

Prepare Before Travel Checklist

For journalists traveling to the U.S.

Journalists, whether freelance or employed, should take proactive steps to mitigate the risks posed by increased border control. Consider the following measures:

Complete a thorough risk assessment

- Consider how your immigration status, country of origin or destination, and prior travel history put you at risk of being stopped.
- Review the data being carried on devices and see if any data could put you or others at risk.
- Identify and keep a list of emergency contacts, such as trusted legal advisors and press freedom groups.
- Develop check-in procedures with agreed-upon key contacts. Ensure they know your travel plans and can provide support if needed. Keep emergency contact information on paper.

Prepare for increased screening

- Ensure that passports do not expire within the next six months.
- Carry valid visas or an Electronic System for Travel Authorization.
- Plan in advance what you will do and say should a border guard stop you or ask you to unlock your phone or laptop.

Know your rights

- Know your legal rights regarding access to or the confiscation of your devices. Be aware that failure to comply with a request from a border guard could result in devices being seized and, depending on the journalist's immigration status, delays or refusal of entry.
- Educate yourself on border security protocols and learn about your rights when encountering law enforcement at border crossings.

Explore available resources

- Journalists working for a media outlet should speak to their employer and see what IT support and best practice guidance are offered regarding crossing the border with devices.
- Consult with a lawyer or press freedom organization to understand your rights and any legal risks associated with your reporting.

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