

A checklist for conflict sensitive journalism*

- Avoid reporting a conflict as consisting of two opposing sides. Find other affected interests and include their stories, opinions and goals. Interview merchants affected by the general strike, workers who are unable to work, refugees from the countryside who want an end to violence etc.
- Avoid defining the conflict by always quoting the leaders who make familiar demands. Go beyond the elites. Report the words of ordinary people who may voice the opinions shared by many.
- Avoid only reporting what divides the sides in conflict. Ask the opposing sides questions which may reveal common ground. Report on interests or goals which they may share.
- Avoid always focusing on the suffering and fear of only one side. Treat all sides' suffering as equally newsworthy.
- Avoid words like devastated, tragedy and terrorized to describe what has been done to one group. These kinds of words put the reporter on one side. Do not use them yourself. Only quote someone else who uses these words.
- Avoid emotional and imprecise words. Assassination is the murder of a head of state and no-one else. Massacre is the deliberate killing of innocent, unarmed civilians. Soldiers and policemen are not massacred. Genocide means killing an entire people. Do not minimize suffering, but use strong language carefully.
- Avoid words like terrorist, extremist or fanatic. These words take sides, make the other side seem impossible to negotiate with. Call people what they call themselves.
- Avoid making an opinion into a fact. If someone claims something, state their name, so it is their opinion and not your fact.
- Avoid waiting for leaders on one side to offer solutions. Explore peace ideas wherever they come from. Put these ideas to the leaders and report their response.

*From Conflict Sensitive Journalism: A Handbook, by Ross Howard, available on the Web site of Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society, at www.impacs.org.