Strategy Paper for the Frontline Freelance Register

2017 -2019

1.   **Introduction**

1.1   This document provides details of the FFR Strategy for the next two years. The paper defines the objectives, priorities and activities of FFR.

2.   **Background and Mandate**

2.1   Frontline Freelance Register is a representative body and self-help group for freelance journalists created by the Frontline Club in 2013.   Its core objective is to promote the welfare and enhance the safety and security of freelance journalists who take physical risks in their work.

2.2   In a world where staff jobs and fully paid foreign assignments are increasingly scarce, foreign and war reporting is dominated by freelancers who are either local to those countries in strife and/or others that travel to cover them. Many of the freelancers are deeply committed professionals doing outstanding work. At the same time, many of them lack the institutional support and the financial means to adequately manage the challenges of operating in dangerous environments in the long term. They also lack organised representation, often leaving them at the mercy of powerful media groups. FFR strives to help freelancers by providing them with a forum, a representative body and a critical mass to face some of these challenges. FFR works to ensure its members observe responsible news gathering standards consistent with industry-established safety standards. FFR aims to build a community of independent journalists, establishing a voice for them by working with journalist support organisations, industry figures and those with an interest in safety and security to support its members and champion safety and professional practice.

2.3   FFR was launched 4 years ago not only to address this lack of representation but also to promote a high standard of safe practice and ethical conduct among freelance journalists and in turn to provide them with the opportunity to distinguish their professionalism from amateur practitioners.

2.4   FFR currently represents over 700 international freelance journalists working in a second country. In the next two years the Frontline Club will be establishing local country chapters for local freelance journalists working inside their own country. Local journalists will be able to join individual country chapters and together with FFR they will be part of a network advocating side by side for the welfare of freelance journalists worldwide. The country chapters will give local freelancers their own voice and allow them to identify themselves as bona fide professional

journalists.

2.5   There are a number of organisations that provide resources for conflict freelancers in some way or another and although all of them do good work, none have the mandate to represent or speak on behalf of freelance journalists. More importantly, FFR is the only organisation that has the endorsement from its members to advocate on their behalf for change in the way the news media industry works with freelance journalists. For example, no organisation apart from FFR states that freelance journalists, who deliver 90% of conflict news, deserve to be paid reasonably for their work as failing to do so not only affects their productivity but also severely undermines their safety.

3.   Governance

3.1   FFR is run by a Director for its day to day activities and a Board of Representatives ('the board') that oversees the organisation's activities.

3.2   The board is responsible for the strategic direction of FFR. The board approves key decisions and works collectively to secure the success of FFR in achieving its objectives. Although board representatives are active participants of FFR activities, the board delegates the overall implementation of FFR's strategy and its activities to the Director, who is responsible for leading FFR and advising and guiding the board on its key decisions.

3.3   The board is comprised of 7 representatives who are elected every year through open elections of its membership. The board meets (virtually) once a month. A quorum for transaction of business at any meeting of the board shall consist of a majority vote at the meeting, present in person or by proxy.

3.4   The board elects the position of Chair and Secretary. The principal role of the Chair is to manage and to provide leadership to the board and act as the direct liaison between the board and the Director and to serve as a focal point for governance issues. The role of Secretary is to support the Director in management and administrative duties. Other powers may be delegated by the board from time to time.

3.5   The board of Trustees of the Frontline Club Charitable Trust is ultimately legally and fiscally

responsible for the operations of FFR.

4.   Objective

4.1   FFR has the following 3 core objectives:

    (1)   Provide freelance journalists with a forum and representative body with a critical mass to lobby for change for the better treatment of freelance journalists.

    (2)   Support the physical and mental well-being of actively working freelance journalists who take physical risks in their work.

    (3)   Promote responsible newsgathering by freelance journalists which is consistent with industry established safety and ethical standards.

4.2   FFR has an internal and external strategic focus to achieve its 3 objectives. Externally, FFR seeks to position itself as the leading authority on all issues within its mandate. It will seek to achieve this by raising its profile through public campaigns and targeted advocacy calling for better treatment of freelance journalists and for an accurate understanding of their role in journalism. FFR will raise it external profile further by demonstrating that freelancers can be part of the solution to industry-wide issues. Internally, FFR promotes the highest standard of journalism and safe practice among its membership and will work towards embedding this standard properly at the centre of freelance journalism culture.

5.   External Strategy Activities

5.1   <u>Campaigning</u>

    5.1.1 FFR will campaign to raise its public profile and the profile of local and international freelance journalists. The core message will centre around the theme of "Do you know where your news comes from" echoing previous ethical consumerism campaigns. The targets of the campaign are the news media industry and consumers.

    5.1.2 The campaign's objective is to raise awareness on 2 issues:

(1) The indispensable contribution freelance journalists make to newsgathering and their role in bringing under or difficult to report on issues to the public attention.

(2) The welfare and safety challenges experienced by freelance journalists.

5.1.3 A public campaign highlighting the central role of freelancers as well as the exploitative work and safety practices prevalent in the news industry will confirm FFR as the leading organisation concerning these issues. A raised public profile will not only leverage FFR's advocacy work (see paragraph 5.2) within the industry, it will also assist in a greater understanding of FFR's work to its current members and the increased visibility will attract more freelancers to join it.

5.1.4 FFR will consult with experts in designing it campaign strategies and activities. These will include (non-exhaustive list) placing articles in news industry publications, utilising social media and online platforms, a strong presence at journalism festivals, participation in panels at relevant conferences and meetings etc.

5.2   Advocacy

5.2.1 In parallel to an awareness raising public campaign, FFR will also be engaging in direct advocacy with media industry, governmental, intergovernmental and press freedom organisations to pressure for change on practices which negatively impact the safety and welfare of freelance journalists. FFR's advocacy will be supported by its expertise and knowledge of freelance issues derived from regularly canvassing its membership for their opinions. Issues that FFR will advocate for include demanding fair and timely pay, access to safety information, training and insurance etc.

5.2.2 FFR was instrumental in the creation of the "A Culture of Safety" (ACOS) Alliance - an industry wide freelance protection standard coordination mechanism. The Alliance has over 90 signatories, including AFP, USA Today, Vice and BBC. ACOS safety standards are based on FFR's codes. As part of its advocacy strategy, FFR will continue to take a leading role in initiatives that support its mandate and furthermore utilise ACOS's platform to for its main advocacy strategy targeting international media organisations. In particular, FFR will lead ACOS's initiative on the Adherence to Principles Protocol which monitors the compliance of organisations to the safety and welfare standards they have agreed to abide to as signatories.   FFR will further work with ACOS to increase the number of signatories to their Safety Principles and it will work with other partners in initiatives that focus on

changing negative practices towards the safety and welfare of freelance journalists worldwide.

5.2.3 FFR will map out the main complaints freelancers have working with media clients and choose strategic cases for its direct advocacy vis-a-vis media organisations or other relevant bodies who can effect change for the better treatment of freelance journalists.

5.3   Setting Standards for the Industry

5.3.1 FFR's external strategy includes demonstrating FFR's positive contribution towards finding solutions to industry wide problems that affect freelancers negatively. For example: freelancers taking safety training courses are not guaranteed that the course they have completed will be recognised by various media clients. FFR has produced a safety curriculum which sets a standard to encourage industry-wide recognition of safety training standards.

6.   Internal Strategy

6.1   Member Engagement

6.1.1 At its core, FFR is an organisation founded and run by freelancers for freelancers. FFR's strength is its mandate to represent and advocate on their behalf. Therefore it is crucial that FFR remains relevant and responsive to the needs of its members and to achieve this it must continually encourage greater membership engagement in its work. Member engagement is also crucial to secure FFR's long term future especially when FFR introduces membership fees, it has to demonstrate its value and relevance to its members.

6.1.2 FFR will seek to increase member engagement through the following activities (non-exhaustive) :
(1) deliver tangible membership benefits such as press cards/letters of accreditation/access to safety equipment, training and security information.
(2) FFR members are not only based in hubs close to the regions they cover (Erbil, Bangkok, Istanbul, Athens and Nairobi), but also in their home countries. FFR has a sizeable number of members in Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Canada, UK and the US. FFR will support members to organise their own activities such as meetups, safety training,

seminars etc wherever they are based. This includes identifying focal members in each locality to lead in organising events (social, training, seminars etc) that are relevant to their location or work.

(3) Engage the involvement of members in FFR activities from writing blogs on FFR's behalf or taking over FFR's social media accounts to running their own initiatives.

(4) Develop partnerships with organisations that provide benefits to members such as Blink (work opportunities) or CPJ (emergency response programme).

(5) Increase the amount and frequency of communication with members including producing more newsletters, relevant content for FFR's website and greater social media presence.

6.2   Expanding FFR's network

6.2.1 FFR represents the needs of international freelance journalists working in a country other than their own and whose work involves taking physical risks. FFR aims to connect local freelancers into the wider global movement that acknowledges their contribution to newsgathering and to work together to advocate for change for the better treatment of all freelancers worldwide. FFR will work to achieve this by partnering with the local country chapters that are being established through the Frontline Club Charitable Trust. The local chapters will be run by local coordinators and will have their own independence to run their organisation in the best interest of their own members. However, for increased impact and reach FFR and the local chapters will team together for certain activities such as public campaigning and direct advocacy.

6.2.2   FFR members are based worldwide and many live in regional hubs such as Istanbul Athens, Greece, Erbil, Nairobi and Bangkok. Additionally FFR has a number of members based in certain countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain and France as well as UK, USA and Canada. FFR's administration will seek to decentralise its outreach work and support its members in the hubs and in countries where they are sizeable in number to become involved in FFR's campaigning and advocacy activities.

6.3   Professionalisation

6.3.1 Membership to FFR allows freelance journalists to identify themselves as professional journalists who take their safety seriously in their work as by joining the register they publicly subscribe to a code of practice including ethics and conduct. FFR will support its members to meet professional minimum standards, to work more safely and productively.

6.3.2 In order to do this, FFR will collaborate with partners to provide affordable access to the following:

- Hostile environment safety training
- Trauma support and rest and respite programmes
- Relevant and timely safety information (such as the safety advice clinics and Infoshare platforms)
- Digital security training
- Resources on ethics in freelance journalism

6.3.3 In addition, FFR will ran in-house projects to support its members to maintain their professional skills and knowledge and keep them up to date, these will include

- Establishing a peer support network
- Running a mentorship programme
- Providing legal compliance resource
- Designing a first aid training the trainers programme