



1/1/2026

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS POLICY



UJOSS
Policies Version - 2026



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Preamble

As the sub-leading institution in the regulation of media and in the conduct and discipline of journalists in South Sudan, one of major functions of the Union of journalists of South Sudan is to promote high professional standards amongst journalists. Besides promoting and protecting freedom and independence of the media, the UJOSS also works to promote ethical standards among journalists and in the media. The Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism as entrenched in the Schedule of the South Sudan Media Authority Act 2014, governs the conduct and practice of all, journalists and media practitioners in the country.

Interpretation

In this "code of conduct "a person subject to this Act "means a journalist, media practitioner, foreign journalist or media enterprise.

The four principles of code of conduct:

Professional journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of the Justice and the substance of democracy.

Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and detailed, and ethical journalist acts with integrity. The Union of Journalists of South Sudan declares these four principles as the basis of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all, in all media.

1. Seek truth and report it:

Ethical journalism shall be accurate and fair. Journalists shall be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Journalists shall:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story. Be cautious when making promises, but keep the promises they make.
- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- Unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find objectionable.
- Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we rarely hear.



- Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.
- Label advocacy and commentary. Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information.
- Clearly label illustrations and re-enactments.

2. Minimize harm

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists shall:

- Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.
- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Realize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention. Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.
- Balance a suspect's right to a fair trial with the public's right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.
- Consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication. Provide updated and more complete information as appropriate.

3. Act Independently:

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public. Journalists shall:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality or may damage credibility.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news. Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.
- Distinguish news from advertising and avoid hybrids that impress the lines between the two. Prominently label sponsored content.

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4. Be Accountable and Transparent

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public. Journalists should:

- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.
- Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations. Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

Description:

Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by additional explanations and position papers that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium. The code should be read as a whole; individual principles should not be taken out of context. It is not, nor can it be under the first amendment, legally enforceable.



1. Accuracy and Fairness

- a) A person subject to this Act shall write a fair, accurate and an unbiased story on matters of public interest.
- b) All sides of the story shall be reported, wherever possible.
- c) Comments shall be sought from anyone who is mentioned in an unfavorable context and evidence of such attempts to seek the comments shall be kept.
- d) Whenever it is recognised that an inaccurate, misleading or distorted story has been published or broadcast, it shall be corrected promptly.
- e) Corrections shall present the correct information and shall not restate the error except when clarity demands.
- f) An apology that results from the determination of the media authority shall be published or broadcast, whenever appropriate in such manner as the authority may specify.
- g) A correction under this paragraph shall be given same prominence as that given to the information being corrected.
- h) A person subject to this Act shall not publish a story that fall short of factual accuracy and fairness.
- i) A person subject to this Act, while free to be partisan, shall distinguish clearly in their reports between comment, conjecture and fact.
- j) Headings shall reflect and justify the matter printed under them. Headings containing allegations made in statements shall either identify the body or the source making them or at least carry quotation marks.
- k) A person subject to this Act shall present news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.
- l) A person subject to this Act shall treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- m) A person subject to this Act shall seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype and present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.
- n) A person subject to this Act shall present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias.

2. Independence:

- 2.1 Journalists shall defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control over news content.
- 2.2 A person subject to this Act shall: -
- 2.3 Gather and report news without fear or favour, and resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals and special interest groups;
- 2.4 Resist those who would buy or politically influence news content or who would seek to intimidate those who gather and disseminate news;
- 2.5 Determine news content solely through editorial judgement and not the result of outside influence;
- 2.6 Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might undermine journalistic duty and service to the public;
- 2.7 Recognize that sponsorship of the news shall not be used in any way to determine, restrict or manipulate content;
- 2.8 Refuse to allow the interests of ownership or management to influence news' judgment and content inappropriately.

3. Integrity:

- 3.1 Journalists shall present news with integrity and common decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news. A person subject to this code of conduct shall: -
- 3.2 Identify sources whenever possible. Confidential sources shall be used only when it is clearly in public interest to gather or convey important information or when a person providing information might be harmed;
- 3.3 Clearly label opinion and commentary;
- 3.4 Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, voiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalize events;



- 3.5 Use surreptitious news gathering techniques including hidden cameras or microphones, only if there is no other way of obtaining stories of significant public importance, and if the technique is explained to the audience.
- 3.6 A person subject to this code of conduct shall not: -
- 3.7 Pay news sources that have vested interest in a story;
- 3.8 Solicit or accept gifts, favours or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage;
- 3.9 Engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence.

4 Accountability:

A person subject to this code of conduct shall recognise that they are accountable for their actions to the public, the profession and themselves therefore they shall: -

- 3.1 Actively encourage adherence to these standards by all journalists and media practitioners;
- 3.2 Respond to public concerns, investigate complaints and correct errors promptly;
- 3.3 Recognize that they are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.

5. Opportunity to reply:

- 5.1 A fair opportunity to reply to inaccuracies shall be given to or organisations when reasonably called for. If the request to correct inaccuracies in a story is in the form of a letter, the editor has to publish it in full or in its abridged and edited version, particularly when it is too long, but the remainder shall be an effective reply to the allegations.
- 5.2 The summarised version of the reply shall not lose the core content.

6. Unnamed sources:

- 6.1 Unnamed sources shall not be used unless the pursuit of the truth will best be served by not disclosing the source who, shall be known by the editor and reporter.
- 6.2 When material is used in a report from sources other than the reporter's, these sources shall be indicated in the story.

7. Confidentiality:

A person subject to this code of conduct has a professional obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

8. Misrepresentation

Journalists shall generally identify themselves and not obtain or seek to obtain information or pictures through misrepresentation or subterfuge. Subterfuge can be justified only in the public interest and only when material cannot be obtained by any other means.

9. Obscenity, Taste and Tone in Reporting

- 9.1 In general, persons subject to this Code of Conduct shall not publish obscene or vulgar material unless material contains news.
- 9.2 Publication of photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes shall be avoided unless the publication or broadcast of such photographs will serve the public interest.
- 9.3 Where possible an alert shall be issued to warn viewers or readers of the information being published.

10. Paying for News and Articles:

A person subject to this Act shall not receive any money as an incentive to publish any information. Paying for news and Articles.

11. Covering Ethnic, Religious and Sectarian Conflict

- 11.1 News, views or comments on ethnic, religious or sectarian dispute shall be published or broadcast after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to national harmony, amity and peace.



- 11.2 News reports or commentaries shall not be written or broadcast in a manner likely to inflame the passions, aggravate the tension or accentuate the strained relations between the communities concerned.
- 11.3 Articles or broadcasts with the potential to exacerbate communal trouble shall be avoided.

12. Recording Interviews and Telephone Conversations

- 12.1 Except in justifiable cases, a person subject to this Act shall not tape or record anyone without the person's knowledge. An exception may be made only if the recording is necessary to protect the journalist in a legal action or for some other compelling reason. In this context these standards also apply to electronic media.
- 12.2 Before recording a telephone conversation for broadcast, or broadcasting a telephone conversation live, a station shall inform any party to the call of its intention to broadcast the conversation.
- 12.3 This, however, does not apply to conversation whose broadcast can reasonably be presumed, for example, telephone calls to programmes where the station customarily broadcasts calls.

13. Privacy

- 13.1 The public's right to know shall be weighed against the privacy rights of people in the news.
- 13.2 Journalists shall stick to the issues.
- 13.3 Intrusion and inquiries into an individual's private life without the person's consent are not generally acceptable unless public interest is involved. Public interest shall itself be legitimate and not merely prurient or morbid curiosity.
- 13.4 Things concerning a person's home, family, religion, tribe, health, sexuality, personal life and private affairs are covered by the concept of privacy except where these impinge upon the public.

14. Intrusions into Grief and Shock

- 14.1 In cases involving personal grief or shock, inquiries shall be made with sensitivity and discretion.
- 14.2 In hospitals, journalists shall identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.

15. Gender Non-discrimination

Women and men shall be treated equally as news subjects and news sources.

16. Financial Journalism

- 16.1 Journalists shall not use financial information they receive in advance for their own benefit, and shall not pass the information to others.
- 16.2 Journalists shall not write or broadcast about shares, securities and other market instruments in whose performance they know they or their close families have a significant financial interest, without disclosing the interest to the editor.
- 16.3 Journalists shall not buy or sell, directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities and other market instruments about which they intend to write in the near future.

17. Letters to the Editor

An editor who decides to open a column on a controversial subject is not obliged to publish all the letters received in regard to that subject. The editor may select and publish only some of them either in their entirety or the gist thereof. However, in exercising this right, the editor shall make an honest attempt to ensure that what is published is not one sided but presents a fair balance between the pros and the cons of the principal issue. The editor shall have the discretion to decide at which point to end the debate in the event of a rejoinder upon rejoinder by two or more parties on a controversial subject.

18. Protection of Children

- 18.1 Children shall not be identified in cases concerning sexual offences, whether as victims, witnesses or defendants. Except in matters of public interest, for cases of child abuse or abandonment, journalists shall not normally interview or photograph children on subjects involving their personal welfare in the absence, or without the consent, of a parent or other adult who is responsible for the children.



18.2 Children shall not be approached or photographed while at school and other formal institutions without the permission of school authorities.

18.3 In adhering to this principle, a journalist shall always take into account specific cases of children in difficult circumstances.

19. Victims of Sexual Offences

The media shall not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification.

20. Use of Pictures and Names

20.1 As a general rule, the media shall apply caution in the use of pictures and names and shall avoid publication when there is a possibility of harming the persons concerned.

20.2 Manipulation of pictures in a manner that distorts reality and accuracy of news shall be avoided.

20.3 Pictures of grief, disaster and those that embarrass and promote sexism shall be discouraged.

21. Innocent Relatives and Friends

The media shall not identify relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime unless the reference to them is necessary for the full, fair and accurate reporting of the crime or legal proceedings.

22. Acts of Violence

22.1 The media shall avoid presenting acts of violence, armed robberies, banditry and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct.

22.2 Newspapers shall not allow their columns to be used for writings which tend to encourage or glorify social evils, warlike activities, ethnic, racial or religious hostilities.

23. Editor's Responsibilities

23.1 The editor shall assume the responsibility for all content, including advertisements, published in newspaper.

23.2 If responsibility is disclaimed, this shall be explicitly stated beforehand.

24. Advertisements

24.1 The editor shall not allow any advertisement which is contrary to any aspect of this Code of Conduct.

24.2 The editor shall be guided by the advertiser's code of conduct issued under this Act.

25. Hate Speech

25.1 Quoting persons making derogatory remarks based on ethnicity, race, creed, colour and sex shall not be allowed.

25.2 Racist or negative ethnic terms shall be avoided.

25.3 Careful account shall be taken of the possible effect upon the ethnic or racial group concerned, and on the population as a whole, and of the changes in public attitudes as to what is and what is not acceptable when using such terms.

26. WORKPLACE CONDUCT:

26.1 Standards of Conduct Policy

To ensure orderly procedures and to provide the best possible work environment, UJOSS expects journalists and media employees who may be engaged to provide service in stations from time to time to adhere to these standards of conduct while on institution's premises, attending UJOSS functions or otherwise performing work-related activity and representing.

UJOSS is responsible for providing a safe and secure workplace and strives to ensure that all individuals associated with UJOSS are treated in a respectful and fair manner. While not intended to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable, the following are examples of conduct that may result into

disciplinary action leading summary dismissals:

- Theft or inappropriate removal of property for personal gain.



- Falsification of records, including timekeeping.
 - Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drug.
 - Possession, manufacture, sale, transfer, distribution or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace, while representing UJOSS, or while operating employer-owned vehicles or equipment.
 - Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace.
 - Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace.
 - Sexual Harassment.
 - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).
 - Negligently or intentionally destroy the property of the employer.
 - Negligently or intentionally expose of workplace to risk.
 - Exposure of confidential information of employer.
- **Negligence, improper or intentional conduct leading to damage of UJOSS, donor, or co-worker property.**
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct.
 - Violation of safety or health rules.
 - Excessive absenteeism or any absence without notice.
 - Using UJOSS equipment for purposes other than UJOSS.
 - Violation of personnel policies.
 - Unsatisfactory performance or conduct any employee who deviates from these rules and standards will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

26.2 Violence in Workplace:

It is policy to provide a workplace that is safe and free from all threatening and intimidating conduct. Therefore, UJOSS will not tolerate violence or threats of violence of any form in the workplace, at work-related functions or outside of work if it affects the workplace. This policy applies to UJOSS members, Journalists, presenters in media outlets, clients, guests, vendors and persons doing business with.

It is a violation of this policy to engage in any conduct, verbal or physical, that intimidates, endangers or creates the perception of intimidation or intent to harm persons or property. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Physical assaults or threats of physical assault, whether made in person or by other means (e.g., in writing or by phone, fax or email)
- Verbal conduct that is intimidating and has the purpose or effect of threatening the health or safety of another individual.
- Any other conduct or acts that management believes represent an imminent or potential danger to safety or security.

Anyone with questions or complaints about behaviors that fall under this policy may discuss them with a security focal person or the president of the union. UJOSS will promptly and thoroughly investigate any reported occurrences or threats of violence. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination. When such actions involve non-workforces, UJOSS will take action appropriate for the circumstances. When appropriate, UJOSS will also take any legal actions available and necessary to stop the conduct and protect UJOSS, our employees and property.

26.3 Weapons in the Workplace policy:

Unless prohibited by state law, prohibits the possession of firearms or any other lethal weapon on UJOSS property, in a vehicle being used on UJOSS occupation, in any UJOSS-owned or leased parking facility or at a work-related function. This applies to all Journalists, visitors and beneficiaries on UJOSS property, even



those who are licensed to carry weapons. The only exception to this is an employee who is required to possess weapons in order to fulfill his or her job duties. Some examples of prohibited weapons include:

- Firearms (pistols, revolvers, shotguns, rifles and guns)
- Knives (switchblades, gravity knives or any knife with a blade longer than three inches)
- Metal knuckles Bows and arrows.
- We prohibit weapons to ensure the safety and security of all employees and persons visiting UJOSS.

Code of conduct receipt acknowledgement:

I have received the code of conduct, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this code of conduct and any revisions made to it.

Employee's Signature _____

Employee's Name _____

Employee's Number _____

Date _____