

---

# JOURNALISTS' CODES OF ETHICS

---

## Code of Ethics of the Burundi Press

Burundi journalists,

- convinced that the public is entitled to truthful information,
- considering that the press is an important instrument in the shaping of public opinion;
- convinced that the press is essential for democracy ;
- whereas press professionals look upon their mission as a commitment to serve the general interest;
- whereas the Burundi Association of Journalists (ABJ) is the guardian of the Code of Ethics,

pledge to respect the following principles :

## The public

1. A journalist must defend the universal values of humanism, especially peace, tolerance, democracy, human rights, social progress, national unity, while respecting the distinctiveness, value and dignity of every citizen.

2. Thus, a journalist must abstain from any biased processing of information relative to social disorder, the problems of ethnic or religious communities; he/she must avoid quoting figures, giving details or insisting on the identity of the groups involved in those disturbances.

3. A journalist must practise his/her job honestly and objectively. He/she must loathe lying and look upon the search for truth as his/her ultimate goal. He/she abstains from any partisanship in his/her report of facts and events. He/she considers libel, insult, slander and the distortion of facts as the worst professional faults.

It is a journalist's duty to correct, as early as possible and in the appropriate form, all news and other information that turn out to be untrue or could harm the dignity, the reputation or the privacy of people.

4. Information being considered as a social asset which participates of education and opinion shaping, a journalist must contribute to eliminating ignorance and misunderstanding among citizens, to making them aware of common needs and aspirations, to insuring the respect of the rights and dignity of all, irrespective of their race, gender or religion.

## **The Processing of information**

5. Journalists and news media will abstain from publishing any articles of an obscene nature or that encourage vice, crime or any other illegal activity. Especially, they will refrain from jeopardising national unity, security, the moral education of youth and the social and economic development of the country.

6. A journalist is responsible for all his/her writings even those that do not carry his/her by-line. He/she will be careful not to publicize any information likely to harm the honour of an individual or of the community as a whole. He/she will not exploit violence and brutality for profit or in order to inflame passions.

## **The profession**

7. A journalist must defend freedom of expression, freedom of information as well as the freedom to collect, process and distribute information. He/she must rigorously check every information destined to be made public.

8. A journalist only accepts assignments compatible with his/her professional dignity.

9. He/she will accept no advantage that might cause his quality of journalist, his influence, his contacts to be exploited.

10. He/she does not sign his name on advertising articles, does not lend his voice to commercials ; never commits plagiarism, names the colleagues whose texts he reproduces.

11. He/she pledges to use the clause of conscience, his/her right to abstention, to write or not to mention a piece of information contrary to his conscience in case of a change of orientation likely to harm his/her honour or his/her political or moral convictions.

In case of a conflict of conscience, he/she will opt for whatever is in the general interest.

12. He/she observes professional secrecy and respects the confidentiality agreed upon with his/her sources of information.

13. He/she refrains from pretending to an imaginary title or other quality, from using unfair means to obtain a piece of information or to trick the confidence of his/her sources.

14. He/she must refuse to take any orders contrary to the general policy of the press firm he/she works for; and takes instructions only from the his superiors in the newsroom.

15. A journalist commits him/herself to a duty of solidarity towards his peers. He/she must abstain from any criticism that denigrates the profession.

## **International Federation of Journalists – Code of Practice**

This international declaration is proclaimed as a standard of conduct for journalists engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information in describing events.

1. Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.

2. In the pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right to fair comment and criticism.

3. The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.

4. The journalist shall only use fair methods to obtain news, photographs and documents.

5. The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any published information which is found to be harmfully inaccurate.

6. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

7. The journalist shall be alert to the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discriminations based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national and social origins.

8. The journalist shall regard as grave professional offences the following: plagiarism; malicious misinterpretation; calumny; libel; slander; unfounded accusations; acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression.

9. Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognise in professional matters the jurisdiction of colleagues only, to the exclusion of any kind of interference by governments or others.

Adopted by the 1954 World Congress of the IFJ and amended by the 1986 World Congress.

## **National Union of Journalists – Code of Practice**

Adopted on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1994 by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ)

- 1 A journalist has a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards.
- 2 A journalist shall at all times defend the principle of the freedom of the Press and other media in relation to the collection of information and the expression of comments and criticism. He/she shall strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship.
- 3 A journalist shall strive to ensure that the information he/she disseminates is fair and accurate, avoid the expression of comments and conjecture as established fact, and falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation.
- 4 A journalist shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticised when the issue is of sufficient importance.
- 5 A journalist shall obtain information, photographs and illustrations only by straightforward means. The use of other means can be justified only by the over-riding consideration of the public interest. The journalist is entitled to exercise a personal conscientious objection to the use of such means.
- 6 Subject to the justification by over-riding considerations of the public interest, a journalist shall do nothing which entails intrusion into private grief and distress.
- 7 A journalist shall protect confidential sources of information.
- 8 A journalist shall not accept bribes nor shall he/she allow other inducements to influence the performance of his/her professional duties.
- 9 A journalist shall not lend himself/herself to the distortion or suppression of the truth because of advertising or other considerations.
- 10 A journalist shall only mention a person's race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, marital status (or lack of it), gender or sexual orientation if this information is strictly relevant. A journalist shall neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred on any of the above-mentioned grounds.
- 11 A journalist shall not take private advantage of information gained in the course of his/her duties, before the information is public knowledge.
- 12 A journalist shall not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial produce or service save for the promotion of his/her own work or of the medium by which he/she is employed.