

Behavior of journalists in crisis situations

Analysis: Journalists in crisis regions of Ukraine

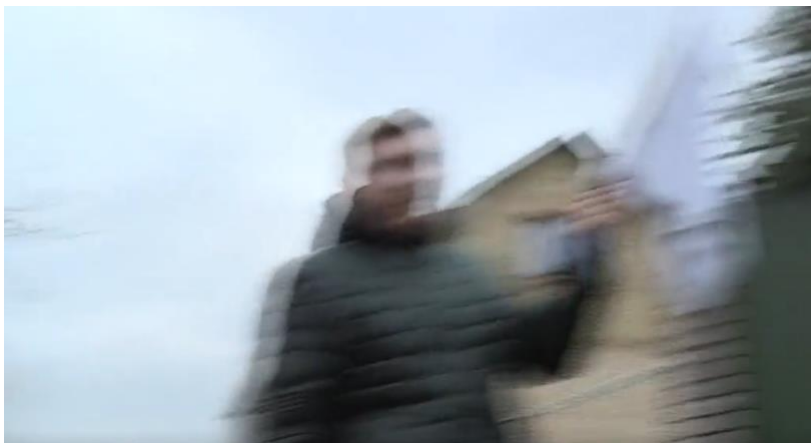
Case study II: Alaraby TV / Iprin Kyiv

The team consisting of cameraman, reporter and driver went to the frontline region of Iprin, which has been heavily contested for days, on March 5-6. Of the original 6 Alaraby TV staff in Kiev, 4 were evacuated, but C.+ D. stayed voluntarily to continue reporting.

Upon entering the contested region, the team was caught between the fronts and integrated into the firefight. At this point, the vehicle was not marked or otherwise identifiable as a press vehicle. (Source: March 10, <https://mobile.twitter.com/demircihabip>)



Probably due to a hit on the passenger side between the windshield and roof, the vehicle stopped in a high fenced side alley. All three individuals exited the vehicle and made ready for further reporting on foot. While doing so, C was wearing vest and helmet with press markings, D. probably also. The driver, in an olive green jacket without press markings, but at times with a white flag in his hand.



During this phase, the team was not directly fired upon. I could not find any other footage of the team fighting, so I assume that the "seek shelter with the population" phase followed.

Background: Convention Concerning the Laws and Customs of Land Warfare [Hague Land Warfare Regulations], October 18, 1907.

Article 32: A parliamentarian is a person who is authorized by one of the belligerents to enter into negotiations with the other and shows himself with the white flag. He is entitled to inviolability, as are the trumpeter, bugler or drummer, flag bearer and interpreter accompanying him.

Article 23. Apart from the prohibitions established by special treaties, the following shall be prohibited in particular: ... f) the misuse of the parliamentary flag, the national flag or the military insignia or uniform of the enemy and the special insignia of the Geneva Convention.

Evaluation

The team drove specifically into the most heavily contested area at the time. Combat in urban terrain, as well as the use of artillery, is extremely dangerous. Since the vehicle was only hit by one shot, which probably could not have been fired more than 100 meters away due to the built-up area, I assume that this was an accidental hit. The vehicle was not recognizable as a press vehicle. The pictures with the meaningful large press inscription on the hood were made only later. At the time the white flag was used, there was no other attack on the team. The white flag could not have had any effect here, because it legally represents a parliamentary flag, common in this war, but also to mark a surrender. In a surrender, one moves openly, without weapons directly towards the enemy and goes into captivity. This was certainly not the intention of this team.

Conclusion

This team has sought and found danger. Under abusive protection of the parliamentary flag, they have attempted to continue their reporting. An opponent who observes such behavior will probably also assume an abusive use of the press marking. *I do not evaluate the attack on this team as an attack on media or journalists!*

Reporting from Ukraine is WAR REPORTING, not reporting on demonstrations or political unrest in a country.

Take Home Message

1. the white flag is not for the protection of journalists!
2. **everyone** in the team as well as the vehicles from all sides should have a sufficiently large lettering PRESS, also in the national language.
2. self-protection goes before coverage, driving between the front is just unwise.

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