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## Charter of Duties of Journalists

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# Italy – National Federation of the Italian Press and National Council Order of Journalists (1993)

Posted on **June 9, 2011** by **MediaWise Admin**

**Charter of Duties of Journalists, adopted by the National Federation of the Italian Press and National Council Order of Journalists in Rome on 8 July 1993.  
(Translated by the Federation.)**

## Introduction

A journalist's job is based on principles of freedom of information and of opinions. It is confirmed by the Italian Constitution and governed by the second article of the Italian law no. 1969 dated on 3 February 1963.

“Freedom of information and of expression are the inalienable rights of all journalists. They are limited by the observance of the rules of law and subject to the protection of other people's personality. They always follow all duties set by fealty and good faith. The respect of the truth of facts is an unbreakable duty. All incorrect news must be rectified, and mistakes must be corrected.

Journalists and publishers are obliged to respect professional secrecy on the sources of a piece of information, when it is required by the fiduciary character of them; they have to promote the spirit of collaboration between colleagues, the co-operation between journalists and publishers, and the trust in press and in readers.”

The relationship of trust between information organs and the people is the foundation of every journalists' job. To promote and cement this relationship, all Italian journalists sign the following Ethics Code (Carta de Doveri).

## Principles

A journalist has to respect, cultivate and defend the right of information for all people; for these reasons he researches and diffuses every piece of information that he considers of public interest in observance of truth and accuracy.

A journalist researches and spreads news of public interest in spite of the obstacles which can arise in his work; he makes any effort to guarantee to people knowledge and control of all public documents.

A journalist's responsibility towards people always prevails above any other thing. A journalist can never subordinate his responsibility to other people's interest and particularly to the publishers' interest, governments' interest or of the other organizations of the State.

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A journalist has to respect people, his dignity and his right of secrecy, and he never discriminates between people according to their race, their religion, their sex, their mental and physical condition, or their political views.

A journalist rectifies, swiftly and accurately, his mistakes or his imprecisions in conformity with the duty to rectify and with what is established by law.

A journalist always respects the right of presumption of innocence.

A journalist has to observe the professional secrecy, when it is required by the fiduciary character of his sources. In any other cases a journalist has to respect the transparency of the sources.

A journalist can not adhere to secret associations or act in any way in conflict with the eighteenth article of the Italian Constitution.

A journalist cannot accept benefits, favours or tasks that make dependent his autonomy and his professional credibility. A journalist cannot omit facts or essential details for a complete reconstruction of events. Titles, summaries, photos and subtitles must not either distort reality or change the content of articles and news.

A journalist must not publish images and photos of people involved in daily episodes particularly terrifying, taking care to preserve people's dignity. Nor must he dwell upon details of violence or brutality, unless there is a pre-eminent reason of social interest. He must not interfere with reality to create artificial images.

Comments and opinions belong to the right of speech and of criticism and, therefore, they have to be absolutely free from any obligation, except for the constraint set by law against offence, defamation and violence against people.

## Duties

### A journalist's responsibility

A journalist is responsible for his job towards people. He has to favour their dialogue with the ombudsman. He has to create various instruments (reader's guarantee, pages for readers, spaces for reply etc.), giving a wide diffusion to their activity.

A journalist only accepts suggestions and instructions from the editorial hierarchy of his newspaper, as long as the dispositions are not against the professional law, against the national Italian journalist's work contract (CNLG) and are in accordance with the Ethics Code (Carta di Doveri).

A journalist cannot discriminate between people according to their race, their religion, their mental and physical conditions, or their political opinions.

Extenuating circumstances, insulting or denigratory references concerning people and their privacy, are only acceptable when they are of relevant public interest.

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A journalist respects the right of secrecy of every person, and he cannot publish news of their private life, unless they are transparent and of relevant public interest. However, he always makes his identity and profession known when he collects such news.

Names of the relations of people involved in such daily events cannot be published, unless they are of relevant public interest; nor can they be made known in case of danger of people's safety, nor can publish other elements be published, that can make clear people's identity (photos, images).

Names of victims of sexual violence can be neither published, nor can the journalist give details that can lead to their identification, unless it is required by the victims themselves for relevant general interest.

A journalist has to proceed with great caution in publishing names or elements that can lead to the identification of members of the legal team or of the police, when they can provoke the risk of endangerment for themselves or their families.

#### Rectification and reply

A journalist respects the inviolable people's right to the rectification of incorrect news or wrong facts that are considered prejudicial to people's interests.

A journalist makes rectification, therefore, with timeliness and appropriate emphasis, also in case of a lack of a specific required of all news that, after their wide diffusion (spreading), seem to be incorrect or erroneous, especially when the mistakes can damage people, organizations, categories, associations and communities.

When a journalist makes a charge against people, he does not spread news damaging a person's reputation or dignity without giving the opportunity of reply to the person concerned. Should this be impossible (because the person is impossible to find or he doesn't want to reply) he has to inform the readers and the public of this fact. In any case, before publishing a piece of news concerning the investigations' warning by a judge, he has to establish whether the charged person is aware of it.

#### Presumption of innocence

In all the process and investigations, a journalist has always to remember that every person charged of an offence is innocent until the final judgement. He must not spread news in order to introduce him as guilty person when he has not been judged guilty in such a process.

A journalist must not publish images that present deliberately or artificially as offenders people that have not been judged as guilty persons in a process.

In case of the accused's acquittal a journalist has always to give an appropriate journalistic emphasis to the piece of news, also giving a referral to all news and articles previously published.

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#### Sources

A journalist has to observe the maximum caution in spreading news, names and images of charged people for habitual offences of a minor nature, except in case of particular social interest.

A journalist has to check all information obtained from his sources. He must accept responsibility for what he says, and must always safeguard the substantial truth of facts.

In cases here the sources require anonymity, a journalist has to respect the professional secret and has to be able to inform the reader of such circumstance.

In any other case a journalist must always respect the principle of more transparency of the sources of information, giving the readers or the audience the maximum and possible attention to them. The fulfilment of an obligation to the quotation of a source is particularly important when a journalist uses a piece of news from a press agency or from any other source of information, unless the piece of news is not correct or widely spread with own means, or unless it is modified as far as the meaning and the content are concerned.

In all the other cases a journalist accept conditioning derived from the sources for the publication or the abolition of a piece of information.

#### Information and advertising

All people have the right to receive correct information, always distinct from an advertising message and not prejudicial to everyone's interests. The advertising message must always be distinguishable from journalistic documents through clear indications.

A journalist has to observe all principles signed in the Protocol's Agreement on Transparency of Information and of the national Italian journalists' work contract (CNLG); he has to make known the advertisement, however, he has to enable people to recognize a journalistic job from a promotional message.

#### Incompatibility

A journalist can never use economic or financial information that he knows to his personal benefit, nor can he disturb the state of the stock market, spreading news and events that are to his own advantage.

A journalist cannot write articles or news concerning the trend of the market in which he has a direct or indirect financial interest. He cannot sell or buy stock in which he is professionally involved or with which he is going to be concerned shortly.

A journalist refuses payments, refund of expenses, donations, free holidays, duty travels, pleasure trip gifts, or facilities, that can damage his credibility and professional

A journalist refuses payments, refund of expenses, donations, free holidays, duty travels, pleasure trip gifts, or facilities, that can damage his credibility and professional dignity.

A journalist cannot accept tasks which conflict with the autonomous discharge of his own duties, nor lend his name, voice or image for advertising enterprises that are incompatible with the safeguarding of a professional journalists' autonomy.

He is allowed, instead, to give free of charge some services for advertising enterprises, for a social, humanitarian, cultural, religious or artistic task, or for a trade union. However, this must be without a speculative character.

Children or weak people

A journalist respects all principles confirmed in the ONU Convention dated 1989 on the right of children and their rules undersigned by the "Treviso Ethic Code" (Carta di Treviso) to protect children, their character and their personality, both as an active protagonist and as a victim of a common-law offence and particularly:

- a) a journalist doesn't publish a name or any other element that can lead to the identification of people involved in the daily episodes or events;
- b) he has to avoid eventual instrumentalizations by all adults that brings to represent and make exclusively his own interest;
- c) however, he values if the spread of the news concerning children brings effectively to the interest of the minor himself.

A journalist protects the rights and dignity of people with mental or physical handicap in analogy with what is confirmed by the Treviso Ethic Code (Carta di treviso) about children.

A journalist protects the rights of the invalid, avoiding sensational publication of news on medical arguments that can bring fear and groundless hopes.

- a) he does not spread news that is not confirmed by important scientific sources
- b) he does not quote the name of commercial drugs and products in order to favour a consumer product.
- c) he spreads in timely fashion the commercial names of pharmaceutical products that are withdrawn or suspended from circulation because they damage people's health.

A journalist pledges to use maximum respect towards subjects of daily life that for social, economical or cultural reasons can be regarded as minor instruments of self protection.

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