OWEN Holdaway caught an ISIS sniper’s bullet hitting his friend’s chest on video, recorded at close quarters. Happily his friend survived and Holdaway thought his clip might be viral gold dust.

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video from 2015, and the guidelines agreed with the NUJ in 2007 — and are now asking the NUJ to help improve these.

We in the NUJ also have to educate the public, Natasha concluded, on the need for high-quality journalism — which means safety and security for photographers and others.

Nigel recounted covering a demo in Champs-Élysées in central Paris in December: almost immediately after arriving he was hit by a “flash ball” and wounded in the abdomen. He saw “10 or 20 injured” on that particular day. It was a typical day among the 22 consecutive Saturdays to date that had seen gilets jaunes protests.

As precautions, he wears a helmet, knee pads and a gas mask. As a journalist, “you’re targeted by police, targeted by gilets jaunes in an argumentative way” — then there’s a “third force,” the “casseurs” (literally people who break stuff) who are only there for the riot.

Photographers tend to go around in groups for protection. Some have the word “Press” visible on them; some don’t and “I choose not to.” Journalists “need to discern who is who, to protect yourself.” Also, “let people know where you’re going.” Have a duplicate copy of your press card in case the original is lost or snatched from you in the confusion. Take lemon juice for tear gas, and food and water for when you’re “kettled” by police.

What support if any do freelancers covering such conflicts get from their clients? “I don’t think very much,” says Nigel, but “I’m getting a lot of good support form the NUJ... and sister unions in other countries.

He mentioned a group action by a lawyer representing 40 journalists who’ve been injured.

And it’s just photographers who are at risk. Nigel recounted one English-speaking journalist who arrived late for a Marine Le Pen far-right rally and started taking shorthand. She was escorted away after the crowd thought she was writing in Arabic.

Guy has covered numerous demos and made 13 trips to Afghanistan, but it was in Switzerland covering the G8 demonstrations where he was badly injured by a “flash bang” grenade fired by police. It took a chunk out of his leg. Nine years later, with the NUJ’s help, he won a £39k payout from the police force that injured him, which he describes as his “best day rate” ever.

His tips: don’t block protesters when they need to escape the police. Don’t feel pressure to get “that picture” they’re all after, if the water cannon is coming. Demos are different from proper civil unrest, such as that which followed the shooting of Mark Duggan in 2011. The rules completely change — at least seven colleagues got turned over, luckily because police didn’t declare it a full-blown riot, their kit was insured.

The right “absolutely hate our guts.” UKIP rallies, are full of middle-aged football folk who are “well-tuned to public order law”: don’t hang around them at night time. In Dover in 2017 Kelvin Williams was beaten with a metal pole by neo-nazis and nearly killed. He now has three metal plates in his arm.

Pennie described the system of “marking” of journalists covering the weekly demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian Territories, whereby photographers tend to reconnoitre ahead of a major event, and befriend staff in local bars to offer shelter in an emergency. From the audience Julio Etchart, Guy Quinton, Guy Smallman and Nigel Dickinson on the panel

Before he profited, however, a news aggregator stole his shot and broadcast it to the world. He was initially offered just £50 for his work — but, after the NUJ intervened, he was paid £6500.

His is one of the cases highlighted in the freelance sector’s new recruitment video. You can watch it at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1904recr.html

Freelance organiser Pamela Morton explained the purpose of the film: “We know that there are thousands of freelancers who do not benefit from NUJ membership. We hope this video will bring our work to wider attention and encourage more to join.” She asks you to share the package on social media.

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Right: Owen Holdaway
Image © Tim Dawson

£6k payout for stolen work

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Right: Owen Holdaway
Image © Tim Dawson

Pennie described the system of “marking” of journalists covering the
weekly demonstrations in the occupied Palestinian Territories, whereby a reporter is shot in the same place with a rubber coated steel bullet on consecutive weeks. Her Palestinian colleagues take this as warning of worse to follow and stay away from the demonstrations until the army units are changed.

Pennie’s practical tips are always to reconnoitre ahead of a major event, and befriend staff in local bars or restaurants — who may be willing to offer shelter in an emergency.

More recently when working around Parliament Square during the Brexit rallies she has observed that police seem quite frightened.

From the audience Julio Etchart confirmed that covering the right is getting worse: it’s quite a scary environment and their stews are part and parcel of it, declaring “you’re fake news mate.” When he was trying to get out of a demo after being pushed around, police told him “You shouldn’t be there in the first place.”

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with reporting by Matt Salusbury