

INSI

INTERNATIONAL
NEWS SAFETY
INSTITUTE

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JOURNALISM | SAFETY | RESPONSIBILITY | ACCOUNTABILITY



“This year’s conflict in Ukraine, where so many seasoned journalists have been killed and injured, sadly reminded us that experience, even when coupled with top-notch training and personal protective equipment, is not always enough to protect journalists thrust overnight into the hell of war.”

– Elena Cosentino, INSI director



Cover: A journalist runs as smoke rises behind after a bombardment in Bakhmut, eastern Ukraine. Photo © Bulent KILIC / AFP; This page: A journalist stands in a crater caused by a rocket outside the Pivdenoukrainsk nuclear plant, in Yuzhnoukrainsk, Ukraine. Photo © Genya SAVILOV / AFP

Introduction

As INSI prepares to celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2023, there is no doubt in my mind that over the past two decades of activity promoting high safety standards in the news media industry our members have affected a sea change.

Many colleagues will still remember when staying safe in a war zone was mostly down to the journalists themselves. “He’s very experienced” or “She’s seen it all before” used to pretty much sum up many news organisations’ relationship with risk ownership, with an old flak jacket and ballistic helmet thrown in for good measure.

For some outlets around the world, regrettably, this may still be the case. This is certainly not so for INSI members, who, by fully owning their teams’ risk in the field and providing them with the training, tools and back-up they need, are setting impressive standards of risk management within their own organisations and across the wider news media industry.

Today, every news organisation that makes up the INSI network of more than 50 of the world’s leading news organisations has, depending on its size and needs, at least one senior role, often several, with direct involvement in and responsibility for editorial safety. They also have access to a host of very specialised and highly skilled media safety professionals to turn to for risk advice and on-the-ground support.

It should not be any other way, no matter the price tag. With our activities at INSI we hope to help spread this mantra ever further and wider in our industry.

This year’s conflict in Ukraine, where so many seasoned journalists have been killed and injured, sadly reminded us that experience, even when coupled with top-notch training and personal protective equipment (PPE), is not always enough to protect journalists and media workers thrust overnight into the hell of war. While there is no such thing as a risk-free frontline assignment, risk and

its context are both specific and dynamic. The news industry’s approach to safety should be the same.

The war in Ukraine is again a case in point. INSI members were quick to adapt after realising that the skills and experiences that so many of their own staff had acquired through decades of frontline reporting across the Middle East and through their regular safety training were often different from the set of skills and military nous that were needed to stay alive along Ukraine’s frontlines. The environment, the language, the threats and the weapons there were totally different from Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq. The balance of power was also reversed. For the first time in decades, international journalists found themselves covering a major conflict from the weaker side of the invaded, rather than from that of the stronger invader.

In response to this new and dangerous scenario, everything had to be reviewed. Training courses were adapted and updated and new safety protocols and practices were discussed and implemented. Also, very importantly, our members shared information, experiences, dilemmas and possible solutions with one another in real time, to better support their international and local staff both physically and psychologically.

Many of INSI’s members are fortunate to work with talented and experienced safety advisors who are invaluable in supporting the best of news journalism. They include trailblazing professionals such as Mark Grant who, between top jobs at CNN and Sky News, pursued a doctorate in security risk management with a ground-breaking thesis on risk management in support of frontline reporting. Mark’s seminal project is the first work of this kind and scope and we are delighted to publish it on our website.

This year has proved that news safety management is emerging as a fully-fledged discipline and, as we work together to continue improving standards, the lessons learned by news teams in the field often at great personal cost should become a life-saving body of reference for all.

– Elena Cosentino, INSI director

Members' activities

We published our annual *Killing the Messenger* report in January, a summary of journalist deaths around the world in 2021. Mexico topped the list as the most dangerous country for journalists for the third year running while Afghanistan maintained its place as the second deadliest country, recording the largest loss of life ever among Afghan female journalists.

Online meetings and expert briefings

INSI began meeting online in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic made in-person gatherings impossible. But it's been in 2022 that the full merit of connecting at short-notice and in real-time with peers around the globe has become glaringly apparent. In the first six months of the year alone, INSI members came together in virtual meeting rooms at least 40 times.

The majority of those meetings were about Ukraine and saw top editorial and safety management from all of INSI's news organisations participating in information

sharing sessions on a daily basis. The sharing of safety and logistical information began in early January, well before the invasion, as teams already on the ground advised colleagues who had yet to deploy. When Russia invaded on 24 February and the conflict raged, members continued to generously share their expertise and potentially life-saving information, despite the pressure they were working under and the mounting casualties. Six journalists were killed in the first month of the war alone, making clear the importance of news organisations cooperating on safety via INSI or other media safety networks.

Members told us our masterclasses and briefings with experts on mitigating risks on the frontline and the broader strategic implications of the war were also highly useful to keep their training and practices up-to-date and their teams safe. As concern grew over the possibility of chemical or nuclear weapons deployment, as well as the safety of Ukraine's



Journalists take shelter during a drone attack in Kyiv. Photo © Sergei SUPINSKY / AFP



A journalist is escorted to safety after being hit by a stone during a protest by factory workers in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo © Richard PIERRIN / AFP

nuclear plants, we organised expert sessions on the risk and mitigation options in the event of an attack.

INSI's year wasn't dominated by Ukraine alone.

Twice the prospect of a crisis involving China brought members together at short notice. In July, following the controversial visit to Taiwan by the US House Speaker, INSI organised a brainstorming session to discuss safety implications for news organisations and their coverage plans. Again, in November, the extraordinary anti-lockdown protests erupting across mainland China got members seeking out each other's views and experience. Also, with an exceptional number of wildfires burning in Europe over the summer, an in-depth session with an international wildfire specialist and members from North America and Australia quickly provided practical and detailed expertise to colleagues without prior experience covering fires.

Not all meetings were reactive, however. Some events helped members plan their deployments

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in advance, such as the first anniversary of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan. An expert briefing on the factors and forces shaping risk in the country was well-attended.

Despite the success of the online meetings, we also welcomed the opportunity to get together in person again. In November, INSI members gathered in London to take stock of the lessons of the previous three years and to rekindle the camaraderie that distinguishes any news environment.



Smoke rises in the Ukrainian city of Lviv following a Russian missile strike. Photo © Aleksey FILIPPOV / AFP

Notes, exclusive advisories and surveys

A key part of our work at INSI is to make sure that our members are kept constantly updated on developments on the ground and the experiences of their colleagues. For that purpose, we produce and distribute confidential materials in the form of notes or advisories, which members can use as part of their teams' preparation for an assignment. Whether it is notes from the Ukraine meetings, first-person accounts from correspondents on the issues they

encountered in China, Qatar or Afghanistan, the high opening rates of our materials is a testament to the strong engagement of our network.

INSI is determined to respond to the changing and diverse needs of the news organisations that make up our network. Members' surveys, from tracking devices to future deployments also provided us with useful insights for planning future activities.



Wildfires raging through wetlands in islands in the Paraná Delta in Argentina. Photo © Juan MABROMATA / AFP



Journalists react to a sound grenade as they cover clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces in the West Bank town of Hebron.
Photo © Hazem BADER / AFP

Information exchange groups

Being able to connect members in real-time on any major story via our information exchange groups is now standard practice for INSI. The confidential groups increased in number and popularity in 2022, with numerous members sharing invaluable information with the INSI network. Sports departments and legal teams have also joined the exchanges on an ad-hoc basis, adding their knowledge to the network.

The Ukraine group started running before the February 24 invasion and, after six months, it already

counted several hundreds of exchanges which, once collated, offers what's possibly the first shared blueprint of the complex process of managing the coverage of a major conflict.

From reporting from Russia, from the short-lived unrest in Kazakhstan or the Beijing Winter Olympics, other topical groups have allowed members to swap information on logistics and safety. Elsewhere, the INSI team answered hundreds of individual member queries.

New members

The start of the Ukraine war saw an unprecedented number of applications for membership. Joining INSI in 2022 were CTV News, the largest commercial broadcaster in Canada; TIME Magazine; the Bavarian public broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR);

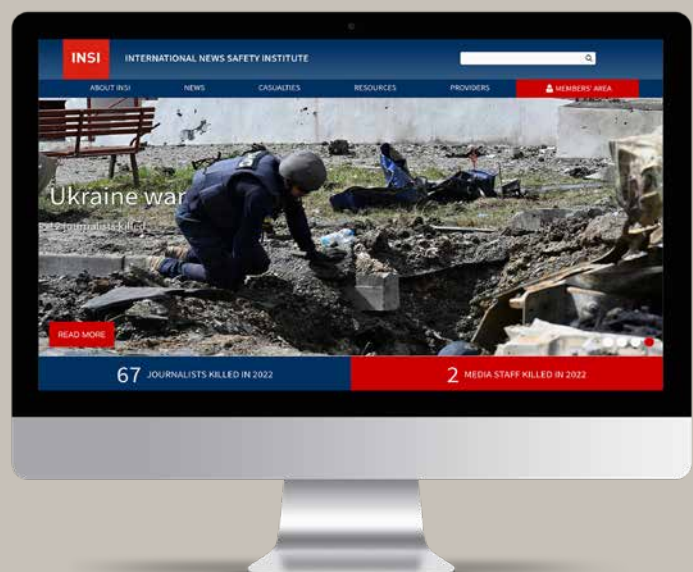
the largest commercial broadcaster in Norway, TV2; and the largest news magazine in Asia, Nikkei Asia. We are delighted to welcome these colleagues and thankful for the great contributions they have already made.

New website launched

Designed by Mary Schrider and brought to life by the creative agency Worldspan and INSI project assistant Tommy Hodgson, the site features a new and secure Members' Area offering a wealth of content for our members, from live global security alerts to advisories and specialist briefings. INSI's new public facing site continues to keep careful record of the deaths of each of our journalist colleagues in the course of their job, which we collate and publish every January in our Killing the Messenger report.

The new site provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the work and learnings of the most experienced professionals in our industry.

www.newssafety.org





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A journalist and protesters run from tear gas fired by Israeli security forces during a demonstration by Palestinians and Israeli peace activists.
Photo © Jaafar ASHTIYEH / AFP