

# /// Safety Guide ///

## for Media Professionals in Reporting from Riots and Protests

**osce**

Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
Mission in Kosovo

ECB



## Introduction

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been supporting media development, media freedoms and capacity building for Kosovo journalists since 1999.

In its continuous efforts to support journalists in the realization of their rights and in close co-operation with journalists' associations and media institutions, the OSCE Mission has decided to put together a guide to provide Kosovo media professionals with basic information on actions they must take to avoid getting into harm's way when reporting live from situations of violence and unrest.

## Protecting yourself and avoiding injury

**Do not underestimate risks!**

Understand that reporting in dangerous conditions can lead to injury, even death.

Therefore, if you find yourself in these situations, you should be able to protect yourselves to avoid injuries of any kind. Ideally, you would have at hand some protective gear to use.

Don't put on your protective gear at the start of the protests. This might anger the protesters, who often consider themselves to be peaceful and accuse journalists of anticipating trouble.

- Protective gear can include helmets, goggles, gas masks, gloves, scarves, and hoods.
- Wearing a sweatshirt or other top with a good hood can be useful when covering a story in which there is a danger that you might get hurt by police or protesters.
- Liquid antacid and water (LAW) can help neutralize irritation from teargas and pepper spray. Use it to flush your eyes. If you don't have LAW, wash your eyes with water or saline solution.

- If you don't have any LAW, a vinegar or water-soaked bandana held tightly over the nose and mouth can help neutralize the effects of teargas. Another option is to carry an onion on you. If gassed, break it in half and sniff it, and get it close to your eyes....it greatly reduces the irritation in the eyes and nasal cavity.
- If you're in a situation that escalates out of control, newspapers shoved under your clothes can offer some protection from batons/nightsticks that may be in use by law enforcement for crowd control.
- Remember, the weight of your gear can add up and slow you down.
- Wear comfortable shoes or boots that you can run in.
- Stay fed and hydrated. Pack a handful of energy bars (or equivalent) and a small container of water.
- Carry a compact first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Carry three days' worth of any medication that you take.

Don't forget to put  
“**PRESS**” insignia on  
your vests and  
jackets, and keep  
your journalists'  
identification  
with you at all  
times. This will  
help the  
police  
distinguish  
you from the  
protesters.



Taking notes, photos, tweeting, live-streaming etc. can sometimes create tunnel vision where you lose track of your surroundings. As best you can, try to balance the act of reporting with keeping your eyes and ears on everything around you with your own safety in mind.

If possible, go to the event with a partner or a colleague who can watch your back. In every situation, try to identify at least two routes to safety. Plan ahead if you can. If you feel that your safety is threatened, leave the area.



## What to do if physically attacked?

The most important part of your body to protect is your head. If you are caught in a situation where there is risk to your physical safety and cannot escape, do not lie on the ground with your face and head unprotected, but rather curl into a ball and cover your head.

If you don't have a hood, pull your coat over your head.

## What to do if you're injured?

- Try to stay calm.
- If your injury is serious, call for help or ask someone to call for help for you.
- Street medics are often present at these kinds of events. Try yelling **“Medic!”** for assistance.
- Yell **“Cameras!”** if you want others to document your situation (which will likely happen anyway).
- Use your own first aid kit, if you have one.
- Seek professional medical attention as soon as possible.



## Avoiding arrest

Watch out for tunnel vision (see above, under “Avoiding injury”).

Tell the police you're a journalist. Show your credentials, if you have them.

A press pass of any kind could be helpful, but it's no guarantee of immunity from arrest or injury.

## What to do if arrested?

- Call the lawyer of Association of Journalists of Kosovo at  
**044-219-727**
- Call Helpline of Association of Journalists of Kosovo at  
**0800-11-333**
- Ideally you will have these numbers memorized. If not, make sure it's written clearly on your forearm.

## What to do after the incident?

Document everything that happened to you. This can include a mix of writing, photos, audio, and video.

If you feel that anyone has violated your rights, contact the lawyer of Association of Journalists of Kosovo for advice on filing charges or a formal complaint.



This guide has been compiled from guides and instructions published by Reporters without Borders, International Federation of Journalists, European Federation of Journalists, and the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media. For more detailed information please consult:

[https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/guide\\_journaliste\\_rsf\\_2015\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/guide_journaliste_rsf_2015_en_0.pdf)

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/documents/ifj-safety-guidelines>

<https://www.osce.org/fom/85777>

