



## ETHICS CHARTER

**As adopted in 2014**

*The board members, directors, full-time staff, correspondents and other employees of Reporters Without Borders' international secretariat and bureaux, and the board members and staff of RWB's sections and partner organizations undertake to respect the ethical principles presented in this charter.*

## Preamble

In accomplishing its mandate, Reporters Without Borders acts in the spirit of the following declarations:

- Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees every person's right "to seek, receive and impart information (...) through any media and regardless of frontiers."
- Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which says: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."
- UN General Assembly Resolution 59, adopted on 14 December 1946, which says: "Understanding and cooperation among nations are impossible without an alert and sound world opinion which, in turn, is wholly dependent upon freedom of information."
- The same resolution, which also says: "Freedom of information (...) requires as a basic discipline the moral obligation to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent."
- The UNESCO constitution, in which the signatories affirm their belief in "full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge." As regards the "pursuit of objective truth," it must however be recognized that the truth can take different forms and yield different and even contradictory results because no one is keeper of the sole truth.
- The Windhoek Declaration, adopted in May 1991 at the end of a seminar organized jointly by the UN and UNESCO, which says: "The establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.
- The UN Human Rights Council resolution of 5 July 2012, which affirmed the right to freedom of expression on the Internet for the first time, saying: "The same rights that people have offline must also be protected online (...) regardless of frontiers and through any media."

# Principles

## RWB's Independence

Reporters Without Borders defends and promotes freedom of information. This is its mandate and it has no other. Everything that its board members, directors, full-time staff and other employees do in the course of their RWB activities must be in accordance with this mandate.

RWB's activities are independent of any political, economic or social influence. It does not accept interference or pressure from any government, political party, commercial enterprise or interest group.

## Governance

Reporters Without Borders has a mission, an organizational structure and decision-making procedures that are clearly defined.

RWB acts in accordance with its statutes. It adheres to the principles and procedures that it has set itself.

It reports its activities and the results that it obtains with the utmost accuracy.

## Journalistic Ethics

Given that the Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Journalists adopted in Munich in 1971 (known as the Munich Charter) is regarded as an authoritative set of standards, and secondly that the activities of Reporters Without Borders both resemble and defend the activities of journalists, RWB's various components therefore undertake, in the course of their work, to respect the following duties enshrined in the Munich Charter, namely:

- To respect the truth regardless of the consequence to oneself, because of the public's right to know the truth.
- To report only facts of which one knows the origin, to qualify them with the appropriate reservations if necessary, and to not suppress essential information or alter texts and documents.
- To respect privacy.
- Not to disclose the source of information obtained confidentially
- To rectify any published information that is found to be inaccurate.
- To refrain from plagiarism, calumny, slander, libel and unfounded accusations,
- To refrain from accepting any form of benefit in return for publishing or suppressing information.

- To never confuse the profession of journalist with that of ad salesman or propagandist and to refuse any direct or indirect orders from advertisers or donors.

Any failure to comply with this undertaking could damage Reporters Without Borders' interests and would be regarded as a serious breach of loyalty to RWB.

## **Transparency**

Reporters Without Borders undertakes to act transparently and to be open about its organizational structure, its mandate, its activities and its results, both internally and with the public, donors, sponsors, partner organizations, beneficiaries and any other interested party, while respecting the wish of anonymity of stakeholders.

RWB therefore undertakes to account for its activities and results at least once a year. To this end, it publishes an annual activity report describing its organizational structure, the goals it sets itself, the activities carried out, the results obtained, the sources of its funding, extracts from its financial report and an audit of its annual accounts carried out in accordance with the law by an independent and qualified accountant.

## **Partnerships and efficacy**

Reporters Without Borders endeavours to cooperate with national and regional organizations with similar ethical values and missions.

The governing bodies of RWB ensure that it has no links with organizations that could be implicated in practices that are illegal or violate the ethical principles it has set itself.

RWB tries to create long lasting partnerships with the organizations with which it cooperates in order to respond as effectively as possible to local needs and to achieve a transfer of skills to its partners.

## **Corruption**

Reporters Without Borders does not tolerate any act of corruption of any kind. It reminds its staff and any other person working for it or on its behalf that it is strictly forbidden to commit acts of corruption, either active or passive, direct or indirect, and whether benefitting public or private-sector actors.

RWB undertakes to denounce any activity of a member of the staff, an intern or a volunteer that would constitute an act of corruption punished by the law. RWB undertakes to treat such behaviour as a threat to RWB's interests and as a serious breach of loyalty to RWB.

RWB respects all international anti-corruption conventions and the anti-corruption laws in effect in the countries where it operates. When it visits these countries, it undertakes to respect these anti-corruption policies.

RWB does not, under any circumstances, have recourse to a third party to do what ethics or the law forbid it to do. RWB undertakes a methodical and well-researched selection process prior to any contractual relationship with a commercial partner.

## **Conflicts of interest**

Reporters Without Borders ensures that its full-time staff and other employees do not have any external links or commitments that could conflict with or undermine the mandate and principle of independence that RWB has set itself.

The staff of Reporters Without Borders, the members of its governing bodies, its voluntary workers and its correspondents must put its goals before their personal interests. They must ensure that their personal interests do not influence the impartial and objective exercise of their activities on behalf of RWB.

They must therefore refrain from using their position to obtain privileges, benefits or advantages for themselves or their relatives, friends or associates, or for other persons or organizations with whom they have political or business relationships. They must consequently abstain from taking part in any discussion or decision-making process on a question that could give rise to a conflict of interest.

Any failure to comply with this undertaking could be sanctioned and could be regarded as a serious breach of loyalty towards RWB and, more specifically, the contract of employment.

## **Gifts**

The signatories of this charter undertake not to accept any gift worth more than a given amount of money that they may be offered in connection with their RWB position or activities or their participation in an RWB project. This amount, which value is 70 euros on 1st September 2014, can be revised by the governing bodies of the organisation.

Any gift of a lesser value that might compromise their independence must also be declined.

Accepting invitations or compensation from any kind of entity is permissible as long as the goal is strictly professional and as long as it does not in any way influence the positions taken by the person invited or the positions of Reporters Without Borders as a whole.

Any presents, gratuities or invitations in any form whatsoever to a person for their personal enjoyment or for the enjoyment of their family or friends are regarded as gifts.

## **Respect for the environment**

Reporters Without Borders undertakes to have a responsible and respectful attitude towards the environment in everything it does, and especially in the day-to-day management of its activities.

## **Non-discrimination**

The internal functioning and external activities of Reporters Without Borders are based on the principle of impartiality. RWB prohibits discrimination in all of its internal and external activities.

In this regard, RWB respects cultural, religious, philosophical, social and sexual diversity among those who constitute its component parts.

In accordance with the principle of non-discrimination, no person may be eliminated from a recruitment process or access to an RWB internship, and no staff member or other person working for RWB may be punished, dismissed or discriminated against on the basis of origin, gender, customs, sexual orientation or identity, age, family situation or pregnancy, affiliation or non-affiliation to ethnic group, nation or race, political opinions, trade union activities, religious beliefs, physical appearance, surname, state of health or handicap.

In its activities, RWB refuses to defend news and information providers and media that incite hatred, violence or discrimination.

In all the activities it undertakes, Reporters Without Borders respects the sexual identity of its staff, and the principle of a person's sexual inviolability and tolerates no form sexual harassment. In this respect, it undertakes to adopt all necessary measures to prevent and punish such behaviour in accordance with the law, and urges victims to report such behaviour to the management.

## **Fund-raising**

Reporters Without Borders makes it a point of honour to respect ethical standards in its fund-raising.

It therefore undertakes to inform donors about its reasons for raising funds, the purpose for which they will be used, and the nature and mandate of those in charge of the fund-raising.

It makes a point of identifying itself, its activities and its needs in connection with each fund-raising initiative and ensuring that the use to which donations are put falls strictly within the framework of its mandate.

It undertakes to scrupulously respect the wishes of donors in the use, management and deployment of funds when they are donated for a specific purpose. When an appeal for donations for a specific cause is launched, Reporters Without Borders undertakes to establish a management plan for any donation shortfall or surplus and to announce this in its appeal. RWB also undertakes to inform donors about any change in the use of donations, and to seek their opinion.

Finally, RWB respects the right of donors to anonymity except in cases when the size of the donation could result in the principle of independence being questioned, and makes sure to use fund-raising methods that respect their right to privacy. It undertakes to neither use nor pass on the contact details of donors without their permission, and to delete information about them from its records if they so request.

All of these principles apply in the same terms to gifts in kind.

## **Work travel**

Reporters Without Borders personnel who are required to travel as part of their work must always act in RWB's interests.

A travel policy has been established.

Its goal is to reduce travel costs and the negative effects of travel on the environment.

## **Implementation of the principles**

RWB's secretary-general has an obligation to promote and monitor compliance with the principles in this charter under the supervision of its board members.

RWB's operational directors undertake to guarantee and facilitate the right of every member of the staff, or other employee or external person to report a breach of the ethical principles defined in this charter.

Any breach or suspected breach of this charter must be reported immediately to the secretary-general.

If the secretary-general is suspected of a breach, there is provision for reporting this to the board members. Reporters Without Borders undertakes to carry out regular evaluations of implementation of the charter.

## **Sanctions**

Any failure to comply with this charter is liable to result in sanctions. These could even include termination of the contract linking Reporters Without Borders with the person or entity responsible for the breach after a process in which they are given the opportunity to defend themselves.

Any breach of this charter that constitutes a violation of criminal law will be punished and referred to the competent authorities under the penal code provisions.