


Statement on Self Regulation of the Print Media in Southern Sudan


We, newspaper and magazine owners, editors, publishers and journalists of Southern Sudan, have agreed the Code of Ethics appended to this Statement. We agree to follow the principles laid down in this Code and to publicise them widely, including in our own publications.

21 June 2007

Signed:

Al-Muragib 

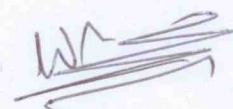
Juba Post 

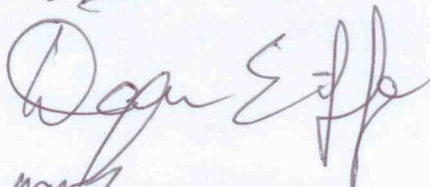
Insight Sudan 

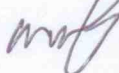
Khartoum Monitor 


South Sudan Post 

South Sudan Review

Sudan Tribune 

Sudan Mirror 

The Citizen 

Union of Journalists of South Sudan 

Code of Ethics of the Print Media in Southern Sudan

Preamble

Recognising the fundamental importance of freedom of expression as an individual human right, as a cornerstone of democracy and as a means of ensuring respect for all human rights and freedoms;

Recalling that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Constitution of Southern Sudan;

Recalling that freedom of expression protects not only the right of the print media to publish, but also the right of the public to receive high quality information from a variety of different media;

Recognising also that the media must recognise the rights of others, and must at all times respect human dignity;

Accepting the need for the media to at all times adhere to the highest ethical standards;

Accepting also the duty of the media to report on matters of public interest, act as a public watchdog and to uncover and publicise matters that need to be subjected to public debate or criticism;

Mindful of the role of the media in promoting peace and protecting human rights;

The following Code shall guide the work and conduct of every person working for the print media in southern Sudan:

Accuracy and fairness

- (i) The print media shall take the utmost care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted material, whether in the form of pictures, texts or other materials.
- (ii) The print media shall strive to report only on the basis of facts the origin of which is known to the journalist, or from reliable sources. Where possible, and subject to their obligation to protect confidential sources, journalists shall indicate the source of their information.
- (iii) The print media shall at all times verify the accuracy of information published by them, subject only to the need, in exceptional circumstances, to report timely on matters of important public interest.

- (iv) The print media shall strive to report fairly. When a person is portrayed in an unfavourable light, comments shall be sought as appropriate. If comments cannot be obtained, this will be indicated in the report.
- (v) Pictures and documents must not be falsified or used in a misleading fashion; captions to pictures shall accurately reflect the contents of the picture.
- (vi) The print media should not suppress or withhold any essential information the knowledge of which would materially affect the general reader's understanding and interpretation of a published report.
- (vii) A publication must report fairly and accurately to the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.
- (viii) While the media are free to be partisan and provide comment and opinion, they must clearly distinguish between comment, speculation and fact.

Correction and Opportunity to Reply

Correction

- (i) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion – once recognised – will be corrected promptly and with due prominence. Where appropriate, an apology will be published.

Opportunity to Reply

- (ii) The print media will extend a right of reply where they have published material that places a person, group or institution in an unfavourable light, if fairness and impartiality requires it. The print media will ensure that the reply is given reasonable prominence.

Privacy

- (i) The print media shall exercise exceptional care and consideration in matters involving the private lives and concerns of individuals in both news and comment, bearing in mind that the right to privacy may be overridden by an issue of public interest.
- (ii) In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings, such as inquests.

Discrimination

- (i) The print media must not place people in a negative light solely because of their gender, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or because of an illness or disability.
- (ii) The print media should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or to an illness or disability they might suffer from unless this is genuinely relevant to the story.

Protection of the vulnerable

The print media shall not open to ridicule vulnerable persons or groups including minors, the bereaved or underprivileged groups or communities. Reporting on the challenging conditions of such groups or individuals shall be not prohibited but shall be conducted in a sensitive manner.

Children¹

- (i) The print media shall at all times respect the needs and interests of children, their vulnerable position in society and their need to grow up in an environment free from unnecessary media intrusion.
- (ii) Except in matters of public interest, such as a case of child abuse, neglect or abandonment, the print media shall not interview or photograph a child in connection with issues involving their own, or another child's, welfare, without the consent of a custodial parent or a similarly responsible adult.
- (iii) The print media must not identify children who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences.

Victims of Sexual Assault

- (i) The print media must not identify victims of sexual assault, or publish material likely to contribute to such identification, unless the victim has consented to such identification and it is in the public interest to do so.
- (ii) In any report of a case involving a sexual offence against a child, neither the child nor the adult may be identified. This means that care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship between the accused and the child and, in particular, that the word 'incest' must be avoided where a child victim might be identified.

Reporting of Crime

- (i) The print media shall not treat any individual as a criminal prior to a court sentence to that effect.

Sensationalism

- (i) Headlines should accurately reflect the content of the report. Headings containing allegations shall either identify the person making the allegations, or carry quotation marks.
- (ii) The print media should exercise caution and sensitivity when showing photographs of violence or human suffering.
- (iii) The print media should guard against highlighting incidents out of context, either in headlines or otherwise in the story.

¹ A child is defined in line with the Southern Sudan constitution as under the age of eighteen.

Incitement

Incitement of ethnic or religious tensions

- (i) The print media shall be aware of the danger of encouraging discrimination and intolerance. They shall therefore avoid the use of inflammatory language. They will take great care in researching and writing material which could denigrate an ethnic or religious group or imply that such a group is responsible for criminal activity. Where possible, the print media will qualify the report so as to minimise any negative impact on the ethnic or religious group.

Incitement of crime

- (ii) The print media shall not publish any material that encourages crime or criminal activity, or that carries imminent risk of causing death, injury or damage to property or other violence.

Covering Ethnic Disputes or Clashes

- (i) News, views or comments relating to ethnic or religious disputes shall be published after reasonable verification of facts, and shall be presented in a manner which is conducive to the maintenance of peace-building, balanced with the public's right to know.
- (ii) Such reports shall not be written in a manner likely to inflame or aggravate tensions between the communities concerned. In determining this test, the public interest in publishing the report shall be taken into account.

Use of Confidential Sources

- (i) Wherever possible, the print media should rely on open, identified sources of information.
- (ii) Journalists and their publications have an obligation to protect the identity of those who provide information to them in confidence, whether or not they explicitly request confidentiality.

Financial Journalism

Journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information to others.

Bribery

- (i) The print media shall conduct themselves in a manner which protects them from real or apparent conflicts of interest.
- (ii) Such conflicts of interest may arise through accepting gifts, bribes or any other form of inducement or privilege.

- (iii) Where benefits are unavoidable, such as accepting travel in order to report on a story, due efforts shall be made to ensure that the journalist's impartiality is not affected.

Use of Recording Devices and Subterfuge

- (i) The print media must not normally seek to obtain or publish information acquired by hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices, by intercepting private phone calls, or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs.
- (ii) Engaging in activity as listed in (i), or engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, may be justified if it is in the public interest but even then only as a last resort, when the material cannot be obtained by other means.

Plagiarism and Attribution

The print media shall refrain from plagiarism. Where there is a need to use material of others, the source will be credited.

Advertising and Sponsorship

- (i) Commercial and political advertisements and sponsored material (whether articles, supplements or other) must be distinguished from editorial content and be clearly marked as what they are.
- (ii) Sponsored material shall indicate prominently and clearly the source of sponsorship.

Definition of 'public interest'

- (i) The public interest includes, but is not confined to:
 - a. Detecting and exposing crime or serious impropriety.
 - b. Protecting public health and safety
 - c. Preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
 - d. Exposing or preventing corruption or wrong-doing in public office, or maladministration.
- (ii) There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.
- (iii) Whenever the public interest is invoked, editors may be required to demonstrate fully how the public interest was served.
- (iv) In determining whether the disclosure of the material is in the public interest, the extent to which the material is already in the public domain, or will become so, should be considered.
- (v) In cases involving children, editors must demonstrate an exceptional public interest to override the normally paramount interest of the child.