



Al Jazeera Staff Code of Professional Ethics & Conduct

1. Professional Ethics

1,1 Acknowledgment & Correction of Errors:

In compliance with Aljazeera's commitment to professional ethics and respect to its audience, it is mandatory to swiftly rectify any error committed during any bulletin or live show. Once discovered, mistakes should be corrected immediately whether while on air or when the show is repeated.

Occasionally bulletins or talk shows broadcast misspelled names or inaccurate figures when such flawed text is used from previous shows. Thus, attention should be exercised while preparing such items for broadcast; archival materials should be carefully examined before use as they may contain Spelling mistakes, misprint, or have simply become outdated.

Therefore, all information should be scrutinised and verified whenever possible.

Mispronouncing names of people, places or special items, is among the most common mistakes in broadcasting.

To avoid such errors and embarrassment it is advisable to ask a colleague hailing from that part of the world on how to properly pronounce the name and a presenter may ask the guest off air how to pronounce his/her name or title.

Upon realizing that a mistake was committed such as airing wrong information, false statement or erroneous figures, the following corrective steps should immediately be taken.

- 1.Ensure that the item will not be broadcast again.
- 2.Immediately acknowledge the error and apologize to viewers.
- 3.Rebroadcast the material after correcting it, except in such cases when the material is of a substantial nature and correction is neither editorially or factually worth the effort.
- 4.If an error affects an individual or entity, it is sensible to provide them with an opportunity to correct the information or deny it, without allowing them to undermine the reputation of the Network or their opponents.

5. A senior news executive editor should be informed of the technical or editorial errors, verbally or in writing, and the steps taken to rectify such mistakes.
6. To publish the major error and corresponding correction on Aljazeera Net webpage.
7. No corrective action should be taken in cases involving slander or libel until a legal opinion is sought to protect the network against legal liability.
8. To forward the correction or remedial procedures to relevant divisions or sections in news or program departments to avoid recurrence.

1,2 Conflict of Interests:

Aljazeera staff members should avoid any action or behaviour which may create a personal conflict of interests with the network. When in doubt or uncertain, employees should consult their superiors to avoid being legally liable as a result of their actions or statements.

Based on the aforementioned statement, the following guidelines should be observed:

- A. Staff members should inform their superiors of any potential personal gains they or their first degree relatives (parents, spouse, children, or siblings) would get as a result of conflict of interests with the Network. Such conflicts can result from having contracts to supply equipment or provide services, hold a position with another media organisation, or be part of a news report that would produce material or immaterial benefits to the person who had written, produced, edited or presented the report.
- B. Staff members are not allowed to work, with or without pay, for competitor networks, stations, or any organisation having financial relations or bilateral agreements with Aljazeera Network or hold shares in such organisations. Staff members are not permitted at all to carry any external work, with or without compensation, unless they secure a written authorization from the network's Director General. For example, script writers, presenters or highly-recognized staff members will not be permitted to engage in such activities unless they obtain a written authorization.
- C. Staff members will not be permitted to accept gifts of any kind, whether cash, airline tickets, or hotel accommodation unless it is done with the knowledge and consent of network's management or during an official mission. However, there is no harm in accepting token gifts or souvenirs, such as mementoes and certificates of appreciation, provided that the network's management is informed to determine whether such gifts can be kept by their recipients or should be surrendered to the network due to their content or significance.
- D. The Network shall presume goodwill in all the journalists' professional demeanours and relations with and towards any other body beyond the Network; and any journalist shall have liberty with respect to his/her political and ideological affiliations; provided that the same shall not impact his professional duties within Al Jazeera Network.

1,3 Gathering Information & Privacy:

All individuals, not only celebrities or public figures, have the right to privacy. Consequently, it is not permitted to invade people's privacy without professional or ethical justifications.

Deliberate aggravating actions causing embarrassment or negatively impacting people's lives will not be permitted.

The following points should be taken into consideration:

- Individuals giving opinions or making statements should know that their opinions or statements will be attributed to them. For example a person who has been tortured or molested by security forces should know that details of his/her statement will be delved into.
- When a private aspect of a public figure becomes a public matter worthy of investigation, it should not justify violation of personal liberties or rights, nor should it engender vilification, libel or slander.
- People do not enjoy the same degree of privacy outdoor as at home. Therefore, while filming in public places, the people present should be informed, verbally or via a signboard that this is a shooting location and those who do not want to be filmed should keep out of the camera range.
- Privacy of individuals who are not part of a news story, such as siblings or relatives, should not be violated, if filming them harm their reputation or cause them social, financial or legal problems. A good example might be the appearance of passers-by while security forces are raiding a brothel or narcotics hangout.
- We should be cognizant of potential legal consequences when taking close-up shots of people such as when reporting on rogue stock market traders, gambling, narcotic addiction, fraud, or professional malfeasance where innocent individuals will appear in the shot and may embroil Aljazeera in a legal action.

1,4 Hidden Cameras & Microphones:

The use of hidden cameras, microphones or wiretapping devices is an ethical issue. While some may justify it as a 'professional necessity' in investigative reporting, in most cases, however, it is fraught with ethical and legal problems.

Covert filming represents the most blatant form of violating a person's privacy. However, in certain reporting circumstances, there is no other alternative available to get to the facts. In such cases evidence is needed to demonstrate that public's interests or welfares have been violated and covert filming is the only means possible to protect it.

In all cases, the following three conditions must be met:

1. The case should represent a public matter.
2. The case should have a strong link to transgression, offenses or crimes against society at large or a specific sector of the community. Covert filming is the only way to glean information about the case.
3. The decision to authorize covert filming should be separated from the decision to broadcast it, as the Director of News may decide later not to air the piece after discovering flaws in the recording or if newly-emerged developments render broadcasting them unethical.

It should be noted that covert filming is sometimes the last resort to obtain facts of public interest matter.

Al Jazeera occasionally resorts to covert filming in countries in which authorities prevent free reporting, conceal facts, or prevent interviewing individuals, for example Al Jazeera coverage of events in Myanmar.

When resorting to covert filming, all facts and versions of an event must accurately and fairly be presented. Al Jazeera does not use covert filming obtained from other sources, except in rare circumstances, after securing the approval of the Director General.

1,5 Filming on Private Property:

Prior approval should be obtained from owners in cases involving filming private properties and staff members must leave the property as soon as they are ordered or requested to do so.

Filming within private property without approval is permitted only in the following cases:

1. If a transgression or crime has been committed
2. If a public interest event is taking place
3. If embedded with security forces raiding a public property

1,6 Competition:

A. Competition does not mean humiliating other media organisations by smearing their reputation or casting doubt on their credibility. High status comes by gaining the trust of the public. It must be noted that Al Jazeera is not competition with entertainment stations despite their popularity. Al Jazeera is, first and foremost, a news network, where there is no room to mixing up entertainment shows with news.

B. The quest to achieve excellence, overtake the competition, or score scoops, should not be an excuse for impartiality, lack of objectivity or manipulation of the Code of Professional Ethics & Conduct. Attaining respect and credibility should have priority over achieving popularity. It is imperative to focus on the minds of viewers and not their hearts.

C. Safety and wellbeing of staff members should have priority over the quest for exclusive reports or scoops. Thus, reporters and producers must exercise caution and do not put themselves in jeopardy, especially while covering wars, riots, violent upheavals or sport events.

D. The quest to beat the competition with exclusive reports or scoops does not justify interrupting the broadcast to air an insignificant event as a “Breaking News”. That decision should be left to a senior news editor.

E. Al Jazeera is a media organization and should not sacrifice journalistic values and ethics for monetary gains. Stories related to corporations airing commercials on Al Jazeera should not be withheld nor should guests with potential negative views of such corporations be excluded. Aired programs should be designed for the minds and not stock market.

2. Professional Conduct

Al Jazeera staff members shall not be allowed to:

1. Promote other media organisations, whether competitor or not, by appearing as guests or analysts, without prior authorisation from Al Jazeera management.
2. Issue statements that may undermine the name, reputation or standing of the Al Jazeera, such as expressing disparaging racial or religious views in public.
3. Consume alcohol, narcotics or drugs inside Al Jazeera premises or reporting to work while being intoxicated or drugged. Smoking is permitted only in designated areas.
4. Staff members are not permitted to participate, without prior management approval, in political, commercial or institutional campaigns, whether Al Jazeera is involved in such campaigns or not; participation will be permitted on case-by-case basis
5. Staff members are not permitted to publicly declare their political, ethnic or denominational affiliation. This injunction applies to all news and program staff members, including presenters, producers, and reporters.
6. Staff members will not be permitted to exploit their professional position, threaten or vilify individuals and/ or corporations, or gain personal benefits or preferential treatment; such actions will negatively impact the name, reputation or standing of Al Jazeera. For example using staff ID or business card for purposes other than Al Jazeera-related work. This applies to disclosing internal circulars, resolutions, workflow directives, or divulging addresses and phone numbers of Al Jazeera guests or staff members, including “Talk-Back” (the internal dialogue platform) for personal gains.
7. Staff members shall not be permitted to establish web blogs to express, without disclaimers, views and opinions in contradiction to Al Jazeera’s standards, ethics or values as per the Code of Professional Ethics & Conduct.
8. Staff members will not yield to threats or inducements to air any material in violation of the Code of Professional Ethics & Conduct and are expected to report such threats or enticements

immediately. No such material shall be aired without prior consent of the concerned staff member; this covers materials on news ticker.

9. Staff members should not debate Al Jazeera's policies, claim to represent it, disclose its current or future plans, reveal internal information in public or private gatherings, without prior management approval. Such permission will be granted on case-by-case basis.

10. People appearing on Al Jazeera, including presenters, anchors, or reporters, must look presentable; their appearance and clothing must look smart; untrimmed hair or beard, or clothes lacking simplest requirements of elegance will not be permitted.

11. Staff members will not be permitted to damage, wilfully or inadvertently, devices, property, equipment, tapes, information, or archive materials. It is prohibited to use devices for any purpose other than what they are designated for. For example, telephones should not be used to make long distance personal calls, computers for gaming or the Internet for chatting.

3. Professional Relations

1. Working in the world of media require collective efforts and a spirit of teamwork ingrained in all staff members and practiced by all sections, without exception. Consequently opposing opinions must be respected while putting together news bulletins and programs; professional conduct must be observed without absolutism. This does not strip a team leader of his discretionary authority or ruling power, as he is responsible for consequences of his decision or when he adopts his colleague's recommendations.

2. Seniority or job title is not a license to disregard or ridicule opinions of other team members. All staff members are entitled to be respected and esteemed while a team leader should not favour any member at the expense of others when allocating duties. Team members should be offered equal opportunities to work on broadcasting material without prejudice to job descriptions or seniority. However, there are certain exceptions, for instance when a particular reporter is better than others in covering a specific issue.

3. Professional relations are based on mutual respect, where there is no room for personal malice or evil. Therefore, it is not permitted to engage in squabbling, futile arguments or brawls on the premises, even if the dispute is job-related.

4. Seniority must be respected and senior officers cannot be bypassed at work. For example, if when a producer is in charge of team of reporters tasked with specific assignments and a difference arises among them, his decision will be final.

4. Instructions & Directives

The violation of any criteria, restriction, requirement or directive mentioned in this Guidebook constitutes shall represent a beach of the Employment Contract and the conditions stipulated therein.

1. All directives of work regulations and duties sanctioned by departments, sections, or divisions are binding and shall constitute an integral part of this Guidebook.
2. All issued editorial circulars must be in harmony with standards and values contained in this Guidebook.
3. All journalists, reporters, correspondents, language monitors, translators, interpreters, producers, technical directors, and editors shall abide on a daily basis by the official email and the Information & Polices; all editorial circulars or directives contained therein are binding upon all staff members. In case of any breach or violation, there shall be no excuse for those who claim they did not read them.