

Marat Mamadshoev: ethics in journalism

The ethical standards of journalism are – a set of rules that are voluntarily accepted by a journalist or editorial staff of any mass media. Ethical standards organically complement the quality standards for information that any self-respecting editorial office should have.

All these standards make it possible to convey to the consumer exactly the amount of socially significant information that they need, in order to get an idea about a particular issue. That is, journalists are trying to refuse to disseminate information that, **in their opinion**, does not have social significance.

For example, this may be information about the ethnic, religious, regional affiliation of the participants in the event and other aspects that are not directly related to the essence of the issue. However, this is only if the information does not matter in the context of the material.

For example, there is a recommendation not to provide unnecessary details about people who have committed certain crimes.

Some editorial offices do not even mention their names and surnames, but simply give the initials of suspects or criminals. Firstly, such information can cause moral harm to the relatives of these people, including their minor children. Secondly, these names and details do not provide any useful information to the reader. In this case, ethical standards allow people to better absorb information.

Public figures in the spotlight of the mass media

However, the above-mentioned restrictions do not work in

relation to public persons and their relatives. They are officials, politicians, public figures, etc.

In case, if information on a crime committed by a relative of public persons or by a themselves is confirmed, such information must be made public in the interest of the society.

In general, journalists should understand that all these rules require creative appliance. For example, in many codes of journalistic ethics there is a requirement not to incite interethnic or interfaith discord.

However, this requirement does not abolish the concept of "ethnic crime," which, unfortunately, is quite real. In such cases, talking about the national or other affiliation of the participants is justified.

In addition, the right of public people to privacy cannot be revoked. The margin of permissible is sometimes very thin and the choice is always yours. Prove to your audience that your approach is of social importance.

General and specifics of ethical codes

Codes of journalistic ethics have their own specifics in different countries. They consider the characteristics of the environment in which journalists work. For example, the Tajik Code of Journalists indicates the need to combat localism, and in the Balkans, journalists are warned of the danger of stirring sectarian division, etc.

That is, for a mono-ethnic country, these norms would be redundant.

Even the journalistic codes of different media in the same country are different.

For all the specifics of codes of journalistic ethics, there are several common ethical standards. In particular, the key

ones were formulated at consultative meetings of journalists held under the authority of UNESCO.

It speaks of the right of citizens to reliable information, respect for privacy and dignity, respect for universal values and diversity of cultures, the need to fight against wars and other troubles.

At the same time, in the ethical codes of the countries of Central Asia, these norms were creatively developed and detailed.

They contain the following:

- Materials must be reliable and impartial.
- Protect information sources.
- Draw a line between fact and opinion.
- Respect privacy.
- It is unacceptable to discriminate based on certain scent.
- Independence from commercial interests.
- Do not plagiarize.
- Correct errors publicly.

Ethics Above the Law!

It is important to understand that for the mass media, ethical standards take precedence over laws. For example, by law, a journalist is required in court to name the name of his/her anonymous source. However, many codes of ethics require that in some cases, journalist should not do so, even at the risk of going to jail.

At the same time, it is very important that the journalist knows the legislation that governs the media. For example, journalists, especially television workers, with the connivance of law enforcement agencies, often violate legal norms that protect children's rights, including international

ones. An infringement of the rights of those who cannot stand up for themselves is, of course, an ethical violation.

Codes of journalistic ethics – as a way to prevent abuse by the media

Of course, it is wrong to call the mass media – the fourth power. The real fourth power is public opinion, with which the media are in a complex dialectical relationship, mutually influencing each other. At the same time, it makes no sense to deny that the media and even ordinary journalists have some power. The media sector is very delicate, and for us it is better to engage in self-regulation, so as not to give officials with their selfish interests an opportunity to interfere in our professional affairs.

Additionally: International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism (UNESCO, 1983) – [link](#)

Code of Ethics for a Journalist of the Republic of Kazakhstan ([Code of Ethics for a Journalist of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#))

Code of Ethics for Journalist of Kyrgyzstan ([link](#))

Ethical Standards for Journalism in Tajikistan ([link](#))