



SECURELEB

**SECURELEB DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
(SDD)**

Before You Go

**Field Preparation Guide
for Media & NGO Team s**

By Ali Abdallah

Field Awareness & Movement Strategy Specialist

Silent Security. Local Precision. Trusted Presence.

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Before You Go Field Preparation Guide for Media & NGO Teams

Your essential checklist for preparing with clarity, confidence, and readiness.

Before heading into a story or mission in a sensitive zone, take a moment to prepare. Whether you're a journalist on a lead or an NGO worker in the field, good preparation is your first line of defense. Even experienced professionals can find themselves exposed or sent home empty-handed without proper planning. This guide will help you avoid that and keep you steady when conditions change.

Don't do it alone. Make sure your team "fixer, driver, security advisor" is involved in the planning. Their coordination is key to a smooth and safe operation.

Here's what you should lock down before starting.

This Guide Covers:

- Secure Access & Approvals
- Check Your Local Sources
- Prepare Local Engagement Ahead of Time
- Draft a Field-Ready Proposal
- Plan Your Route — and Your Backup
- Scan for Medical Options
- Keep Your Communication Simple
- Know the Conditions
- Pack What You Need — and Nothing More

Step 1: Secure Access & Approvals

- Before you reach a location, make sure you're actually allowed to be there.
- Some areas require formal access "others need the right phone call made ahead of time"
- If you're entering a zone that needs clearance, get it early — not the night before.
- Make sure your fixer has confirmed access, not just "thinks it's fine."
- Inform the local authorities in advance — this is not optional.
- Know who to call if someone stops you or asks questions.

Tip: Your fixer should handle most of this — but you need to be briefed so you don't walk into a situation blind.

Step 2: Check Your Local Sources

- Don't plan a trip based only on headlines or old maps — the ground changes fast, and each area has its own rhythm.
- Talk to someone you trust locally:
 - What's the general vibe in that area?
 - Has anything shifted recently — more presence, tension, or unusual quiet?
 - Any recent incidents, unofficial roadblocks, or growing sensitivities?

Tip: Your fixer or security advisor should always confirm local dynamics before any movement. One quick call can save you a serious mistake.

Step 3: Prepare Local Engagement Ahead of Time

- Never assume people will be ready to talk just because you show up with a mic or camera.
- Identify potential interviewees or community contacts.
- Reach out and confirm their comfort, willingness, and timing.
- Clearly explain your topic or story in a respectful, direct way.

Tip: A good fixer isn't just a translator — they manage trust. If you wait until you're on-site to figure it out, chances are you'll leave empty-handed.

Step 4: Draft a Field-Ready Proposal

- Before heading out, put your plan in writing — not just for approvals, but for clarity.
- Talk to someone you trust locally:
What should it include?
 - Your main objective — why are you going?
 - The area you're covering — and why now?
 - Estimated time on site, plus your entry and exit timing.
 - Mode of transportation and who's with you.
 - Primary and alternate routes.

Step 5: Plan Your Route — and Your Backup

- Don't just pick the fastest way — pick the smartest way.
- Think in layers: road conditions, checkpoints, visibility, and possible delays.
- Where you're going, how long you'll stay, and how you're getting back.
- Timing — avoid tense hours, large gatherings, or unclear road situations.
- Always have a backup road in case something blocks or complicates the main one.
- Try to finish your field work before dark. Things feel different after sunset.

Tip: Review your route with your fixer or advisor, they'll spot what maps don't show..

Step 6: Scan for Medical Options

- You never want to use it — but you always want to know where it is.
- Mark hospitals or clinics along your road. Note their names, exact locations, and how long it takes to reach them.
- Make sure at least one person on your team knows basic first aid.
- If you're going into areas far from main towns, ask your fixer about any known private doctors, medical contacts, or small clinics nearby.

Step 7: Keep Your Communication Simple

- You don't need five apps and two phones — just keep it clean and clear.
- Use one main app for backup comms if needed (Signal, WhatsApp, etc.).
- Let your fixer know before you move — even short distances.
- If you need to go live, let your fixer know first and only do it from a stable location.
- Turn off location-sharing features you're not using.

Tip: Plan your comms setup with your fixer before heading out — what to use, and when.

Step 8: Check the Situation on the Ground

- Before you head out, don't just check the road — check the conditions.
- Ask your fixer or local contact about the electricity situation.
- Check if mobile signal is weak or blocked in that area.
- Know if water access is limited — especially in hot zones.
- Make sure your vehicle suits the trip and road conditions — a sedan may work for city routes, but mountain or rural areas often require an SUV.
- Check the vehicle the day before — fuel, tires, brakes, battery, spare tire, and route knowledge for the driver.

Step 9: Pack What You Need — and Nothing More.

- What you carry says a lot in the field. Keep it smart, light, and low-profile — but make sure it's enough in case you get delayed or stuck.
- Bring only what you'll really use — but don't under-pack.
- Keep your ID, press card, and access permits together in one place where you can reach easily.
- Pack enough water, snacks, and something to keep your energy steady.
- Power gear: charged power banks, a 12V-to-220V inverter, rechargeable lamps, field days don't follow schedules.
- PPE (helmet, vest, med kit) isn't optional in sensitive areas.

Tip: Check your bag with your fixer before leaving. They'll spot anything that might be unnecessary or cause trouble at checkpoints.

Until We Meet Again

"Fieldwork can be unpredictable, but with the right preparation and support, you can face any challenge with confidence. Remember, the key to success is in the details—secure your access, engage with local resources, and always plan ahead. Stay safe, stay aware, and let us be there when you need us the most."

SECURELEB DEVELOPMENT DIVISION (SDD)

Field Awareness • Movement Strategy • Operational Discipline

About the Author

Ali Abdallah is a Field Awareness & Movement Strategy Specialist with over a decade of operational experience supporting journalists, humanitarian actors, and professionals operating in sensitive environments across Lebanon.

His work focuses on situational clarity, movement logic, human terrain awareness, and decision-making under uncertainty.

*About **SecureLeb Development Division (SDD)***

SecureLeb Development Division offers practical field-awareness training and advisory support for media teams, NGOs, expatriates, and professionals operating in dynamic or complex environments.

SDD materials are built on real-world experience and designed for quick understanding, calm decision-making, and safe field practice.

For Professional Inquiries

Email: Ali.Abdallah@secureleb.com

Website: www.secureleb.com

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