

Revolting Britain

Preface

Journalists and other news media staff die in unacceptable numbers around the globe - and many of these deaths could have been avoided.

Around the world hundreds of journalists are murdered or injured because they try to shine the light of brave reporting onto the murky underworld of political and criminal corruption. But a significant number also come to harm covering domestic disturbances - riots, demos, even football matches.

Proper safety training, the provision of good safety equipment and self-knowledge about health and capabilities can cut the toll.

Do you have hard hats, anti-stab vests and mini-cameras available to cover an anti-globalisation protest, where journalists are as much part of the hated establishment as McDonald's?

Do you know how to take effective shelter when bullets or bricks fly, or to guard yourself when bombs go off - as they did in London in 2005 - how to exit when threatened, how to know if you are under surveillance? Have you had training in quiet times in anticipation of when things go bad?

Any "noes" even to that little list and you need professional safety training and your employers need to brush up on their duty of care for journalists working in an increasingly dangerous world where we're under attack from all sides.

Don't assume it will never happen to you. Riots, disorder, gunfire, explosions can erupt anywhere, any time and any place, home or abroad, and you might just be the duty journo sent out.

The International News Safety Institute was set up in 2003 by safety-aware global news organisations and journalist support groups to help ensure news media staff get the help they need when things get tough. Go to www.newssafety.com.

Rodney Pinder
Director
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...Covering violent events even-handedly is part of the journalist's vital role in a healthy democracy but at all times...YOUR SAFETY COMES FIRST!

Introduction

Journalists are facing increasing risks to their safety when covering public disturbance stories - it is a sad sign of the times that violence is now a fact of life in many towns and 'sink' estates.

The Chartered Institute of Journalists, the world's oldest association for our profession, is concerned by this situation and has produced this brochure as a timely reminder to all print and broadcast reporters, photographers and their various assistants of these dangers to life and limb and the precautions they should take.

Journalists covering wars abroad for the major media groups generally receive suitable training and protection but little has been done 'on the home front'.

A European Union Council of Ministers Protocol, of May 3, 1996, clearly lays down government and police responsibilities for protecting journalists...

Most of this advice is common sense but when a 'hot story' is running, the pressure to meet deadlines is greatest and the adrenaline is flowing, precautions can be overlooked - and a journalist becomes a victim. The simple measures outlined in this brochure, taken on the way to cover stories of violence or to areas of potential violence, will minimise the risks.

Safety clothing - stab-proof vests and hardened baseball-style hats - are recommended, and employers are urged to make them available. There are too many people only too prepared to use a knife or a broken bottle in violent confrontations and a recent Association of Chief Police Officers' report highlighted the growing use of these weapons in both town and country areas. 'It CAN happen here' is now only too true.

This brochure has been compiled by 'battle-hardened' journalists who have had first hand experience of such violence - be it at demonstrations that turn nasty or on seemingly innocuous stories in 'sink' estates where a journalist can be seen as fair game for an aggravated mugging.

The law is with us in terms of legal protection. A European Union Council of Ministers Protocol, of May 3, 1996, clearly lays down government and police responsibilities for protecting journalists and their ability to work in situations of conflict and tension, but it also underlines the need for journalists to have training in looking after themselves as physical protection cannot always be guaranteed. The protocol also emphasises the need for employers to provide adequate safety clothing and insurance but freelances have to make their own arrangements - and should have adequate insurance cover for both injury and their equipment.

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When out on such a story a journalist is usually on his or her own and personal safety should be the prime consideration. It is no disgrace to 'beat a retreat'. Editors, too, should remember their staff are facing potential death situations and should not pressurise them to take undue risks nor penalise them for applying caution.

Remember, too, that in the case of terror attacks involving bombs, secondary devices can be planted within the general area! Fools rush in...as the saying goes.

Covering violent events even-handedly is part of the journalist's vital role in a healthy democracy but at all times...YOUR SAFETY COMES FIRST!

Your rights

Journalists are treated in law as ordinary citizens, but with some special rights.

They have the full protection of the law under international conventions. They are also protected by the legally enforceable European Convention on Human Rights.

Journalists' right to be at violent and conflict situations is spelt out in a recommendation of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers which stresses that "the freedom of the media and the free and unhindered exercise of journalism must be respected in situations of conflict and tension".

Under UK health and safety regulations, and under the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights, employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff have reasonable and safe working conditions. This makes them responsible for anyone sent to work in violent situations, or in situations that might become violent - in other words that he/she is fully prepared and has protective clothes and equipment.

Although it has not been tested in a Court of Law whether this applies to journalists and media personnel, we understand that it does. If journalists are attacked, injured or worse while covering a demonstration or other news event, they or their survivors should ask their union for advice. If you are not a member of a union, seek independent legal advice from a reputable firm of solicitors.

Where appropriate the union will seek compensation from those responsible for the damage, injury or death.

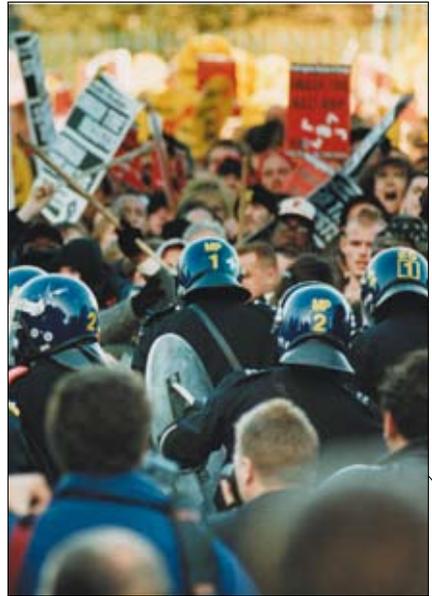
Being properly prepared means having had safety training and being insured. Being properly protected means having safety equipment that journalists can put on the moment a demonstration or news event looks like turning violent.

Freelances

Take out insurance, both on yourself and on your equipment.

Attend a respectable safety training course and periodically go to refresher courses. Safety courses are provided by the International News Safety Institute (INSI), journalists' trade unions, and private companies specialising in advising on what to do in violent situations and how to prepare for situations that might become violent.

Equip yourself with at least a minimum of safety equipment, and always have it with you in the boot of your car. The cost of safety equipment and safety training is recognised by the tax authorities as a justifiable professional expense. If your tax inspector does not



"the freedom of the media and the free and unhindered exercise of journalism must be respected in situations of conflict and tension"

accept these expenses, report the matter to your union which will take the matter up with the authorities.

Your responsibilities – ‘They who turn and run away live to write another day!’

Journalists’ first responsibility is for their own safety and for the safety of colleagues. It is up to them to keep themselves safe. A dead journalist, or one severely injured or knocked unconscious, is no good to anyone. There is no disgrace in leaving a scene if the situation threatens your personal safety.

On the job

- * If possible scout out the layout of the area, identify blind alleys and similar traps and avoid them if running for cover.
- * Wear a hardened baseball cap - they are indistinguishable from conventional ones and do not attract attention.
- * A thick (spiral-bound) notebook kept in a left inside pocket of a jacket or coat will provide some protection against stabs to the heart area in an emergency but this is no substitute for a stab-proof jacket.
- * Be discreet in using a mobile phone – and tell news desks NOT to keep calling you to avoid attracting the attention of would-be muggers.
- * Don’t carry large amounts of cash – keep a £5 note and some coins as a ‘giveaway’ to muggers
- * Be inconspicuous - try to blend in to your surroundings and the people around you.
- * If you see an angry mob coming towards you or near you, get out of the way. Watch from somewhere safe.
- * If stones, bricks, or bullets start flying, take cover.
- * Be neutral - never say, do or wear anything that suggests you are part of the demonstration, or that you disagree with the demonstration.
- * Always have your Press Card with you. This is in case the police think you are a demonstrator, or the demonstrators think you are a scab or spy for the police.
- * If you are attacked, or if you see a colleague attacked, get the name and address of two or three witnesses who saw what happened – but only if it is safe to do so.

The lorry in the distance was loaded with one and a half tons of explosives when this shot was taken. A combination of lenses and other equipment was used to take this shot from a half a mile down the road.



Safety equipment

There is no doubt that safety equipment can both save lives or injury, but what is the right equipment to buy? The CloJ has conducted some fairly extensive research into what is available in the way of protective equipment at this time.

Firstly, helmets. Currently, other than military or riot type helmets, or something like a motorcycle crash hat, there is nothing better than the baseball type cap protector from First Base. This and some “woolly hats” with the same liner are more or less the only covert head protection that is available. While less than perfect, they will protect you from some forms of injury and at around £10 to £15, if you are covering civil disorder, you would be a fool not to wear one.

On the stab/bullet proof vest front, things are a lot better with many good quality products being available from companies such as TBA, Bradley and Praetorian. You can get a covert vest on E-Bay for as little as £80, but don't! There are many things one needs to find out about Kevlar equipment, much of which may not be available unless it comes from a reputable supplier. You need to know not only its resistance to bullets and stab wounds but also how good it is to resist blunt force. One thing worth remembering is that it doesn't pay to look too much like the police in incidents of civil disorder, so one should always try and get a good covert vest.

Cap

- 2 views of the Protector First Base Security Cap available from Wickes and other builders merchants. The first view shows that it is indistinguishable from a normal baseball cap and the second view shows the polyurethane and sorbethone liner which, while not bullet resistant can give vital protection against blunt force.



Vest

- the Praetorian Covert Waistcoat gives protection against stabbing and shot. It also gives excellent protection against blunt force which is more likely to be encountered in a riot. With the addition of 2 more pockets, it can become a fully functioning photographers jacket while still offering excellent levels of protection.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF DOS AND DON'TS

1. Most violent demos happen at night. Wear dark clothing, carry the minimum money necessary and use a mobile phone discreetly.
2. Carry a minimum amount of equipment... and NO bulging camera bag or laptop computer
3. Don't use flash...it'll pinpoint you, and you may get a brick by return.
4. Don't wander off on your own. Stick with colleagues, or in sight of police lines.
5. Always try to be on the move, don't stand still for more than a few moments; you tend to stay alert if you're on the move, and always be aware of what's going on around you.
6. Don't hold extended conversations on your mobile phone, it'll distract you from what's going on around you. If the office keep calling you, tell them to stop. You've got a riot to cover.
7. If you must carry valuables like a credit card, use a concealed zip fastened pocket for this, and the bulk of your cash. Carry a fiver in an outside pocket ready to "make available" in case you get mugged...if they see your pocket is otherwise empty, they may move on.
8. Do not take anything for granted. Know. Be certain and don't attract attention to yourself by your clothes or by your actions.
9. Do not be foolhardy or macho. That last good quote or last good photo should not be your last.
10. Do not imagine it can't happen to you - IT CAN!

Warning signs

Most demos are peaceful, and there is no trouble. In some cases it will be clear in advance that a protest or demonstration is going to be violent but some can turn in a flash. If that happens, be careful, go back to your car and put on safety equipment. Use your common sense as soon as things look like turning nasty.

Tell-tale signs of possible violence:

The mood of the crowd changes. Frowns replace smiles. Chatter ceases. The crowd starts shouting angry slogans.

A group or groups of (mostly) men gather, often on street corners.

The Leader or leaders of a demonstration start yelling angry provocative statements or slogans.

AT THIS STAGE YOU SHOULD GET OUT OF THE WAY. Only come back when you have put on safety clothing.

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