

## Information and Support for Journalists 2009

Confidence Building Measures (CBM) is a unique programme for UNHCR aimed at addressing the effects of prolonged separation between the Saharan refugees in the camps near Tindouf, Algeria, and their families in Western Sahara. UNHCR has been facilitating communication and contact with refugees and their relatives through the exchange of family visits between the two locations, and providing free telephone services so refugees in the camps may contact family members in the Territory.

In accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and in close cooperation with Morocco and the Polisario, and Algeria as a host country, the CBM programme focuses exclusively on the humanitarian needs of the Saharans and is, therefore, not political in nature. UNHCR also works closely with United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which provides logistical support on a reimbursable basis, including aircraft and ground transportation for the programme.

It is necessary for journalists wishing to work with UNHCR/CBM to receive the authorization of all concerned parties and are required to:

- Contact UNHCR Western Sahara in writing stating their name, employer, credentials, and objectives.  
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- Request permission in writing from the parties and from the host country, and submit those permission letters to **UNHCR/CBM**

Morocco: Mr El Arabi Mrabet, Rabat – Governor, Ministry of Interior, Office of the  
Coordination for MINURSO and *UNHCR/CBM*  
Tel: +212 537 726 163

Polisario: Mr Mohamed Khadad, Rabouni – Coordinator for the Polisario with  
MINURSO and *UNHCR/CBM*  
Tel: +213 661 553 077

Algeria: Mr. Lazhar Soualem, Algiers - Director for Human Rights, Social  
Development and International Cultural, Scientific and Technical Affairs  
Tel: +213 21 504 545 ext. 3628

## Code of Conduct for Media

In general, media personnel should:

- Respect each and every person and his/her dignity and not discriminate against anyone on account of their race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance and social status.
- Respect the individual's right to privacy and avoid sensationalistic and unjustified disclosure of one's privacy to the public. Intrusion into individual's privacy may be permissible if there is an overriding public interest. Media should be aware that gathering and publishing information and photographs may cause harm to individuals not accustomed to media and public attention.
- Take into consideration that no one is guilty until legally found so, when reporting on judicial matters. Media should exercise caution in publishing names and photographs of perpetrators, victims and their relatives when reporting on tragedies and pre-trial proceedings.
- Be tactful when gathering and reporting information, publishing photographs and transmitting statements on children and minors, those affected by misfortune or family tragedy, the physically or mentally disabled and others having severe handicaps or illnesses.

In particular, when dealing with information regarding asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants, media personnel should:

- Adopt an appropriate terminology which reflects national and international law so as to provide readers and viewers with the greatest adherence to the truth as regards all events which are the subject of media coverage, avoiding the use of inappropriate terms.
- Avoid spreading inaccurate, simplified or distorted information as regards asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants. Indeed, the negative effects of superficial or unprofessional behaviour may result in unwarranted apprehension among the public.
- Safeguard those asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who choose to speak with the media by adopting solutions as regards their identity and image so as to ensure that they are not identifiable. Asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants who are identifiable – as well as the latter's relatives – may face reprisals on the part of the authorities in their country of origin, of non-state entities or of criminal organizations. Moreover, individuals who belong to a different socio-cultural context where the press plays a limited role, may not be aware of global media dynamics and thus may not be able to foresee all the consequences of their decision to appear in the media.
- Whenever possible, consult experts and organizations with a specific expertise on the subject so as to provide the public with information which is clear, comprehensive and also analyses the underlying roots of phenomena.