



CONFLICT SENSITIVE REPORTING:

A HANDBOOK FOR AZERBAIJANI JOURNALISTS

PETER DU TOIT

Research Associate, School of Journalism and
Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa

SEYMUR KAZIMOV

Independent journalist, researcher and conflict
reporting expert in Azerbaijan.

Authors:

PETER DU TOIT

*Research Associate, School of Journalism and Media Studies,
Rhodes University, South Africa*

SEYMUR KAZIMOV

*Independent journalist, researcher and conflict
reporting expert in Azerbaijan*

This material has been produced within the Council of Europe project on Reenforcing gender equality and other ethical standards in the Azerbaijani media. The views expressed herein cannot be taken to reflect the official opinion of the Council of Europe.

@Council of Europe, October 2021





**CONFLICT SENSITIVE REPORTING:
A HANDBOOK FOR AZERBAIJANI
JOURNALISTS**

Contents

Part One: <i>What do we mean by conflict sensitive journalism?</i>	4
1.1. Initial thoughts on conflict sensitive journalism	4
1.2. The relationship between conflict and journalism	5
1.3. Assumptions underpinning conflict sensitive journalism	6
Part Two: <i>Some conflict fundamentals</i>	8
2.1. Defining conflict	8
2.2. Conflict and violence	8
2.3. Causes of conflict	10
2.4. Conflict moderators and aggravators	11
2.5. What happens as conflict escalate?	11
2.6. How parties approach conflicts	13
2.7. What do parties need to be able to do if they are to resolve conflicts constructively?	15
Part Three: <i>How journalist can impact conflict</i>	17
3.1. How good journalism contributes to conflict resolution	18
3.2. How journalists can exacerbate conflict	21
3.3. Is our reporting conflict sensitive?	22
Part Four: <i>Some key questions to ask when covering conflict</i>	26
4.1. General questions to consider when covering conflict	26
4.2. Question to ask during peace processes	27
Part Five: <i>Thinking creatively about conflict coverage</i>	29
5.1. Joint interviews	29
5.2. Journalists across the divide	29
5.3. Exchanging questions	30
5.4. Asking the same questions of all parties	30
5.5. Profiling peace makers	30
5.6. Sharing our opinions - A note for bloggers	30
Part Six: <i>A conflict sensitive approaches to interviewing</i>	32
6.1. Some general tips for conflict sensitive interviewing	32
6.2. Interviewing people affected by conflict	33
Part Seven: <i>Looking after ourselves during times of conflict</i>	35
7.1. Staying safe while covering conflict	35
7.2. Taking care of our mental well-being	37

INTRODUCTION

Media reports about wars and violent conflicts often prove more gripping to audiences than any other events but covering these stories can offer enormous challenges to the journalists who must bring this news to the public. This was certainly the case during the 44-day war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in late 2020. Not only were stories dramatic, but audiences were anxious for information about how events would impact on their lives. Even those who normally show little interest in socio-political affairs became avid consumers of news and many continue to monitor the aftermath of the fighting.

Journalists on the frontline of this conflict included seasoned correspondents and inexperienced beginners. Some provided fair, accurate and responsible reports, but others succumbed to the lure of propaganda which impacted on their credibility. This handbook aims to introduce Azerbaijani journalists to principles of conflict sensitive journalism (CSJ). Written by an international conflict sensitive journalism trainer and an Azerbaijani conflict reporting specialist, the handbook aims to empower journalists to reflect on their coverage of the war and to equip them to report constructively on other conflicts.

The handbook has been designed to be used in a number of ways. It has primarily been written as a resource for journalists who report on different forms of conflict on a regular basis. It aims to provide these journalists with a range

of concepts they can engage with as they reflect on how their reporting impacts on conflict. It also aims to provide these journalists with useful tools they can use when covering conflict stories and highlights some strategies that can help journalists stay safe in the field. The handbook could also provide bloggers and social media producers with ideas about how their work can contribute constructively to peace.

The handbook is also intended to provide a stimulus for dialogue between journalists and between journalists and their editors as they grapple with the challenges of reporting responsibly on conflict. The text should also provide a resource for journalism trainers and university lecturers wanting to introduce participants and students to core principles relating to conflict sensitive reporting.

While it offers up some suggestions, the handbook is not intended to be prescriptive. Every conflict situation is different and journalists' working contexts vary dramatically from institution to institution. Some journalists have enormous freedoms in the way they choose to approach their work, others are highly restricted by demands of their employers. It is hoped that members of the latter group will be able to adapt some of these ideas to their contexts and, where necessary, to be able to draw on this text in mounting arguments for an approach to journalism that is conflict sensitive and contributes towards reducing the harm caused by conflict.

REFLECTIVE MOMENTS

This handbook brings together a collection of core ideas about conflict sensitive reporting that journalists from conflict affected countries, who have attended courses in conflict sensitive reporting, have found stimulating and useful in their work. These ideas are not cast in stone. Some have provoked ongoing debate among reporters who are committed to making a difference through their reporting. Readers are urged to reflect on their own responses to principles presented here and how these ideas can be applied in their own contexts. To encourage reflection we have included a number reflective moments in the text where readers can pause to consider their reactions. A brief space has been included at the end of each of the seven parts for readers to capture their ideas.

Part One:

What do we mean by conflict sensitive journalism?

1.1. Initial thoughts on conflict sensitive journalism

4 Every time we report on conflict, we can make life better or worse for the people involved. Our reports can equip people to make lifesaving decisions, enable better understandings between rivals and allow communities to share their concerns. They can also provoke fear and hatred, enhance misunderstandings, and do damage to the prospects of peace.

We cannot determine how people will react, but if we are sensitive to the potential impact of our reporting, we can take steps to avoid doing harm and possibly even contribute to the possibility of peace. This is the essence of an approach to reporting often referred to as *conflict sensitive journalism (CSJ)*.

It is an approach to journalism that understands that the moment we begin to report on a conflict we become part of the

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 1:

Before you start reading this text consider how you feel about your role as a journalist reporting on conflict. What would you like to achieve when you present stories about conflicts? Who are you serving?

event. Who we choose to speak to, what questions we ask, which images we select and the angles we decide on influences how parties behave and how conflicts will unfold. Conflict sensitive reporters recognize that their work affects lives, and this knowledge underpins their commitment to providing fair, honest, accurate, independent, and comprehensive

coverage. All qualities of good professional journalism.

So, is there a difference between conflict sensitive reporting and good professional coverage? No and Yes. No, because conflict sensitive reporters are just as committed to principles of excellence as other journalists, and yes, because they are further motivated by the knowledge that excellent reporting can help limit the destructive potential of conflict and ease suffering. This knowledge informs the way they approach their work, inspiring them to dig deeper and to think more broadly about the stories they are covering. They do not see themselves as mediators or peacemakers but understand that good journalism can contribute towards creating conditions that

allow for the peaceful management and resolution of conflict.

For journalists working in countries and communities that have been through wars and violent confrontations, conflict sensitive reporting provides a means of making a constructive difference without compromising principles of good journalism.

In this short handbook we will explore the assumptions that underpin a conflict sensitive approach to reporting, the ways in which good journalism can make a difference and the practices that we should avoid when reporting on conflict. It also provides some tips for how journalists can report on conflict stories and some advice about how to stay safe.

1.2. The relationship between conflict and journalism

A conflict sensitive approach to reporting seems especially important when we recognize that virtually all news stories involve an element of conflict. Why? Because news is always about change and change is almost always accompanied by conflict. Change is seldom uncontested.

Conflicts occur when people try to bring about change that enables them to meet their needs, gain access to resources and to reduce inequalities and injustice. It occurs when people resist change as they struggle to maintain privilege or to protect customs, principles, people, and property they hold dear. It also occurs when people have different ideas about the nature of the change, how it should happen and how quickly it should happen. Some, for instance, may favor a slow, evolutionary, approach to social transformation, others may demand a quicker and more revolutionary response.

Conflicts can vary greatly in their scope and intensity. National struggles to recover occupied lands may lead to major conflagrations, disputes over social conditions and political freedoms can result in protests and

demonstrations, while the struggles of members of the LGBTI community may be met with hate speech and thuggery. Regardless of the cause and the scale, conflicts cause suffering if they result in confrontations and this suffering can intensify if they are prolonged and allowed to escalate. Conflicts need not ultimately end negatively, when tackled in a cooperative manner they can ultimately result in positive social and political change that benefits everyone involved.

As journalists, we are interested in the impact change has on individuals, communities and nations, the environment, political movements, economies, and social institutions. We are also interested in how the change takes place and whether people are harmed in the process. Is it violent or peaceful? Who is involved and who is excluded? Will change result in permanent solutions or provide the foundation for future outbreaks? In reporting on these issues conflict sensitive reporters are acutely aware that people rely on us for information to guide how they respond to alterations in their political, social, economic, and natural environments. We also know that

people look to the news to gain insights into how they should feel about others involved in

a conflict and how they should respond to them.

1.3. Assumptions underpinning conflict sensitive journalism

As an approach to journalism, conflict sensitive reporting is based on several fundamental and interrelated assumptions that inform how we approach our work. These assumptions include the following:

- Conflicts cannot be sustainably managed or resolved unless the needs and interest of all parties involved are satisfied to an acceptable degree. This lesson from the fields of peace and conflict studies emphasises that unless all parties are satisfied with the outcomes of a settlement, the conflict will continue.
- Journalists and news organisations can make an important contribution towards the creation of conditions that allow for conflicts to be resolved by reporting on events in ways that are sensitive to the needs of all parties.

For journalists belonging to communities caught up in conflict these two assumptions are significant. They suggest that if journalists hope to serve their own communities, they must also be interested in ensuring other communities' interests are recognized and accommodated. The final outcome of a conflict must be fair to all parties. We can only contribute to peace if we recognize the needs and interests of all parties involved are important and treat these groups equitably.

- While journalist can make a positive contribution during times of conflict, they should not promote the agenda or interests of a particular group or advocate a particular solution.

It is never up to us to try and shape how a conflict should play out. Our role is to provide people with the information they need to make informed decisions for themselves. The moment

we throw our weight behind a particular position is the moment we sacrifice our credibility with groups favoring alternative positions and without that credibility we can do very little.

- We need to constantly reflect on the impact of our work and the degree to which we are meeting the needs of our audiences.

Not only do we need to be conscious of the degree to which our work can contribute to the possibility of conflicts being constructively and peacefully resolved, we also need to be aware of how our reports can impact negatively on conflicts. If our coverage is inaccurate, biased, or sensational our journalism can contribute towards prolonging and exacerbating conflicts and people's suffering.

- Our journalism must be engaging and compelling.

One of the challenges conflict sensitive journalists face is ensuring their work captures the attention of audiences. If people are not engaging with our stories these will have no impact. We need to find creative ways of presenting the news without sensationalism.

What sets conflict sensitive reporting apart from other forms of journalism has less to do with journalists practice and more to do with how they view their work. If we recognize our potential to make a constructive difference during times of conflict, this will shape our reporting and the way we approach our coverage.

- The more journalists understand about conflict, the better equipped they will be to report on events and processes in ways that promote understanding and enhance the likelihood of parties achieving peaceful solutions.

We expect sports reporters to know something about the games they are covering, and we expect business reporters to have a working knowledge of economics, we should also expect conflict reporters to know something

about the causes of conflict, its dynamics, and its resolution. A knowledge of general conflict theory can greatly enhance our ability to understand the world and to report on events from an informed perspective.

Notes on Part One:

Part Two: Some conflict fundamentals

Conflicts are always more complex than they seem. Our challenge is to understand them and to find ways of explaining complicated events and processes to our audiences. In this part of the handbook, we examine a number of useful concepts, theories and tools that will: 1.) enhance our understanding of conflict, 2.) equip us to tell stories about conflict that explain their complexity, and 3.) enable us to think more deeply about the impact of our work on conflicts.

2.1. Defining conflict

Conflict theorists have provided us with many definitions of conflict. These generally focus on similar themes that are captured in this definition by a South African conflict specialist, Mark Anstey, who writes that:

Conflict exists in a **relationship** when parties **believe** their aspirations cannot be achieved at the same time, or **perceive** a divergence in their **values, needs or interests** ... and **purposefully mobilise** the power that is available to them in an effort to eliminate, neutralise, or change each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction¹.

The critical elements of this definition are highlighted. Conflict occurs within a relationship between two or more parties and this relationship will influence how events play out. When there is a history of antagonism between parties it become more challenging to reach solutions without confrontation. Where

2.2. Conflict and violence

Conflict and violence are often equated, but they are different. Violence is a manifestation of conflict. It is a way in which parties attempt to compel others to do their bidding by causing or threatening to cause them harm.

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 2:

As you work your way through this part of the handbook think about some of the conflicts that you have been involved in covering or that you have witnessed. Consider how the concepts included in this text can be applied to these conflicts. How could you use them in your reporting?

past relationships are strong, the chances of parties collaborating are enhanced.

The other key element in this definition is the reference to perceptions. It is enough for the parties to perceive that they have incompatible goals for a conflict exist.

As journalists we need to be aware of the history of the relationship between contending parties. We also need to be able to understand how the different parties view the issues in contention.

Leading conflict specialist Johan Galtung, often known as the father of peace studies, distinguishes between three forms of violence, direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence.

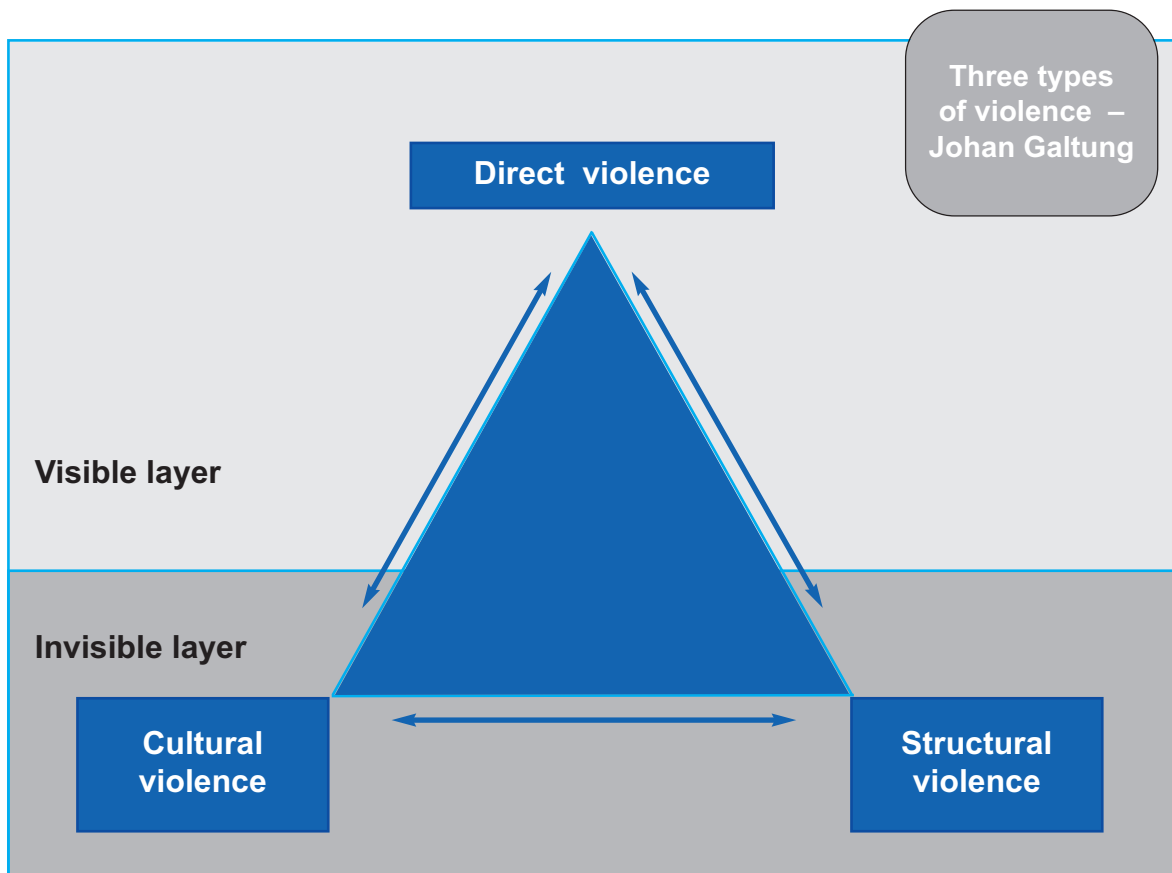
¹Anstey, M. 2008. Managing Change: Negotiating Conflict. Cape Town: Juta

- **Direct violence** is the most visible and refers to physical attacks on people and property. Examples include: assault, rape, bombings, war, torture, genocide and other human rights abuses.
- **Cultural violence** refers to actions intended to undermine people psychologically and to destroy their sense of self-worth. Examples include: hate speech, racist jokes, and discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and religion and ethnicity.
- **Structural violence** describes the “systematic way in which inequitable social, economic, and political structures

repress, harm or disadvantage individuals or groups”.¹

These different forms of violence frequently occur at the same time and impact on each other. Structural violence often occurs in tandem with direct violence and cultural violence. While people subjected to cultural violence will frequently resort to direct violence to assert identities.

Direct violence is typically the form of violence that gets covered in the news because it is so visible, but we need to be aware of the other forms violence that are provoking conflict in our communities and to ensure these are also exposed.



¹ Rama, E.K. & Gürten, K. 2018. The Conflict-Sensitive Journalism Teaching Guide. ForumZFD. Available: <https://www.forumzfd.de/en/publikation/conflict-sensitive-journalism-teaching-guide-philosophy-and-practice>

2.3. Causes of conflict

There are many factors that lead to conflicts and if we can identify these, we can begin to understand why conflicts are taking place and ultimately, what it might take to resolve them. The following are some of the key elements researchers have identified which lead to conflict.

- **Scarcity**

Conflict will frequently erupt in situations in which people believe there are insufficient resources to satisfy the needs of all the parties involved. Conflicts involving finite resources, such as land and water can be especially difficult to manage.

- **Structural imbalances**

Closely related to conflicts over scarcity are conflicts that occur because there is an actual or a perceived inequality in the way in which resources are distributed. These conflicts frequently occur when dominant groups use their power and entrenched privileged positions to ensure an uneven allocation of resources. Where structures privilege people from particular racial, religious or ethnic backgrounds these conflicts often appear to take on racial, religious and ethnic dimensions.

- **Goal incompatibility**

Conflicts frequently break out when parties see themselves as having incompatible goals. The demands by some groups for autonomy and independence may be viewed by others as a threat to national unity. The demands by mining companies for land can directly contradict the needs of a community to protect their natural environment and to save threatened species.

- **Information conflicts**

Conflicts can break out in situation where people lack the information they need to make informed decisions. When parties misinterpret the motives behind other's actions this can give

rise to an escalation in conflict. This is particularly likely in the absence of clear communication channels. Anstey argues that:

Lack of shared and legitimate information ... gives rise to power struggles and contributes to rising levels of mistrust in relations ... it reduces the capacity of the parties to understand each other's stances on issues, contributing to the chances of misjudgement [and in parties] embarking in trials of strength¹.

- **Interpersonal relations**

Intergroup conflicts may frequently find their origins in interpersonal conflicts between leaders. Leaders will often use their influence to encourage supporters to turn against people they personally hold grudges against. Supporters may sometimes engage in these struggles out of genuine loyalty to leaders; they may also do so because they are reliant on the leader's patronage. Once followers inflict harm on each other the conflict can take on an entirely new dimension as people have genuine grievances against each other.

- **Uncertainty**

It is not uncommon for conflicts to break out during times of transition and change, when new norms are being established and groups are grappling with the challenge of relating to each other in different ways. It is common during times of transition for conflicts that have been suppressed under authoritarian rule to come to the surface when the political environment begins to open. Differences may have been addressed at a macro-level between leaders, but the antagonism between members of competing groups may persist leading to ongoing strife.

- **Identity**

People need to associate with people who share their ideological, political, cultural and religious beliefs and to be able to express themselves openly without being threatened.

¹ Anstey (2008: 29)

They can see these groups as extensions of themselves and to view anything that threatens one member of the group as a challenge to themselves. This can have serious implications for conflict because it allows leaders to mobilise

people around issues affecting group identity. It is also makes it possible for people pursuing their own agendas to manipulate people’s perceptions of threats to group identity as a way of mobilising people to their advantage.

2.4. Conflict moderators and aggravators

When reporting on conflicts, we need to be aware of factors that could exacerbate the tensions and ultimately lead to violence. As we assess conflict situations, we should be asking a range of questions that will enable us to see whether conflicts are likely to get worse.

- **What is the history between the parties?** Do they have a history of antagonism and violence? Where this is the case, it can often take very little to trigger a violent confrontation. Have they been able to resolve past differences peacefully? Parties may be unwilling to jeopardize a valued relationship by allowing a conflict to escalate beyond a certain point.
- **Do they share common values?** Where parties recognize and acknowledge each other’s rights this can pave the way for peaceful settlements. Where there are

fundamental differences in values conflicts are more likely to escalate.

- **Are there alternative solutions available to the parties?** When parties can choose between a range of possible solutions, they are less likely to allow conflicts to escalate. Where confrontation seems to be the only option, the potential for a rapid escalation increases.
- **Can the parties turn to acceptable conflict management forums?** The availability of a jointly acceptable conflict management forum can prevent conflicts from escalating.
- **Are groups able to communicate with each other?** Clear and open communication channels reduce the likelihood of conflict escalating, but the possibility of misunderstandings and conflict spiralling increases if these channels are blocked.

2.5. What happens as conflict escalate?

Theorists studying conflict have identified a range of common dynamics that take place as conflicts escalate. We need to be aware of these because they enable us to know when conflicts

are getting worse and to predict how they are likely to evolve. This table provides an overview of what happens between parties as conflicts escalate.

Dynamics of conflict escalation ¹	
From	To
Limited issues – Parties make, often quite clear, defined, demands regarding specific issues.	Issue proliferation – Demands become broader and more complex, making them harder to meet.
Limited investment – A limited amount of human and material resources are invested in the conflict.	Increased investment – Parties invest more and more in pursuing the conflict, but the more they invest the harder it becomes to withdraw without gain.

¹ Adapted from Anstey (2008).

Few participants – Only those directly concerned about the issues are involved.	More participants – Groups draw in their allies for support. Each new group has its own agenda and interests which enhances the complexity.
Neutral perceptions – Parties have relatively neutral and sometimes positive perceptions of the other.	Negative perceptions – Parties views of the other become hostile as they blame each other and come to view each other as enemies.
Open communication – Parties communicate openly with each other.	Poor communication channels – communication becomes infrequent and messages from the other group are treated with suspicion.
Neutral relationships – Interactions between groups are neutral or positive.	Hostile relationships – Personal relations decline between group members at all levels.
Doves lead – Groups are led by moderates who are more open to looking for peaceful solutions.	Hawks lead – Militant leaders come to the fore as groups believe they need strong leaders to defend them.

12

A critical problem with escalation is that it results in a spiralling effect. As conflicts continue, they become more complex and intense with issues increasing along with the costs. Acts of violence attract acts of retaliation which attract further acts of retribution. This cycle can continue until parties are exhausted. The following are some of the factors that enhance the chances of conflicts escalating:

- Groups fear losing face. Leaders can find it hard to argue in favour of compromise without losing face or being seen to be weak by their supporters. Stepping back from hard-line positions can result in leaders seeming to be flip-flopping.
- Groups develop tunnel vision. Parties lose the ability to see things from the other party's perspective. They become locked into promoting and defending their own positions and struggle to recognise that other parties also have needs and interests.
- Groups become more cohesive. Group members feel increased pressure to conform to a single position. Members who advocate a moderate or a conciliatory

approach to conflict can be rejected or branded as traitors.

- Groups seek revenge. People's experiences of suffering often leave them with a strong desire to see opponents punished. Groups seldom recognise that harm is often inflicted on both sides. Groups fearing reprisals may feel it is better to continue fighting.

- Conflicts can become so complex that people do not know where to start the process of resolving their differences.

Knowing these things equips us to anticipate what might happen and enables us to ask informed questions that shed light on the conflict and how different people are likely to behave. These questions can be directed at the parties themselves or at experts who can provide insights into how conflicts might be resolved. We can also anticipate when a conflict is likely to turn violent. The following are some of the trends that indicate when violence is likely: ¹

- One or more of the parties is experiencing a high level of discontent and frustration.

¹See Anstey, 2008: 324 -325.

- One or more of the parties is threatened by the demands of another or by the prospects of change.
- There is an absence of trusted forums where people can turn to resolve conflicts. Systems of social control, e.g. the police force, cannot be trusted or are perceived to be untrustworthy.
- Parties cannot see alternatives to violence when it comes to furthering or protecting their interests.
- Parties believe violence is ideologically acceptable and, given the circumstances, legitimate.
- There is a track-record of violence in the relations between the parties.
- There is a breakdown of social norms as people struggle to find new ways of dealing with difference or change.
- Individuals do not see themselves as responsible within their group for preventing violence.
- There is evidence that group members have lost the ability to empathise.
- Crowd situations create a feeling of anonymity and decreased responsibility.
- Communication channels in the conflict are poor, allowing for rumours of potential attacks and violence, which cause people to misread situations.

2.6. How parties approach conflicts

Not all conflicts need to result in direct hostilities between groups. Parties can choose from a range of competitive approaches or they can opt for a collaborative approach in which they jointly seek to negotiate mutually satisfactory outcomes. The latter is generally the most advantageous in the long run, but parties will frequently begin by resorting to competitive

approaches before they consider alternative. Sometimes, they will not have a choice. When an opponent refuses to negotiate in good faith the other party's choices can be limited. In the table that follows we focus four different competitive approaches parties may engage in as a way of dealing with their conflicts. Each of these has a particular set of drawbacks.

Common Competitive Approaches to Conflict		
Strategies	Motivations	Consequences
Total Victory	Parties feel they can mobilise sufficient resources to force opponents to make concessions or face total defeat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties come to believe that whoever mobilises the most force will get what they want. • Parties are deprived of the opportunity to learn about the other side. • Large commitment of resources to ensure victory. The cost of winning can outweigh the benefits. • Real causes of conflict are not addressed. • Valued relationships are not developed which might help parties in managing future conflicts. • Defeated parties resume the struggle once they have gathered strength. • Ongoing acts of sabotage and violence are likely.

Avoidance or accommodation	Parties fear the costs of engaging in conflict may be too high. They try to avoid confrontation by making concessions at their own expense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance only postpones the time when parties will have to deal with the issues. • Parties do not get to tackle problems jointly & learn about each other’s needs and interests. • Parties do not get to clarify misperceptions or question their own stereotypes. • Groups remain frustrated. • When one group starts making small concessions it becomes likely the other group will make more and more demands.
Surface solutions	Parties accept the simplest solutions, without addressing the underlying causes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The illusion is created that the problem has been addressed. • Failure to address substantive issues means the solution is likely to be temporary. • Parties may lose confidence in the value of working together if agreements fail.
Bargaining	Parties enter a process of give and take, with each trying to limit their concessions while trying to extract as many concessions from the other side as they can.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties focus on the issues on the table rather than addressing underlying causes of the conflict. • Power remains defined by each party’s ability to extract greater concessions. • Parties see conflict as having a definite winner and loser. • Losers are likely to feel frustrated which enhances the likelihood of further conflict. • All parties may be forced to give up on things that are important to them. • Relationships are likely to deteriorate or stagnate. • The process is time consuming.

The alternative to competitive approaches are collaborative approaches where parties recognize that they cannot solve the conflict by themselves and that they need to work with their “opponents” to find solutions. These processes can sometimes be more time

consuming and challenging, but they will generally benefit all sides in the long run. The following table provides an overview of the benefits of collaborative conflict management processes over competitive ones.

Competitive vs Collaborative approaches to managing and ending conflict	
Competitive approaches characterised by:	Collaborative approaches characterised by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero-sum gains. In other words, what is won by Party A is lost by Party B. <i>Gains by Party A – Loses by Party B = 0.</i> • Parties working against each other. As parties work against each other they mobilise more and more resources which increase the costs of for all sides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive-sum gains. Parties seek to ensure that everybody benefits from solutions that are negotiated. Parties working together to address problems jointly. • By focussing on the problems instead of on harming each other parties often find far more creative solutions, which satisfy everyone.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term solutions. The fact that one party has prevailed does not mean the conflict is over. Defeated parties often continue to look for ways to achieve their goals and undermine their opponents. • The competitive process causes a deterioration of the relationship between the parties. Resentments are not addressed, and parties do not come to learn about each other or to build relationships based on trust. • All parties will sustain losses. The expression that “Nobody wins a war” can be all too true. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of communication. For parties to tackle problems on a collaborative level, there must be open and respected channels of communication. This can also pave the way for effective conflict management in the future. • Increased levels of trust and improved relationships. This can have long-term benefits in helping parties address conflicts that might erupt in the future.
---	---

It is important for journalists to be able to identify these different approaches and to understand the likely consequences of these choices, because this enables us to ask questions which invite parties to consider the consequences of their actions. For example, if it is evident a party is seeking to avoid conflict by simply backing down, we can ask questions that encourage people to consider the potential outcomes of this approach. The following are questions journalists could ask.

- You appear to be making concessions to avoid a confrontation. You may be willing

to do this now, but are you going to feel the outcome is fair and just in the future? If not, what could this mean for the conflict resuming at a later point?

- Can you be sure that having made these concessions now, you will not be asked to make more concessions in the future?
- How will the way you are approaching this issue impact on your potential to resolve future conflicts with this party?

It is possible to contemplate similar sets of questions for all of the different approaches.

2.7. What do parties need to be able to do if they are to resolve conflicts constructively?

If parties in conflict are to be able to collaborate in finding solutions then a number of conditions need to exist for this to be possible. We discuss these briefly in this section, while in Part Three we explore how journalists can contribute towards the creation of these conditions. The following are some of the key conditions that must exist. It must be possible for parties to:

- communicate with each other about their needs, values and interests. They must also be able to talk about their feelings and their emotions;
- define the issues that are important to themselves and to learn about the issues of most importance to other parties involved in the conflict;
- clarify misperceptions. Parties will have particular beliefs about their opponents

and their intentions and they need to be able to correct these ideas when they are wrong;

- be equipped with information they need to make informed decisions. Parties do not always understand the legal and contextual parameters in which they are operating and need access to information to resolve differences;
- speak on an equal or at least equitable footing with their opponents. Power differences often make it harder for seemingly weaker parties to stand up for their rights. Unless they can do this, they are likely to be ignored by stronger groups;
- be educated about different ways in which conflicts can be resolved;

- think creatively about solutions to conflict. When parties have multiple options available to them, they are more likely to resist violence and to choose outcomes that satisfy everyone;
- be protected against abuse by other parties. If parties feel they are being bullied or intimidated then the prospects of them finding mutually satisfactory solutions are minimal.

It is important to remember that it is not enough for leaders to be able to engage with

each other. In the long term it must also be possible for their supporters to live in peace with members from other groups. It can take time for people who have been separated by conflict to learn to trust each other again and to recognize each other's humanity. Top-down approaches to resolving conflicts will only address some problems; spaces also need to be created for people at grassroots levels to engage with each other and to find ways of confronting past differences. It is in this regard that journalists can make a particularly important contribution.

Notes on Part Two:

Part Three: How journalist can impact conflict

It should already be clear from our discussion of different theories and ideas about conflict that there are numerous ways in which journalists can contribute constructively through their reporting. In Part Three we explore some of these contributions in more detail, whilst noting that none of these roles contradict traditional standards of good journalism. They do not ask journalists to take sides with parties, but they do ask journalists to consider how their work impacts on conflicts. They do not ask journalists to tell parties how to behave, but they do suggest we should hold parties accountable for their behaviour. They do not promote specific strategies or solutions, but they do ask parties to consider the potential impact of their choices. They do not ask journalists to abandon ideals of fairness and accuracy, but they do require we go dig deeper and go beyond the conventions of many established reporting routines. They ask that journalists do not accept what they are told at face value, but continuously dig deeper to uncover the real causes of conflict and the motives behind parties' actions. They also require that journalists go beyond the usual sources to seek out others who, while often ignored, also have important stories to tell. It is important to note that the contributions journalists can make will vary depending on what is happening and

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 3:

Consider the proposals about constructive contributions journalists can make in helping parties to resolve conflict in Part Three. Is there any reason why you feel these contributions would contradict principles of professional journalism? Are there other ways in which you feel journalists can contribute?

where they are located. For reporters on the frontline covering violent engagements the most critical roles would involve providing an honest and accurate description of what is happening and how the violence is impact on combatants and civilians on all sides is possible¹. When we are reporting on conflicts away from the frontlines or when conflicts are not as volatile, we are better placed to play some of the other roles described below.

In Part Three we focus on ways in which good journalism can make a constructive contribution. Thereafter we will examine ways in which we can exacerbate conflict and conclude the section by considering some questions we can ask that will help us determine if our coverage is conflict sensitive.

¹ Note: It may not always be possible for us to cover all sides of a story during a violent confrontation. Sometimes it is simply dangerous for us to access all of the areas affected by a conflict. During war time, for instance, journalists from one nation may not be able to cross the border to witness what is happening on the other side. In these instances, it is important for us to make it clear in our stories that we are unable to bring audiences a comprehensive description of what is happening. Similarly, we may be prevented by security organs from covering particular organizations or speaking to particular people and in these instances it's important for our audiences to know this so that they understand that there are gaps in the information they are receiving.

3.1. How good journalism contributes to conflict resolution

The following are different ways in which journalist can contribute towards the creation of conditions that allow for the peaceful management and resolution of conflict.

- **Channelling communication between parties**

Journalists can provide parties in conflict with a channel they can use to communicate with each other about their concerns. By giving all parties a chance to talk about their needs, journalists make it possible for people to relay important messages to each other. This does not mean journalists allow parties to use their media for hurling threats and insults at each other; rather, it involves asking probing questions that seek to find out what parties need others to know and understand in order for conflicts to be resolved.

- **Providing parties with accurate information**

Journalists can play an important role in ensuring that both the leaders of conflicting parties and their supporters are equipped with the information they need to make wise decisions. If we can identify information gaps and address these needs, we can make an important contribution in reducing the prospect of conflicts escalating unnecessarily. We can help ensure people are not manipulated by leaders who provide supporters with false information. The principle of *active accuracy* is important here. This means that we do not just accept the claims that people make, but we also do our best to verify whether these are true.

- **Educate people about different ways of managing conflict**

Journalists can educate people about different ways in which conflicts can be resolved. This would normally mean providing people with information about conflict management and resolution practices. We may not be experts in these fields ourselves, but we

can always approach people with expertise. We can also present stories about other communities and show how they have solved conflicts. This can help people to see that conflicts can be resolved peacefully and provide them with ideas they can adapt to their own circumstances.

- **Empowering weaker parties**

Journalists can empower weaker parties to speak out and be heard. By giving people a platform in the media we ensure that even marginalized groups have a chance to peacefully raise their concerns. In reporting on conflicts, we want to consider which voices are being excluded and ensuring that these people have a chance to talk. This does not suggest that we should interfere with the process, but rather that we want to provide fair and inclusive coverage.

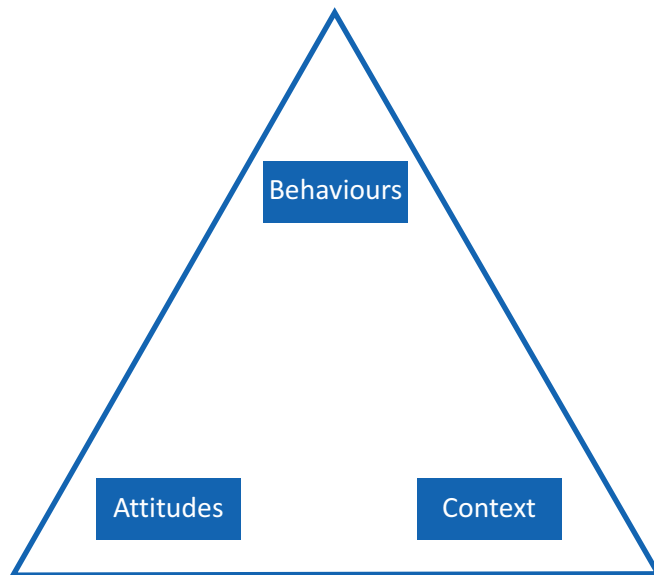
- **Clarifying misperceptions**

Journalists can help to reduce tensions by helping to clarify misperceptions. As external observers it is often possible for us to recognize when parties have erroneous beliefs about their opponent's attitudes towards them and their opponent's overall goals and objectives. By producing stories that reveal how people really feel and which explain their real intentions we can help to reduce tensions between groups.

- **Analyzing conflict**

By drawing on our knowledge of conflict and engaging with people with expertise in the field we can provide analysis of conflicts that help people understand what is happening and why. We can make comparisons between conflicts happening in other places, enabling people to see the parallels and the lessons they can learn from these events. We can help people to recognize the likely outcomes of pursuing particular approaches and the benefits of considering others.

The Conflict Triangle



Conflict Triangle. (Johan Galtung, 1994: 24)

The ABC Conflict Triangle encourages us to consider one of the common complaints made about the news media – that we focus on what people are doing (their behaviours) without explaining what drives them to act. The model shows that behaviours are the result of two things: the attitudes groups have towards each other and the social and political context people are living with. Media coverage which focuses primarily on behaviours – the visible actions above the line – provides a distorted picture of what is really happening. Conflict sensitive reporting aims to provide a more comprehensive account that answers the critical question of why a conflict started and what is happening in the relationships between the different groups.

- **Help identify underlying needs and interests**

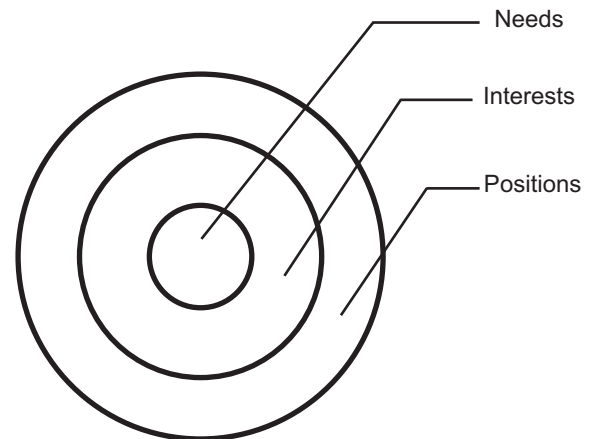
Parties tend to make their positions public but are reluctant to clearly express the interests underlying these positions. Parties get locked in a tug-of-war with each side trying to move the other off positions without being aware of why opponents have adopted specific positions. If parties can learn about each other's interests they will be better able to assess whether there are ways of accommodating the other or compromising. Journalists asking informed, probing questions can play a role in uncovering these interests.

- **Allow parties to express their grievances**

When parties are experiencing growing frustration, journalists can provide emotional outlets by allowing them to express their feelings through the media. This does not mean allowing parties to use the media to insult and attack others, instead it means allowing them to talk about their frustrations and their fears. If people are unable to express their feelings through the media, then they are likely to do so in other less peaceful ways.

The Conflict Onion

The Conflict Onion provides us with a simple way of thinking about what different parties hope to gain during conflicts. The model shows that groups in conflict will express a range of demands about what they want and how their opponents should behave. These demands reflect the parties' outward positions and are represented by the external layer of the onion. To find out what groups really desire, journalists must peel away the onion's layers to uncover their deeper interests (what they really want) and why these interests are important to them (their needs). By refusing to simply accept the claims that parties make and by asking probing questions journalists can find out more about a party's needs and interests.



20

- **Expand the search for solutions**

It is not our job to tell parties how to deal with their conflicts, but we can help them identify possible solutions they may not have considered. As impartial observers who are in contact with all the major stakeholders, we can sometime see solutions others may not have considered. We will never advocate a particular solution, but there is no harm in a journalist putting a possible solution to the parties and asking for their views on this option.

- **Creating a space for voices of peace**

Journalists can help to ensure that peacemakers have a chance to be heard. It is normally the most radical and militant people who are most outspoken during times of conflict. These people need to be covered, but we also want to ensure others, who might be more interested in finding solutions that satisfy everyone, are given a chance to talk.

- **Counteracting rumours and speculation**

Journalists can reduce the danger of conflicts escalating by helping to counteract rumors and speculation. Fearful people will often believe the worst stories even when these are not true, and these beliefs can turn into violent action. We can make a difference by following up on rumors, and alleviating people's fears by publishing the truth. Counteracting fake news is a critical role for us to play. We need to provide space that people can turn to for reliable, trustworthy, information.

- **Exposing human rights abuses**

Parties will not be able to make progress with negotiations if members of one, or more than one, of the parties are involved in attacks against the other. By monitoring how parties are behaving and exposing abuses, journalists can play a role in limiting attacks. Parties will generally want to avoid the negative exposure

of being blamed for attacks and knowing that journalists are monitoring events can help to limit the use of violence. By raising awareness about abuses and by tracking how authorities are responding, journalists can help ensure attacks are not committed with impunity.

All of these contributions are the byproducts of fair, accurate, in-depth and

inclusive reporting, but knowing that we can contribute in these ways provides us with additional motivation to go the extra mile. Traditionally our roles are said to be to inform, educate and entertain, but it is clear that journalists do much more than this. Our reporting can make difference and ultimately save lives.

3.2. How journalists can exacerbate conflict

There have been many instances where people who call themselves journalists have actively set out to fan the flames of conflict and to promote war and genocide. This section will not address these cases, rather we will focus on a few of the ways in which even the most well-intentioned journalists can promote conflict. The following are some things we will want to avoid doing.

- **Oversimplifying conflicts**

Conflict, as we have already noted, is almost always more complex than it seems. It is very seldom that conflicts only involve two parties, and it is also very rare that every member of a party feels the same way about a conflict. For example, some might favour war, while others may be pacifists. It is important for us to identify all the stakeholders involved and to show that there are different opinions within contending groups. If we ignore these complexities, we can provide a highly distorted picture of the conflict. It is also critical for us to show that conflicts do not simply erupt out of nowhere. There are almost always historical antecedents that need to be understood and recognised if we are to get an accurate picture of why events are taking place. See Figure Two the Conflict Triangle.

- **Ignoring minorities and grassroots communities**

It is common to provide extensive coverage to the leaders or parties and to completely ignore the general membership. However, these people may often have very different understanding of a conflict and how it should be

approached. Conflict sensitive journalists do not only speak to leaders and influential people we are interested in the views of everyone affected by the conflict.

- **Insensitive use of language**

The words we use in describing conflict are critical and can have an important impact on how people perceive us and respond to our reports. Using terms that are overly positive about members of one group, while using derogatory terms about members of another can antagonize people and result in people dismissing our reports. When member of one group feel we are biased they will ignore us and our ability to make contribution can be compromised. We need to look for neutral terms. See the note on the precise use of language at the end of Part Three.

- **Promoting propaganda**

It is common during times of conflict for parties to rely on propaganda to win support and to encourage people to think negatively about their opponents. It is never our role to simply provide a platform for spin. False claims always need to be interrogated and challenged. It is important that we do not uncritically adopt the language that is being used by leaders. For example, national leaders may refer to as soldiers from another country as “enemy terrorists,” as journalists we would refer to them as soldiers from (and name the country).

- **Sunshine journalism**

Sunshine journalism refers to an approach to reporting that only focuses on the positive.

Sometimes this can be because people fear that reporting on harsh realities will provoke conflict. Conflict sensitive journalists recognize that concealing unpleasantness only leads to an escalation in rumors. It is better for us to provide an accurate picture of events than to let people begin speculating about what has taken place, because the facts will inevitably be distorted. People must often make life and death decisions during conflicts and they need to know they can rely on the information they are getting.

- **Glorifying violence**

While we want to avoid covering up horror, we also want to avoid the glorification of violence. It is important to cover what has happened to people, but we do not need to describe their suffering in excessive detail. Such reports can cause additional pain for the families and friends of victims. We also want to avoid spending too much time marvelling at the destructive capacity of military hardware. We must report on how the technology is being used, but there is nothing to be gained from glorifying warfare.

- **Sensationalizing stories**

It is important for us to present our stories in ways that will attract viewers and readers, but this does not mean we want overdramatize conflicts. Writing stories with shocking headlines and riveting introductions may attract audiences, but we also need to be aware of how they will impact on the conflict. Sensational headlines can unnecessarily provoke fear, hatred and anger which can contribute to conflict escalation.

- **Avoid simple labels**

We often use labels as a way of quickly summarizing a conflict, but these can often contribute towards and oversimplification of the conflict and distort and decontextualize what is happening. Terms as “Religious wars”, “Christian-Muslim conflicts”, “Black versus white” conflict never fully capture the intricacies of what is happening. They also make it seem as if people from different groups have an innate antagonism than can be explained simply by juxtaposing their titles.

3.3. Is our reporting conflict sensitive?

The following questions can assist us in deciding whether we are approaching our reporting in a conflict sensitive manner.

- Is the way we are covering a conflict helping to deepen our audience’s understanding of the causes of the conflict and of what needs to happen for conflicts to be resolved?
- Are we being fair in giving all stakeholders affected by a conflict an opportunity to share their views on what needs to happen for this conflict to be resolved?
- Is the way we are covering a conflict causing people to experience fear and panic that may lead them to respond violently?

- Is the way we are covering the conflict unnecessarily promoting anger and hatred between groups? Are we using language that will anger and offend different groups? Could we be using terms that are offensive without even knowing it?
- Are we helping people to see that there are alternatives to violence when it comes to resolving conflict?
- Are we creating a space where people who want to promote peace can share their experience and knowledge?

In Part Four we will explore several practical steps journalists can take in reporting constructively on conflicts.

Some notes on the precise use of language

When we report on conflict its important use language precisely. Words are highly emotive and the inappropriate use of language can contribute towards raising emotions, provoking anger and reduce our credibility. The following are some categories of words that need special care.

Judgmental terms:

Many terms that are used during conflicts imply the person using them has made a judgement about an event or about the people involved. As journalists we avoid using these terms in our descriptions of events, but we can certainly quote them if they are used by sources who can legitimately make these determinations. Our role in encountering events is to report on what we see and to let audiences make their own decisions. Some of these judgmental terms include:

- **Atrocities:** The word is used as an umbrella term to cover different forms of extreme violence carried out against defenseless people. The actions of the perpetrators generally involve acts of deliberate cruelty and humiliation.
- **Genocide:** The term refers to the deliberate attempt to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group through the use of systematic violence. This term should never be used loosely as it implies a large-scale action designed to eliminate thousands if not millions of people. If we must refer to a genocide, be clear about who has made the determination.
- **Ethnic cleansing:** Systematic attacks against civilians from a particular identity group that aim to eradicate them from a particular area. The act could include both killings and forced removals.
- **Crimes against humanity:** These involve the deliberately systematic policy of attacking civilian populations through

methods such as mass murder, enslavement, torture, rape and enforced disappearances.

- **Massacre:** The mass killing of large a substantial number of defenceless people.
- **Terrorist:** Although there are many definitions presented by different international bodies (UNSC, FBI, OECD, US State Dep.), there is no commonly accepted version. Therefore, we should avoid using it, unless we can indicate the source who uses it.
- **FBI definition of terrorism:** The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.
- **Collateral damage.** This is a term used by governments as a euphemism for the killing of civilians or the destruction of civilian property and infrastructure during military actions, especially aerial bombings and missile strikes.

Offensive terms:

There are many terms that journalists use to describe others that can be offensive to members of those groups. We need to think carefully about the terms we use and how we would respond if they were used about us. What follows are some examples of terms we should be careful of.

- When used as nouns or as adjectives the terms **fanatic** and **extremist** suggest that the people being described are driven by an irrational motivation and cannot be relied on to think clearly.
- Similarly, to describe a group of demonstrators as a **mob** suggests that they are part of an unthinking, uncontrollable mass of people.
- We would not use the word **“enemy”** in our own description of conflicts or if we are paraphrasing what a source has said. This would suggest we are taking sides, although we may use the word when quoting others if it is absolutely necessary.

Using words precisely

Many of the words used to describe aspects of conflict have precise meanings and it is important for us to use them accurately.

Frontline: This is the point where tactical military units are arrayed in order to engage with each other. The frontline marks the dividing between the opposing sides.

Border (International): The internationally agreed line that separates one country from another.

Buffer zone: Neutral area separating conflicting forces. An area designed to separate hostile forces and where no military hardware is permitted. Also known as a demilitarized zone (DMZ)

Delimitation: As noted in the political literature and international law, the delimitation

process is the first stage in the demarcation of borders with neighbouring states. In the process of delimitation, as a rule, relief, hydrography, settlements are shown in detail on large-scale maps. Upon completion of this process, an agreement on the state border will be signed.

Demarcation line: This term has several meanings:

- in the military: a line separating the armies of the warring States during a temporary peace until permanent borders are established by a peace treaty or any other agreement;
- the line dividing the territory of the defeated state into occupation zones;
- a line temporarily established in the territory that is the subject of a dispute between neighbouring states. The demarcation line is determined by a special agreement between the warring parties, the occupying or conflicting states.

IDP – persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

Refugee – a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

Notes on Part Three:

Part Four: Some key questions to ask when covering conflict

4.1. General questions to consider when covering conflict

While every conflict is different there are a range of questions that we can pose in almost any situation and which will help to shed some light on the conflict. These will naturally need to be contextualized, but the principles are broadly applicable across a range of conflicts.

The following are some questions journalists can ask that will help to address the issues raised above¹.

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 4:
These questions have been suggested by specialists in the field of conflict and conflict sensitive reporting. Are there other questions you feel journalists should be asking that would supplement the ones presented here?

- What is the conflict about? Who are the parties involved and what are their real goals?
 - Which other stakeholders have an interest in the conflict? What are their interest? Are they provoking the conflict or helping to bring about peace?
 - What are the deeper roots of the conflict? Are there structural imbalances that need to be addressed? Besides the stated reasons for the conflict, are there other factors that are contributing to the strife between the groups? What is the history behind the conflict?
 - What kinds of ideas exist about the outcomes other than the one party imposing itself on the other? What would it take for the parties to reach a solution?
 - Are there any particularly creative or new ideas about how a conflict might be resolved? Can such ideas be sufficiently powerful to prevent violence?
 - If violence does occur, what impact will the invisible effects, such as hatred and the wish for revenge and for more glory, have on the possibilities for peace?
 - Who is working to prevent violence? What are their visions of the conflict outcomes? How will the parties respond to these ideas?
 - What methods are they using and how can they be supported? Who could provide the kind of support these peacemakers may need?
 - What can be done to limit the likelihood of the conflict erupting again in the future?
- It is unlikely that we will answer all these questions in any single story, but if we want our coverage to be comprehensive then we should try to address these questions through our ongoing coverage as the conflict unfolds.

¹ Adapted from Galtung, Johan. 1998. High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism. In Track Two, 7(4). Available at http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p07_highroad_lowroad.html.

4.2. Question to ask during peace processes

Peace processes and negotiations will generally mark a turning point in any conflict, but we need to remain alert to the fact that they will not necessarily indicate that a conflict has come to an end. Just because the guns have gone quiet in a time of war does not mean the conflict is over. As we saw from our broader discussion conflict, we cannot say a conflict has been resolved until the interest of all parties have been satisfied to an acceptable level. Even then parties may need to engage in important processes to deal with the antagonisms and hatred that built up during conflict.

The following are some of the things that we should do as we report on peace processes and negotiations:

- Continue monitoring the parties' actions away from the negotiating table. We should not simply accept that because people are engaged in dialogue that they are genuinely looking for solutions. It is not uncommon for parties to enter negotiations to gain time to regroup and to prepare for more fighting.
- Identify people who have been left out of the negotiation process and ask questions about how these people will be accommodated.
- Keep the public informed about the progress being made during negotiations. When people know progress is being made, they are likely to develop faith in the process. This can help to ease tensions and to reduce the likelihood of violence. That said, there may be others who try to escalate violence to derail negotiation processes.
- Avoid making too much of small successes. Negotiations frequently involve a series of mini-agreements and we should not encourage people to rejoice too early.

Small gains can be celebrated, but it's important to let audiences know when there is still work to be done.

- Remain aware that negotiations can be extremely sensitive. There will be times when parties cannot afford to let the public know what is happening until they have formally reached agreements. We need to be very cautious about leaks because they may sometimes come from people wanting to derail processes. They may also be false.
- Recognise that peace-making takes time and patience. People often grow impatient as negotiations continue and journalists can help people understand that good agreements cannot be rushed.
- Remain critical of the processes being used by peacemakers. Peace processes do not always fail because the parties are unwilling to pursue solutions; they also fail because of badly designed processes. If we lack the knowledge and expertise to comment on these issues, then it can be useful to speak to experts who do.
- Ensure that people on the ground also have a chance to express their views. By talking to ordinary people and canvassing their views we can sometimes make it possible for their views to be included in the negotiations.

The following questions have been suggested by Johan Galtung¹ for journalists reporting on peace proposals and agreements. They provide a valuable guide for journalists on the key issues that need to be considered when reporting on peace agreements. Each of these questions relates specifically to the likelihood that a peace agreement will last.

¹ From Galtung, Johan. 1998. High Road, Low Road: Charting the Course for Peace Journalism. In Track Two, 7(4). Available at http://www.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_4/p07_highroad_lowroad.html.

- What was the method behind the plan? Were all parties involved in the dialogue?
- Is the plan acceptable to all parties? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan, if realised, self-sustainable? If not, what can be done about it?
- Is the plan based on autonomous action by the conflicting parties, or does it depend on outsiders?
- To what extent is there a process in the plan? Does it spell out who shall do what, when, how and where?
- To what extent is the plan based on what only the elites can do?
- Does the plan foresee an ongoing conflict-resolution process or a single shot agreement? Why?
- If there has been violence, to what extent does the plan contain elements of rehabilitation/reconstruction, reconciliation, and justice?
- If the plan does not work, is it reversible? Even if the plan does work for this conflict, does it create new conflicts or problems? Is it a good deal for all involved?

A question that is often neglected relates to the extent to which women are involved in peace processes. Women are frequently the people who bare the brunt of a conflict, but when the time comes to negotiate peace agreements they are often left out. Once we know the extent to which women are involved in the process or not, we can approach women's organisations and canvass their views on the challenge.¹

Notes on Part Four:

¹UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) represents a commitment by the international community to ensure that women are involved in the finalization of peace agreements and in their implementation.

Part Five:

Thinking creatively about conflict coverage¹

While our day-today coverage of conflict is clearly critical, it is also useful to think creatively about ways of producing conflict stories that can assist audiences to learn more about each other and which can build bridges between contending groups or nations. There are many ways in which we can do this, what follows are a few suggestions that journalists can adapt to their own contexts.

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 5:

Have you seen any of these ideas implemented? How well have they worked? What other creative strategies have you used, or seen other journalists using, in covering conflict? Which of these would be useful in covering conflicts you might be focusing on at present?

5.1. Joint interviews

In this approach we will identify people from different sides of a conflict and interview them together in the same room or on a platform such as Zoom. The goal is to stimulate a conversation between the interviewees and to capture they say. What are they learning about each other? How could this help to enhance understanding? The choice of participants will be critical. We want to be sure that discussions will not end in a slanging match, because we are unlikely to learn anything from engagements of this nature. We should consider bringing together interesting combinations of people. For instance:

- people who were friends before the conflict broke out;

- people who grew up together and who have been separated by the conflict;
- couples who come from the different groups;
- people from different groups who still play sports together.

It is unlikely that we will get leaders of parties to agree to take part in such interviews while a conflict is active, but in post-conflict situation they may well be prepared to come together. Stories of this nature can be both moving and entertaining. They can also help to challenge stereotypes and to help people from different groups recognise their common humanity.

5.2. Journalists across the divide

In many conflicts, journalists from a one national, ethnic, or religious group may be prevented from reporting on news happening in an area controlled by members of a “rival” group. We can sometimes overcome this problem by teaming up with journalists from

the other group and working on stories together with them. Not only will this approach enable us to access information we would otherwise be unable to obtain, but our joint by-lines can become a symbol of how people from different groups can work together constructively.

¹ The following suggestions were adapted Du Toit, P. 2012. Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Toolbox for Journalists. Published by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership at Rhodes University.

5.3. Exchanging questions

This approach is specifically designed to help people from different groups learn more about each other. It helps people to challenge stereotypes and to find out why particular issues are important to members of the other groups. The process begins with the journalist gathering questions from members of one group about things they would like to know about the other

side. The journalist then asks members of the other group to respond to these questions and prepares a story based on the questions and the responses. The process can be repeated with the roles reversed. The approach works well if the journalist targets specific groups of people such as university students, youth groups, women's groups or religious institutions.

5.4. Asking the same questions of all parties

By asking each party involved in a conflict the same set of questions we can help people identify where they have concerns in common and where they differ. These are some questions we could pose to people from different sides of conflict.

- What do you believe is the primary cause of this conflict?
- What, for you/your party/organisation, are the priority issues that you want resolved?

- What would be the most constructive way of approaching this conflict?
- How do you think you could satisfy your demands, while at the same time addressing the concerns of the other party?
- What would you like members of the other party to know about you?

If we can run parties' responses to these questions alongside each other, we can help people see where they share common ground and where there are differences.

5.5. Profiling peace makers

Profiles of people involved in peace work can help to raise awareness about peace processes and alternatives to violence when reporting on conflict. These profiles generally focus on people with high status, but some of the most interesting stories can be about normal people who are making a difference. We could focus on people who build bridges between groups at a local level, organizers of peace committees that

intervene when violence seems likely, and people running peace gardens or crèches for children from different groups. Such stories can play an important role in challenging stereotypes and enemy images that people have of each other. Off course, in presenting stories about these people, our role is restricted to providing them with an opportunity to share their views, we do not get involved in their operations.

5.6. Sharing our opinions – A note for bloggers

Journalists will seldom, if ever, directly inject their opinions into news stories, but there are many spaces where it is quite acceptable for them to do so. Most of us are active on social media and some of us produce our own content on a regular basis in the form of blog posts and video logs. These can be important outlets, but we need to be sensitive in using these. No

matter how neutral we may try to be in our news coverage, if we are making inflammatory statements on our personal online spaces this will impact on our credibility and on the credibility of the media organisations we work for.

The following are some suggestions for journalists who are producing opinion pieces on conflict.

- **Respect your audience.** Do not take advantage of the platform to promote your own interests or the interests of your group. We need to consider the concerns of other groups involved in a conflict and to use the space we have available to help people understand each other’s positions.
- **Promote a diversity of opinion.** Rather than promoting a single approach or solution to a conflict, we can show that there may be a range of different options available to parties. If we must present a position, we should do so in a way that lets audiences know we are contributing to the debate and that we encourage additional opinions.
- **Do your research.** We may not be presenting hard news, but we still need to draw on solid research. We should explain where the information we are relying on comes from. We need to give people credible and reliable background information so that they can fairly assess whether the opinions we are presenting are worth considering.
- **Consider the response.** We need to be aware of the diversity of our audiences and consider how what we say might impact on people in different communities.

This does not mean we should censor ourselves, but it does mean being cautious about unwittingly offending others. Being provocative for the sake of being provocative may be entertaining, but it is seldom helpful in a conflict situation.

- **Respect yourself.** We need to be conscious of what our work says about us. Have we used sexist, homophobic, classists, and ethnically divisive language? What we say in our opinion pieces can impact on our audience’s view of our hard news stories, our credibility, and the credibility of the organizations we are affiliated to. Many people have been discredited for having made offensive posts on social media platforms.
- **Draw on your observations.** We need to find out about people who are making a difference in times of conflict and write about them, discuss what they have accomplished and suggest how others might make similar contributions. We can use the space we have to speculate about possible solutions and encourage people to consider our ideas. We don’t need to be right, but we do want to contribute to promoting creative thinking.

Notes on Part Five:

Part Six: A conflict sensitive approaches to interviewing¹

The interview is arguably the most important tool in a journalist's toolbox. How we speak to people and the kinds of questions we ask will determine how they will respond to us and what we will be able to learn from them about their conflicts. In Part Six we look at some general tips about conflict sensitive interviewing, before reflecting on the challenges of interviewing people affected by violence.

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 6:

This list of interviewing tips will never be exhaustive. What other ideas would you include in this list? Are there some suggestions you would remove or adapt?

6.1. Some general tips for conflict sensitive interviewing

Good interviewing enables us to get beneath the surface and to access information that helps people to find solutions to their conflicts. What follows are a series of simple suggestions we can employ during our interviews and which can help us to make a positive contribution as we report on conflict.

- Our goal is to ensure that interviewees have the best opportunity possible to get their message across and to be understood. We want to be as sure as we can be that what we say in our reports accurately reflects what the source intended to say. If we distort what people are saying, we may contribute to aggravating or prolonging a conflict.
- Avoid phrasing questions in terms of winners and losers. When asking questions about goals, objectives and strategies encourage parties to move away from zero-sum ideas. The way in which we phrase our questions will impact on how they respond. Asking, "What will it take to satisfy you?" is a very different question to "What will it take for this conflict to be

resolved in a way that satisfies everyone?"

The first begs a zero-sum response, the latter asks people to think more broadly. Both are fair questions, but the second is more likely to encourage a constructive response.

- Encourage interviewees to consider the other parties involved. Instead of just asking parties to outline their needs and interests – we should be trying to get beyond positions – we should also be asking them how they understand the needs and interests of others involved in the conflict.
- We want to avoid being used as tools in someone else's war. Parties will often make highly provocative comments about opponents during interviews. We do not want to censor interviewees, but we should not shy away from interrogating their statements. This can mean asking people to substantiate negative claims made about others. It can also mean asking people to consider how they expect maligned parties to respond to negative comments made about them.

¹ Adapted from Du Toit, P. 2012. Conflict Sensitive Reporting: A Toolbox for Journalists. Published by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership at Rhodes University

- Be firm. Being conflict sensitive does not prevent journalists from being tough on interviewees when necessary. When parties make false claims these must be challenged, and extreme demands must be questioned. People must be expected to support and justify their claims.
- Listen carefully and paraphrase people's responses back to them. We cannot afford to misrepresent what people say during times of conflict. Lives could depend on our getting a quote right. There is never any harm in making sure that we fully understand what a source is telling us. For example, we can repeat the interviewee's position back to them, saying: "Am I correct in saying your position on this is ABC ... ?"
- Don't put words into people's mouths. Avoid the: Would you say XYZ...? questions

6.2. Interviewing people affected by conflict

The following tips on how to interview people affected by conflict are based on ideas from senior journalists who have worked in conflict zones and spent years interviewing people affected by trauma.

- Do not pretend to understand what someone who is suffering as a result of conflict is experiencing. Go slowly and let the person tell his or her own story in their own time. There is no harm in showing that we care. We cannot be indifferent to suffering, but we still do not want to come across as sympathising with a particular group. Be conscious that people may have had experiences we may not even be able to imagine.
- Begin the interview gently and allow the person to feel comfortable before asking the more difficult questions. Let the person know that they are in control of the interview. They can decide on how much or how little they want to tell us.
- It can help to ask probing questions, but we need to be sensitive to the interviewee's emotional needs.

that are deliberately intended to get people to say what journalists want them to say. We need to be patient with speakers and let them express themselves in their own words.

- Adopt a tone that suggests even-handedness. We do not want to come across as if we sympathise with a specific party, rather we want it to be clear that we are interested in what everyone has to say.
- We frequently speak to people whose views and ideologies we find objectionable and sometimes abhorrent. In these instances we need to take the time to think about how our feelings could influence our behaviour in an interview. We may not like it, but when we schedule interviews with people, we are committing to giving them a fair opportunity to tell their side of a story.

- It can help to be silent for a moment to give people the chance to think and to collect themselves if they are feeling emotional.
- Asking open-ended questions encourages people to tell their stories in their own words. Closed-ended questions leading to "Yes" and "No" answers tend to foreground the journalist's views instead of the interviewee's explanations.
- It can help to have people present who will support the person during the interview.
- We need to be sure that people understand how what they have said is likely to be used and whether they will be identified in the story.
- We must be aware that traumatised people may make statements that seem false or which do not make sense.

We want to make sure that we sure we understand what the source is saying. It can help to highlight the points we think will be used in our stories and to check with the source

whether our understandings are accurate and whether there is any information we are missing.

We also need to prepare ourselves emotionally before we interview people affected by conflict. Journalists tend to get hardened over time, but there will often be cases where something about an interview or an interviewee touches us deeply. We need to be alert to that possibility and to consider how we will respond if this happens.

It is also important that we do not make promises we cannot keep. The best we can generally do is to promise to try to tell the person's story accurately and with respect so that others can understand what they have been through and what they need. We cannot promise our stories will bring about change or attract aid. Many of us cannot even guarantee our organisations will use our stories. It is worth explaining that the final decision about what gets covered or not rests with our editors.

Notes on Part Six:

Part Seven:

Looking after ourselves during times of conflict

In the final part of this handbook we recognize that journalists can face considerable risks as they report on conflict and we consider some steps we can take to protect ourselves from physical and psychological harm.

REFLECTIVE MOMENT 7:

Having read through these proposals, how ready do you think you are to cover a violent conflict that might break out in your area? What could you do to improve your chances of staying out of trouble? If you are a seasoned journalist with experience of covering conflict on the frontline, what can you do to ensure less experienced colleagues stay safe.

7.1. Staying safe while covering conflict

Whether we are reporting on wars, civil unrest, or relatively low-level conflicts, we cannot be sure when we will find ourselves in situations that are potentially dangerous. There is no substitute for experience when it comes to surviving in volatile situations, but the following tips provided by journalists who have worked in conflict zones can help us to be prepared.

- **Let people know where you are at all times.** If you are in or going into a volatile situation, let your news desk know where you are going and when you plan to be back. Keep the desk updated if your plans change. Colleagues may be able to organize help for you if you fail to check in at appointed times, but if they do not know where you are, a difficult task can become impossible.
- **Be conscious of how quickly you are moving.** While covering a battle, a riot, or a fast-moving demonstration it is easy to get so involved in the action that we lose track of our colleagues, where we are and how we can return to safety. Being isolated among groups of combatants or protestors can be dangerous.
- **Be conscious of how people are responding to the news media.** Be very careful if there is an overwhelming sense of negativity toward the media. Carry accreditation but use your judgement about whether to display it or not. A “Press” sign on your car may offer some protection, at other times it may make you a target.
- **Acquaint yourself with the names of leaders of parties in the area.** Being able to drop the names of respected leaders can help to ensure that you get out of trouble if you are threatened by members of one of the conflicting groups. Knowing how to contact a respected leader could get you out of a potentially dangerous situation.
- **Be ready to hit the ground if shooting starts.** Remember cars and the thin walls offer little or no protection against military grade weapons. Lying flat in a drainage ditch can be the safest place when shooting starts. Keeping low can also protect you from shrapnel.
- **Plan your escape.** Familiarize yourself with the terrain and plan how, if a

situation becomes too volatile, you will make your escape. Establish at least one backup escape route in case your first option is blocked. Update your escape options as you move.

- **Be conscious of how the mood of people around you may be changing.**
- **Stay with other journalists.** Many reporters have recounted how they have run into trouble when they went off on their own. You may not want to stick with the pack, but there is some safety in numbers.
- **Dress appropriately.** Avoid colours that might be associated with the different parties, political t-shirts, and clothes that could be mistaken for police and military uniforms.
- **Wear shoes you can run in.** Running shoes, cross trainers, or light hiking boots are best. Clothes made from natural fibres are both cooler and warmer and less likely to catch fire.
- **Wear protective clothing,** bullet-proof vests, and helmets when necessary.
- **Prepare an I.C.E. card** (In Case of Emergency) with the following information on it:
 - your full name and the organization you work for;
 - contact numbers people should use if something happens to you;
 - your blood group;
 - information about any medicines and drugs you may be allergic to.
 - this should ideally be laminated and kept in a place where people are likely to find it.

- **Carry basic supplies.** The following are some useful emergency items we should consider carrying with us:

- water, water filters, or purification tablets, as well as energy bars;
- medication that you might need on a regular basis;
- a torch, compass, first aid kit, and space blanket;
- a back-up cell phone, SIM cards from different network providers, and spare batteries.

- **A clear head is your most important survival tool.** Withdraw too early rather than too late. Control your temper at all times and never react violently to verbal or physical provocation.

Other things we can do to prepare ourselves for going into volatile situation include:

- **Getting and staying physically fit.** We never know when we might need to run several kilometres to keep up with a demonstration or to trek long distances to investigate rumours of an atrocity in an isolated village. Keeping fit also enhances our chances of getting out of danger and can provide a valuable outlet for stress.
- **Take a course in first aid.** Being caught with a wounded colleague we cannot help because we lack basic knowledge of first aid can be devastating. We may also be able to draw on our knowledge to treat ourselves in an emergency or to guide a colleague who is helping us. Put together a first aid kit you can carry with you in the field.

7.2. Taking care of our mental well-being

Journalists confront traumatic events on a daily basis. We cover both natural and man-made catastrophes and have to report on the way these events devastate the lives of people. During times of conflict we bear witness to the horror of war and the impact of civil strife on combatants, law enforcement officers, adult civilians and children. We can also be exposed to violence ourselves with journalists increasingly becoming the victims of assault, targeted assassinations, kidnappings and numerous different forms of intimidation. We also spend hours talking to people who have experienced great suffering and absorb some of their pain as part of the process. Covering other people's trauma is part of our work, but we frequently forget how this exposure touches us.

There is a growing awareness today of the impact of trauma on journalists and a recognition that we can suffer the same psychological harm as soldiers, police officers and first responders whose work is directly tied to traumatic situations. Journalists will often display many of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and many would benefit from professional counselling. Some of these warning signs can include the following:

- flashbacks and bad dreams;
- feeling inexplicable jittery and irritable;
- being unable to concentrate;
- a sense of numbness and being cut off from the world and loved ones;
- a craving for solitude;
- avoiding reminders of traumatic experiences; and
- drinking and smoking more than usual.¹

If these unsettling reactions persist over time and begin to impact on our work and relationships we need to speak to others to consider seeking professional help.

Even if we are not experiencing PTSD there are still things that we can do to help us manage the stress associated with having to cover conflict. The following points have been adapted from advice provided by the Dart Foundation² an organization which works with journalists confronting trauma.

- Know your limits. If you feel you cannot perform an assignment, discuss this with your editor and explain your reasons.
- Take breaks. Giving yourself a few hours away from a traumatic situation can help to relieve stress.
- Talk to someone. Find someone you can trust and who understands what you are going through. Ensure this person is someone you know will listen without judging or interrupting.
- Develop personal strategies for dealing with stress. Deep breathing techniques and meditation can help.
- Start and maintain an exercise routine. Walking, running, and cycling are great ways to work off stress. Keeping physically fit helps you cope with stress and will help you in your reporting work. If you are caught in a conflict zone and unable to move freely, basic floor exercises such as sit-ups and push-ups are useful substitutes.
- Find something you can do that distracts you from thinking about stressful events. Play an instrument, learn to juggle, read – anything that can hold your attention.

¹ See Rees, G. 2013. The Trauma Factor. In Fowler-Watt, K., & Allan, S. (eds.) Journalism: New Challenges. Centre for Journalism and Communication Research, Bournemouth University

² Hight, J. & Smyth, F. 2013. Tragedies & Journalists: A guide for more effective coverage. http://dartcenter.org/files/en_tnj_0.pdf

- Monitor your alcohol and tobacco consumption and be very careful of taking narcotics.
- Try to get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Share what you are going through with loved ones. You do not need to recount all of the horror stories but talk to them about your feelings.
- Find moments in the day when you can sit quietly by yourself and reflect. Perhaps listen to music, keep a diary, or write poetry.
- Take time to reflect on what motivates you. It can be very empowering to reflect

on why we have chosen this life and who we are trying to serve. During the dark moments that often come when we report on violence and atrocities, these ideas can provide us with the strength we need to push through the hard patches.

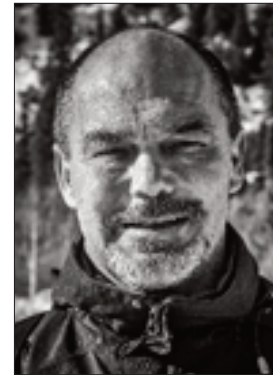
For journalists reporting on wars and conflicts in their own areas, it can be very useful to make time each day to talk to colleagues about your experiences. These meetings need not be formal, but they should provide a space where people can speak freely without judgment and know they will be listened to and respected. Knowing that other people are facing the same challenges as us can help when it comes to dealing with trauma.

Notes on Part Seven:

About the Authors

Peter du Toit is a South African journalist and media trainer who has been involved in conflict sensitive reporting training for more than twenty years. He started work in this area when his work as a journalist covering the South African transition and his academic focus on conflict enabled him to see the potential journalists have to make a constructive contribution in conflict transformation and peace-building. Since then Peter has facilitated conflict sensitive reporting workshops in more than twenty conflict affected countries, primarily in Africa and Central and South East Asia. Peter is a research associate of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. He has completed master's degrees in higher education (Rhodes University) and conflict management and transformation (Nelson Mandela University).

Photo credit: John Offord



Seymur Kazimov is a journalist specialized in conflict studies, with experience in conflict investigation and journalism in extreme conditions. He is also a researcher on media issues. He has been working as a journalist since 2002.

He covered the Armenian-Azerbaijani war and published articles in local and international media about people who have suffered from this conflict for many years. He has been working in this area of media since 2008. His first experience was the Georgian-Russian war. In addition, he prepared materials from a number of international military operations and demonstrations.

He received his Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Baku State University and Master's degree from the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management of the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs.


Photo credit: Fargana Novruzova



Computer designer ***Sabina Mammadova***
Cover designer ***Firuz Ibrahimova***
Corrector ***Parvin Guliyeva***

Signed for printing 20.08.2021. Size of paper 60x84 ¹/₈.
Order 139. Edition 1000.

Published in Printing House of the
“Publishing House Təhsil”.

Baku, AZ 1052, Fatali khan Khoyski str., 149
Tel.: (994 12) 567 81 28/29
e-mail: tahsil_az@yahoo.com
 tahsilpublishinghouse

