



भारतीय प्रेस परिषद् PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA

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PR/8/26-27-PCI

Dated: 15.10.2026

PRESS RELEASE

Guidelines for Journalists Covering Protests and Demonstrations

In view of the prevailing scenario and the need to facilitate the orderly and effective coverage of protests and demonstrations, the Press Council of India, at its meeting held on 14 October 2026, adopted the Guidelines for Journalists Covering Protests and Demonstrations. The guidelines seek to facilitate the effective discharge of journalistic duties while promoting the safety of media personnel, responsible reporting and better coordination among journalists, media organisations and law enforcement authorities. The Press is advised to follow guidelines set out below:

1. Identification and Professional Conduct

- Carry a valid identity card issued by your media organization/newspaper and/or valid PIB/DIP accreditation, as applicable.
- Keep your valid Press identification cards visibly displayed at all times. When using a lanyard, ensure that it is worn and secured carefully to minimize the risk of entanglement during crowd movement or confrontations.
- Clearly and calmly identify yourself as a journalist when approached by law enforcement personnel.
- Maintain neutrality and professionalism. Do not participate in demonstrations, take sides, provoke confrontations, or interfere with protesters, counter-protesters, or police.
- Remain respectful, follow police orders, avoid arguments during tense situations, and comply with lawful instructions, particularly those issued for immediate safety reasons, while calmly asserting your Press status when necessary.

2. Positioning and Crowd Safety

- Maintain a reasonable and safe distance from confrontations, particularly when tensions escalate or police action is anticipated.



- Do not attach cameras or recording equipment to police barricades, vehicles, or other equipment in ways that obstruct movement or damage property.
- Move carefully through crowds, taking short steps to reduce the risk of falling or being trampled.
- Continuously reassess your position in relation to protesters, counter-protesters, police, and other potential sources of danger.

3. Situational Awareness and Escape Planning

- Continuously scan your surroundings for changes in crowd behaviour, approaching individuals, potential confrontations, changes in crowd noises, and emerging hazards.
- Keep an escape route in mind and update it as conditions change. Identify nearby exits, open streets, sidewalks, and safe locations.
- In smoke or tear gas, use visible landmarks and safe routes to leave the affected area without moving deeper into the crowd.

4. Personal Protective Measures and First Aid

- Carry a compact emergency kit containing:
 - (i) A basic first-aid kit and essential personal medication.
 - (ii) Drinking water and high-protein snacks,
 - (iii) A flashlight,
 - (iv) Washcloth/ hand towel,
 - (v) Eye Protection/goggles.
- Depending on the assessed threat, consider suitable protective headgear and body armour. Protective equipment must not encourage unnecessary risk-taking.
- Learn basic first aid and practise using protective equipment before deployment.
- Never touch, pick up, or attempt to move tear-gas canisters, flash-bang devices, or smoke grenades. They may remain hot, explode, or contain hazardous residue.

5. Coordination and Communication

- Maintain regular contact with your newsroom throughout the assignment. Newsrooms should designate a point of contact to monitor journalists' locations and respond to emergencies.
- Freelancers should ensure that a trusted editor or contact knows their location, assignment plan, and expected return time.
- Look out for fellow journalists, particularly when working alone, and maintain communication with colleagues whenever feasible.
- For planned demonstrations, media organizations should coordinate with designated police and public information officers or press liaisons where feasible, to clarify communication protocols and identify any designated media staging areas.



6. Ethical and Responsible Reporting

- Report events accurately, objectively, and impartially. Distinguish verified facts from allegations, opinions, and unconfirmed claims. Follow the applicable Norms of Journalistic Conduct on Accuracy and Fairness.
- Verify information through multiple sources wherever possible. Ask witnesses how they obtained their information and assess their proximity to the event, visibility, reliability, and potential biases.
- Treat statements from protesters, event organizers, police, and government authorities with equal journalistic scrutiny. Attribute claims clearly and seek corroboration.
- Do not broadcast or publish real-time police positions, tactical movements, or escape routes when doing so could compromise safety or operational security.
- Describe observable actions rather than assuming people's motives, intentions, or emotions.
- Exercise particular care when filming or identifying minors, vulnerable individuals, injured people, and private citizens in distress. Consider whether publication could expose them to retaliation, harassment, any other harm, or violate their right to privacy.
- Do not allow equipment, live-broadcast commitments, or pressure to obtain exclusive footage to override safety considerations.

