

Session Report: Strengthening Trust Through Ethical Science Journalism

Event: Science Journalism Forum (SJF25)

Date: October 28, 2025

Language: Arabic

Duration: 30 minutes

Session Title: Strengthening Trust Through Ethical Science Journalism

Speaker: Abdulrahman Abotaleb, Editor-in-Chief, Yemen Science Network

Co-speaker (online interaction): Vera Novais, WFSJ

Session Overview

This Arabic-language session was part of the Science Journalism Forum 2025 (SJF25) and focused on exploring how the Guiding Principles for Journalists Covering Science — developed by the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) with support from the Kavli Foundation — can help strengthen public trust in science journalism.

The presentation covered the WFSJ project 'Establishing the Boundaries of Ethics in Science Journalism', highlighting how ethical standards contribute to transparency, accountability, and credibility in science communication.

Session Content

The 30-minute presentation included the following sections:

1. Introduction to the WFSJ ethics project and its background.
2. Overview of the project timeline and development process (2019–2024).
3. Presentation of key findings from the 2022 global Perspective report, with a special focus on the MENA region.
4. Discussion of selected principles from the Guiding Principles document, emphasizing their role in building and sustaining public trust in science journalism.

Interactive Segment

Due to the limited session time, audience engagement was conducted via Mentimeter, allowing participants to contribute anonymously and efficiently. A total of 15 participants joined from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and other Arab countries.

1. Which principle is hardest to apply?

Participants voted on four selected principles from the document.

Results:

- Financial independence: 5 votes
- Correcting errors after publication: 3 votes
- Protection of sources' privacy: 1 vote
- Personal safety: 1 vote

2. Why are these principles difficult to apply?

Key reasons mentioned:

- *Safety concerns*: fear of consequences, limited freedom of expression.
- *Editorial constraints*: restrictive newsroom policies, lack of editorial independence.
- *Financial issues*: low pay, lack of financial recognition, and limited funding opportunities.

3. Ranking principles by their impact on public trust

Participants ranked four ethical principles according to their importance in strengthening public trust:

1. Transparency and avoidance of conflicts of interest
2. Independency
3. Accountability and correction of errors
4. Accuracy and rigour

4. Comments and suggestions

Participants expressed appreciation for the initiative and proposed:

- Discussing real examples of science reporting for collective analysis.
- Translating the Guiding Principles into additional languages, including Arabic.
- Holding more regional sessions and workshops on ethics in science journalism.

Conclusion

The session concluded by reiterating that the Guiding Principles document is a living framework open to continuous improvement. Participants were informed that WFSJ will organize a follow-up workshop in Arabic to further refine the principles and expand regional engagement.

The audience feedback reflected strong enthusiasm for the topic, confirming that ethical journalism remains central to restoring and maintaining public trust in science — the core theme of SJF25.

Alignment with SJF25 Theme

This session directly addressed SJF25's overarching theme, 'Strengthening Trust Through Ethical Science Journalism,' by demonstrating how ethical standards — such as transparency, independence, and accountability — serve as foundations for credibility in the face of misinformation, limited resources, and external pressures on journalists.