

Guidelines for survivors of right-wing, racist or anti-Semitic violence when dealing with the press

Dealing with the press can sometimes be challenging and even very stressful. The purpose of this guide is to provide support and an overview of your rights so that you can better protect yourself and those around you and share your stories in a way that feels right for you.

1. Basic considerations before contacting the press

In general: Your well-being always comes first. You have the right to say no, to control your statements and to seek professional support if necessary. Don't let yourself be pressurised into anything and decide for yourself what is right for you.

- **Decide for yourself:** You are not obliged to speak to the press and have the right to privacy. Whether and how you wish to make a statement is entirely your personal decision.
- **Protect yourself:** Media coverage can be emotionally stressful. It is best to get support, e.g. from trusted persons, counsellors or specialised survivor support centres ([VBRG](#), [Weißer Ring](#), [ReachOut Berlin](#) and many more). You can find an overview on our website.
- **Set boundaries:** Think in advance about what information you want to share and what you don't want to share (e.g. personal details, family matters, etc.).

2. Rights during and after the report

In Germany, there are recognised journalistic standards that the press must adhere to. These include due diligence (reports must be accurate, fact-based and carefully researched), respect for human dignity, protection of rights of personality, source verification and the protection of survivors and those affected by violent crimes.

In addition, private individuals and those affected by reporting have various rights to protect themselves against false, offensive or unauthorised publications:

- **General right of personality** (Article 2 (1) in conjunction with Art. 1 (1) GG, German Basic Law): Gives the individual the right to self-expression and protects against defamation of character, libel and slander as well as unauthorised publication of private information.
- **Right to informational self-determination:** Part of the general right of personality. Grants the individual the right to determine the disclosure and use of their personal data. Personal data may not be published without consent.
- **Right to one's own image** (§ 22 KUG): Part of the general right of personality. Photos or videos of persons may only be published with their consent. Exceptions: Images from the field of contemporary history or from public events.
- **Right to one's own word:** Part of the general right of personality. Extends to the words spoken, written or otherwise expressed by a person and includes the power to decide whether the content should be made available to the public. Provides protection against attribution of statements not made.
- **Right of reply** (§§ 10, 11 of the state press laws): Anyone who has been portrayed incorrectly or one-sidedly can demand that their own view be published in the same medium (so-called "counterstatement").
- **Injunctive relief** (§ 1004 BGB in conjunction with § 823 BGB): If there is a threat of reporting that is false or damaging to your reputation, an action for injunctive relief can be filed.

- **Damages and compensation for pain and suffering** (§ 823 BGB): In the event of an unauthorised infringement of the above-mentioned rights of personality, there is a right to compensation. If you are affected by an infringement, you can contact the Press Council or a state media authority directly and seek legal assistance.

3. Preparation for an interview or statement

- **Find out about the context:** Ask what the article or report is about, how your story is going to be embedded in it and which other people are featured. Also find out about the medium in which the article appears and the journalist responsible. This can also provide valuable indications of the direction the reporting will take.
- **Three points to focus on:** Think about three points in advance that are particularly important to you and write them down. You can also take a notebook or piece of paper with you – you can “hold on to” these very well during an interview.
- **Take someone with you:** You don’t have to deal with press appointments alone. If necessary, organise a companion in advance whom you feel safe with or contact professional survivor support services.

4. Preliminary discussion

- **Demand transparency:** Have the questions sent to you in advance or ask for a preliminary discussion. Responsible journalists should be prepared to offer one of these two options. In the course of this, clarify the format of the interview (in writing, by telephone, in person, online). You can express your own preferences and request that the interview takes place on your terms.
- **Ask the other person to be prepared:** If you have already publicly spoken about your perspective several times, ask the journalist to read up on this in advance. Even if you would like to share your perspective, you are not obliged to repeat things several times – especially if topics challenge you emotionally. Further information for representatives of the press on dealing with survivors of right-wing violence can be found on our website.
- **Right to authorisation:** You have the right to read through the interview before publication and to make changes (delete/reword things etc.). Nothing may be published without your authorisation. Ask in the preliminary discussion: “When will I receive the content for review?” and send the revised version back to the person responsible as quickly as possible (max. 2-3 days).
- **Translation:** You do not have to conduct the interview in German if you do not feel able to do so. The press is obliged to provide you with an interpreter if requested. You should also clarify this in a preliminary discussion.

5. During contact with the press

- **Keep calm and stay in control:** Do not allow yourself to be put under pressure. You have the option of cancelling or restarting an interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable with a statement. Speak openly if you want to formulate something differently or repeat your answer. Take the time you need and don’t let yourself be rushed. The journalist must give you this time.
- **Stay on topic:** Steer the conversation towards the aspects that are important to you and don’t allow yourself to be pressurised into making statements that you don’t want to make.
- **Protect your privacy:** Do not disclose any information that could jeopardise your safety or that of those close to you. You do not have to provide any information about your place of residence or that of your family/friends. You can also ask for your names to be anonymised. Stay within your limits: If certain topics make you too emotional, you can say so before or during the interview or simply remain silent on questions. You can also take breaks or cancel the interview. If in doubt, consult an accompanying person.
- **Refer to supporters if necessary:** If you do not wish to speak yourself, you can refer to lawyers, advisors or organisations who can speak on your behalf.

6. Dealing with potential risks

- **Always pay attention to your safety:** Do not pass on any information that could be used against you. If necessary, seek professional advice on how you can best protect yourself. Your safety always comes first.
- **Emotional stress:** Increased media attention can be accompanied by psychological stress and right-wing hostility. Therefore, take good care of yourself, set clear boundaries, talk to people you trust or seek professional help if necessary.

7. Support options

- **Lawyers** can provide you with legal advice and enforce your rights against the press in the event of an infringement.
- **Counselling centres:** There are various national and regional organisations that specialise in counselling those affected by right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic violence and – if desired – can also support you with interviews and media enquiries. You can find an overview on our website.
- **Sensitised journalist networks:** In addition, there are networks and platforms that work closely with civil society organisations and survivors to ensure well-founded and respectful reporting (e.g. [NSU-Watch](#), [Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen](#), [Correctiv](#), [Belltower.News](#) and many more).
- **Training courses:** It is also possible to prepare for contact with the press in special seminars, workshops or coaching sessions. Corresponding offers can be found here, for example: [Media Workshop](#), [Deutsche Presseakademie](#).

8. Alternatives to the press

If you don't want to go directly to the media, there are other ways to make your story visible:

- **Support from organisations:** Many organisations document right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic violence and help to publicise this anonymously or in a protected setting ([Amadeu Antonio Foundation](#), [ReachOut Berlin](#), [VBRG](#), [Opferperspektive Brandenburg](#) and many more)
- **Social Media:** If you have the strength and energy, you can also share your story via your own social media channels and keep control of the presentation yourself. However, switch off the comment function if necessary to protect yourself from hate speech. Further information on protection against hate speech can be found on [the website](#) of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.