

**ANTI-TERRORISM CONVENTION
(RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE MASS MEDIA IN CASE OF
A TERRORIST ATTACK AND AN ANTI-TERRORISM OPERATION)**

11 April 2003

In order to provide the public with reliable information, the mass media have the right and are obliged to facilitate open discussion on the issue of terrorism, update the public on the course of counter-terrorism operations, carry out investigations and inform people about real problems and conflicts.

We are convinced that the terrorist threat must not be used as a pretext or an excuse for imposing restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and the mass media.

At the same time, recognizing the danger posed by terrorism as well as the high responsibility of working with information in such circumstances, we consider it necessary to voluntarily adopt the following rules of conduct for the mass media and pledge to adhere to them in our work:

1. Media professionals must understand that, during a terrorist attack and an anti-terrorism operation, the rescue of people and the right to life take precedence over all other rights and liberties.

2. In case of receiving information suggesting that a terrorist attack is being prepared or about to be launched, journalists must convey this information to their management before making it public.

3. Journalists shall always carry and produce upon request a press card or any other document certifying their identity and professional affiliation.

4. Mass media management shall immediately communicate to the Operational Headquarters or other official bodies any information in their possession that could be used to save people's lives.

5. In view of the fact that in most cases one of the major goals of terrorists is to gain access to the mass media in order to transmit their message, the mass media shall not:

- hold, on their own initiative, interviews with terrorists during the terrorist attack, except upon request or authorization of the Operational Headquarters;

- provide terrorists with an opportunity of live broadcast without prior consultations with the Operational Headquarters;

- act on their own account as mediators (except when it has been authorized and performed upon request of the Operational Headquarters); if a media representative happens to be among the negotiators, he/she shall refrain from his/her own publications until the crisis has been resolved;

- take up arms and wear camouflage or any other uniform, proceeding from the understanding that he/she ceases to be a media representative the moment he/she takes up arms;

- suggest that terrorists, hostages, other persons involved in the conflict take any actions in order to obtain better video or photo pictures;

- insult and humiliate terrorists who are in control of the lives of hostages.

6. The mass media shall:

- be mindful of the fact that live TV and radio broadcasts may be used by terrorists to send pre-arranged signals to their accomplices elsewhere;

- avoid providing particular details concerning the actions of professionals engaged in saving human lives;

- show tact and care towards the feelings of families and loved ones of the victims of terrorism; be particularly sensitive when communicating with eyewitnesses of the events as information sources;

- avoid excessive naturalism when showing the scene of the event and its participants; respect moral, ethnic and religious feelings of their audience;

- be careful with the use of terms in the news coverage; avoid playing into the hands of terrorists who use advantageous self-designations;

- be aware that terrorists' hostages are also hostages of the situation and at some point could be used as a leverage to influence public opinion;

- avoid identification of relatives and friends of hostages and potential victims without their consent.

7. When covering terrorist attacks and anti-terrorism operations, the mass media should also:

- be mindful of their responsibility to inform the public, rather than spread panic; watch not only the contents of the message but also its tone;

- remember that media reports are available to the general public, including those who are intentionally creating the critical situation;

- take into account that the world community does not associate terrorism with any specific religion, race, or nationality;

- understand that media reports must not contain information that could enable terrorists to strengthen their positions – for instance, statements in support of terrorists' demands. Such strict requirements are applicable solely to the situations that involve a direct threat to people's lives and do not apply to events of political, economic or social struggle that is in compliance with the Constitution.

8. The mass media may announce that some of the information has been classified by the Operational Headquarters for the duration of the counter-terrorism operation for security reasons in order to save people's lives.

*Exemptions from these rules are possible only for the sake of saving people's lives upon approval by the Operational Headquarters.