

Survivor Spokesperson Best Practices for Traditional Media Relations

The Brave Movement recognises the inherent risks survivor spokespeople assume when agreeing to speak or interview with traditional media relations personnel e.g. journalists of newspapers, broadcast channels and established online news websites (blogs and social media should concern separate guidelines). While traditional news media coverage can have a powerful impact in terms of establishing reputation credibility and exponentially advancing advocacy initiatives, it poses unique challenges and liabilities, including:

- Lack of content control and recourse - once interviewed and/or published, it is typically impossible to remove or edit statements
- Personal retraumatisation heightened via interactions with “bad faith” or unprofessional behaviour
- Exposure to extended vulnerability to harassment, both online and offline
- Reputational and legal attacks may be recategorised with more severe consequences

These risks can lead to significant and serious harm, and the Brave Movement acknowledges an obligation to adequately inform potential media spokespeople about them, and provide recommendations for how to maintain optimal safety and wellbeing should they agree to engage.

Recommendations for potential survivor spokespeople

- 1. Spokespeople must go through a media relations training session, guided by a communications expert prior to engaging with the press.**
 - a. During this training session, survivors will be fully prepared to engage with the press in a professional capacity, for example, understanding “on the record/off the record”, recognising bad faith questions, learning tactics to circumvent hostile interview techniques, reviewing Brave Movement redlines, etc.
- 2. Survivor spokespeople speaking formally on behalf of the Brave Movement must be provided with approved key messaging, verified by at least two members of the relevant teams, as well as redlines.**
 - a. This is primarily to ensure that nothing is quoted with factual inaccuracies or that may cross organisational boundaries.
- 3. Whenever possible, survivor spokespeople speaking formally on behalf of the Brave Movement should take interviews accompanied by a media relations professional and a trauma specialist.**
 - a. The former is needed to provide professional support and intervention, particularly to flag and redirect when a journalist crosses a line. The latter is to ensure the mental wellness and safety of the survivor, to stay aware of sensitivities and signs of triggering/ activation relevant to traumatic experiences, and address them in real time to avoid, de-escalate and minimise harm.

- 4. All media opportunities should be fully vetted by a media professional prior to agreement, to avoid bad faith or hostile media interactions.**
 - a. Opportunities should also be reviewed in light of approved Brave Movement media relations strategy, and regional leadership and subject matter experts concerned e.g. any publication with readership in Africa should consult the Brave Africa campaign strategy lead to ensure alignment.
- 5. Whenever possible, slow down the decision-making process before agreeing to speak with the press; never make a spontaneous decision without first carefully considering the risks.**
 - a. While press deadlines can be exceptionally fast and opportunities may arise spontaneously, Brave must not use this as an excuse for allowing an accelerated choice by survivors. Potential spokespeople must be given adequate time to fully comprehend and consider the personal and professional risks.