate balance cannot be achieved during fast-breaking events, ensure follow-up reports or updates restore balance as soon as possible.
- When presenting testimonies from victims or affected parties, indicate they reflect personal perspectives influenced by experience, so audiences understand these represent one aspect of the story.

Regarding online discussions and social media:

1. Do not endorse or support personal opinions or advocacy campaigns from users.
2. Clearly distinguish between content produced by the institution and user-generated content, highlighting this distinction on digital platforms.
3. Clearly reference verified sources in journalistic materials to prevent confusion between opinion and information, preserving content credibility.

- In interviews, provide all parties equal time, space, and conditions to express their views without discrimination.
- Ensure continuous representation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in coverage, alongside influential figures in public affairs.
- Maintain objectivity and use balanced language free of preconceptions or evaluative labels.
- Present opinions and responses accurately, without distortion, excerpting, or rephrasing that alters meaning or context.
- Achieve both quantitative and qualitative balance when presenting opposing views, whether in broadcast time, publication space, quality of argumentation, or manner of presentation, avoiding giving excessive exposure to one side while marginalizing another.
- Grant the right of reply and correction when accusations, value judgments, or claims affect individuals or entities.
- Maintain balance in covering conflicts, societal clashes, and contentious issues among different Syrian groups, presenting information and opinions in a way that reduces tension and supports reconciliation rather than escalation or incitement.

II. Impartiality and Separation of Opinion from News

Impartiality is a core principle of journalism, based on clearly separating verified facts from opinions and commentary. Clearly identifying whether content is news or opinion is a cornerstone of professional transparency.

Blurring the line between news and opinion undermines media credibility, turning institutions into propaganda platforms and misleading the audience by presenting personal stances as objective information. Clear distinction between news and analysis or opinion protects the public's right to accurate knowledge and ensures journalistic integrity.

It also requires avoiding the use of advertising or promotional material in ways that blur content for political or other interests.

Signatories commit to:

- Refrain from inserting personal positions into news content or hiding them behind sources.
- Publicly acknowledge and correct any instance of blending news and opinion as a professional error.
- Draft news using objective language, free of preconceptions, bias, or evaluative commentary.
- Clearly separate verified facts from opinions, analyses, or commentary, explicitly classifying content by format, headline, and placement. This entails:
 1. Clearly distinguishing analysis or interpretation in news items, using phrases like “according to analysts,” and preferably separating analysis from news items entirely.
 2. Implementing internal policies holding journalists accountable for mixing opinion with news, with written editorial guidelines regulating the separation process.
- Use descriptive and neutral headlines for news items that convey the essence of the event without commentary; opinion headlines may be analytical or critical, provided they are clearly identified as such.
- Avoid including personal opinions, political or ideological stances, or evaluative judgments within news items.
- Refrain from presenting opinions or estimates as factual or objective information.
- Prohibit the use of news reports as direct or indirect propaganda for any entity, position, or agenda.
- Employ editorial, visual, and organizational measures enabling audiences to clearly distinguish news from opinion or analysis.

- Subject any blending of news and opinion to review, correction, and internal professional accountability to maintain media credibility and public trust.
- Clearly distinguish advertising, sponsorship, and promotional content from journalistic content, avoiding presenting products, policies, or sponsoring entities as news.
- Display advertisements in formats completely different from journalistic content in placement, colors, fonts, graphics, and overall design.
- Refrain from publishing ads disguised as editorial news, clearly labeling them as “advertisement,” “paid content,” or similar unambiguous wording.
- Treat any attempt to obscure ads as news as a misleading and serious ethical violation.
- Prevent advertisers or sponsors from influencing editorial content, policy, or publishing priorities, ensuring editorial independence.
- Avoid embedding promotional messages indirectly within journalistic content or prioritizing coverage of companies or profit-driven entities in exchange for material or moral benefits.
- Choose camera angles in live broadcasts or videos that avoid unintentionally displaying billboards or promotional material.
- Refrain from publishing misleading or false advertisements, or those exaggerating in a way that harms the audience or deceives them.
- Avoid transmitting political messages through media content or promoting one party or political entity over another; when accepting political advertisements, clearly disclose their purpose, sponsor, and beneficiaries.
- Journalists must use their positions or platforms for promotion only with full transparency, clearly indicating when content is an advertisement or paid promotion.

III. Accuracy

Media outlets must adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and clarity in all journalistic content, avoiding exaggeration, misinformation, or assumptions in language, images, data, numbers, dates, and sources.

To achieve this, media professionals should:

- Rely on trustworthy sources and consult multiple sources to verify information before publication.

- Carefully check information from correspondents, especially regarding casualty figures, damage assessments, and responsible parties, to ensure numerical and factual accuracy.
- Exercise precision when translating from foreign languages, avoiding literal translations that distort meaning, and ensuring correct understanding of context and terminology.
- Use real names of individuals and organizations, employing pseudonyms only when clearly justified for professional or security reasons.
- Be meticulous when publishing sensitive news that could cause panic or chaos, such as reports on disasters, epidemics, or conflicts, prioritizing official and expert sources.
- Verify accompanying images, confirming their authenticity and relevance to the story, indicating date and source, and distinguishing between real, illustrative, and archival images.

IV. Avoiding Media Sensationalism

Exaggeration or deliberate distortion to capture audience attention and increase viewership at the expense of accuracy and depth violates ethical codes of conduct. Sensationalism undermines journalism's role as a tool for knowledge and awareness, transforms it into a profit-driven medium, erodes public trust, misrepresents facts, spreads chaos, incites fear and promotes lying.

Examples of unacceptable media sensationalism include:

- Using shocking, exaggerated, or emotionally manipulative language in headlines that does not reflect the content.
- Focusing excessively on violence or graphic imagery without justified context, simply to provoke fear or attract views.
- Highlighting human-interest stories solely to trigger emotions or engagement without addressing solutions or broader context.
- Emphasizing scandals or private lives of public figures with no relevance to societal interest.
- Overstating incidents, disasters, or diseases beyond factual reporting.
- Using phrases that induce panic or fear without evidence, e.g., “Syria on the brink,” “a great threat to Syrian existence,” etc.
- Sharing shocking or offensive images or videos of religions, individuals, or social groups on social media purely for attention, without necessary context.

- Inflating events or actions for political, economic, or personal gain.

Fifth: Context Consideration

Context consideration means logically linking an event to its full reality without excerpting or isolating it from its circumstances. This requires understanding the surrounding political, economic, social, cultural, and security contexts, the factors preceding the event, and the subsequent consequences, so that the event is presented in its complete picture rather than partially, providing the audience with a more accurate and deeper understanding of reality.

Conditions for context consideration:

- Collect facts within their full context: It is not enough to identify the elements of the event (who, what, where, when, and why); the causes, consequences, and potential impacts must be understood.
- Link the present with the past and future: Highlight factors preceding the event and what may follow, ensuring a complete temporal perspective.
- Consider multiple dimensions: Analyze the event within its political, economic, social, and cultural contexts, as well as aspects related to safety and security.

Sixth: Source Protection

Signatories are committed to taking all necessary measures to protect information sources from any negative or biased consequences that may result from their participation in preparing or publishing content, without compromising the accuracy of the material or depriving the audience of essential information.

Relying on trusted sources, verifying the information they provide, understanding their motivations, and presenting it to the audience transparently and clearly is an essential part of journalistic ethical responsibility.

Source protection and professional commitment are ensured through:

1. Disciplined use of sources:

- Avoid selectivity or using sources without clear criteria or hiding their backgrounds.

- Do not exaggerate a source's status or attribute undeserved qualifications; ensure the source's expertise and the accuracy of the information provided.
- Do not rely on a single source for controversial issues; ensure diversity and breadth of sources.

2. Verification of source reliability and proximity to the event:

- Ensure the source is connected to the event, aware of it, and consider their background, motivations, and status.
- Document information and link it to sources, clarifying each source's relation to the data provided.

3. Transparency in source attribution:

- Avoid vague phrases like "informed sources" or "witnesses said" without professional justification.
- Balance between official, independent, and field sources.
- In case of controversy, provide opportunities for sources representing all perspectives.
- Do not convey statements or data from unqualified entities or those with undisclosed objectives.

4. Define the source's relationship to the topic:

- Clarify the source's connection to the issue when cited.
- If anonymity is necessary, explain the reason to the audience.
- If sufficient sources are not available, clarify the reasons.

5. Independence from sources' agendas:

- Reject attempts by sources to impose their agenda, shape the content, control its direction, or remove parts of it.
- Do not adopt the language, concepts, or agenda of the source.
- Acknowledge responsibility in case of misinformation or error resulting from reliance on a source.

6. Balance in using sources:

- Avoid exaggerating the importance of any particular source.
- Allow space for popular and civil society sources on public issues, and do not rely solely on official entities.

7. Accuracy in quoting:

- Ensure the meaning is not altered when abbreviating or excerpting a source's statement.
- Use punctuation accurately when presenting statements.

8. Dealing with digital platforms as sources:

- Verify the platform's creation date, type of posts, administrators, and context of interaction.
- Do not rely on an unknown digital platform as a primary source; it may only be used as a secondary source after verifying its credibility.

9. Source confidentiality and protection:

- Do not disclose any personal information or secrets learned in confidence.
- Do not reveal the identity of a protected source except in specific cases:
 - Explicit legal provision.
 - Serious risk to the life of others.
 - Official request from an independent judicial authority.
 - Legitimate professional request following clear criteria.

10. Institutional commitment:

- Institutions must establish written policies for information management, use protective measures, and set mechanisms for dealing with authorities when data is requested.

11. Obtaining information professionally:

- Avoid unprofessional methods of gathering information, except in very exceptional cases (e.g., exposing corruption, investigative reporting), provided that:
 - There is a clear public interest.
 - Other means are proven impossible.
 - Written approval is obtained from three administrative entities within the institution.
 - Potential harm to the source is minimized.

12. Using individuals as sources:

- Do not use ordinary individuals as sources without their full awareness of the journalist's work, publication context, and potential risks to them.

13. Fair treatment of all sources:

- Treat every source fairly, even if they are accused or under investigation or trial.
- Protect sources from any unfair negative consequences arising from their participation in preparing or publishing the material, without compromising the accuracy of the material or the public's right to information.

7. Integrity

Integrity means the journalist's commitment to convey information, opinions, and statements honestly and accurately, without bias, favoritism, or selective reporting, and to refuse any material or moral offers, or personal gain—financial, political, or moral—offered by external parties, whether individuals, institutions, companies, or groups, intended to influence journalistic content or guide coverage in a non-objective manner.

Signatories commit to the following:

- Do not accept gifts, commissions, or material or moral benefits from any party with an interest in the media coverage, or engage in any interaction that could distort facts, show favoritism, or bias coverage in favor of a party.
- Do not directly or indirectly promote beneficiaries within the content or coverage for personal or institutional gain.
- Refrain from any biased coverage and do not allow personal or financial interests to influence the content or prioritize publication.
- Do not use position or media influence to gain personal advantages or illegitimate privileges, whether material or moral, or to serve external interests at the expense of public interest or truth.
- Ensure that no internal or external entity influences editorial content, guaranteeing integrity, objectivity, and independence.
- Do not produce reports, news, or media material to serve personal interests or the interests of companies or specific entities without a legitimate professional justification.

- Do not exploit professional position to reach the audience for revenge, defamation, or personal gain for the journalist, relatives, or affiliated entities.
- Refuse any assignment that conflicts with professional standards or violates the principles outlined in this document.
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could affect objectivity and accuracy, and refrain from participating in coverage involving parties with whom the journalist has relationships that may compromise impartiality.
- Media institutions must establish clear policies to prevent conflicts of interest, ensure integrity, and guarantee journalist independence.
- Strictly adhere to copyright and intellectual property rights, accurately documenting and attributing transferred materials to their original sources.
- Signatories must disclose their affiliations or connections with political or economic institutions, public relations companies, or any relationships that may affect their independence.

Special Cases Affecting Integrity:

There are additional practices that may undermine integrity and weaken media credibility. Syrian media institutions and their staff must completely avoid them and adopt strict measures to prevent them. The most prominent include:

1. Accepting gifts, rewards, or commissions from parties with a vested interest in exchange for coverage or journalistic assignments, except for customary symbolic gifts typically offered to guests.
2. Offering bribes, gifts, or promises of privileges to sources, directly or indirectly, by journalists or their institutions, in exchange for information, interviews, or media coverage.
3. Owning shares in a company being covered, or having political affiliations that affect media presentation.

8. Transparency:

Transparency plays a fundamental role in restoring or building trust between the public and media professionals. It effectively reduces content manipulation, reinforces self-accountability, protects journalists professionally and legally, prevents suspicions regarding them or their content, and enhances their reputation, facilitating their work and increasing source trust. Clear transparency and standards help journalists resist external pressures.

For media institutions, transparency enhances funding, builds reputation—which is one of their most important assets—strengthens public loyalty, trust, and engagement, and helps the audience understand why one event is covered over another. Transparency also supports risk and crisis management and improves internal governance.

Signatories commit to:

1. Disclose sources when there is no risk to their lives, specifying the limits of their knowledge and the information they provided.
2. Explain and clarify the methods of work and verification followed, and publish institutional editorial policies and ownership, as well as senior management practices.
3. Reveal any personal or institutional interests that may affect published content.
4. Acknowledge errors and explain methods for correcting them.
5. Provide channels for the public to submit complaints and communicate with institutions and individuals, specifying response methods and timelines.
6. Inform the public when sources withhold or conceal information related to public affairs, if doing so would harm the public interest, in accordance with the principle of transparency and the public's right to know.
7. Maintain transparency regarding support and funding, disclosing all financial sources and providing clear, accurate, and early announcements of all financial resources received by individuals, institutions, or entities, whether domestic or foreign, allowing the public and stakeholders to assess integrity and independence, and mitigating conflicts of interest or suspicions regarding the use or allocation of funds.

To achieve this, the following must be adhered to:

- Clearly disclose the identity of funders, including individuals, institutions, governments, companies, or any entity providing financial or in-kind support.
- Specify the amount and source of funding, whether local or international, and detail its nature accurately.
- Clarify any conditions or restrictions associated with funding, if any, to prevent potential influence on editorial independence or media coverage.
- Ensure funding information is easily accessible and understandable to the public and stakeholders, enhancing trust and credibility.

- Fully comply with fees and legal regulations related to commercial advertising in media and social media, when the funded activity is commercial or profit-oriented.
- Media and its personnel must refuse any funding that could influence editorial lines or direct content, and the following are prohibited:
 - Conditional funding that restricts content freedom or directs coverage to serve the funder's interests at the expense of the public interest.
 - Funding from unknown or non-transparent sources, preventing assessment of its influence or objectives.
 - Funding linked to illegal or unethical activities, or intended to undermine civil peace, spread chaos, or weaken trust among community components.
 - Funding from political entities intended to manipulate public opinion to serve specific agendas or interests.
 - Advertisements or sponsorships aimed at diverting professional editorial lines or misleading the public, or disguised as journalistic material.
 - Any funding that creates conflicts of interest, threatens the objectivity or independence of media work, or influences publishing priorities.

9. Correction and Accountability

- **Ensuring the Right of Reply and Correction:**

Right of Reply: The right of individuals and institutions to respond to statements or information published about them in the media, allowing them to present their position or clarification regarding what was reported.

Right of Correction: The right of an individual or entity to correct any inaccurate or false information published about them in the media, preserving their reputation and rights and ensuring content accuracy.

The right of reply and correction is a fundamental right of individuals and institutions, enabling them to defend themselves, rectify mistakes, clarify circumstances, and prevent misleading or incomplete information from remaining in the public domain. Respecting this right is an essential part of media responsibility to enhance transparency, credibility, and the public's right to accurate and complete information.

- **Forms of Exercising the Right of Reply and Correction:**
This right is implemented through tools and mechanisms allowing affected individuals or institutions to present their response or clarification fairly and equitably, including:

1. **Publishing Written Statements:**

The affected person or entity has the right to submit a written statement containing the requested reply or correction, which the media organization must publish fairly and within appropriate space in the media output.

2. **Conducting Interviews:**

The media organization may allocate an interview with the concerned individual to explain their viewpoint and clarify their position, ensuring the response is presented in a balanced manner accurately reflecting what the affected party wishes to convey.

3. **Direct Communication:**

The media organization shall communicate directly with the person or entity subject to allegations to record their response and include it in the published content in a fair and objective manner, preserving their right to express their position.

4. **Enhancing Audience Engagement and Communication Channels:**

Media organizations shall strengthen interaction with the public through their various platforms, enabling the reception and correction of information and responses transparently and fairly, contributing to building sustainable trust between the organization and its community.

Accordingly, signatories commit to the following:

- Publicly and clearly acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly, refraining from hiding or circumventing them, and republishing the correction multiple times in a clear manner to ensure it reaches the audience.
- Adopt written correction policies that clarify standards and types of errors, internal and editorial review mechanisms for the content in question, and establish a complaints system or participate in platforms that allow the audience to provide feedback.
- Handle complaints seriously without manipulating correction formats, ensuring that acknowledgment includes explicit acceptance of responsibility for errors.

- Engage ethically with professional criticism, using dialogue and direct communication to resolve disputes arising from published content.
- Publish annual reports detailing the number of complaints, their nature, and how they were addressed, reinforcing transparency and building audience trust.
- Publish editorial policies, codes of conduct, organizational values, ownership, funding sources, content sponsors, and administrative bodies to keep the public informed about the general framework governing professional work.

10. Intellectual Property Rights:

Respect for copyright, intellectual property rights, and authorship is a fundamental obligation of media organizations and journalists, forming a core part of protecting creativity, maintaining professional credibility, and avoiding legal liability.

The owner of intellectual property rights is the individual or organization that produces original content with tangible effort and publishes it through any medium, such as written, audio, or visual news, images, designs, documentaries, and audio recordings. These works are generally protected under copyright laws.

Under “fair use” laws, portions of journalistic content may be reused for criticism, analysis, commentary, education, or research without constituting a copyright violation, provided the use is fair and legally compliant. Nevertheless, obtaining prior permission from the original content owner is always preferred when reusing content wholly or partially.

Signatories commit to the following:

- Not violating copyright laws and intellectual property rules, refraining from publishing or excerpting any previously published content without respecting the intellectual property rights prescribed by laws and global codes of conduct.
- Clearly and explicitly attributing any content or part of content to its original owners when citing or using it in new journalistic materials.
- Refraining from manipulating published content or altering its context or meaning in ways that could harm the owner or mislead the audience.
- Explaining the concept of Creative Commons licenses and their proper use to media organizations, clarifying associated rights to

ensure lawful and proper use of available content under these licenses.

- Documenting all materials used in investigations and reports with accurate and clear references, enabling the public to verify information sources.
- Training media personnel on local and international copyright and citation laws, enabling them to understand professional rights and responsibilities associated with using published content.
- Journalists are prohibited from attributing to themselves any information, images, or materials that have previously been published by another media outlet and are required to clearly acknowledge the original source as an essential component of professional transparency.
- Media institutions that engage with news agencies or external platforms shall enter into clear and binding contracts that define rights of use and publication, and ensure compliance with sound professional and ethical practices.
- The republication, reproduction, or quotation of any textual, visual, or audio content—whether ideas, investigations, data, or figures produced by others—is strictly prohibited without explicit and accurate attribution to the original authors or sources, with a clear distinction maintained between verbatim quotations and analytical summaries.
- Reproducing previously published content by the same individual or institution and presenting it as new or original material is prohibited.
- Translating materials from other languages and presenting them as original production without citing the original source is strictly prohibited.

Article Six: Use of Social Media

- This article applies to all content that is published or republished, as well as to comments and messages circulated through social media platforms, across all accounts belonging to the signatories to this Code.
- All provisions set forth in this Code shall serve as binding and regulatory references governing all digital activity. Publication on the official platforms of media institutions and publication on journalists' personal or professional social media accounts shall be treated equally in terms of responsibility and accountability, in a manner that ensures adherence to ethical and professional standards across all media environments.

- Signatories shall avoid ambiguity in satirical content and must ensure that satire or humor is sufficiently clear so as not to be misunderstood by the audience. It shall be taken into account that tone and sarcasm do not transmit effectively online, which necessitates refraining from publishing any content that could reasonably be interpreted as insensitive or offensive.

The signatories to this Code commit to the following:

- Refraining from incitement to, advocacy of, or calls for crime or violence, as well as from glorifying violence or individuals who commit criminal acts on social media platforms.
- Refraining from producing, publishing, or disseminating hate speech, discrimination, or harm, as defined in the preceding articles, through social media.
- Refraining from producing, publishing, or republishing fraudulent or misleading content, rumors, unverified news, or inaccurate information—particularly on life-related or health-related issues—and presenting such content as factual or as originating from specialists.
- Committing to respect religious beliefs, cultures, and customs, and refraining from offending them directly or indirectly, including through satire or mockery.
- Refraining from publishing content that exposes individuals or groups to danger, stigmatization, or psychological or social harm, even if such content is widely circulated on social media.
- When using artificial intelligence to generate or modify content, adhering fully to the provisions of this Code and clearly informing the public whether AI has been used partially or entirely in the production process.
- When using personal accounts, signatories shall remain mindful that they may represent their institutions directly or indirectly; therefore, they must act responsibly to avoid harm to the institution. Where opinions are expressed, it must be clearly stated that such views do not represent the institution, while fully respecting all provisions of this Code.
- Journalists and media professionals shall refrain from promoting political or economic interests that could call into question their independence or that of their institutions, undermine public trust in the credibility of the content they or their institutions produce, or jeopardize the principles of professionalism and impartiality.
- Signatories commit to promoting awareness and positive values and to contributing to the building of a safe digital community,

while avoiding participation in trending content that promotes hatred or bullying, recognizing their role as opinion leaders and influential figures who are widely emulated.

- Committing to refrain from publishing private correspondence, images, videos, or private messages, including group conversations, except with the explicit consent of their owners or where there is an overriding public interest, while ensuring that harm is minimized.

Live Streaming and Comments

- The signatories—particularly media institutions and quasi-institutional entities—shall commit to establishing clear policies governing live streaming, comments, and content publication on digital platforms. Such policies shall uphold the provisions of this Code, freedom of expression, the right of access to information, public safety, and the responsibility to ensure that platforms do not become spaces for incitement, defamation, or misinformation.
- Comments
- Signatories shall delete or block comments on posts or during live broadcasts in the following cases:
 - Any content that calls for the commission of a crime, encourages illegal or unethical activities, or incites hatred or discrimination.
 - Any content containing information that may pose a risk to the lives or health of others.
 - Any comments involving explicit defamation, the dissemination of unverified rumors, misleading news, obscene language, or deliberate abuse of individuals or social groups.
 - Any comments that contain racism, discrimination, stereotyping, or hate speech.
 - Any comments that include personal data without the consent of their owners or contain suspicious or harmful links.

Live Broadcasting:

Signatories commit to:

- Refuse to include individuals known for humiliating others, promoting hate speech, or using obscene language or indecent actions.
- Avoid reading insulting comments or comments that violate the above rules on air.
- Intervene to stop waves of bullying, hate speech, or attacks on dignity, whether directly or in comments.

- Prevent turning broadcasts into platforms for spreading hatred, embarrassing others, or humiliating participants.
- Avoid turning guests, the audience, or parts of the audience into subjects for bullying, self-harm, or life-threatening actions.
- Stop the broadcast, refrain from publishing, or delete content if it violates the code and its annex.

The code encourages institutions and individuals to:

- Respond professionally to inquiries or criticisms.
- Consider comments and responses as tools to enhance audience engagement.
- Avoid emotional or unethical disputes.

Correction and Deletion After Publication:

- Errors on social media are subject to the principles of integrity and transparency in corrections as stated in the code, observing the following:
- In case of a material error in a post (text, image, video), corrections should be applied to the original post whenever possible, with the amendment clearly noted at the beginning of the text or in a pinned comment.
- If the erroneous post has significant reach, it is preferable to publish an independent post explaining the correction or offering an apology, referencing the original content.
- Simply deleting misleading or offensive content without clarification is insufficient if it influenced public opinion or harmed individuals or entities.
- When deleting a post containing an error, a follow-up post must clarify the reasons for deletion, acknowledge the mistake, and offer an apology.
- Review content before publication to ensure consistency with the code, particularly regarding hate speech, privacy, protection of vulnerable groups, and the public interest.

Maintaining Balance in Political Interaction:

- Certain professional actions by journalists (e.g., following political campaign accounts or interested groups) may be perceived as bias. To ensure objectivity, journalists must follow accounts from multiple sides, including parties representing opposing viewpoints, to provide a balanced and comprehensive representation of the issues.

Article Seven: Artificial Intelligence

- With the rapid developments in AI technologies and their increasing use in media practice, it is necessary to adopt a clear ethical framework governing this use, ensuring responsible deployment that protects the public interest, upholds human and national values, and prevents AI tools from becoming means of misinformation, distortion, or rights violations.
- Ethical considerations in AI use apply to all stages of media content production, from research and information gathering to text writing, material design, and final stages of publishing and distribution.
- Journalists and editors must clearly disclose any AI tools used at any stage of journalistic work, reinforcing transparency and building audience trust.

Despite the broad benefits of AI systems, they pose significant ethical challenges, notably privacy violations, the production or dissemination of media misinformation, the reinforcement of biases and discrimination, and the entrenchment of stereotypes. Reliance on algorithms for news distribution or content moderation on social media and search engines may also raise issues affecting freedom of expression, information accuracy, media literacy, and individual rights.

As Syria is a UNESCO member state, it is committed to the recommendation adopted by the organization in 2021—the first global standard for AI ethics, encompassing all 194 member states. This code aims to establish a comprehensive national framework aligned with UNESCO's recommendations, regulating the AI lifecycle in the media sector, from design and development to publication and use. It seeks to foster shared responsibility among the government, media outlets, and the private sector, ensuring a modern, trustworthy media ecosystem that supports innovation and maintains public confidence.

Definitions:

For the purposes of this code, the following terms are defined as follows:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Any software system relying on machine learning techniques or algorithms to generate, modify, or analyze media content.
- Committee:** The AI Committee, responsible for establishing regulatory policies and approving tools and technologies used in media institutions.

- **Coordinator:** The AI Ethics Coordinator, tasked with monitoring compliance with this code and overseeing daily implementation within media institutions.
- **Violation:** Any use of AI tools that contravenes this code, applicable national legislation, or causes professional or societal harm.
- **Synthetic Content:** Any text, image, video, or media material produced entirely or partially using AI tools or systems.

General Principles:

Modern technologies, including AI tools, are supportive and accelerative instruments in media work and cannot fully replace the human role. Reliance on or absolute trust in their outputs is prohibited; editorial, professional, and ethical responsibility remains entirely with journalists and media personnel. This includes reviewing content produced or modified by these technologies to ensure compliance with the professional and ethical standards set forth in this code.

Algorithms and Human Oversight:

Signatories must recognize that intelligent technologies may reflect inherent biases in their algorithms, potentially resulting in errors, distortions, or injustices, necessitating continuous professional vigilance and critical evaluation of all outputs.

Commitment:

1. All content produced or modified using AI technologies must undergo thorough human review to ensure its accuracy, correctness, and freedom from biases.
2. Editorial teams bear full responsibility for the final published content, regardless of the tools used in its production.

AI Challenges:

To avoid challenges arising from unprofessional or improper use of artificial intelligence, signatories commit to the following:

1. The use of AI techniques to produce fraudulent, false, or misleading posts is prohibited.
2. Publishing or producing any AI-generated material aimed at defamation, spreading hate, or incitement is forbidden.
3. Impersonating individuals by altering their images or voices using AI tools is prohibited, especially when the intent violates this code or seeks to shape public opinion based on fabricated content.

4. Producing offensive or sexually explicit content using real persons' images, videos, or voices is forbidden.
5. Integrating images or videos of real individuals into fabricated or falsified content that violates this code is prohibited.
6. Digital filters must not alter facts or affect individuals' identities; if used for artistic or technical purposes, extreme caution must be exercised, especially when depicting vulnerable groups.
7. Filters or digital alterations of features are prohibited in news coverage, documentaries, or any content that could compromise credibility or the realism of the scene.
8. Cosmetic filters on victims, officials, or witnesses are prohibited, as they create false and unrealistic representations.

Privacy, Data, and Intellectual Property Protection:

To ensure protection of privacy, data, and intellectual property, signatories commit to the following:

1. Technology must not be used to extract personal data of any individual without a clear legal basis or a legitimate public interest.
2. No content protected by intellectual property rights may be copied or used to produce publication materials; signatories must strictly adhere to creativity protection rules and respect copyright.
3. Institutions must establish clear policies and systems regulating AI use, monitor employees' compliance, and subject AI tools to independent evaluation to ensure adherence to the code's principles. Institutions must also create dedicated channels to receive complaints about AI misuse and address them through clear procedures.

The code encourages signatories to clarify their level of reliance on AI technologies in their work and to invest in ongoing training to enhance professional capabilities and ensure responsible and positive use of technological developments.

AI Use Principles (Ten Guidelines):

1. Journalistic Ethics Guide Technology Use:

Media outlets and journalists must use modern technologies to enhance their ability to fulfill their core mission—ensuring everyone's right to reliable, high-quality information. This objective must guide all choices regarding the use and development of technological tools. AI use in journalism must uphold the profession's core values, including: objectivity, accuracy, fairness,

independence, non-maleficence, non-discrimination, accountability, privacy protection, and source confidentiality.

2. Human Agency as Priority:

Human decision-making must remain central in long-term strategies and daily editorial choices. AI systems should be used only as a result of conscious and considered human decisions.

3. Editorial teams must define the objectives of using each AI system, clearly specify its scope and conditions of application, ensure comprehensive and continuous oversight of these systems' effects, verify strict adherence to the defined framework, and always retain the ability to halt them at any time.

4. Independent Evaluation of AI Systems:

AI systems used by media outlets and journalists must undergo an independent, comprehensive, and precise evaluation, involving entities supporting press freedom.

This evaluation must demonstrate clear adherence to core journalistic ethics values. The systems must also comply with privacy, intellectual property, and data protection laws.

A clear accountability framework must be established to address any failure to meet these requirements.

It is preferable to use systems with high explainability that operate predictably and can be easily understood.

5. Media Responsibility for Published Content:

Media outlets remain fully responsible for editorial content and all stages of information collection, processing, and publication, including the use of AI technologies. They are accountable for all content published, regardless of the tools used.

Responsibilities related to AI use must be clearly defined and assigned to relevant personnel, ensuring ongoing compliance with journalistic ethics and approved editorial principles.

6. Transparency in AI Use:

Media organizations must explicitly disclose any AI use that has a substantial impact on content production or distribution and inform all recipients accordingly.

Organizations must maintain a public record showing which AI systems they currently use or have used, specifying each system's purpose, scope, and conditions of use.

7. Ensuring Content Authenticity and Traceability:

Wherever possible, media outlets should adopt advanced tools and techniques to verify the authenticity and source of published content, providing reliable information about its origin and documenting any subsequent modifications. Any content that does not meet authenticity and reliability standards should be treated as

potentially misleading and subjected to thorough verification before publication.

8. Distinguishing Original from AI-Generated Content:

Journalists and media organizations must ensure a clear and reliable distinction between content based on real images and recordings (e.g., photos, audio, video) and content generated or substantially altered using AI systems.

Whenever possible, original footage and recordings should be used to represent real events.

Media organizations must avoid any practices that could mislead the public through AI, particularly producing or using AI-generated content that simulates real recordings or impersonates real individuals.

9. Participation in AI Governance:

Journalists, media organizations, and press-support groups act as guardians of the right to information and bear a central role in AI governance.

They should be involved in all forms of institutional oversight at national and international levels concerning AI regulation and development.

They must ensure AI governance reflects universal national values and human-cultural diversity in design, development, and application stages.

They are responsible for keeping pace with technological developments, studying AI impacts, and reporting them objectively, accurately, and critically.

10. Maintaining Ethical and Economic Standards with AI Organizations:

AI system owners must credit sources and respect intellectual property rights, providing fair compensation to rights holders when using their journalistic work for training or development.

This compensation should translate into fair and equitable rewards for journalists.

AI owners must maintain a transparent and detailed record of the journalistic content used to train or feed their models, enhancing trust, accountability, and protecting the professional and economic rights of journalists and media organizations.

11. Public Disclosure and Trust Building:

Media organizations must publish annual reports highlighting efforts to combat hate speech and prevent AI misuse, promoting transparency and reinforcing public trust.

They must involve the public in understanding policies and procedures by explaining operational mechanisms and technical

tools used, fostering an interactive relationship based on clarity and credibility.

Organizations must promptly announce any updates or amendments to AI use policies or hate speech mitigation rules and make them clearly and directly accessible to both staff and the public.

Article Eight: Privacy and Data Protection

Respecting privacy and personal life is a fundamental right for every individual and a core principle of responsible journalism. Media organizations, journalists, content creators, and social media personnel must uphold this right at all stages of information collection, processing, and publication, in accordance with national laws and international standards, following the principles and guidelines below:

General Principles:

- Collecting or publishing any personal data or information—such as addresses, medical records, financial data, or family and daily life details—is prohibited unless there is a clear professional justification that serves the public interest or provides a greater public benefit than potential harm, after careful assessment of the possible damage before publication.
- Journalists must not publish or share sensitive information without obtaining explicit, informed consent from the owners of the information, and must clarify the professional purpose of publication or recording.

Photography and Publication Rules:

1. Private Residences, Workplaces, and Facilities:

- Photographing or publishing images of individuals inside homes, workplaces, hospitals, schools, or places of worship is prohibited without explicit, informed consent from those involved.

2. Enclosed Spaces:

- If a location contains more than twenty people (or fifty according to some standards), a clear question must be asked of attendees explaining the purpose of recording and the intended publication platform, and prior consent must be obtained before filming begins.

3. Large Public Spaces:

- When filming in open or enclosed areas with more than fifty people, attendees must be clearly informed about the recording process and given at least five minutes after equipment setup to leave if they do not wish to appear.

4. Hidden Recording or Filming Devices:

- Their use is strictly prohibited except in investigative cases that serve a significant public interest and cannot be achieved openly, and only with written approval from the editor-in-chief.

5. Unethical Use of Footage:

- Avoid capturing or publishing suggestive images out of context, such as close-up shots without consent or images of sensitive body areas.

6. Prohibition of Mockery or Abuse:

- Using images or videos to mock or ridicule individuals' appearances or movements is prohibited unless clear written consent is provided and the purpose serves a genuine public interest.

7. Preventing Harm and Defamation:

- Publishing or republishing any images or videos that may cause psychological harm, defamation, or grief to the subjects or their families is prohibited.

8. Content on Personal Accounts:

- Images or videos shared on individuals' social media accounts cannot be used without explicit consent from their owners.

9. Separation of Public and Private:

- Publications must clearly distinguish between publicly available information and private information, avoiding any confusion that could harm individuals.

10. Transparency in Information Collection:

- Journalists or filming teams must always clearly identify themselves and the purpose of collecting information or filming, ensuring individuals have the full right to refuse to appear, provide statements, or allow use of their images.

11. Disclosure of Non-Journalistic Purposes:

- Media organizations must transparently disclose any political, commercial, or non-journalistic purposes related to data collection or filming. Using collected data outside the legitimate scope of journalism is strictly prohibited.

- **Balancing Public Interest with Harm: Assessing Harm versus Benefit:**
In cases where public interest requires the publication of private information, journalists and media organizations must carefully balance the public's right to know against the individual's right to privacy, ensuring that harm is minimized as much as possible.
- **Privacy of Public Figures:**
While public figures and officials have a right to privacy, this right is limited when information directly relates to their duties and responsibilities, or when it exposes issues such as corruption, abuse of office, or conflicts of interest.

Article Nine: Participation, Responsibility, and Accountability

First: Participation

Signatories are encouraged to join and endorse this document, reaffirming their shared commitment to ethical and professional standards and promoting a responsible media culture based on respect for human dignity and individual rights.

Second: General Commitment

All signatories commit to respecting the principles and standards outlined in this document and integrating them into daily professional practices, reinforcing a media approach grounded in integrity, neutrality, accuracy, and service to the public interest.

Third: Responsibility and Accountability

1. Shared Responsibility:

- Media professionals and organizations are bound by the provisions of this code.
- Responsibility is progressive and interconnected between individuals and institutions; no media practice can evade accountability for published content.
- Responsibility is shared among staff according to the stages the content has gone through and the individual's position within the organizational structure.

2. Individual Responsibility:

Each person, whether journalist, content creator, or media worker, must:

- Review content multiple times to ensure it does not violate the provisions of this code, whether published on the organization's platforms or their personal or professional accounts.

- Ensure that their personal activities do not appear linked to their organizations.
- Maintain a high level of professional and ethical responsibility in their public presence.

3. Institutional Responsibility

Media organizations are committed to the following:

- Zero tolerance for any violations of the code, especially fundamental ones, whether on organizational platforms or personal accounts.
- Establish clear and public policies for handling breaches of the code.
- Address violations according to their severity, as impacts vary; sanctions must be proportionate to the harm caused.
- Implement immediate and decisive procedures for urgent violations that cannot be delayed or reviewed, such as insults or serious offenses.
- Provide a transparent mechanism that allows the public and stakeholders to review published materials and file complaints regarding content that warrants scrutiny.
- Respond promptly to all complaints received.
- Take all feasible actions to remedy violations, restoring the rights of affected parties through correction, clarification, adjustment, public acknowledgment of errors, apologies, compensation, or production of new content.
- Publish periodic reports detailing the nature of complaints, the handling process, and measures taken.
- Train media personnel on professional and ethical engagement with hate speech, prioritizing the protection of journalists and fostering a safe, inclusive work environment.
- Adopt clear administrative policies ensuring protection of staff from discrimination, harassment, bullying, or targeting based on professional opinions or affiliations.
- Provide an independent internal complaints channel capable of reviewing and addressing reports effectively.
- Implement written rules for moderating comments and managing audience interactions.
- Regularly and systematically update organizational, editorial, and code policies to respond to professional, technological, and societal changes.

- Organize the management and protection of personal data and sensitive materials through specialized regulations and policies.
- Develop administrative policies to prevent misuse of data without legal or professional justification.
- Monitor content produced with artificial intelligence and implement policies governing its responsible use.

4. Responsibility to Society

Media professionals and organizations commit to:

- Prioritizing the public interest and safeguarding human values.
- Focusing on development, peace, justice, and the protection of rights.
- Promoting social peace and coexistence.
- Contributing to raising positive awareness and combating hate speech.
- Highlighting community development issues such as education, health, environment, and poverty alleviation.
- Protecting civic values and national identity while respecting sub-identities.
- Preventing the dissemination of content that causes panic or disorder.
- Increasing solution-oriented and calming content during crises to guide and inform the public.

5. Accountability to the Public

- Accountability is integral to press freedom, societal responsibility, and adherence to professional and ethical standards.
- Global charters emphasize that media freedom is inseparable from transparency and accountability mechanisms.
- Correcting errors through all possible means is a fundamental right of the public.
- Civil society organizations play a key role in monitoring and developing accountability tools.
- Media organizations must provide complaint mechanisms, internal review systems, and policies that uphold the public's right to hold them accountable.
- Signatories commit to cooperating with councils and bodies overseeing the implementation of this code.
- The public has the right to understand editorial policies, decision-making processes, and funding sources. Institutions should publish policies covering:

- Topic selection procedures
- Source engagement and management
- Publication policies
- Complaint handling processes
- Correction mechanisms
- Organizational priorities and general orientations

Article Ten (Final Provisions)

- A dedicated committee shall be established to monitor adherence to the standards in this code, develop follow-up, training, and evaluation mechanisms, receive complaints, issue recommendations, and publish periodic reports.
- The committee shall assess the need for updates or amendments to the code, consult with signatories, and publicly announce any changes.

References for the Code

- Deliberations and workshop proposals for drafting the Syrian Media Code of Conduct with participation of independent journalists, private and public sector experts.
- The Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic.
- Syrian Journalists' Code of Ethics.
- Combating Online Hate Speech (UNESCO).
- Hate Speech Coverage: A Guide for Journalists (UNESCO).
- Rabat Plan of Action (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights).
- International Federation of Journalists (SPJ).
- UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights).
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations).
- United Nations Charter, Article 2.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- ILO Convention C190.
- Guidelines for Journalists Reporting on Children (UNICEF).
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations).
- Impartiality in Journalism (International Journalists Network).
- Hate Speech Guidelines (Meta Policy).
- Social Media Guidelines (Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Arizona).

- UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.
- Paris Charter on AI and Journalism (Reporters Without Borders).
- Editorial Guidelines for AI and Generative AI Use (Turkish Journalists Union).