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TO ALL NEWS EDITORS

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUJM Guideline for Media on Elections Reporting

Introduction: The Elections Challenges

The National Union of Journalists Peninsular Malaysia (NUJ) reinstates the need for objectivity, impartiality and balance reporting in journalism as an everyday challenge for media professionals.

The election process provides further challenges to media because it brings into sharp focus the need for media to provide the public with access to all the facts, opinions and ideas being in the campaign.

Journalists must also provide access to media so that rakyat's voices can be heard above the babble of political debate.

This call to raise standards in journalism during the elections campaign and the role is now more relevant than ever before, in the current climate of fake news fuelling misinformation on increasingly influential social networks.

At the same time, covering elections carries some safety risks, which journalists need to assess, prevent and reduce.

The NUJ offers the following guidelines for a model of election coverage, combining professional ethics and safety tips.

Uphold Ethics of Journalism: Every journalist should seek to follow the time tested road map to excellence in covering elections, by considering the key professional ethics in media.

1. Editorial Independence

Independent journalism is an essential part of any credible democracy. Journalists in newsrooms and on the campaign trail must ensure that voters have access to impartial and independent information.

2. Facts Checking

The accuracy of information is a priority in elections reporting and journalists need to establish the candidates' statements by checking with credible sources such as officials, civil society organisations and elections monitors. Special care must be taken to confirm, before publication, information from social media which can be misleading or have a bias in favour of/against a candidate or a political party.

3. Handling Bias Challenge

Allegations of bias in the news media happen all the time, but they are most evident at election time. Journalists know that for politicians and public interest groups consider as bias the omission of certain news items in newspapers, on radio and television news bulletins, the angle given to a story or the choice made about its place in a page or a bulletin. Journalists can allay those concerns by making efforts to achieve a balance in their reporting through a fair representation of candidates' views.



4. Guard against Hate Speech

Elections can be divisive on community, ethnic and party lines, providing some political actors to adopt hate speech and violent rhetoric. Journalists should never provide a platform for such politics and clear protocols must be developed to avoid media being used for inciting violence and hatred.

5. Check and Comply with Media accreditation Requirements

Journalists must check the requirements for covering elections and apply in good time for their accreditation to avoid delays and denial of access to candidates, electoral commissions' venues, polling stations, etc. A valid accreditation is also hugely important to ensure free movement when there are restrictions related to elections.

6. Look out for Signs of Confrontation

In a volatile political situation, anything can happen. Journalists need to be on the lookout for certain signs of violence. These include the presence of offensive weapons at events (stones, batons, guns, anti-tear gas kit, etc..) It is also vital to listen to what people in the crowd are saying, including on media organisations. Finally, journalists need to observe the presence of security forces and their attitude to the crowd.

7. Take Cover

If violence breaks out, seek a safe location to film and take pictures away from the immediate area of confrontation. Journalists should avoid at all times confrontation with the crowd and must keep their press credentials clearly visible unless they believe violence is targeted at media. In such cases, they must seek the protection of security forces and leave the area.

8. Come prepared

Journalists are advised to always bring essential items while covering election campaigns. This includes, but not limited to, extra clothes, umbrella, raincoat/poncho, accreditation passes, water and snacks, medicine etc.

Always take care of yourself first before attending to others.

NUJM wishes everyone safe reporting.

On behalf of the NUJ Executive Committee,



FARAH MARSHITA ABD PATAH
President NUJ