

GEOASOOL

**GEOASOOL**  
VISION  
FOR A BETTER  
MEDIA  
FOR A BETTER  
**PAKISTAN**

<http://www.geo.tv/asool>

**GEO ASOOL**

**C) TeamGeo Ethical Journalism  
Handbook**

**WORKING DRAFT  
Version: 2.0**

**Dated: 14 August, 2012**

## **DISCLAIMER**

This Code of Conduct mainly represents the aspirations and high standards that Geo management and Geo team wish to uphold professionally. Being an internal standard yardstick, this Code or any part of it, may never be used as a basis to pursue a claim against any company of Geo Group, any member of Geo management or any journalist working in Geo Group, if such claim is otherwise not maintainable under general provisions of law. Adoption of this Code of Conduct will neither increase nor decrease the legal obligations of Geo Group companies and members of Geo team under the laws of Pakistan.

## **D) Employee Handbook<sup>i</sup>**

### **Disclaimer**

These guidelines generally apply to all members of the news and editorial departments; whose work directly affects the content of the channel and even includes those on leaves of absence. Examples given in this document are illustrative for better understanding. Any similarity with actual events is purely coincidental.

### **1. ETHICAL JOURNALISM**

#### **Introduction, Scope & Purpose**

- i. The scope of these guidelines includes: anchors, newscasters, hosts, reporters, editors, editorial writers, photographers, picture editors, art directors, artists, designers, graphics editors and researchers. This group of professional journalists is what this text means by “TeamGEO members” or “staff members.”
- ii. GEO believes beyond question that its staff shares the values these guidelines are intended to protect. In the past GEO has resolved differences of view over applying these values amiably through discussion, almost without exception. GEO has every reason to believe that pattern will continue. Nevertheless, the organization views any deliberate violation of these guidelines as a serious offense that may lead to disciplinary action; potentially including dismissal, subject to the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement.
- iii. Our fundamental purpose is to protect the impartiality and neutrality of GEO and the integrity of its content and brand. In many instances, merely applying that purpose with common sense will point to the ethical course. Sometimes the answer is self-evident: simply asking oneself whether a course of action might damage the GEO’s reputation is often enough to gauge whether the action is appropriate.
- iv. Every staff member is expected to read this document carefully and to think about how it might apply to his or her duties. A lack of familiarity with its provisions cannot excuse a violation; to the contrary, it makes the violation worse. The provisions presented here can offer only broad principles and some examples. Our world changes constantly, sometimes dramatically. No written document could anticipate every possibility. Thus we expect staff members to consult their supervisors and Director News and or Executive Director News if they have any doubts about any particular situation or opportunity covered by this document. In most cases an exchange of e-mails should suffice.

- v. Thus this handbook is not an exhaustive compilation of all situations that may give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest as well as standards that define our editorial policy.
- vi. GEO reserves the right to modify and expand the guidelines from time to time, as appropriate.

The authority to interpret and apply these guidelines is vested in department heads and ranking editors, most notably in Director News and or Executive Director News.

They may delegate that duty to their ranking assistants, but they remain responsible for decisions made under their official authority.

### **a) Third Party/Part time Engagements**

GEO freely acknowledges that outside appearances can enhance the reputation of its stories and programs and serve GEO's brand and organizational interests. Nevertheless, no TeamGEO member may appear before an outside group if the appearance could reasonably create an actual or apparent conflict of interest or undermine public trust in GEO's impartiality. This will be a serious violation as GEO's credibility will be adversely affected.

No TeamGEO member who takes part in a broadcast, Webcast, public forum or panel discussion may write or edit news stories about that event.

Speeches and other outside endeavors by TeamGEO members, paid or unpaid, should not imply that they carry the endorsement of GEO (unless they do). To the contrary, the TeamGEO member should gracefully remind the audience that the views expressed are his or her own. Outside commitments should not interfere with the speaker's responsibilities inside GEO.

Speeches, tours, seminars, writing assignments and beepers- contributions of any kind are discouraged due to potential conflict of interest as well as time management constraints.

Thus no TeamGEO member should agree to a third party part time assignment schedule without approval from a Director News and CEO/MD. Direct supervisor/Director News must agree first based on past performance as well as conflict of interest as well as future workload and time management capacity and then make formal recommendation to CEO/MD.

### **b) Collaboration and Testimonials**

TeamGEO members may not collaborate in ventures involving individuals or organizations that figure or are likely to figure in coverage they provide, edit, and package or supervise. Among other things, this prohibition applies to collaborating in writing books, pamphlets, reports, scripts, scores or any other material and in making photographs or creating artwork of any sort.

Except in reviews or columns aired in GEO/Jang Group or on its Web site or appropriately voiced in authorized public appearances, TeamGEO members may not offer endorsements, testimonials or promotional blurbs for books, films, television programs or any other programs, products or ventures.

### **c) Voting, Campaigns and Public Issues**

No newsroom or editorial employee may do anything that damages GEO's reputation for strict neutrality in reporting on politics and government. In particular, no one may wear campaign buttons or display any other sign of political partisanship while on the job.

Media persons have no place on the playing fields of politics. Staff members are entitled to vote, but they must do nothing that might raise questions about their professional neutrality or that of GEO. In particular, they may not campaign for, demonstrate for, or endorse candidates, ballot causes or efforts to enact legislation. They may not wear campaign buttons or themselves display any other insignia of partisan politics.

No TeamGEO member may seek public office anywhere. Seeking or serving in public office plainly violates the professional detachment expected of a journalist. It poses a risk of having the TeamGEO member's political views imputed to GEO, and it can sow a suspicion of favoritism in GEO's political coverage when one of its staff is an active participant.

TeamGEO members may not march or rally in support of public causes or movements, sign ads taking a position on public issues, or lend their name to campaigns, benefit dinners or similar events if doing so might reasonably raise doubts about their ability or GEO's ability to function as neutral observers in covering the news. TeamGEO members must keep in mind that neighbors and other observers commonly see them as representatives of GEO.

### **d) Representing GEO**

TeamGEO members may appear from time to time on radio and television programs or write newspaper articles devoted to public affairs, but they should avoid expressing views that go beyond what they would be allowed to say in GEO. Opinion writers and commentators enjoy more leeway than others in speaking publicly because their business is expressing opinions. GEO nevertheless expects them to consider carefully the forums in which they appear and to protect the standards and impartiality of the GEO as a whole. As a general rule immediate supervisor must have prior knowledge and give consent to this activity.

Depending on circumstances, the TeamGEO member may have to excuse himself or herself from certain coverage or even move to a job unrelated to the activities in question.

GEO's good name does not belong to any of us. No one has a right to expropriate it for private purposes. TeamGEO members may not use GEO identification cards for purposes not

connected with GEO employment. Cards may not be used to obtain special treatment or advantage from governmental, commercial or other organizations (except when the card is required for a benefit available to all GEO Company employees by virtue of its foundation's charitable relationships, such as free admission to the Museums).

TeamGEO members may not use company stationery, business cards, forms or other materials for any purpose except the business of the GEO.

TeamGEO members must not disclose confidential information about the operations, policies or plans of GEO or its corporate affiliates. Department heads may authorize other TeamGEO members to comment publicly on policies or plans within the TeamGEO members' areas of responsibility and expertise. If staff members are approached by other media or other outsiders to discuss GEO content or policy, they should refer the questioners to the President of the Network, anyone delegated by him or the CEO, or the corporate communications department—who are the only authorities to represent GEO formally on its policy.

TeamGEO members are free to discuss their own activities in public, provided their comments do not create an impression that they lack journalistic impartiality or speak for GEO. None of these restrictions should be interpreted as barring a TeamGEO member from responding openly and honestly to any reasonable inquiry from a viewer about that TeamGEO member's work.

If a viewer asks for a correction, that request should be passed promptly to a supervisor/feedback@geo.tv. If the request threatens legal action or appears to be from a lawyer representing a client, the complaint should be promptly referred to the legal department through a department head.

#### **e) Disclosure of Possible Conflicts**

Any TeamGEO member who sees a potential for conflict or a threat to the network's reputation in the activities of spouse, friends or relatives must discuss the situation with his or her supervising editor. In some cases, disclosure is enough. But if GEO considers the problem serious, the TeamGEO member may have to withdraw from certain coverage. Sometimes an assignment may have to be modified or a beat changed. In a few instances, a staff member may have to move to a different department — from business and financial news, say, to the culture desk — to avoid the appearance of conflict.

Although this policy necessarily imposes restraints, GEO has no wish to intrude upon the private lives of its staff members and their families. Nothing in this document seeks to prohibit a companion, spouse or other relative of a TeamGEO member from taking part in any political, financial, commercial, religious or civic activity. GEO understands that friends and relatives of its staff have every right to pursue full and active lives, personally and professionally. If restrictions are necessary, they fall on GEO employee. But any attempt to

disguise a TeamGEO member's participation in prohibited activity by using a relative's name or any other alias constitutes a violation.

#### **f) Personal Benefit Ahead of Readers and Viewers**

Though TeamGEO members must necessarily accept certain limits on their freedom to invest, this policy leaves a broad range of investments open to them. Any TeamGEO member, regardless of assignment, is free to own diversified mutual funds, money market funds and other diversified investments that the reporter or editor cannot control. No TeamGEO member may own stock or have any other financial interest in a company, enterprise or industry that figures or is likely to figure in coverage that he or she provides, edits, packages or supervises regularly. TeamGEO members may not buy or sell securities or make other investments in anticipation of forthcoming stories that originate with GEO. In general, TeamGEO members must refrain from acting on such information before public disclosure.

#### **g) Personal Relations with Sources**

Relationships with sources require the utmost in sound judgment and self discipline to prevent the fact or appearance of partiality. Cultivating sources is an essential skill, often practiced most effectively in informal settings outside of normal business hours. Yet staff members, especially those assigned to beats, must be sensitive that personal relationships with news sources can erode into favoritism, in fact or appearance. And conversely staff members must be aware that sources are eager to win our good will for reasons of their own.

#### **h) Accepting Hospitality/Gifts from Sources**

GEO pays the expenses when its representatives entertain news sources (including government officials) or travel to cover them. In some business situations, it may be unavoidable to accept a meal paid by a news source. Whenever practical, however, the reporter should suggest dining where GEO can pay. Staff members may not accept free or discounted transportation and lodging except where special circumstances give us little or no choice. This however should be cleared with supervisor before hand.

If any TeamGeo member accepts a gift or travel offer from a source the TeamGeo member will declare this to his/her departmental head and HR and seek advice on appropriate action. Geo reserves the right to ask TeamGeo member not to accept the gift/travel request and to return it politely with a policy letter (see below for templates).



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Sample letter declining a gift

Dear XXXXXXXXX,

Your recent gift came as a pleasant surprise. I appreciate your thinking of me.

But the gift puts me in an awkward position. The GEO Network bars its reporters and editors from accepting anything of value from the people or groups they cover. GEO does not want to risk the perception that it will cover a subject more thoroughly or skew its coverage of controversial subjects because interested parties have expressed appreciation for its efforts.

So I must return your gift with thanks. I hope you understand our position, and I thank you for your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,

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Sample letter declining an unsolicited award

Dear XXXXXXXXX,

Your recent letter informing me that I'd been selected to receive an award from XXXXXXXXX came as a pleasant surprise. I appreciate the sentiment behind the award.

But your decision puts me in an awkward position. GEO Network bars its reporters and editors from accepting awards conferred by groups that have an interest in the subjects covered by the award recipients. GEO does not want to risk the perception that it will cover a subject more thoroughly or skew its coverage of controversial subjects because interested parties have applauded its efforts.

So I must decline your award with thanks. I hope you and your colleagues understand our position.

Thank you again for your kind words.

Sincerely,

## 2. TeamGEO Social Media Guide

Every day, people discuss, debate and embrace Geo News and our brands in hundreds of online conversations on Social Media. These are conversations supported by online tools.

Social Media unlike the broadcast medium's target audience is not just a demographic of people, anymore. The people who use social media are real people who use it and their social interactions. To connect with them you need to understand them.









**Remember:** *Relationships are more powerful than marketing.*

**Aim for a target:** *Are you going mostly for awareness? Influence? Buzz?*

We must recognize the vital importance of participating in these online conversations and are committed to ensuring that we participate in online social media the right way.

**These Online Social Media Principles have been developed to help empower our concerned departments and our colleagues, to participate in this new frontier of marketing and communications, represent our Company, and share the optimistic and positive spirits of our company and brands.**

To achieve sustainable growth online, our shared goals and values individually and collectively must guide us:

- a) To encourage tolerance in society 
- b) To create an enabling environment for thought and change 
- c) To promote "Public Interest" as ultimately the viewer is our employer 
- d) Geo Pakistan. To make our slogan Geo Pakistan meaningful. 
- e) To speak the truth with accuracy 
- f) To be impartial through diversity of opinion 
- g) To bring the world to Pakistan and Pakistan to the world 
- h) To value feedback and accountability 
- i) To encourage positive activism

These **Online Social Media Principles** are intended to outline how these values should be demonstrated in the online social media space and to guide your participation in this area, both when you are participating personally, as well as when you are acting on behalf of the Company.

The same rules that apply to our messaging and communications in traditional media still apply in the online social media space; simply because the development and implementation of an online social media program can be fast, easy, and inexpensive doesn't mean that different rules apply.

By leveraging our collective genius and the courage to shape a better future, combined with our passion, diversity, quality and accountable integrity, it is critical that **we always remember who we are (a news power house) and what our role is in the social community is.**

The best advice is to approach online worlds in the same way we do the physical one – by using **sound judgment** and **common sense**, by adhering to the Company's **values**, and by following the **Code of Business Conduct** and all other applicable policies.

### **Our Company in the Online Social Media Community**

Note that there's a big difference in speaking "on behalf of the Company" and speaking "about" the Company.

- **Adhere to the Code of Business Conduct and other applicable policies.** All Company associates, from the Chairman to every intern, are subject to the Company's Code of Business Conduct in every public setting.
- **You are responsible for your actions.** Anything you post that can potentially tarnish the Company's image will ultimately be your responsibility. We do encourage you to participate in the online social media space, but urge you to do so properly, exercising sound judgment and common sense.
- **Be a "pathfinder" for compliments and criticism.** Even if you are not an official online spokesperson for the Company, you are one of our most vital assets for monitoring the social media landscape. If you come across positive or negative remarks about the Company or its brands online that you believe are important, consider sharing them by forwarding them to [feedback@geo.tv](mailto:feedback@geo.tv).
- **Let the subject matter experts respond to negative posts.** You may come across negative or disparaging posts about the Company or its brands, or see third parties trying to spark negative conversations. Unless you are a certified online spokesperson, avoid the temptation to react yourself. Pass the post(s) along to our official in-market spokespersons who are trained to address such comments, at [feedback@geo.tv](mailto:feedback@geo.tv).
- **Be conscious when mixing your business and personal lives.** Online, your personal and business personas are likely to intersect. The Company respects the free speech rights of all of its associates, but you must remember that customers, colleagues and supervisors often have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind when publishing information online that can be seen by more than friends and family, and know that information originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on.

Remember NEVER to disclose non-public information of the Company (including confidential information), and be aware that taking public positions online that are counter to the Company's interests might cause conflict.

- **Protection** of our consumers' privacy. This means that we should be conscientious regarding any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) that we collect, including how we collect, store, use, or share that PII, all of which should be done pursuant to applicable Privacy Policies, laws and IT policies.
- **Respect** of copyrights, trademarks, rights of publicity, and other third-party rights in the online social media space, including with regard to user-generated content (UGC).
- **Responsibility** in our use of technology. We will not use or align the Company with any organizations or Web sites that deploy the use of excessive tracking software, adware, malware or spyware.
- **Utilization** of best practices, listening to the online community, and compliance with applicable regulations to ensure that these Online Social Media Principles remain current and reflect the most up- to-date and appropriate standards of behavior.

### **Our Expectations for Online Interactivity**

Just as with traditional media, we have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to effectively manage the Company's reputation online and to selectively engage and participate in the thousands of online conversations that mention us every day.

**Be Certified in the Social Media Certification Program.** All associates who wish to officially represent the Company online must complete the Social Media Certification Program prior to beginning or continuing these activities.

**Follow our Code of Business Conduct and all other Company policies.** Our Code of Business Conduct provides the foundation for these Online Social Media Principles.

**Be mindful that you are representing the Company.** As a Company representative, it is important that your posts convey the same positive, optimistic spirit that the Company instills in all of its communications. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures; how you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects on you – it is a direct reflection on the Company.

**Fully disclose your affiliation with the Company.** The Company requires all associates who are communicating on behalf of the Company to always disclose their name and their affiliation. It is never acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive people.

**Keep records.** Because online conversations are often fleeting and immediate, it is important for you to keep track of them when you're officially representing the Company.

**When in doubt, do not post.** Associates are personally responsible for their words and actions, wherever they are. As online spokespeople or behalf of, you must ensure that your posts are completely accurate and not misleading, and that they do not reveal non-public information of the Company. Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, DO NOT POST IT.

**Give credit where credit is due and don't violate others' rights.** DO NOT claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are using another party's content, make certain that they are credited for it in your post and that they approve of you utilizing their content. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rightsholder(s).

**Be responsible to your work.** The Company understands that associates engage in online social media activities at work for legitimate purposes and that these activities may be helpful for Company affairs. However, the Company encourages all associates to exercise sound judgment and common sense to prevent online social media sites from becoming a distraction at work.

**Remember that your local posts can have global significance.** The way that you answer an online question might be accurate in some parts of the world, but inaccurate (or even illegal) in others. Keep that "world view" in mind when you are participating in online conversations.

**Know that the Internet is permanent.** Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you "remove/delete" it later or attempt to make it anonymous. If your complete thought, along with its context, cannot be squeezed into a character-restricted space (such as Twitter), provide a link to an online space where the message can be expressed completely and accurately.

#### **Quick Recap:**

There should be a clear division between "Geo News staff" pages and "personal" pages.

On Social Networking sites, you should be mindful that the information you disclose does not bring the "Geo News staff" into disrepute.

For example, editorial staff should not indicate their political allegiance. Non-editorial staff should make their role clear if they wish to engage in political activity.

It may not be appropriate to share Geo News-related photographs, comments and videos. Offensive comment about Geo News staff colleagues may be deemed a disciplinary offence.

Geo News staff are free to edit online encyclopedias (such as *Wikipedia*) but should be transparent about doing so.

If you are using Geo News in your usernames or twitter handles, your account will be considered as an official account.

All official accounts need to be approved by your supervisor and PD/New Media desk.  
All output on these accounts needs to be consistent with Geo News policy.

Posting content which is not from Geo News requires approval (this includes articles and videos from other websites).

### 3. TeamGeo Safety Guide

#### Points to ensure Personal Safety while working in high risk environment

1. The fundamental principle that governs news coverage in a conflict zone is: '**NO STORY IS WORTH YOUR LIFE**'. So, pull out before it's too late.
2. Staying in touch means staying alive. So your Executive producer/Bureau Chief/shift in charge should always be aware of your movements in a conflict zone.
3. The Executive Producer/Bureau chief /Shift Incharge are also expected to carry out the risk assessment before deploying the crew in a hostile zone.
4. In case of trouble Executive Producer/Bureau Chief/shift in charge is expected to coordinate with the emergency services/hospitals.
5. Make sure the team of reporters/photographers/cameraman being deployed has the basic knowhow/ training in reporting from a conflict zone.
6. The vehicle/DSNG they are traveling in should have the necessary safety gear (bullet-proof jackets etc) and a proper first aid/trauma kit.
7. At least one member of the crew should have the basic knowledge of life saving techniques.
8. The colour of the bullet-proof jacket/helmet should be different from that of the security forces operating in the area.
9. During civil disturbance/riots the journalists should be dressed up in a manner that they are not confused for members of one of the conflicting parties.
10. Geo News will not take beepers of Reporters or Photo/Video Journalist from the conflict areas unless they are wearing proper kit (Bulletproof Jacket).
11. As tempers often run high during civil disturbance, the reporter/photographer should never hesitate to identify themselves by shouting '**PRESS**' or '**JOURNALIST**' but try and avoid arguing with either of the parties (rioters/police).
12. The field reporters, tv crew's vehicle/DSNG should have a directory of all nearby hospitals/police stations.
13. At least one member of the team should be trained and senior enough to **DECIDE** on the spot the **RIGHT TIME TO ABANDON THE COVERAGE** and move to a safer place.

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<sup>i</sup> Much of this document, including whole paragraphs, have been derived from The New York Times and BBC Journalism Handbooks.