

Tip Sheet: Exiled Newsrooms: Managing Teams And Investigations

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Why we are in exile

- The Taliban takeover and their war on women and media forced us to create Zan Times in exile in 2022.
- Our mission: document human rights violations under Taliban rule and create a space where Afghan women journalists can author their own stories.

How we manage a dispersed newsroom across time zones

- Weekly all-team meeting at a time accessible to everyone.
- WhatsApp/Signal group for urgent updates; email and Google Docs for structured collaboration.
- Constant informal check-ins for safety, morale, and support.

How we maintain investigative rigor

- We are training Afghan women journalists online in Afghanistan; they understand our ethics and methods.
- We have a list of vetted journalists across more than 20 provinces acting as our initial local verifiers.
- Every fact must be confirmed by **at least two independent sources** before publication.
- When evidence is thin due to fear or restrictions, we speak with activists, elders, community members, or additional reporters on the ground.
- This network is how we maintain accuracy and trust from afar.

Practical methods that sustain our work

- Fully digital workflow, no physical newsroom needed.
- Editors review every story in shared Google Docs;
- Regular check-ins with reporters inside Afghanistan for security purposes
- Peer review: minimum two editors per investigative draft.
- One-on-one mentorship between exiled editors and on-ground reporters.

- Verification logs for major stories; no claim stands without two independent confirmations.
- Weekly virtual newsroom meeting to troubleshoot, support, and stay united.

Supporting reporters facing trauma

- Each journalist has a dedicated editor they trust and can confide in.
- We offer training on trauma-informed reporting and constant reminders that their wellbeing matters more than any story.
- Offering presence, listening, and solidarity, especially when they face grief or danger.
- What keeps them going: knowing they belong to a community that stands *with* them, not behind them.