

The logo for Article 19, featuring the text "ARTICLE 19" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "ARTICLE" is in red and "19" is in white. The text is set against a white, torn-paper-like background that is angled upwards to the right.

ARTICLE 19

International Annual Report 2017

Defending Freedom of Expression
and Information around the World



Protests play an important part in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural life of all societies. ARTICLE 19's [Right to Protest: Principles on the protection of human rights in protests](#) are intended to be used by civil society organisations, activists, human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, elected representatives, public officials and other stakeholders in their efforts to strengthen the protection of the right to protest locally, regionally and globally. Published in December 2016, the [Principles](#) were made available in 2017 in French and Portuguese, and other languages will be produced during the course of 2018.

Photo: Twelve people took part of the No Justice No Pride movement and blocked the NYPD and Toronto Police contingents at the New York City Pride March on June 25, 2017 in New York. Protesters chained themselves to one another bringing the march to a complete halt. Twelve arrest were made co-facilitated by the Pride March board of directors for blocking police presence out of pride.

At a Glance – ARTICLE 19 in 2017



**projects in
31 countries**
around the
world

112

**valued
staff**



**legal
analyses**

Working with technology and businesses

**5 Expression
Agenda themes**



**Civic Space,
Digital, Media,
Protection,
Transparency**

Repressive laws declared unconstitutional

Turning commitment into implementation

11

offices
around
the world

XpA metric analysed

172

countries

Empowering communicators

**Setting standards
and defining policies**



Trained

3205
people



Innovation for expression

Surveillance challenged

Policy into practice

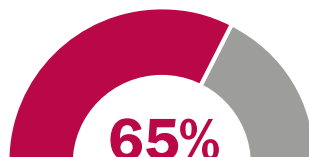
Resources in

15
languages

15

Global Outcomes

Strong progress has
been made across



of our Global
Outcomes to date

UPR submissions

3

**Bangladesh
Brazil
Pakistan**

**Protecting
the right
to protest**

Improving governance

Creating accountability



14

**legal
interventions**

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30 years of ARTICLE 19

“ARTICLE 19 was born on the cusp of extraordinary revolution in the world and for freedom of expression: the fall of communism, the birth of the Internet, the rise of religious fundamentalism.”

Jo Glanville at the
30th Anniversary Event

“Is it the case that the more things change, the more they stay the same? Even if the challenges to freedom of expression change, the need for an organisation to offer principled responses and to champion victims of censorship remains constant.”

Kevin Boyle, ARTICLE 19's first Executive Director.

And things have certainly changed: political turmoil, technological revolution, and globalisation over the last 30 years have brought unforeseeable and radical shifts in how we communicate, publish, and receive information. They have also brought huge changes to the threats to our rights, including the right to speak and the right to know.

And Kevin was right: the need for ARTICLE 19 has remained constant, and we have remained at the front line, as well as in the centres of power. Responding to new challenges and championing victims in the face of the protean threat of a silence which would undermine global society.

ARTICLE 19 was the brainchild of US philanthropist and activist John Roderick MacArthur, whose journalistic background heightened his awareness of the challenges being faced and the lack of an effective campaigns group to battle them. After his death, his children realised his dream, launching ARTICLE 19 in 1987.

Our first ever campaign was for Zwelakhe Sisulu, a South African editor detained without trial by the apartheid government of South Africa, and the organisation's first few years saw us engage with issues like Israel's control of the Palestinian press, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, and the protection of journalists.

We celebrated our 30th anniversary in London in 2017, inviting experts, partners, and allies from all over the world to share their experience and wisdom with us, as we shared our history with them.

Though, as current Executive Director Thomas Hughes said, “Progress over the last 30 years has by no means been linear,” there is much to celebrate and be proud of in our history, and many to whom we are immensely grateful.

We have transformed from a small campaign to a truly global organisation with ten international offices, working from the halls of the UN all the way to the streets. ARTICLE 19 is now the voice of expression and information across the world.

“I am privileged to be a part of this global team, as we reflect on the last 30 years with pride, and look forward to the next 30, ready to face them with the strength, rigour, and innovation we are known for the world over.”

Thomas Hughes, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director

Where we work

● International and regional offices ● Countries we work on



“None of us has the luxury of being indifferent anymore: we have seen that what happens in one part of the world has a direct impact on the lives, on the happiness of people in another parts of the world. We are deeply, deeply connected in so many ways.”

Elif Shafak, award-winning novelist and campaigner, at the ARTICLE 19 30th Anniversary event

From the Executive Director: Thomas Hughes



“Success in some contexts is simply holding ground, or making sure a perspective is heard; in other contexts, it is a leap forward, or the forging of a new path.”

As the world becomes increasingly networked, the ripples of every word reach further and expression has more power than ever.

However, threats are posed at global and local levels: to the infrastructure, tools, and individuals on which freedom of expression depends, as well as those who exercise it.

As ARTICLE 19 completes the second year of our six-year ‘Expression Agenda’ strategy, we are prepared to tackle challenges and to fight the key battles whose effects echo worldwide.

In a climate which often seems politically, economically, and environmentally unstable, and even unsafe, fear can reign, and expression is often the first right to be eroded.

It is, however, a rare instance in which silence and ignorance pave the path to security or peace, and we must keep space open for dialogue and resolution. Restrictions on freedom of expression must only be made on specific occasions, and within strict boundaries: those boundaries, despite being established in international law, continue to be wilfully misinterpreted and manipulated.

How we define and defend our freedom of expression will determine whether our digital world is vibrant and open, or becomes shuttered and corporatised. It will determine whether vested interests are allowed to hide wrong-doing and silence those who investigate and expose. It will determine how, and indeed if, we confront or counteract misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic, or nationalist discourse.

Ultimately, it will define us, our global society, and how we relate to one another: it sits at the centre of the human condition. We must be ready to face the hydra’s many heads: to navigate the labyrinthine complexities of online speech and technology-mediated violence, but also to face unvanquished titans like impunity and defamation.

Just as challenges can be nebulous and take many forms, so can success. As you will see in this report, success in some contexts is simply holding ground, or making sure a perspective is heard; in other contexts, it is a leap forward, or the forging of a new path.

2017 reminded us of these realities and we must invest ourselves with renewed energy in the defence and promotion of freedom of expression. We must continue to hold the line on traditional threats, while also navigating new waters.

Our work has stunning variety and scope, across our five themes – civic space, digital, media, protection and transparency – and from local to global and back again. Nevertheless, ARTICLE 19 speaks with one voice to promote and pursue our vision: a world where all people everywhere have the freedom to speak and the freedom to know.

I reflect on 2017 proud of our achievements, grateful to our partners, and sure that we will face what comes next with the tenacity and rigour I see in our teams worldwide.

Thomas Hughes
Executive Director

From the Chair of the Board: Paddy Coulter



One particular day in November encapsulated 2017 for us: the Expression Agenda event in London, celebrating ARTICLE 19's 30th anniversary.

Katharine Viner, Guardian editor-in-chief, gave a welcome address which urged us all to work together for free expression: indeed, cooperation is more important than ever, as this report will show, with a huge range of collaborations and partnerships across the globe.

The audience included an enormous range of human rights organisations – from A to Z, or at least from A to W – from Amnesty International to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

The keynote speaker was Elif Shafak, Turkish author and advocate for women's and minority rights. She called out clampdowns on the plurality of the media and the self-censorship that arises when writers see that the exercise of their freedom of expression can lead to harm. She stressed the importance of advancing facts, but also fostering a narrative which engages with people's emotional intelligence and addresses their deeply-held fears.

The event launched ARTICLE 19's new measure for evaluating freedom of expression and information around the world, and the bulk of the day focussed on our key battlegrounds.

Extraordinary and moving testimonies highlighted the courageous activism of our partners and beneficiaries, with talks from the father of murdered Bangladeshi blogger Faisal Arefin Dipan, from the daughter of assassinated editor of the Gambian independent *Point* newspaper Deyda Hydera, and from Malaysian political cartoonist, Zunar.

What emerged was that ARTICLE 19 is *truly* inclusive – an organisation which genuinely embraces that much-abused word: partnership.

Discussing the evolution of ARTICLE 19 over three decades, a panel of our former and current Directors and board members revealed how the creation of regional offices across the world transformed the organisation. The development of these has allowed the organisation to work across the globe, with an understanding of context, history, and politics where we work: an authentically international human rights organisation.

There was much to celebrate at the anniversary event, and it demonstrated that, in these testing times for freedom of expression, we all need to pull together and draw strength and knowledge from one another.

Times may be testing, but the news is not all bleak, as the contents of this annual report attest, so do please read on and see how collaboration and creativity can fight the tide and make space for expression.

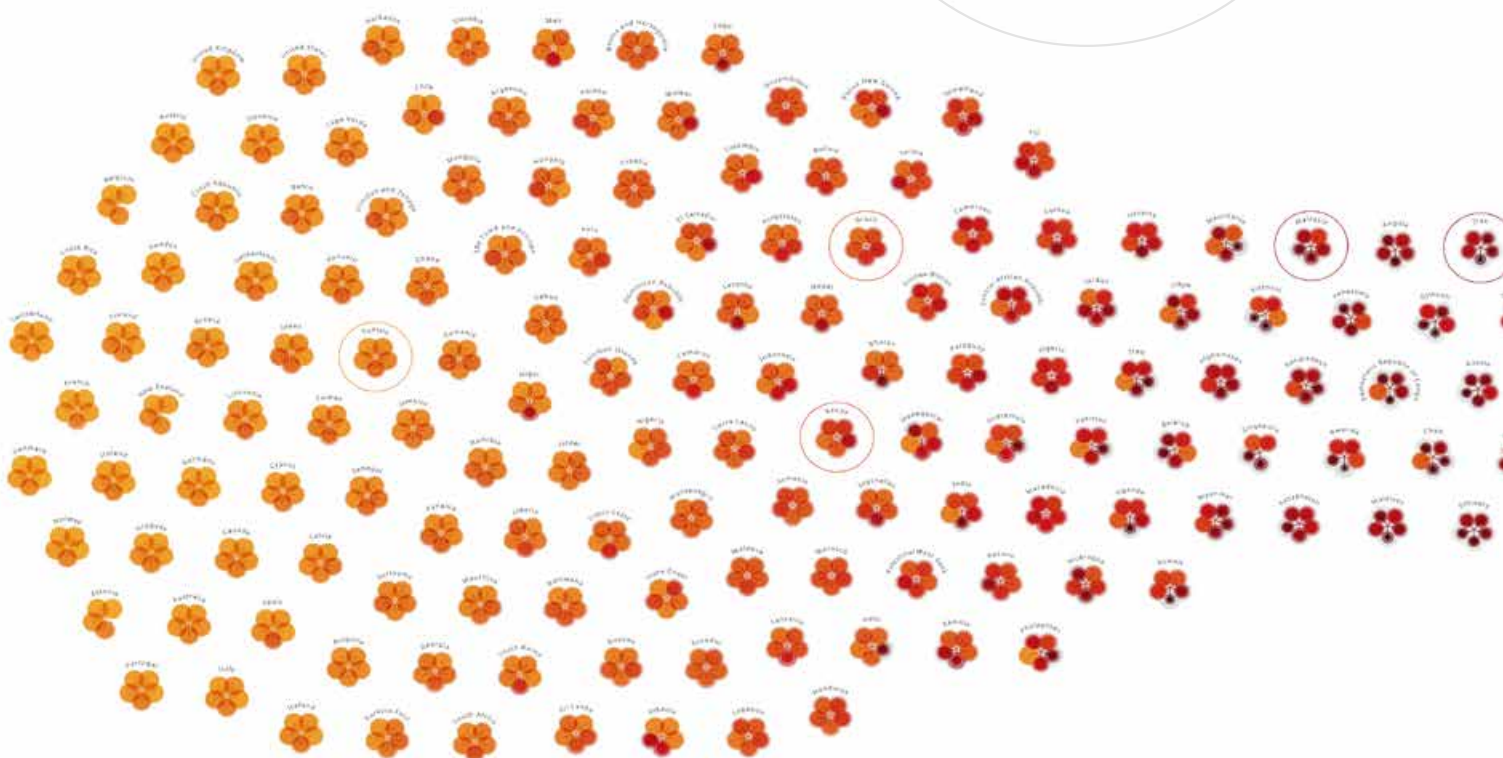
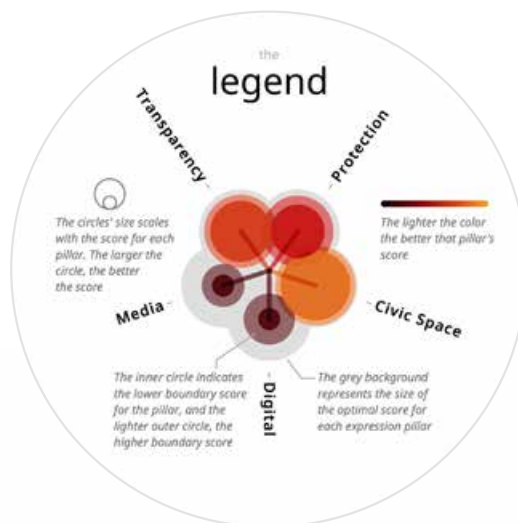
“In these testing times for freedom of expression, we all need to pull together and draw strength and knowledge from one another”

Paddy Coulter
Chair of the Board

Seeing the big picture: introducing the XpA metric

The lack of a global measure for freedom of expression has been a major impediment to its protection. It was excluded from the UN Sustainable Development Goals on the grounds that it is not measurable: it was seen to be too complex and abstract to evaluate progress rigorously.

ARTICLE 19 has developed a response to this: a new metric to effectively evaluate the state of freedom of expression: enter the **XpA metric**.



The XpA – short for ‘Expression Agenda’ metric – is our new tool: a way to rigorously measure the global state of freedom of expression. It will enable us to track changes worldwide and target advocacy effectively, as well as providing a resource for partners around the world and a reliable source of insight for journalists, activists, and policy-makers.

We partnered with the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), whose work is the world’s largest social science data collection project. V-Dem’s pioneering approach to measuring democracy reveals the key threats facing freedom of expression and information, creating a unique assessment of their status worldwide.

By combining V-Dem’s data and analysis with our own experiences on the ground, we provided a real global picture of freedom of expression: we revealed a shocking catalogue of cases, a testament to global levels of impunity, a vicious circle of intimidation and self-censorship.

In 2016, at least 259 journalists were imprisoned worldwide and 79 were killed. We should be alarmed that media freedom is at its lowest level since the millennium: State censorship is on the increase; academic and cultural freedom is at risk, while online censorship is accelerating; the space for civil society is shrinking and attacks on journalists and activists are rising; even commitments to transparency are in retreat.

Governments are using an unprecedented range of measures to silence dissenting voices and protest, from surveillance of journalists to labelling NGOs as ‘foreign agents’.

Internet censorship is increasing. Algorithms are used to remove both legal and illegal content with too little transparency or consideration of human rights from the handful of companies whose platforms host most of our communication.

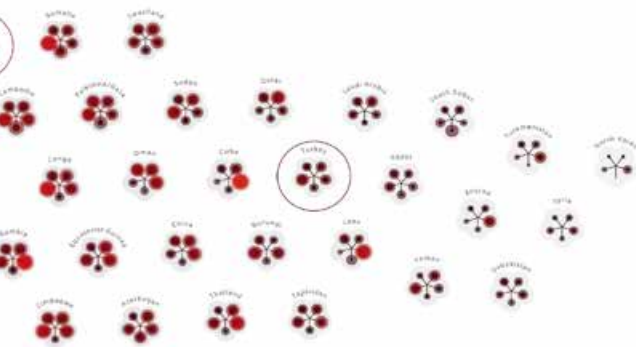
But there is hope: technology has fuelled a revolution in transparency and individuals have access to information on an unprecedented scale. WikiLeaks, Edward Snowden, the Panama Papers, and the Paradise Papers have contributed to transforming expectations of open democracy, increasing pressure on governments to be accountable.

The right to information is now law in 119 countries: it is momentous progress, but vigilance against the backlash and attempts to limit the information we are able to access will remain vital.

“But there is hope: technology has fuelled a revolution in transparency and individuals have access to information on an unprecedented scale.”

Even some of bleakest headlines are not a surprise, but we must not become numb to the threats and setbacks: we must not accept anything less than the full realisation of our rights.

With our new tool we will be able to push harder for that full realisation, backed up by rigorous monitoring and statistics: the XpA Metric.



Spotlight on Malaysia

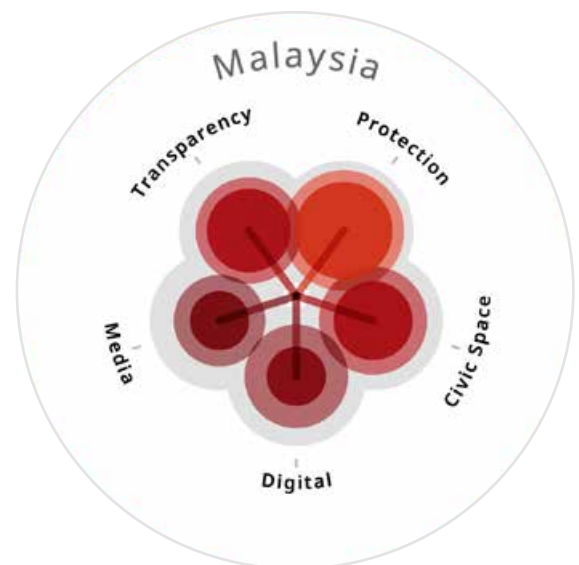
Population: 30.7 million

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 10(a) of the Malaysian Constitution, but Malaysia has not signed or ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees the right to freedom of expression under Article 19.

Repressive legal framework and ‘legal’ harassment of human rights defenders.

Criminal defamation invoked to target social media users who post comments allegedly offensive to national leaders.

Lack of media pluralism: the component parties of the ruling coalition have ownership and control of all mainstream media.



Pentafoil for [Malaysia](#)

Spotlight on Brazil

Population: 208 million

Freedom of expression and information is guaranteed under Article 5 of the 1988 Constitution, and the country has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Brazil has staggering inequality rates, despite having the 9th highest gross domestic product in the world.

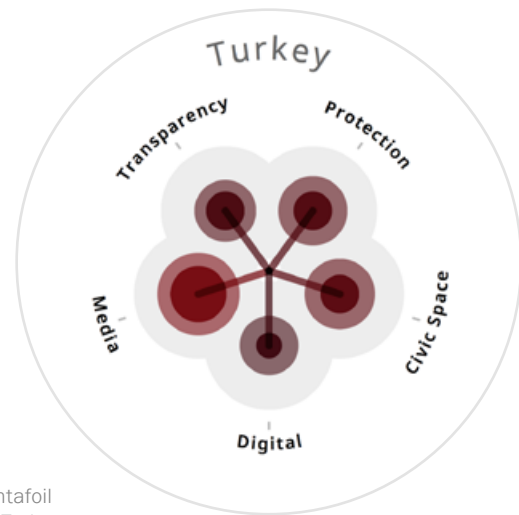
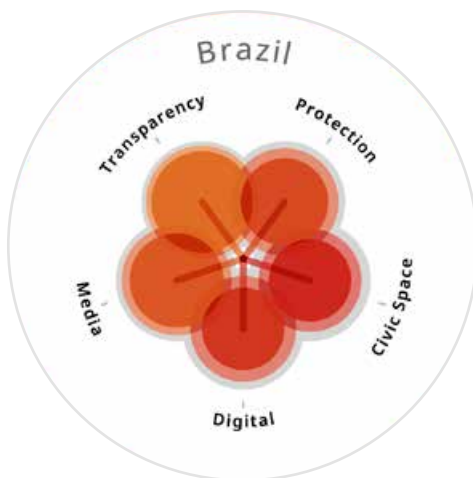
Violence, intimidation, and impunity face activists and media workers raising awareness of human rights violations and corruption.

Most protests are met with violence by security forces, with hundreds of injured demonstrators, arbitrary detentions, and restrictive handling of crowds.

The Right to Information Law has seen challenges in implementation particularly on sensitive topics such as environmental issues and public security.

Implementation of online rights legislation continues to be challenged by bills in Congress and judicial decisions.

Pentafoil
for [Brazil](#)



Pentafoil
for [Turkey](#)

Spotlight on Turkey

Population: 80 million

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 26 of the Constitution of Turkey, and Turkey has also ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Penal Code criminalises defamation, and website blocking frequently takes place under Article 8 of the Internet Law.

Hundreds of journalists and academics are being tried under terrorism propaganda or incitement charges.

Demonstrations are arbitrarily banned: the Istanbul Pride March was banned in 2017.

The President has increased authority over the appointment of judges and prosecutors, after reforms in May 2017. Following the coup attempt, one fifth of Turkey's judges and prosecutors were dismissed.

How does the XpA metric work?

Our partnership with V-Dem has created a cutting-edge analysis of the challenges and complex environment which affects freedom of expression. Reviewing V-Dem's data has also given us an opportunity to review trends over the last decade.

V-Dem's multi-dimensional dataset examines 350 aspects of democracy. We worked with 32 indicators, aggregated into our five themes.

The XpA metric is a work in progress: some indicators have not yet been measured by V-Dem, such as restrictions on the right to protest, Internet governance, and financial transparency.

Our partnership will support the ongoing development of relevant indicators in the global dataset. We also plan to develop a methodology which will enable us to use the metric to measure our own contribution to freedom of expression.

Law and policy work

ARTICLE 19's legal and policy work is at the core of what we do: we provide analyses of national laws, submit expert opinions to courts and shape international standards through UN advocacy and the production of policy documents on core free expression issues.

Our legal experts engage with States and international actors, shaping standards in new areas of international law, as well as creating toolkits and resources for governments and civil society.



Legal analyses



Brazil: Bills on the “right to be forgotten”, June 2017



Gambia: Draft regulatory guidelines on media ownership, October 2017



Germany: Act to Improve Enforcement of the Law on Social Networks, September 2017



Iran: Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009, September 2017



Kyrgyzstan: Law On Guarantees for Activity of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, August 2017



Libya: Draft Constitution, August 2017



Malaysia: Communications and Multimedia Act, March 2017



Morocco: Draft Law on the Right to Access Information, September 2017



Myanmar: Draft Interfaith Harmonious Coexistence Bill, September 2017



Myanmar: Telecommunications Law, March 2017



Paraguay: Third party intervention on the TEDIC case, March 2017



Senegal: Press Code, August 2017



Thailand: Computer Crime Act, January 2017



Tunisia: Draft Organic Law on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, February 2017



Tunisia: Draft Organic Law Related to the Elimination of Violence Against Women, February 2017

Legal interventions



Energy Transfer Partners v Greenpeace at the United States District court of North Dakota



Google v CNIL at the Court of Justice of the European Union



Endy Gęsina-Torres v Poland at the European Court of Human Rights



Aleksey Navalnyy v Russia at the European Court of Human Rights



Kharitonov v Russia at the European Court of Human Rights



Selahattin Demirtaş et al v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Ahmet Husrev Altan and Mehmet Hasan Altan v Turkey at the Istanbul 26th High Criminal Court Sahin Alpay v Turkey at the Istanbul High Criminal Court



Republic of Turkey v. Erol Önderoğlu, Rasime Şebnem Korur and Ahmet Nesin at the 13th Heavy Penal Court Istanbul



Deniz Yücel v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Şahin Alpay v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Ahmet Hüsrev Altan v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Mehmet Hasan Altan v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Ahmet Şık v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights



Ali Bulaç v Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights

Spotlight on ‘the right to be forgotten’: Google and a global threat

The ‘[right to be forgotten](#)’ refers to the possibility of having certain results delisted from search engine results pages. In [2014](#), the European Court of Justice stated when search results are ‘inadequate, irrelevant, or no longer relevant’, search engines can be ordered to remove them.

In 2017, two test cases arose which would form key moments in the development of the ‘right’. These cases threatened to give national governments the power to control what users worldwide are able to see as search results – setting the precedent for a government in one part of the world being able to control what links appear in search results in another.

No court or data protection authority in the world should force its definition of lawful or acceptable information beyond their frontiers. Building on our [2016 policy](#), we spoke up for the rights to freedom of expression and information in courts on both sides of the Atlantic.

Intervening for information: from France to the Court of Justice of the European Union

French regulators, Commission Nationale de l’Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) have pushed [Google to restrict search results](#) all over the world to comply with their ‘right to be forgotten’ privacy laws. In the CNIL’s view, an effective ‘right to be forgotten’ would require that search results be made unavailable to all web users, regardless of their location. This position is tantamount to having the French data protection authority determine what can be found on search engines worldwide.

We intervened at the French Conseil d’Etat (constitutional court) and were then granted leave to intervene at the Court of Justice of the European Union. This case presented the court with an opportunity to correct some of the flaws in the 2014 Google Spain judgment between the ‘right to be forgotten’ and freedom of expression online.

We submitted a brief demonstrating that there is no universal acceptance of either the right or its scope. Any attempt to impose a national concept at the global level is bound to create a disproportionate restriction on freedom of expression.

Justice and Jurisdiction: Google v Equustek

The Supreme Court of British Columbia, Canada, issued an order which required Google to de-list all URLs of a website selling counterfeit Equustek products.

In an amicus brief, we and a coalition of civil society groups urged the Supreme Court to overrule this injunction. In our view, the global de-listing order was neither necessary nor proportionate and would set a dangerous precedent for other courts around the world to issue similar orders.

The *Equustek* judgment will, unfortunately, reinforce the trend of national bodies claiming for themselves the right to restrict freedom of access to information on the Internet worldwide. We will continue to advocate on the issue, making sure the expression perspective is heard worldwide.

“These cases threatened to give national governments the power to control what users worldwide are able to see as search results.”

Setting standards and publishing policies

Defining Defamation:

Principles on Freedom of Expression and Protection of Reputation

Implementing UN HRC Res 16/18:

A framework for inclusivity, pluralism, and diversity

Blocking websites and applications in Brazil: a contribution to the legislative debate

Public procurement and public information

Prevent, Protect, Prosecute: Acting on UN Human Rights Council Resolution 33/2 on the Safety of Journalists

Open Development: Access to Information and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Global Principles on Protection of Freedom of Expression and Privacy

Getting connected: Freedom of expression, telcos, and ISPs

Freedom of Expression and State Aid to Media: An Update

Independence of Public Service Media in Poland

Fighting corruption through access to information

Working with intergovernmental organisations

ARTICLE 19 shapes standard-setting initiatives at the UN, informing our advocacy through the local and national priorities of our regional offices and partners. In turn, our national work uses States' UN obligations and commitments to drive local change.



Photo: Press Association Images

Spotlight on hate speech: re-building momentum

“Hate is becoming mainstreamed. Walls – which tormented previous generations, and have never yielded any sustainable solution to any problem – are returning. Barriers of suspicion are rising, snaking through and between our societies – and they are killers.”

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Addressing hate speech is a priority for ARTICLE 19: it can incite violence and discrimination which is clearly a freedom of expression concern. Hate speech has real impacts on the freedom of marginalised individuals and groups to speak out and be heard, as well as affecting the right of others to receive their opinions and ideas.

Our [guide](#) seeks to demystify key UN standards like Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18 and the Rabat Plan of Action – a guide on how to balance freedom of expression with the right to be free from discrimination, hostility, and violence.

Using Resolution 16/18 and the Rabat Plan, consensus has been maintained on two UN General Assembly resolutions which contain essential commitments for States to address a rising tide of intolerance, as well as violations of the rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. This is a feat which should not be underestimated in the current environment.

Our [expert roundtable](#) in New York, chaired by Thomas Hughes, concluded that renewed momentum is required for national implementation, including reinvigoration of the Istanbul Process – a series of intergovernmental

meetings to guide implementation of Resolution 16/18. The roundtable was organised with the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom.

The experts agreed that States need to commit to re-energising the Istanbul Process and ensure practical exchange of experiences. The need to open up formal reporting processes to other stakeholders, such as national human rights institutions and civil society organisations, was also stressed.

We have also taken part in other Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights initiatives, including the drafting of the Beirut Declaration: a rights-based call to people of all faiths to promote peaceful societies based on mutual respect. More broadly, we have engaged with UN special procedure mechanisms, the Universal Periodic Review, and treaty bodies to hold States to account on their international human rights obligations and commitments around addressing hate speech.

We have been taking global mechanisms to the local level, focusing on LGBTQ discrimination in former Soviet countries, hate speech against migrants across Europe, and hatred based on religion in Malaysia, where we trained members of the Human Rights Commission – these stories appear throughout this report.

Policy in practice

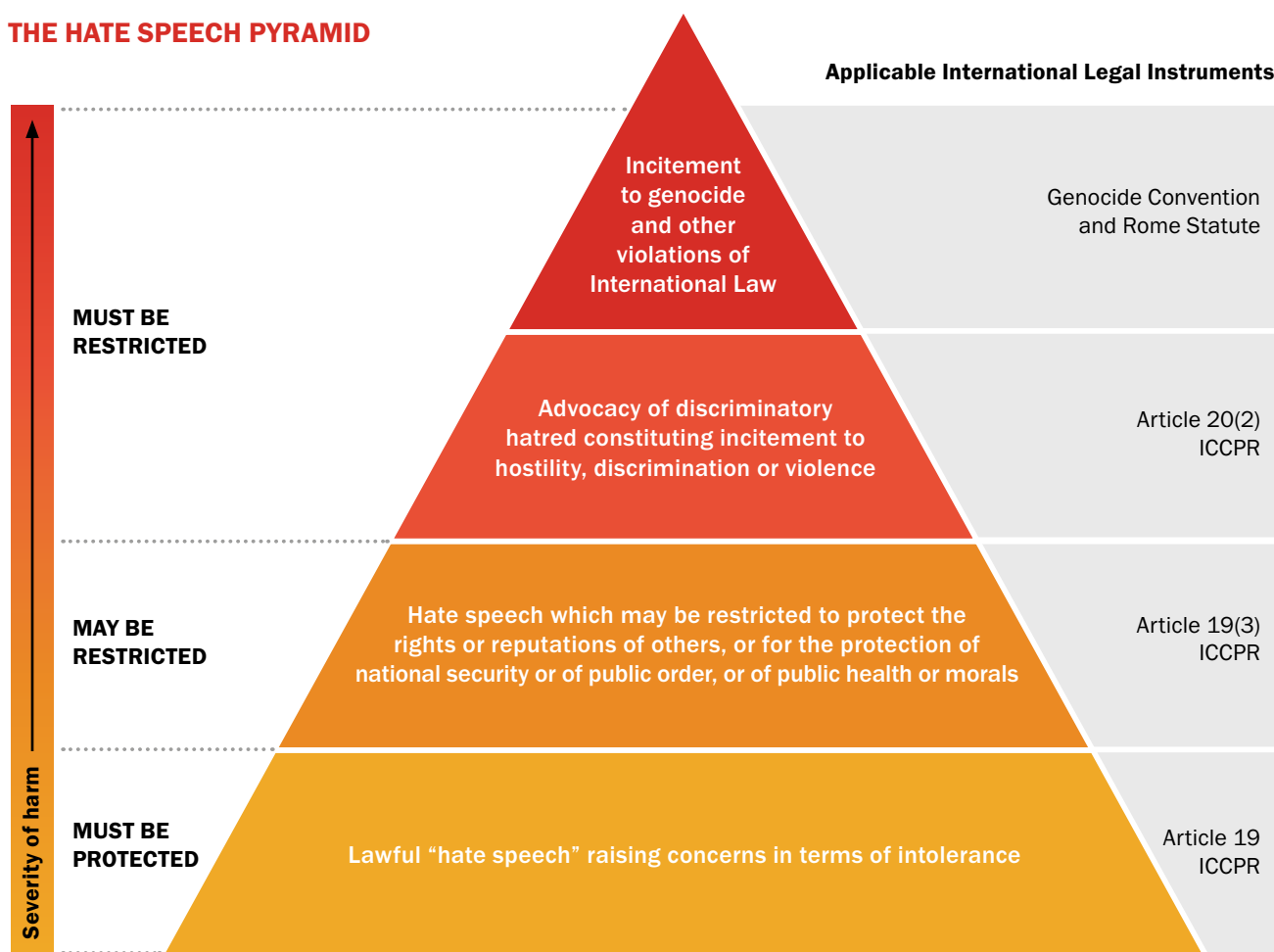


Putting 16/18 into action in Tunisia

We trained 21 civil society organisations from all over the country to counter hate speech: this group have now agreed to build a coalition to work on Resolution 16/18 and its implementation in Tunisia.

A joint plan of action is also being developed to grow the coalition and prepare it to take part in governmental action relating to the resolution. We will continue to support and train members in constructively participating in implementation.

THE HATE SPEECH PYRAMID



Our 'Hate Speech' Tool Kit has continued to provide an in-depth read on tackling hate speech while protecting freedom of expression.

The Hate Speech Pyramid was developed in collaboration with Agnes Callamard, former Executive Director of ARTICLE 19.

Business and ICT: working with special rapporteurs

Following consultation with ARTICLE 19 and other partners, David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, published his [June 2017](#) report to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), which focussed on telecommunications companies and digital access.

This report and its recommendations are a successful part of a broader project targeting the role of businesses and information and communications technology (ICT) in freedom of expression, targeting decision-makers as well as the business and technical communities. This report reflects our policy and consultation responses, demanding strong standards for the protection of human rights.

States increasingly rely on the digital access industry to control, restrict and monitor expression online: when authorities seek to disconnect users, they frequently require the assistance of Internet service providers or interfere with the Internet exchange points that facilitate traffic into or within a country.

We will be using the standards detailed in the June report as a basis for ongoing work and advocating to have them included in the next Internet and human rights resolution in June 2018 at the UN HRC.

Digging deeper: ARTICLE 19's research and reporting

ARTICLE 19 publishes original research and insightful reports on a range of issues – monitoring, exploring, and shedding light on freedom of expression issues. These reports form the basis of advocacy and projects, but also tackle impunity by creating visibility around violations of the rights of communicators worldwide.

Here are just a few of our publications from 2017:



Digital Rights Russia: an analysis of the deterioration to freedom of expression online



Bangladesh: violations against journalists and online activists in 2016



Invisibility kills: data on femicide in Brazil (Portuguese)



Malaysia: a worrying year for freedom of expression



Not worth the risk? Threats to free expression ahead of Kenya's 2017 elections



5 years of access to information in Brazil: emblematic case studies (Portuguese)



Tightening the net: the soft war and cyber tactics in Iran



Official Information: a notable absence in the wake of Mexico's 2017 earthquake (Spanish)



Photo: Press Association Images

Peeling back the layers: sex, sexuality, and gender

Sex, sexuality and gender shape every aspect of life. Women and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) persons face large barriers to freedom of expression and information that are specific to sex, sexuality, and gender.

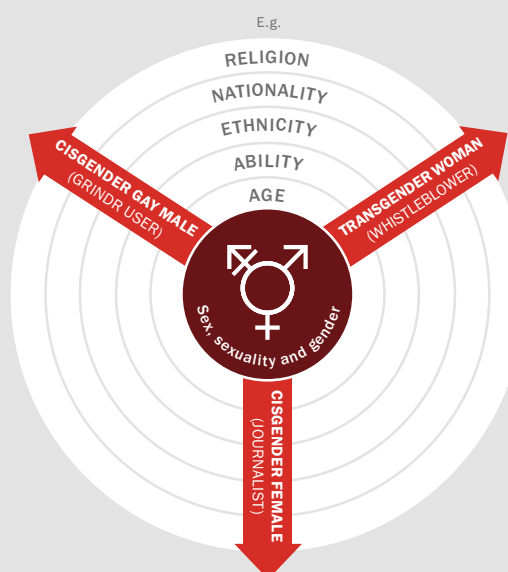
This is the bedrock of the Mx Method, with which we seek to develop effective and inclusive solutions defending and promoting freedom of expression and information for all.

This is the bedrock of ARTICLE 19's 'Mx Method', with which we seek to peel back social-political layers and tease out underlying realities and systemic roots of discrimination and power, revealing risks and perpetrators that ordinarily go unobserved.

For instance, sometimes conventional sources for security can become harmful (e.g. families enforcing rigid social norms) or speech might become sources of psychological trauma (e.g. hate speech). A gender lens pushes us to dig deeper.

Just as identity is fluid, so must our study of it be. Constant re-evaluation prevents generic or 'cookie-cutter' approaches and ensures that our work is as relevant as possible to those we are aiming to support.

THE MX METHOD: OUR INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO SEX, SEXUALITY AND GENDER





Making space for complexity: giving the discussion texture

In 2017, we opened discussions with various human rights and gender organisations, and we are shifting the narrative that to protect freedom of expression is to protect trolls and abusers.

Through dialogue with key groups, including the Association for Progressive Communications and Tactical Tech, we are fostering a more nuanced understanding of freedom of expression, hate speech, and online abuse.

Several key groups including the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Tactical Tech previously did not consider ARTICLE 19 as an ally to their community, but we are fostering a more nuanced understanding of freedom of expression, hate speech, and online abuse.

These conversations are gaining real traction with potential partners working on gender and sexuality, and technology-mediated violence, laying the foundations of strong partnerships.

Internet es Nuestra | The Internet is Ours

We and a coalition of partners have begun to reclaim the online space and free it from violence, with a focus on Mexico: Internet es Nuestra: 'the Internet is Ours'.

Online harassment is an extension of structures of violence in society: to imagine online and offline as entirely separate is to fail to understand that both the roots and consequences of that violence have many features in common.

As well as creating our advocacy and information platform, our first major publication came out in November 2017: it brought major new insights to the discussion, as well as clarifying it with analysis of online aggressions and surveys of women affected. We are also entering into complex and difficult debates around sexting and victim-blaming online.

Our research revealed that 66% of women over 15 in Mexico have experienced some form of violence but 88% of women never take any action before authorities. At least nine million women in Mexico have suffered online harassment.

Making Mx a reality in Bangladesh

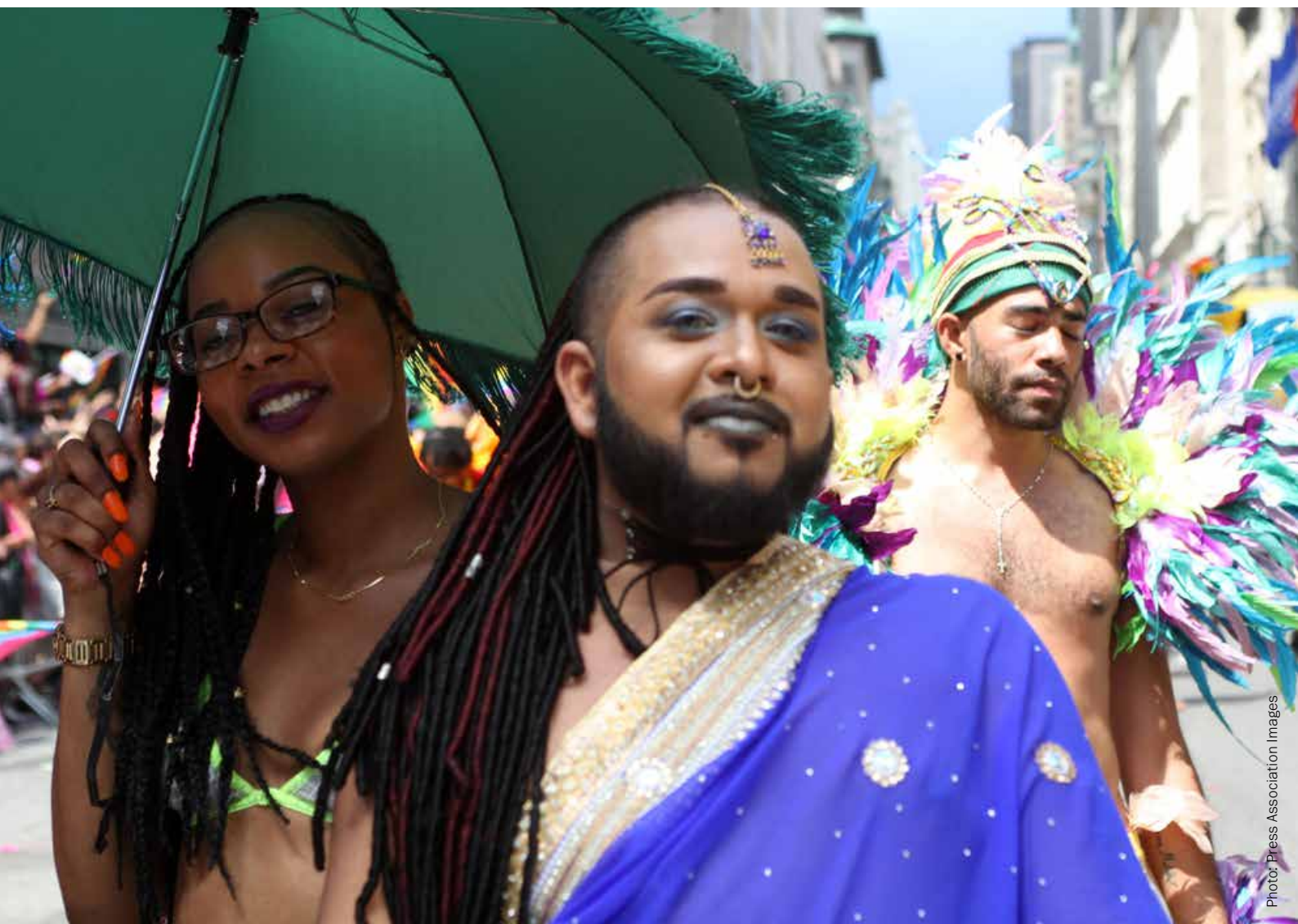
We have been expanding and strengthening our forum for women journalists, which now has a membership of 19 from various districts and media, print, electronic, online, and radio backgrounds.

The forum has become the vehicle for publication of the 'Kanya Sahosini' newsletter and has drafted a charter for women journalists, with recommendations to the government and media on the safety and protection of women journalists.

In 2017, we also launched an investigation into technology-mediated violence against women in Bangladesh: although a number of laws relate to this violence, they do not provide sufficient safeguards. There is also an absence of legal protection of data and privacy, and a lack of laws targeting 'revenge porn'. We also identified scope for a strong and clear directive on sexual harassment online, which will form the basis for advocacy.

“The ARTICLE 19 training and support have given women journalists confidence that there is support and guidance available when needed, reassuring them that when facing problems and prevents them from leaving the profession.”

Moriom Shelley, Chuadanga correspondent and member of the women's forum



Building capacity and sharing resources: training and workshops

Training focus

- Community networks
- Freedom of Expression
- Hate Speech
- Legal instruments
- Media Freedom
- Right to information
- Security

We supported groups in Brazil, including the indigenous Tanomami, in developing and installing their own internet networks – see page 36

Brazil and South America



481 people trained

Including: civil society groups, journalists and bloggers, students and indigenous communities



Mexico and Central America



472 people trained

Including: civil society groups, journalists and bloggers, government officials, students, professional groups and organisations



Europe and Central Asia



226 people trained

Including: civil society groups, LGBTQ groups, journalists and bloggers, judiciary and organisations



Middle East and North Africa



544 people trained

Including: civil society groups, students, journalists and bloggers, government officials, judiciary and organisations



Senegal and Western Africa



415 people trained

Including: civil society groups, students, journalists, government officials, professional groups, human rights defenders and organisations



In the Gambia, we trained aspiring female candidates for the National Assembly Election 2017 – see page 25

NOTE: This graphic represents a summary of detailed reports on our training around the world. In several reports however the disaggregation of gender participation was not available, and although we understand that there was a greater degree of female participation than the numbers suggest, we are unable to reflect that picture on the basis of the data. We remain committed to capturing the true numbers and demonstrating equitable participation of women in training during the course of our project implementation and reporting processes in 2018.

Bangladesh and South Asia



312 people trained

Including: civil society groups, journalists and bloggers, students and organisations



We trained journalists on combating hate speech in Myanmar, where its impact against the Rohingya Muslim minority has been catastrophic – see page 30

Asia-Pacific



325 people trained

Including: civil society groups, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers and organisations



Eastern Africa



331 people trained

Including: civil society groups, journalists and bloggers, judiciary, professional groups, and students



Coming together in Kathmandu: women's networks in South Asia

In November 2017, in Kathmandu, we held our first South Asia Regional Training Workshop for Women Journalists, with partners Media Action Nepal. 24 women journalists participated, including leading editors and journalists from Bangladesh and Nepal.

They discussed challenges that women journalists face, including insufficient political and crime reporting jobs, lack of trust in female journalists, no female editors in-chief, gender-based censorship, and harassment.

The women were trained in how to face these challenges, as well as others including safety funds, maternity leave and childcare, forming unions, and capacity-building.

The shoe on the other foot: security forces and the media in the Gambia

“It is important to underscore the need to re-establish trust and professional working relationships between security forces and the media in the Gambia.”

Fatou Jagne Senghor, ARTICLE 19's Regional Director for Senegal and West Africa

Law enforcement officers are often unfamiliar with freedom of expression principles and how to deal with journalists in a way that respects freedom of the press, allowing them to access public interest information.

ARTICLE 19 ran training for members of the Gambian security forces and media on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists: the activities included role play, creating a better understanding of one another's role in society, and ideas on how to manage better collaboration.

The training has created pathways to professionalism and mutual respect for both security and media, and more than 95% of participants said they wanted to further this training.

“We say ‘no more’ to lack of partnership, cooperation, and mistrust between the media and security forces.”

Anne Marie Ndiaye, trainee and journalist at public broadcaster GRTS

Civic Space

Civic space is the place, physical and legal, where individuals realise their rights. It includes the freedom to speak and to access the means to do so, participate in public decision-making, organise, associate, and assemble.

A robust and protected civic space is the cornerstone of accountable, responsive, democratic governance and stable society. The most vulnerable individuals in society bear the brunt of rights violations where civic space begins to shrink.



Photo: Press Association Images

A demonstrator stands in front of a National Guard armoured vehicle in Caracas, Venezuela, June 17

“ARTICLE 19’s work on freedom of expression has been critical, not just for protecting this key civic freedom around the world but also in our collective efforts to push back against the global clampdown on civic space.”

Dr Danny Sriskandarajah,
Secretary General, CIVICUS

As governments attempt to limit channels for dissent worldwide, ARTICLE 19 faced attempts to restrict civic space in several target countries in 2017, with challenging legal environments and even targeting of our offices. Partners have experienced harassment ranging from threat of imprisonment to serious financial constraints.

Despite these challenges, progress has been made in relation to various UN processes, as we continue to contribute and ward off attempts to water down positive resolutions. Our legal analyses and court submissions led to positive changes in national laws, and we continue to open the space for dialogue and understanding through our hate speech work.

Hand in hand: guiding the Gambia’s new democracy

“Gambians are already showing the way, by expressing loudly and widely their voices during the election. That expression brought the change itself: so now the question is how to strengthen that nascent freedom to build democratic institutions.”

Fatou Jagne Senghor, ARTICLE 19’s
Regional Director for Senegal and West
Africa, on [BBC Africa](#)



Since the constitutional crisis at the end of 2016, ARTICLE 19 has played a central role in that work. We have been working closely with ministries in the Gambia’s new government to ensure that freedom of expression forms a keystone of the new democracy there: we are even involved in drafting the new constitution.

After initially accepting the election victory of rival Adam Barrow in December 2016, Yahya Jammeh, the Gambia’s leader of 22 years, refused to hand power to the new president, claiming that voter fraud had lost him the election. A constitutional crisis ensued: tens of thousands of residents fled, as troops from Nigeria and Senegal prepared to invade the country to remove Jammeh if he did not agree to leave peacefully. Eventually, in January 2017, left the country.

In February 2017, ARTICLE 19 completed a successful mission to the Gambia, among the first organisations to visit, and were among a very small number to be invited to the inauguration of the new president.

Our years of work in the area on expression issues meant we have been a key voice on the topic in the country for some time, but we quickly became a central voice on the crisis itself and on the nascent democracy establishing itself in the country.

In May 2017, after the crisis, ARTICLE 19 signed a memorandum of understanding with the new government, drafted and accepted by the Ministers of Justice and Communication.

The memorandum has a focus on the rights to freedom of expression and information, public engagement, and transparency. The agreement commits us to significant input on legal reforms on the media and the upcoming Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. We were also consulted on the Gambian Public Utilities Regulatory Authority’s draft Guidelines on ownership and cross-ownership in the broadcasting sector.

In December 2017, we were also made the leading organisation in the drafting process for the Freedom of Information Bill and will continue to provide technical expertise in this process.

“The people have found that with expression, they can make the difference.”

Fatou Jagne Senghor (pictured left)

From the UN to the streets: protecting protest

We work holistically to protect protest, leveraging UN standards and policy principles to make sure they have real effect on civil society and individuals protesting on the streets and online across the world.

Through resolutions on peaceful protest at the UN Human Rights Council, States have committed to recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteurs on the management of assemblies. Many of these reflect ARTICLE 19's [Right to Protest Principles](#), launched at the UN Human Rights Council on Human Rights Day 2016.

We are bringing practical advice and security tools to protesters in five languages via [Protestos](#), originally launched in Brazil. The site now gives protesters fully illustrated and accessible tips, as well as a toolbox of digital safety tools, legal tips, and ways to minimise risk in cases of surveillance.

Policy in practice



Five years of breaking the fear in Mexico

Rompe el Miedo is a real-time monitoring system which uses key individuals to monitor and report police activity during protests, via social media. It will reach its 5th year in 2018, and has been activated more than 20 times to support, inform, and monitor elections and protests nationwide.

In June 2017, the network was activated to monitor activity around the elections – the first time it had been activated in Mexico City, Veracruz, and Puebla. In total we received reports of nine acts of intimidation

and eight physical attacks. The network was activated again in October to monitor the demonstrations in commemoration of the Tlateloco Massacre of 1968.

We have been strengthening and expanding this network: in 2018 we will be monitoring protest around the elections in 18 states and around 200 journalists will take part in the next Rompe el Miedo activation.

The information gathered from the network provides a strong basis for advocacy around the right to protest, adding weight to our demands with concrete evidence.

Policy in practice



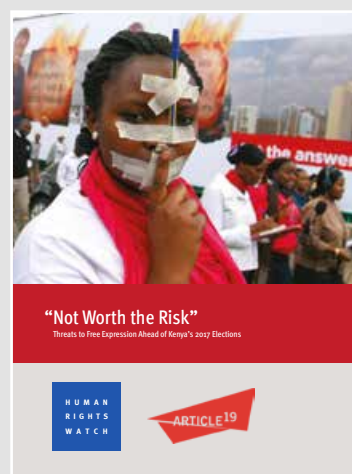
Keeping an eye on protest in Kenya

After protests over electoral reform across Kenya, we saw that something needed to be done to create a real conversation around the right to protest in the country.

Attendees of our Dialogue on Peaceful Assembly sessions in the counties of Eldoret and Kakamega were taught to identify whether the right to protest is being fully exercised by citizens and protected by the State, as well as whether protesters are behaving legally. 25 participants agreed to be protest monitors.

“I have gained valuable insight on the nature and obligations of the right to protest. Now I know what to look for in order to hold the State to account.”

A workshop participant



Report: Not Worth the Risk: Threats to Free Expression Ahead of Kenya's 2017 Elections



Photo: Press Association Images

David Tesinsky's photo-activism project, 'The Dictator or Gay?', addressed the issue of LGBTQ marginalisation in Belarus

Opening the debate: discrimination and LGBTQ rights in Belarus

Post-soviet countries are often a particularly difficult context for work on freedom of expression, but ARTICLE 19 has remained in action across the region, strengthening coalitions and creating space for vital debates about freedom of expression.

“The National Consultation boosted various members of civil society to express their concerns regarding hate speech towards marginalised groups, including LGBTQ people, and to commit to a long-run collaboration to ensure comprehensiveness and efficacy of strategies to counter hate speech. This is a first in Belarus.”

Katsiaryna Borsuk, project coordinator for Dotyk, a LGBTQ rights initiative

We are working to strengthen civic space for the safe participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) communities across the region, from Ukraine to Moldova to Kyrgyzstan. We have had remarkable success in creating space for discussion and mainstreaming LGBTQ issues among human rights groups.

In September 2017, a *National Consultation of Civil Society on tackling hate speech and discrimination* was organised collaboratively with partners, including a lecture on our policy on hate speech and freedom of expression.

Discussions covered the monitoring of hate speech against LGBTQ people conducted in Belarus, anti-discrimination legislation developed by Belarusian human rights defenders, and information strategies to counteract hate speech.

It is the first time that an event organised by LGBTQ initiatives in Belarus has attracted representatives of so many mainstream human rights organisations: there were 43 representatives of different organisations, including from the National Centre on Legislation and Legal Research, a government body. The event was supported by the UN Development Programme's office in Minsk.

As a result of the conference, there was a declaration on collaboration on tackling hate speech and discrimination in Belarus and an agreement on activities for 2018- 2019 among some participants, including a meeting on hate speech with representatives of media. This is a promising sign of independent outlets being open to addressing the issue of hate speech.

The representative of the National Centre on Legislation and Legal Research, Belarus' main law-drafting institution, expressed readiness to initiate a discussion on the possibility of anti-discrimination legislation in Belarus.

Not only has this work strengthened partnerships and capacity in the area, it has also resulted in concrete plans to consolidate progress on hate speech, with an eye on LGBTQ issues.



“I felt like the training has taken my life to a whole new level, a higher one. I learned so many new analysing methods and started to see the world from a better perspective.”

Nourhen Sioud, youth campaigner and trainee



Photo: Alfredo D'Amato/Panos

Education against hatred: teaching tolerance in Tunisia

Instilling an understanding of citizenship and human rights at a young age is key to fostering human rights awareness and tolerance later in life.

We have started a collaboration with the Tunisian Ministry of Education to create educational tools for Tunisian students on freedom of expression and hate speech. Our programme has now been rolled out in five schools.

In 2017, we were included in the list of expert associations to be consulted by the Ministry for Education on integrating human rights into the national syllabus. The ministry has committed to take part in the development of educational tools, their use in the curriculum, and their integration into education reform.

Youth activists in Tunisia have been trained in campaigning and defending their ideas. In our sessions, they came up with practical plans, budgets, and schedules for mini-campaigns after our training series on freedom of expression, hate speech, and campaign methods.

“This is a real model to engage youth in building a young free new Tunisia that we always have dreamed of, in addition to practice our right in decision-making and driving change in our communities.”

Hammadi Khelifi, a trainee

These mini-campaigns take on issues like discrimination against female and younger candidates and voters and inequality between Tunisia's regions. This gives us further opportunity to engage and collaborate with local partners to address discrimination and hate speech during local elections.

Youth campaigner Nourhen Sioud said, “I felt like the training has taken my life to a whole new level, a higher one. I learned so many new analysing methods and started to see the world from a better perspective. I was so proud that my project *het_el_shih* ('Give the truth') was selected for an ARTICLE 19 sub-grant: I felt confident and glad. I would like to continue to sensitise people to the risks of hate speech and help them know how to say 'stop' to hate speech – in particular in the political discourses of political parties during elections. I have a dream and I want to make it a truth.”

On the rise: supporting female political candidates in Gambia

Significant progress has been made in the Gambia to advance gender issues and gain recognition of the important role women can play in decision-making. However, the limited participation of women in decision-making processes has been a cause for concern.

Forty aspiring and potential female candidates for the National Assembly election were brought together, from various political parties and some independent candidates. The workshop was organised with partners UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding to equip trainees for working in public and political life, advising on how to run for seats, organise electoral campaigns, and communicate effectively with the media.

After the workshop, 19 of these women became candidates. By the end of the election, three had been able to win seats in the National Assembly. Through advocacy with other actors, three more women have been appointed members of Parliament, the speaker of which is also a woman.

We and our partners have also been advocating that the National Assembly pass a gender parity bill to enhance women's participation in politics, in accordance with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

Space for dialogue: hate speech in Myanmar

Myanmar has a long history of internal armed conflict and marginalisation of minority groups. The conflict in Rakhine state led to an estimated 700 thousand refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, with widespread credible reports of human rights violations, including ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims.



Hate speech, including incitement to violence, has been a trigger for this and other intercommunal conflicts. With restrictive laws, the government has been proactive in limiting access of journalists to conflict affected regions, while itself spreading misinformation and propaganda.

ARTICLE 19 is working to open spaces for inclusive debate, progressive dialogue, and legal reforms, working with the media, the Press Council, and civil society. Tools and communication platforms have been created to encourage interaction between and within faith-based groups and media.

We are also active in the 'Harmony Working Group', where 25 organisations are seeking to address hate speech, including engaging the government on its proposed law on hate speech. We are supporting partners in developing ethical journalism standards, with plans to reach out to civil society, politicians, and the government.

Debating discrimination: youths and civil society in Senegal

Following a surge in incitement to violence in Dakar, Senegal, we have begun to leverage the rights to freedom of expression and information to tackle intolerance and fundamentalism among young people.

More than 50 youths from five suburbs of Dakar were taught about the place for freedom of expression in the fight against radicalism and discrimination. The workshop fostered a stronger knowledge of international principles and global efforts against hatred and discrimination, and taught the young people to speak in public and defend their opinions, while respectfully engaging with the opinions of others.

After the training, the young people formed 'ARTICLE 19 Clubs' to continue raising awareness, making them agents of change in their own communities. There are now five clubs – one in each suburb – teaching in schools.

We observed that women and girls felt less able to speak up and assert themselves, so we began running specific trainings to empower and build the self-confidence of female members, with a particular focus on public speaking.

“Since our training, we never stop acquiring new knowledge, especially related to freedom of expression and access to information. ARTICLE 19 has made us capable of defending individual and collective freedoms, because it provided us with the best tools necessary for a perfect handling of the questions of the hour.”

A trainee

Conversation and conservatism: talking about religion in Malaysia

In Malaysia, we are approaching hate speech from multiple angles: our trust-building meetings are laying the foundations for a genuine dialogue on human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief.

For some time, with partners [Projek Dialog](#), we've been contributing to the discourse by publishing articles: this work reached new highs in 2017, providing space for controversial discussions online with high readership and stronger engagement than ever.

We have now expanded our approach: we are speaking directly to religious groups, civil society, and governance.

Seven Islamic religious groups agreed to meet with us and, though these were extremely challenging conversations, a number of groups emerged from the exercise showing willingness to collaborate in the future. We are also starting to bring conservative youth groups, and non-Muslim religious groups to the table, nurturing a genuinely diverse and inclusive dialogue.

Training sessions given at the Malaysia Human Rights Commission, SUHAKAM, successfully educated

commissioners and officers on 'hate speech' and the best ways to respond with a human rights perspective.

“I have been with SUHAKAM for 13 years and this is the first time I have joined training on freedom of expression. We have got an understanding at a deeper level on hate speech. It is also very useful on how we can educate the public and how the public can exercise their freedom of expression at a responsible level.”

A participant from the Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)

Digital

Freedom of expression includes the individual's right to access and engage in debate, dissent, and information-sharing on an open Internet. These rights must be embedded in laws, policies, processes, and products which affect the Internet and emerging technology.



We continue to work at the cutting edge of digital policy, laying the groundwork for a rights-enabling Internet architecture, as well as protecting the exercise of rights online at international bodies, and deepening our engagement with business to ensure that they enable freedom of expression too.

We are working across a huge range of issues, from connectivity in Brazil to dating apps in the Middle East and surveillance in Mexico, and increasing our capacity to engage in policy conversations and legal battles worldwide.



Looking for love, finding danger: LGBTQ dating apps in the Middle East and North Africa

Dating apps have revolutionised the way we date, hook-up and find love, but they are also being weaponised against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities in high-risk contexts, especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

We have been investigating the use and implications of these apps in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran. LGBTQ communities in these three countries rely on apps to communicate, meet or hook-up, and fall in love. We have found that State authorities and homophobic non-state actors are also using these apps to monitor, entrap, threaten, and prosecute.

Afsaneh Rigot, ARTICLE 19 Iran Programme Officer, designed and led the project: she spoke to us about how, in less than a year, she persuaded Grindr to tighten up their security options, and how this can be a model for persuading tech businesses to support human rights standards in their work.

What inspired this project?

In 2014, I read stories about apps being used to entrap gay and transgender users in Egypt using geolocation features. Not much investigation was being done into the methods or the extent or LGBTQ groups being targeted. In 2015, I was told about continuing entrapment cases in Egypt and similar dangers in Iran. The situation seemed more complicated than just geolocation tracking.



Photo: Press Association Images

I wanted to get the full picture, to understand how digital rights intersect with LGBTQ rights, and how we can work to mitigate some of these trends – particularly how apps can protect their users. Here we began our first conversations with Grindr, which led to a full collaboration.

LGBTQ people have suffered centuries of repression and marginalisation globally, with limited opportunities to safely connect, organise, and meet-up. Despite technological revolution, the situation is not so different now: some traditional threats simply have online and digital equivalents. However, despite the barriers put up against them, LGBTQ people have always been resilient and savvy.

What were the first steps?

In designing this project, our aim was to ensure that the needs and wants of LGBTQ communities were at the forefront. We started by talking to local groups and asked them to organise discussions with queer app users. Based on these meetings, we created a survey on the use of dating apps, asking about threats via apps and needs of users.

The response was overwhelming: we gathered over 1,000 responses to our questionnaire, 400 of which we were able to use for our analysis. That was triple what we had anticipated: clearly, users wanted to make their experiences known. Our partner organisations in Lebanon and Egypt informed me at the time that some of the users partaking in the questionnaire had expressed relief that there was work being done on this.

Respondents gave us a huge amount of information and, most importantly, an insight into what they actually need.

“The drive for sex, intimacy, and love is stronger than fear.”

What insights did app users provide?

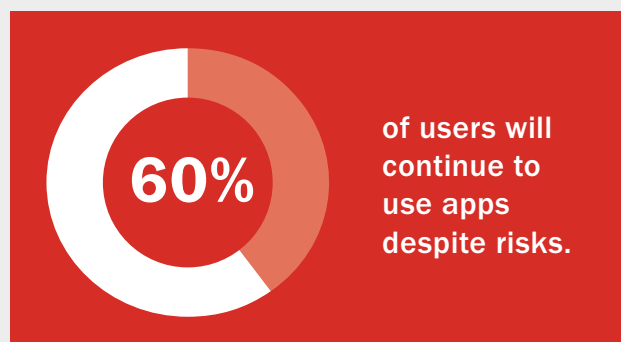
We can now see that the reality of apps being weaponised was far more complex than tracking geolocation. Patterns of arrest and targeting ranged from entrapment to street checkpoint checks of mobile devices by police and infiltration of groups chats run by LGBTQ groups.

Local groups had been aware of this for a long time, but their calls for action had not been taken seriously enough. Through the data, we saw that the burden was placed on local groups and the users themselves to protect against the threats they faced when using these apps. They did not see apps as actors that would support them.

The other major insight was that the use of apps and platforms can put users in real physical danger, but when it comes to communication, connection, and association, human resilience shows.

The drive for sex, intimacy, and love is stronger than fear. 60% of users will continue to use apps despite risks.

Crucially, this means that the onus is on apps to make services safer: they owe proactive protection and digital security to their users.



Were there any surprises in the data?

One of the most surprising elements of the research was the extent and sophistication of entrapment and seeing how LGBTQ apps had become both a surveillance tool and a trap.

Many users had adopted tactics for staying safe – some of which were really intricate. However, without access to security specialists and app providers for support, these tactics often only provided a false sense of security.

Although many were aware of the existence of laws against LGBTQ persons, the content of these laws was often misunderstood or entirely unknown. Refugees have particularly low levels of access to legal help and information about their rights, as well as a higher rate of arrest and intimidation.

A huge number of LGBTQ refugees and migrants live below poverty line: many resort to transactional same sex sexual activity, facing some of the highest risks of violence and arrest. Their safety using online tools is pertinent to our work.

How did the research guide your advocacy?

Local data and personal testimonies were critical: they were the catalyst for our dialogue and agreements with international experts and apps companies.

These voices can be powerful agents for change. They must be amplified.

Having gathered data and forged strong partnerships, we brought together local groups, activists, human rights experts, businesses, and technologists to discuss how to combat the threats identified. The result was a recommendation list for app partners, and our starting point in meeting the needs of users.

“These voices can be powerful agents for change. They must be amplified.”

We were able to show apps that the users are not just aware of the risks they face from authorities and non-state actors, but also risks from flaws in app security: 50% of our respondents said they stopped using certain apps due to ‘physical security concerns’, and 20% due to ‘digital security concerns’.

Many dating and messaging apps used by LGBTQ people in the region lack fundamental security features and knowledge of the contexts they are operating in.

We began by alerting apps of how their projects are being used to spy and cause harm in some contexts, then we developed advice and recommendations for how they could work to reduce and mitigate these harms, as well as educating their users on the risks in their countries.

We also worked with the apps to find creative solutions to the issues we discovered: the apps’ knowledge of their users will be vital in finding inventive ways of our ongoing work to support users in staying safe.

Reasons respondents stopped using apps:



- Physical security concerns
- Digital security concerns
- Other

How receptive were apps and businesses to these recommendations?

We have a great relationship with Grindr, who took on the majority of our recommendations almost immediately.

Users will soon be able to change the distinctive Grindr app icon on their phone to something unrecognisable, which responds directly to one of the major risks reported by survey respondents: the app being found and identified on their phones led to serious repercussions.

They will also soon be able to create a security password to open the app, and will have disappearing and timed messages, panic buttons, as well as stronger links and rapid response connections with local groups.

We know we have a long way to go, but our relationship with companies is evolving all the time: more and more companies are joining the dialogue. Grindr's genuine interest in supporting their users has lit the way for businesses, human rights groups, and security technologists to work constructively together on harm reduction, they have also taken an active role in encouraging other apps to follow suit: this is key – the push should come from business itself.

So, what's next?

Our partnership with Grindr for Equality and other LGBTQ dating apps demonstrates how human rights groups, activists, and businesses need to work together to reduce the impact of crackdowns on LGBTQ communities.

“We have a long way to go, but we have taken some important steps in the right direction.”

Our project and its model have already led to independent projects: it is being adopted in various circles: LGBTQ activists in Africa and the broader MENA region have conducted similar studies and reported back to us. We hope to continue this work with them, supporting them along the way.

Technology groups have also informed us that they plan to use our research methodology before designing and developing their tools, others are teaching and spreading our harm reduction approach. We have also started research in Tunisia and discussions with groups in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania.

We will continue to work with apps, activists, experts, and businesses to address shortcomings in security, design, and technology. We aim to create a global and multi-stakeholder coalition. Geolocation-based dating apps were an initiative of the queer community: our work will stay inspired by this, to support these communities and to set the standard for design ethics, collaboration, and tech responsibility.

We have a long way to go, but we have taken some important steps in the right direction – towards keeping users safe and getting tech business involved in protecting the human rights of their users.

“Through our collaboration with ARTICLE 19, we have been able to co-create a roadmap of how we can empower gay, bi, and trans people who use Grindr to keep themselves as safe as possible, both online and off.

I am so proud that, as a corporation, we have been able to really listen to the findings that have come out of this process, and that we have already implemented key changes.

In the future, we will continue to work with the coalition and with ARTICLE 19 to assess the situation for those who may be vulnerable in a variety of regions and also to show other companies in this space how they too can leverage their resources to make the world safer for our people.”

Jack Quintana Harrison, Director of Grindr for Equality

Planting a seed: human rights at Internet governance bodies

We have been working with Internet governance bodies (IGBs) to mainstream human rights into value statements, risk assessment, and development policies of crucial institutions, from ICANN (The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) to domain name managers like SIDN. We attended meetings, hackathons, and fora across the globe to promote human rights in technology.

In 2017, more than four years of work at the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) came to a great climax: we are making real steps towards a shared understanding on how protocols (a set of rules governing Internet networks) influence human rights standards and how human rights must be considered in their design.

One of ARTICLE 19's primary goals for engaging in the IETF is to formalise human rights standards through the generation of Internet Drafts, which would ideally be codified as official Informational Request for Comments (RFCs). Our Internet Draft finally reached RFC status in 2017.

Although thousands of RFCs have come before it, RFC 8280 on [Research into Human Rights Protocol Considerations](#) is the first IETF document to explicitly address human rights.

In the IETF, there currently is a compulsory process for analysing security considerations in protocol development. Our tool equips engineers with the tools to include a similar section on 'human rights protocol considerations': this is an element which we hope will become mandatory in the future.

This tool is already being adopted and used by engineers; it's one small step for developer, but one giant leap for human rights.

We achieved another digital first in 2017 and wrapped up our first Human Rights Impact Assessment for a provider of Internet infrastructure, SIDN (an Internet registry), with the Danish Institute of Human Rights. While our model was tailored to registries, we plan to adapt the model for other types of infrastructure providers: several have reached out to us to discuss the possibility of assessing their work.

These milestones are certainly worth celebrating, but we also want help others build on our success by increasing civil society engagement with internet governance bodies – a landscape that is difficult to enter and even harder to master.

We and the Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA) developed a guidebook: [Media Development in the Digital Age: Five Ways to Engage in Internet Governance](#), which details five key Internet governance bodies, outlines the relevant policy debates at play in each one, and explains how civil society actors can get involved.

Connectivity in the community: Internet service providers in Brazil

Roughly half of Brazil's homes are not yet connected to the Internet. Of these, 30% are located in areas where telecommunications infrastructure has not even arrived.

Where there is Internet access available, it is often not affordable for those who need it most. Lack of public policy to enable universal access to the Internet led us to explore the potential of community networks as an alternative to connect people.

In 2017, Anatel approved a resolution that means internet service providers (ISPs) with 5000 users or less will not require authorisation – the providers will only need to provide basic information and use certified equipment.

ARTICLE 19 was involved in discussions and carried out advocacy and conversations with Anatel's decision-makers, contributing to this great victory for community and small commercial ISPs. Previously the license process usually took a long time to be approved, creating a barrier to connectivity.

As well as advocacy on this issue, we created a 'how-to' guide (among our most successful publications ever), ran workshops in communities intending to build providers, and offered legal advice to aspiring providers. 2017 saw increased facilitation of community networks: more people than ever know how to set them up thanks to our resources and training.

Among a number of groups supported, we held a workshop with an indigenous community group of Yanomami, who now have access to basic Internet services in their communal places through a fully-functional community provider.



Protesters at the Million Mask March demonstrate against mass surveillance and exploitation in Berlin, Germany, March 2017

Advocacy into action: privacy and expression online

ARTICLE 19's principles are increasingly being integrated into international policy. In 2017, the protection of human rights online took a huge step: the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) followed our lead on the importance of privacy in the digital age.

"The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights HRC Privacy Resolution is a game-changer for the protection of privacy in the digital age. For the first time, it makes clear that sweeping surveillance powers that are neither necessary nor proportionate violate international human rights law. It is the culmination of four years of advocacy efforts from ARTICLE 19 pushing for strong protection for the right to privacy." Gabrielle Guillemin, Senior Legal Officer and project lead.

In keeping with our own [Global Principles on Privacy and Freedom of Expression](#) (launched in March 2017), the resolution recognises that privacy is essential to freedom of expression. This is crucial for investigative journalists, human rights defenders, and whistleblowers, who require secure communications to investigate and expose wrongdoing, inform the public, and protect their sources.

This constitutes a significant shift in the policy debate around mass surveillance, and can be seen as the result

of our several years of engagement with the UN HRC, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UN Special Rapporteur (among others) on freedom of expression on mass surveillance and the protection of the right to privacy online.

Though often seen as opposing forces, we have been instilling an understanding of privacy and freedom of expression as two sides of the same coin: both play essential roles in the fundamental restraints on power – from governments and their agents, to corporate actors and public figures.

“States should ensure that any interference with the right to privacy is consistent with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.”

Resolution 34/7 adopted by consensus in March 2017

This resolution is central to the debate about mass surveillance, privacy, and international human rights law. ARTICLE 19 has long argued that indiscriminate surveillance without specific or reasonable suspicion are inherently disproportionate and discourage expression: people self-censor when they feel they are being watched. The resolution does not reach a specific conclusion on this but represents notable progress in the right direction.

A voice of reason: reporting on Iran's digital policy

Our first venture into the quagmire of Iran's regulation of freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy was published in 2006: a legal analysis of Press Laws. Just more than a decade later, ARTICLE 19 are an established and central voice in the field: as well as legal analyses, we now produce reports and tools from briefings and original research, to videos and infographics.

The information we are producing has wide reach in English and Farsi and reveals human rights abuses to the international and national community, as well as providing the basis for digital security strategies for activists and citizens.

In 2017, we continued to document Iran's digital policy in a series of four reports on the cutting edge of digital security research and analysis: the 'Tightening the Net' series.

It was a year of chaos for digital policy and implementation in Iran, but we were there to make sense of it. We delivered comprehensive and accessible content, covering issues from social media shutdowns and malware, to continuing arrest and harassment of communicators and social media sites.

We are now the go-to expert voice: our briefs have been reported and summarised on Al Jazeera, Vice, Slate, Politico Magazine, and Global Voices, and Mahsa Alimardani, Iran Programme Officer, has appeared on BBC Persian to discuss our work.

In 2017, we widened the scope of our reports to cover shrinking digital space in Iran. Now, our reports also explore policies and actions of foreign governments and technology companies in addition to the Iranian regime. The [May 2017 briefing](#) in Farsi reached more than 150,000 readers, and our latest, published in mid-December 2017 in Farsi, had over half a million views by the end of the month.

“We can already see the impact of ARTICLE 19's work via our Persian audiences, who are engaging with their Tightening the Net reports – so far raking up millions of readers inside of Iran from our platforms alone – and also from the media attention their research and advocacy work is getting.”

Rieneke van Santen,
Director of Zamaneh Media

Tracking implementation: Brazil's Internet framework

The Civil Internet Framework – Marco Civil da Internet (MCI) – has brought strong guarantees to freedom of expression online: it guarantees network neutrality, privacy on the Internet, and aims to encourage digital inclusion and e-government practices.

We are now promoting this best-practice across the world through [our new digital platform](#), launched in April 2017, supporting scholars and activists of freedom on the Internet in tracking the implementation of the MCI and guiding the ongoing implementation of a free and rights-based Internet.

Throughout 2017, we campaigned against bills which aimed to weaken the law and continued to make recommendations on issues relating to expressions rights which emerged in Congress, including content blocking, data protection, and 'right to be forgotten' bills. We have now been invited to take part in public hearings organised by law-makers.



Graphic from the [digital platform](#)



Photo: G.M.B. Akash/Panos

A not-so-fond farewell: Section 57 of Bangladesh's Information Technology Act

After years of advocacy against its repressive effects, Section 57 of the Information Technology Act is being repealed.

In 2017, Tahmina Rahman, ARTICLE 19's Regional Director for Bangladesh and South Asia, met with a variety of government actors including the Minister for Information, as well as experts and ambassadors, and appeared on TV to discuss these issues from a freedom of expression perspective.

According to Section 57, if any person deliberately publishes any material in electronic form that causes deterioration of law and order, prejudices the image of the State or a person, or causes to hurt religious belief, the offender could face 14 years in jail.

The section has often been used to curtail the right to freedom of expression, with more than two dozen editors, journalists, teachers, social media users, and thinkers sued since March 2017, and an estimated 700 cases since 2013.

In November 2017, it was announced by Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu that the section will be repealed.

Some Section 57 provisions have been incorporated into the draft for the Digital Security Act, but there are noticeable improvements: offences are better-defined and punitive measures are less harsh: the maximum sentence has dropped from 14 to two years.

Media

Media pluralism and media freedom are essential for protecting and promoting freedom of expression and the public interest in an increasingly globalised, digitalised, and converged media landscape worldwide. ARTICLE 19 supports the broadest possible diversity of information and ideas, to enable individuals to act as informed citizens, play their part in political life, and hold governments to account.



“Media pluralism and media freedom are under threat. So are journalists. ARTICLE 19 acts as a strong watchdog, promoting free media and denouncing breaches of these fundamental rights.”

Josep-Maria Terricabras, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament

Boundaries between print, online, and broadcast media are more and more blurred: we are developing and updating our approach to media rights, advocating progressive standards at the European Commission and the Council of Europe, among others, as well as scrutinising legislation and intervening in court cases to keep up with the converging media environment.

Profit and fear: bringing Mexico's official advertising under control

For years, the lack of regulation of official advertising in Mexico has limited the space for real public debate and eroded public trust in the media: though President Enrique Peña Nieto made promises, no regulation materialised.

In 2017, after our campaigning and application to the Mexican National Supreme Court, regulation has finally become mandatory and will be put in place in 2018.

According to the [Fundar Centre](#), between 2013 and 2017 (the current governmental term), the government spent 38 billion pesos (53.7 million USD approx.) on official advertising – buying space in the media to distribute information to citizens. These expenditures dwarf other types of public spending.

These spaces have often been used to promote government actors and policy and to muzzle critical media. As historian Daniel Cosío Villegas pointed out, it is not that Mexico has not had a free media but rather that, whether for fear of reprisals or in pursuit of profit, it has not fully exercised its freedom.

Opaque, discretionary, and excessive allocation of public advertising funds to the media is a means of controlling content and editorial lines. It can constitute subtle or indirect censorship and has been an obstacle to the development of a plural, critical, robust, and free debate on public interest issues. It also erodes public trust in the media.

ARTICLE 19 filed an application to the Mexican National Supreme Court, demanding that the lack of regulation be addressed, as it limited the rights to freedom of



Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, 2017

expression and to information. We then wrote a [letter](#) insisting upon its consideration, in collaboration with other international media organisations.

On 15 November 2017, the highest court in Mexico ruled in favour of our petition, recognising the value of freedom of expression and the need to remove any form of impairment which would put this right at risk. Mexican Congress has until the end of April 2018 to legislate on official advertising.

“The message is clear: no political body is above the Constitution.”

We look forward to being a part of the conversation around implementation: we are now working with the [#Medios Libres](#) coalition to promote our ten principles to underpin the regulation.



Photo: Samuel Aranda/Panos



Tunisia's Press Council: the long view with Saloua Ghazouani Oueslati

In 2013, ARTICLE 19 was invited to take part in meetings with a view to creating a Tunisian Press Council based on a self-regulatory model. 2018 is our fifth year of working towards this truly independent and effective media institution.

ARTICLE 19's Middle East and North Africa Regional Director, Saloua Ghazouani Oueslati, tells us about the last five years and her hopes for the next five.

How did work on the Press Council begin?

Long before the Council was even conceived, ARTICLE 19 was supporting the journalists' unions in monitoring media practices and restrictions.

When the Press Council became a goal in the country, we were invited to join discussions: we started to facilitate conversations with experts and representatives of unions. We have been bringing people together and providing best practice examples ever since, and we are still the only international organisation involved in the project.

“There are times when it feels like the media environment is actually narrowing: laws are being proposed which are risky for media freedom and there are conflicts between the government and media stakeholders.”

What challenges have you faced in pursuing the establishment of the Press Council?

There are times when it feels like the media environment is actually narrowing: laws are being proposed which are risky for media freedom and there are conflicts between the government and media stakeholders. Not only do these laws limit press freedom, they also distract attention from the project of the council.

The Press Council also faces the challenge of winning the minds of the media: any self-regulatory approach needs the industry to be behind the rules – journalists and communicators must be ready to follow them as well.

We also need to convince the public that this initiative is born of the journalists' unions and has grassroots legitimacy: we need people to understand that it is not something being imposed or suggested from outside the country but comes from within it – from the unions themselves.

“We need people to understand that it is not something being imposed or suggested from outside the country but comes from within it – from the unions themselves.”

So why is it such an important project for democracy in Tunisia?

A self-regulatory body where the government has no control is a great asset to a country: the Press Council will be an independent voice and will provide a strong bulwark against a government which might make policy or decisions which try to limit press freedom.

The Press Council should not be a public body created by law. There was deep concern among media professionals and human rights organisations about anything that risked becoming – or sounding like – a Ministry of Information with State control over the press.

Tunisia continues to prosecute journalists on the basis of the Military Justice Act, the Criminal Code and other laws, rather than relying on Decree Law No. 115 of 2011 on Freedom of Press, Printing and Publishing, which provides the legal framework for resolving disputes related to press violations.

We need to modernise thinking on this issue: there are many who have not changed their views even in the face of technological changes and political developments: they think a government or constitutional body would be preferable.

What steps were taken in 2017?

We have a concrete achievement to take from 2017: the constituent committee has now been established.

It has been agreed that five members will be nominated, and they have even started work on the ethical charter, which will be established in 2018.

We have also reached an agreement that civil society groups will be among the members of the council, along with journalists and media institutions. This is a great step forwards: a more inclusive approach will allow for advocates of freedom of expression to take part in conversations and even give the council more legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

In March and May 2017, we held training and discussions to spread and instil best practice among both audio-visual regulators and Press Council members: reaching a consensus on how to proceed, how to foster good cooperation between the broadcasting regulatory body and self-regulatory body, and working towards encouraging respect for ethical journalistic practices too.

What is next for ARTICLE 19's work on the Press Council?

We have a lot of work planned for the next two years, we will be supporting digital and interactive tools to communicate with the public.

We are also looking to twin with another press council so that we can gain from the experience best practice from a State near to the Tunisian experience.

As for ARTICLE 19, I think we need to retain capacity to criticise and oversee the council, perhaps it is better that we are not involved as a member of the council, but we will continue to support. We can maintain a public position on the council from the outside.

“We need to modernise thinking on this issue: there are many who have not changed their views even in the face of technological changes and political developments.”

What does the ideal Press Council look like?

Of course, we aspire to establish a Press Council which is truly independent and effective – and publicly-funded, though without threat to its independence. The Press Council needs to be recognised and respected by the media sector and the public – we want to incorporate a wide range of communicators into its remit too – including bloggers and other social and digital communicators.

We hope it will be a model for the whole region of a genuinely independent self-regulation body, setting a high standard across the Middle East and North Africa.

Striking a balance: expression and reputation

“I have had conversations on the balance between expression and reputation with legal experts, members of parliament, and civil society organisations in various countries both in the global north and south, and the need for a robust explanation and defence of international standards can be felt everywhere.”

Pierre François Docquir,
ARTICLE 19 Senior Legal Officer

In 2000, ARTICLE 19 released our [Defamation Principles](#), laying out minimum standards and basic principles for dealing with the issue. Since then, defamation has remained a persistent and thorny issue, with some nations retaining draconian and outdated laws which make defamation a criminal offence.

18 years on, we have seen huge and unforeseeable changes and developments in technology, society, and politics, and yet in many places the old issues still urgently need addressing. We updated our Defamation Principles, tackling emergent issues head-on to ensure we stay at the forefront of policy work on defamation.

The context is more complex than ever, with old challenges to freedom of expression persisting, like libel tourism or strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPPs), and new challenges emerging, including the notions of intermediary liability and ‘potential damage’.

We have worked to strike the delicate balance between freedom of expression and the right to reputation, adapting to the globalised nature of reputation, reshaped by digital communications technologies. Reputation is now as global as the Internet is.

Policy in practice



Criminal defamation declared unconstitutional in Kenya

In 2016, Jacqueline Okuta and Jackson Njeru were charged with criminal defamation under Section 194 of the Kenyan Penal Code for posts on the Facebook page Buyer Beware-Kenya, which stated that certain individuals were wanted for illegal possession and handling of property.

In 2017, Jacqueline and Jackson’s case was heard at the High Court of Kenya: they faced up to two years in prison.

ARTICLE 19 submitted an amicus curia brief to the court and the judgment referenced our intervention at length: on 6 February 2017, the court declared Section 194 unconstitutional. The judge’s rationale relied heavily on the international jurisprudence which we set out in our submission.

“The harmful and undesirable consequences of criminalizing defamation, viz. the chilling possibilities of arrest, detention and two years’ imprisonment, are manifestly excessive in their effect and unjustifiable in a modern democratic society like ours. Above all, I am clear in my mind that there is an appropriate and satisfactory alternative civil remedy that is available to combat the mischief of defamation.”

Judge John M Mativo in his judgment

How we interact with people and ideas has shifted radically: engaging with, sharing, and digitally ‘publishing’ articles and images now take the form of likes and retweets.

New ways of engaging with information and ideas are a crucial exercise of freedom of expression and must be protected as legitimate expression. It is important that these developments are integrated into our understanding of defamation and that content can be engaged with and shared without fear of legal retribution.

Though Burkina-Faso, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have repealed their criminal defamation laws, many retain these outdated and draconian laws. Civil defamation is a more appropriate model, though these laws must have safeguards and avoid features which can create a ‘chilling effect’ on expression.

Policy in practice



Policy in practice: defamation and online comments at the European Court of Human Rights

Payam Taziz brought a claim to the European Court of Human Rights regarding comments on a Google-hosted blog. He claimed his right to privacy under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated by the abusive comments and the lack of remedy at national level.

The court declared his case to be inadmissible due to the triviality of the damage done to his reputation, repeatedly referencing our intervention.

“As ARTICLE 19 noted in their intervention, the reality is that millions of Internet users post comments online every day and many of these users express themselves in ways that might be regarded as offensive or even defamatory.

However, the majority of comments are likely to be too trivial in character, and/or the extent of their publication is likely to be too limited, for them to cause any significant damage to another person’s reputation.”

Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos, in the judgment

“How we interact with people and ideas has shifted radically: engaging with, sharing, and digitally ‘publishing’ articles and images now take the form of likes and retweets.”

These chilling features take a number of forms, ranging from fear of high damages, SLAPPs, and protection of reputation of public authorities, heads or symbols of State, to responsibility for words of others and fetishising the notion of truth, rather than holding journalists to standards of professional ethics.

A progressive and broad interpretation of the idea of ‘communicators’ will also be key moving forward: there is an urgent need to provide equal protection to all communicators, with an understanding that contributions to debates on public interest issues can and should be made equally by anybody. While there have been positive moves towards this sort of recognition in Europe and Canada, there is some distance to go.



'Fake News' was Collins dictionary's word of the year 2017: its rise to prominence is widely attributed to Donald Trump, President of the United States of America

Fad or foe? Setting the agenda on 'fake news'

“Tactics that are associated with authoritarian regimes are increasingly being used by democratically elected leaders with cries of ‘fake news’, the aggressive dismissal of critical expert voices, and the US president even asking whether a media organisation’s licence should be challenged.”

Thomas Hughes in *The Guardian*, November 2017

In the face of this new and nebulous threat, we brought together a group of experts from the worlds of technology, academia, journalism, government, and civil society. The meeting was organised with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Wilton Park – an executive agency of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

We broke the ground on ‘fake news’: our aim was to work towards a shared definition and understand what threats this idea and its rise to prominence might pose. During discussion, it was agreed that one of the great difficulties of the concept is the elasticity and breadth of the concept, and its various applications and re-uses by leaders around the world.

We wanted to place the idea in its historical context and look at how it differs from previous information and propaganda wars, what sorts of new antidotes it might need, and how we can avoid undermining fundamental human rights as we face it.

The participants sought to generate a common vocabulary for thinking through ‘fake news’ and generate a research and reporting agenda which could be a resource moving forward.

Fake news looks destined to stay in the spotlight, but a buzzword should not distract from the threat posed by the prospect of State-controlled information, or selective sorting of media content by dominant and unaccountable technology giants.

In close collaboration with ARTICLE 19 and the Centre for Law and Democracy, international and regional freedom of expression mandates special rapporteurs and representatives (for the UN, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Inter American Commission on Human Rights, and African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights) came together to address fake news in 2017’s Joint Declaration.

Null and void: restrictive law struck off in Kenya

“We laud Robert Alai for his courage and determination, and appreciate the courts, which continue to offer hope. This is a big victory for freedom of expression in Kenya.”

Henry Maina, Regional Director,
ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa

In December 2014, Robert Alai, a social media commentator, posted on Facebook criticising President Uhuru Kenyatta’s statements against Raila Odinga, an opposition leader.

Robert was arrested and charged in Kenya for undermining the authority of a public officer, under Section 132 of the Penal Code. His case under the Chief magistrate went on for over a year without determination.

Seeking timely redress and protection of his freedom of expression, Robert petitioned the High Court of Kenya in 2016, seeking to have section 132 declared unconstitutional and invalid.

ARTICLE 19 intervened in the case as an interested party: we argued that the provisions of Section 132 were vague and uncertain and formed an unjustifiable restriction on freedom of expression, as well as violating basic principles of criminal law.

On 26 April 2017, Justice Enock Chacha Mwita declared that the provisions of Section 132 were indeed incompatible with the Kenya Constitution. In agreement with Robert’s petition and ARTICLE 19’s intervention, he declared the provisions ‘null and void’.

The judge stated that the provisions are overreaching and broad, and contradict the Constitution. All charges against Robert were dropped.

Empowerment on the air: women radio broadcasters in Brazil

Radio is a vital medium in Brazil: community radio stations are among the most important ways to broadcast and receive information, particularly in rural or poorer urban areas: radio is also a tool of resistance and struggle for communities. Greater participation of women in this process, including producing content, is crucial to strengthening women in these communities.

Security for women communicators is a complex issue and requires measures ranging from training in self-protection to the creation of peer support networks. We have brought together women broadcasters across Brazil, providing technical training, and creating communities of solidarity and support in the country’s most violent regions for human rights activists and advocates.

In bringing together these journalists, a network was created: a space for the exchange of information and support between women facing similar challenges in the profession. In late 2017, the community rallied around a member with advice and support when their offices had been robbed and they feared it was a targeted threat against their expression.

Trainees told us that they had found a space for discussion of gender issues in general and have since been collaborating to produce specific gender content to be distributed among participants’ radio stations. In trainings in the South East, participants even set up radio programmes which were planned, produced, performed, and broadcast by them dealing with issues of gender violence, which were heard by women all over the region.

As well as enabling mutual support, we have been listening to the experiences of women broadcasters. It will be crucial to fully understand the different realities of the radio broadcasters around Brazil, as well as to incorporate information from monitoring and advocacy, demanding concrete measures of prevention and to address the violence faced by women communicators.

Protection

Around the world, the safety of those defending freedom of expression on the frontline has seen a dramatic deterioration in the past decade. Attacks are met with impunity in the vast majority of cases, creating a cycle of intimidation and self-censorship.

Increased citizen journalism, blogging, and information activism have placed more individuals and groups on the front line than ever before. They must be supported by effective networks of institutions and activists, and by strong legal frameworks and mechanisms.



We have strengthened networks for holistic security and safety, sharing lessons learnt and best practices from region to region. We have also reached out to new partners and actors, including law enforcement and activists.

Our ongoing advocacy pushes for the release of journalists and human rights defenders worldwide, and we continue to fight impunity for crimes against journalists, with strategic litigation in countries from Mexico to Kenya.



Photo: Press Association Images

Bridging the gap: implementing UN Resolutions on the safety of journalists

“Journalists perform an essential function informing the public in all parts of the world, and should not have to fear violence and intimidation merely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.”

Thomas Hughes, ARTICLE 19's Executive Director

Between 2006 and the end of 2016, 930 journalists were killed for their work, with a 90% impunity rate for those crimes. Impunity for crimes against journalists drives a cycle of violence: a failure of justice and lack of accountability encourages further murders and attacks.

For each journalist killed, attacked, threatened, or detained, countless others are intimidated to self-censor: entire societies are deprived of vital information.

In 2016, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a ground-breaking Resolution on the Safety of Journalists (A/HRC/33/2), the culmination of more than five years work and advocacy by ARTICLE 19 and our partners.

On paper, the resolution is the most ambitious ever global agenda on the safety of journalists: ARTICLE 19's advocacy and recommendations to States led to the adoption of the resolution by all 47 HRC members by consensus, and subsequent sponsorship by more than 90 other States.

The resolution provides a foundation for pushing change on the ground, and we have worked tirelessly since its adoption to maintain international consensus on its aims. The reality for journalists facing daily threats and attacks, however, remains dire.

“UN resolutions will mean nothing more than the paper they are written on, unless they are implemented. If they remain obscure, no one will know about them. We are creating resources to help local actors, from government to the media and civil society, understand and act on the commitment to better protect journalists at the national level.”

Andrew Smith, Senior Legal Officer and lead UN Advocate

We have been working to bridge the implementation gap, increasing commitment at the national level to create real change for those working on the frontlines of expression. We have also been leading efforts to increase coordination among international organisations on the issue, with partners Free Press Unlimited and International Media Support.

The form and legal style of these resolutions can be a barrier to engagement from civil society, and therefore to their effective implementation. Resolution 33/2 includes various ground-breaking standards and commitments, they only stand a chance of being implemented if the national and local actors working to enhance journalists' safety know about and use these standards to affect change.

So we created [our guide](#), which breaks down the document and the concrete actions States have committed to take to prevent, protect against, and prosecute attacks against journalists. It was launched in September 2017 to the Geneva 'Group of Friends', a newly established collection of States committed to the 'Safety of Journalists' agenda.

We will be working with the Group of Friends in Geneva to increase the profile of this issue in the context of the UN Universal Periodic Review process.

UN General Assembly and the protection of women journalists

In December 2017, the UN General Assembly passed a follow-up resolution highlighting the need to address the gender-specific threats faced by women journalists ([GA Res 72/175](#)). Understanding the specific and often gender-based threats faced by female journalists, and the different types of threats, is essential to tailor effective prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts.

The new resolution calls upon States to address these trends 'as part of broader efforts to promote and protect the human rights of women, eliminate gender inequality and tackle gender-based stereotypes in society'. The resolution states that this is essential if women are 'to enter and remain in journalism on equal terms with men', while 'ensuring their greatest possible safety'.

We will continue to work closely with UN mechanisms to ensure that the commitments made in this most recent resolution are implemented, in particular in relation to the safety of women journalists.

In 2017, we established a new international office in New York, from which we engaged with States on this resolution, including by holding a side event to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. Much of the language incorporated in the resolution built upon our suggestions. From this new base, we will be able to closely monitor and advocate for stronger standards from New York-based organisations and mechanisms.



“What motivates me to keep working in journalism is a passionate desire to see Cambodian people and Cambodian journalists to enjoy their freedom of expression.”



Hearing from the frontline: facilitating exchange of experience at the UN

Bopha Phorn, a Cambodian journalist, received the Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women's Media Foundation for her report on illegal logging in her country. While investigating the story, she was detained and shot at by military police.

We organised a UN side event on the Safety of Journalists and facilitated Bopha's attendance. She shared her experiences with us:

“I am really happy ARTICLE 19 invited me to be a speaker at the UN. I believe what I said there will give the world a sense of what is happening in Cambodia right now. I am particularly lucky to have shared my experience of being detained and shot at in 2012 at the event.

At the moment the government could use any excuse to jail journalists who they think are costing them votes or power. We cannot rely on the courts to give us justice: the Cambodian court is heavily connected with the government. Two former Radio Free Asia reporters were arrested and put in jail, accused of espionage, and others have fled the country, like Mr Aun Pheap from the Cambodia Daily.

Even though I know it is very hard to get there, I still hope one day we will achieve it – as long as we keep pushing and keep working hard.

ARTICLE 19's work is necessary and timely: more than ever, we need to bring local perspectives to the international level: through this kind of work, the international community could see and put pressure on the government of Cambodia, among others, to let its people exercise their right to freedom of expression.”



Protection and impunity in Bangladesh: the long view with Tahmina Rahman

Tahmina Rahman, ARTICLE 19's Regional Director of Bangladesh and South Asia, has been awarded an MBE in recognition of her services to freedom of expression and the right to information in Bangladesh.



We spoke with Tahmina after her MBE ceremony to talk about holistic protection, communicators online, and who inspires her to keep striving to protect those who exercise their freedom of expression.

What keeps you motivated in this increasingly difficult environment?

For me, when I see the tenacity of the journalists working at a grassroots level, I am amazed. They continue to write and investigate very difficult issues and they are so passionate: to be able to do something for them is very satisfying – they inspire me to carry on.

It reinforces our belief that our work is needed: we are doing something which benefits people at a personal level and also a political level – they stand up for the right to speak and we can support them and reinforce that right.

So how does it feel to have been awarded an MBE this week?

It is a great acknowledgement of what we have achieved in Bangladesh over the years: we started from practically no office and now have fully-fledged programmes which are multi-dimensional and effective across all of ARTICLE 19's five themes.

'Nirbhoy' is a platform for the holistic platform approach which launched in 2017 – what inspired the project?

All of our work on the ground inspired Nirbhoy: working with the people on the frontline.

After the spate of attacks on bloggers in 2013, the issue of protection became a priority and the real needs began to become clear: nine bloggers in seven months were killed – the system was not protecting them, and justice was taking too long – it was too slow.

Above: Tahmina Rahman MBE, Director, ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh and South Asia, at the reception after her investiture.
Photo: Meghna Guhathakurta

“Previously I was not used to taking any measures for my own protection while on reporting assignments, but after receiving my Shuroksha training I am getting into the habit of preparing, discussing risks with my editor, telling my family about my whereabouts, informing district administration where necessary: these ensure my safety.”

Tanuja Sharmeen, Dinajpur district correspondent and trainee



Avijit Roy, a blogger who advocated secularism, was killed in Dhaka returning from a book fair: hundreds of students gathered to mourn and protest his death



Communicators and journalists need to feel supported, to be supported, and to have the information they need. We need to take care of immediate risks – but in a holistic manner, providing materials for education, for self-protection, and advocacy.

We are also fighting to make the State understand their role in this – we need an alive-and-kicking democracy – this need inspired the advocacy arm of Nirbhoy.

How does Nirbhoy innovate in the protection of communicators?

Nirbhoy is a holistic approach to protection, accessible to communicators in Bangladesh through an online platform.

Our protection work is hugely appreciated by the journalist community – at the grassroots level but also in media academia to a large extent creating resources and making information available.

The model is holistic, and Nirbhoy's self-protection toolkit, Shuroksha (meaning 'well-protected'), covers four vital elements: legal protection, physical protection, digital protection, and gender-based censorship, with various tools including risk analysis and pestle analysis trainings: training a huge number of journalists in the last year and a half – more than a hundred: our frontline work is growing.

The other innovative part is Shohojogita (meaning 'support'): this is direct assistance – legal, medical, and referral support. In 2017 we assisted over 28 journalists with various forms of support. Beneficiaries included the cases of Abhjit Roy and Fauisal Arefin Dipon.

We also have a documentation element to the platform, Shamiksha, and an advocacy element too: Sangskar. Ours is the only state of the art website in Bangladesh for communicators: it provides a huge variety of information – up-to-date news, full reports, and summaries – communicators can find out about what is really going on.

What are the major challenges you are currently facing in Bangladesh?

We face challenges on two levels: there is the level of risk that we face ourselves, but also the risks and challenges faced by journalists working in the field: it is a constant struggle.

I have been amazed at how they fight against so much adversity – they are so committed. Physical attacks are a major challenge: they are all-too-common – particularly when it comes to reporting on corruption issues or local level business issues – corruption and environmental issues most of all.

Local political elites, business people, local leadership of the ruling party, and law enforcement agencies are all connected: the end result of questioning them could be beating, or kidnap to undisclosed locations, even being left there for the night as a form of threat.

“We face challenges on two levels: there is the level of risk that we face ourselves, but also the risks and challenges faced by journalists working in the field: it is a constant struggle.”

What shifts and trends have you seen developing over the last five years?

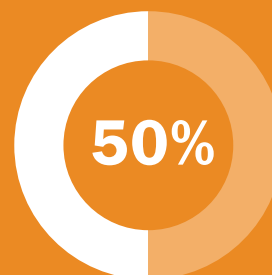
Though there was a huge spike in murders in 2013, there were no recorded murders for journalistic work in 2017, though the number of grievous injuries is very high.

However, in 2017 we had 76 cases of Section 57 of the ICT Act (see page 39) being used against communicators: that is enormous. We have also seen more than 80 cases of criminal defamation being slapped onto communicators too.

So, as you can see, killing has been reduced but the silencing process has continued.

What future do you see for freedom of expression in Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is such a diverse media environment – it is also a huge growth environment: 50% of people are now online, which has revolutionised the information environment.



of people in Bangladesh now have access to the internet

The government has promoted affordable access for all, but I want to see freedom with that – guarantees that people who are using it are not penalised for doing so.

Ultimately, I want to see that justice is done – perpetrators brought to justice and people able to see that measures are being taken: we need a strong message that there will be zero tolerance of violence against communicators, both online and off.

ARTICLE 19's Universal Periodic Review Submission, October 2017, jointly with Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB)

In the submission, ARTICLE 19 and RIB highlight a worrying increase in the rate of attacks on journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders in Bangladesh, and impunity for these. In the period under review, June 2013 to June 2017, ARTICLE 19 recorded:



1,159 violations

AGAINST JOURNALISTS, BLOGGERS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Including:

- 20 murders
- 10 cases of abduction
- 167 cases of serious bodily injury
- 253 cases of minor assault
- 113 verified threats
- 2 attempted killings
- 126 cases of destruction of equipment
- 52 gender-based attacks



Harassment through unwarranted application of the law also accounted for a large proportion of attacks:

- 120 criminal defamation cases
- 89 other vexatious litigations
- 115 cases under section 57 of the ICT Act 2006
- 92 cases of arrest and remand in police custody



Photo: Press Association Images

Riot police use water cannons and tear gas to disperse supporters at Zaman daily newspaper headquarters in Istanbul, Turkey, after an Istanbul court ordered it into administration in 2016

Keeping watch: monitoring political trials in Turkey

In an extraordinarily repressive environment, ARTICLE 19 has been maintaining ground and making our voice heard in order to generate and hold national and international pressure on Turkey to keep to human rights obligations, with a focus on trials of journalists persecuted for exercising their right to free expression.

Through consistent attendance at major trials, we are ensuring oversight of criminal procedures against journalists and emerging as a key supporter of freedom of expression in the country.

We use information from trial monitoring to target domestic and international opinion and pressure the government to release journalists jailed on politically-motivated charges, to repeal restrictive legislation, and to reform the criminal justice system.

In July 2016, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP government survived an attempted coup that left 256 dead. The authorities then introduced a state of emergency,

during which they have detained thousands, including judges, teachers, and journalists, on suspicion of involvement in the coup. Journalists and human rights groups seeking to cover the ongoing conflict in the South East of the country have been particularly affected by the post-coup crackdown.

In September 2017, we attended three mass criminal trials of journalists, the Zaman Newspaper case, Ahmet and Mehmet Altan's case, and the Cumhuriyet case.

Very few trial observers or journalists attended the opening hearings in the Zaman case, we were one of only two international organisations attending. The hearing

was held in a prison outside the city and lasted from 10am until 10pm. We played a key role in ensuring that information about this trial was shared and highlighted the lack of trial monitoring with other organisations.

“In the face of persistent and credible allegations of human rights violations, the Turkish authorities are seeking to prevent the circulation of information about the situation.

By harassing and imprisoning those who try to document or criticise what is going on, they have created an atmosphere of total impunity for human rights violations.”

Katie Morris, ARTICLE 19's Head of Europe and Central Asia

ARTICLE 19 also produced an expert opinion on the Zaman case, which was officially submitted to the court at the second hearing of the case.

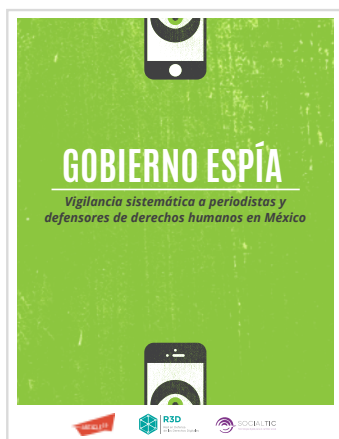
With our partner P24, we continue to coordinate an informal coalition of international actors to develop shared advocacy messages, and the platform ‘[Expression Interrupted](#)’ hosts P24’s list of detained journalists – now 155.

The platform is kept up to date with details of trials and detention (in English and Turkish), which is expanding to cover more forms of freedom of expression violation. Our resources enable local and international human rights bodies, journalists and politicians to formulate policy and response based on reliable information.

International consensus is slowly being reached that this crackdown goes far beyond measures to respond to any coup attempt: monitoring procedures at the Council of Europe have even been re-opened.

Government turned spy: surveillance of lawyers and journalists in Mexico

The malware ‘Pegasus’ was first documented in 2016, used against activist Ahmed Mansoor in the United Arab Emirates.



Report: Government Spy: Systematic surveillance of journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico

In 2017, ARTICLE 19 [revealed the use of Pegasus in Mexico](#), confirming that at least three institutions within the Mexican Federal Government had both acquired and deployed the malware against communicators and even investigators of the Ayotzinapa murders from the Organization of American States.

With Citizen Lab (University of Toronto), R3D: Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales Social, and SocialTIC, we published a detailed report on the use of ‘Pegasus’, which is marketed exclusively at governments and was designed to target terrorists. It is highly sophisticated and invasive, able to infiltrate smartphones to ‘monitor every detail of a person’s cellular life’, according to the [New York Times coverage of our story](#).

We later reported that Karla Micheel Salas Ramírez and David Peña Rodríguez, lawyers and human rights defenders, had received SMS texts related to the malware in 2015. These two lawyers had been involved in the murder cases of Ruben Espinosa, Nadia Vera, Mile Virginia Martín, Yesenia Quiroz, and Olivia Alejandra Negrete, who were killed in Navarte, Mexico City in 2015.

The use of malware in this way is illegal, disproportionate, and a restriction on the rights to privacy and freedom of expression. Spying and surveillance have become an effective tool for intimidation of HRDs, activists, and journalists. It is a way to control the flow of information and is an abuse of power: more than 200 organisations and individuals joined us in condemning the tactics and demanding accountability.

We have made an urgent call for justice to the General Attorney on Crimes against Freedom of Expression. ARTICLE 19 and R3D are demanding a full investigation and new measures to regulate these tactics and tools: we ask that the authorities explain their reasons for taking these measures against individuals.

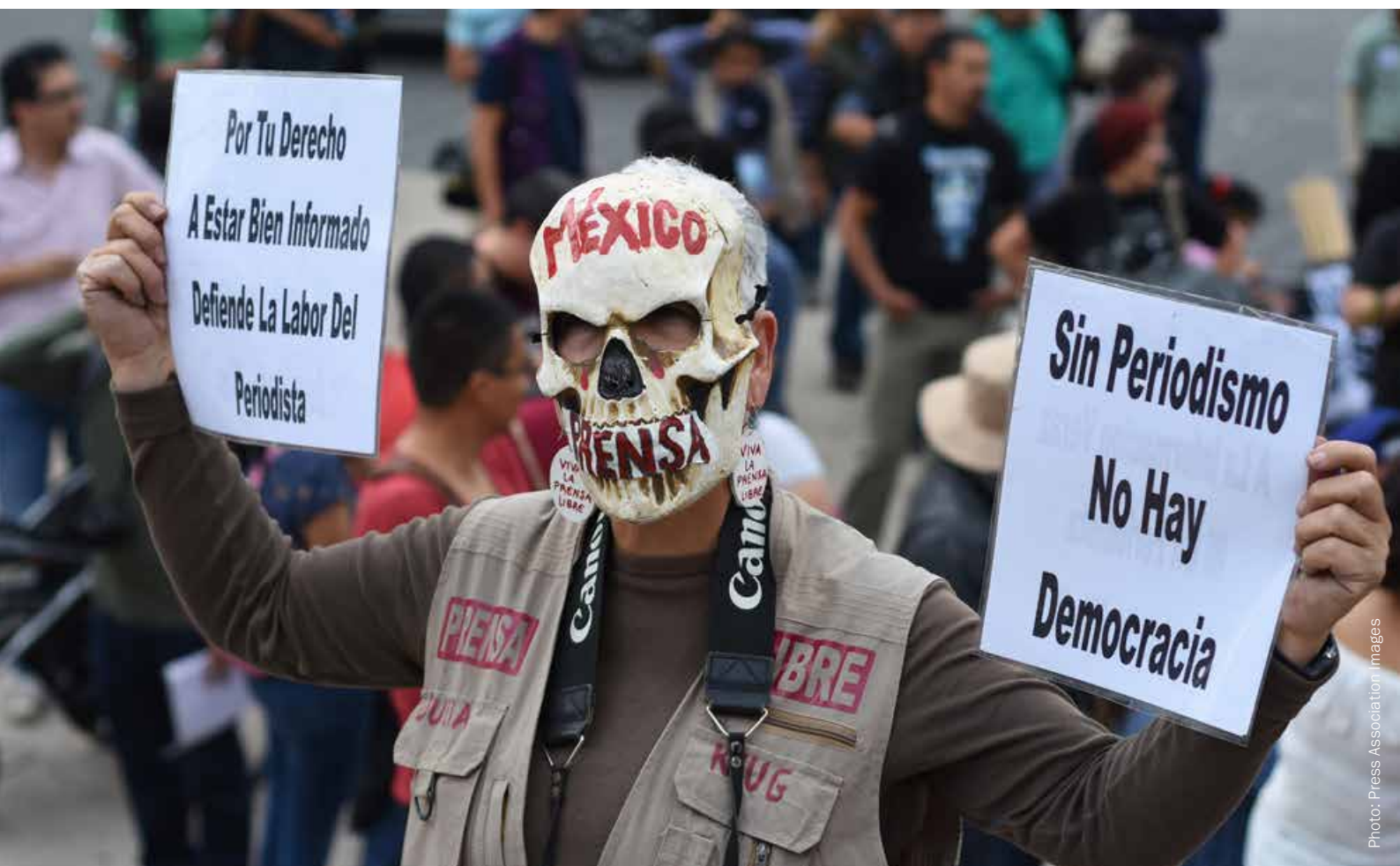


Photo: Press Association Images

A woman protests the murder of journalists in Mexico City, March 2017

Taking it to the top: ensuring legal protection for communicators in Mexico

More communicators have been brought under the protection of laws which protect journalists, thanks to a legal intervention by ARTICLE 19 in 2017.

In 2014, photographer Edwin Canché was arbitrarily detained and tortured in Seyé, Yucatán, by five police officers, for covering a crash caused by the nephew of the mayor, who was both inebriated and a minor.

Though justice for these crimes against him remains elusive, his case has been the cause of huge developments in legal protection of freedom of expression in Mexico.

ARTICLE 19 and Equipo Indignación took on Canché's legal representation in 2014, and we have been long been active at international and national levels in pushing to widen the understanding of 'journalism'.

A narrow interpretation of 'journalist' is often used by authorities to avoid dealing with cases sent for investigation at Federal level, where crimes against journalists must be dealt with. This leaves many journalists unprotected – Edwin was one of these.

However, following our legal submission, the National Supreme Court endorsed a broad and *functional* definition of 'journalist', and allowed the investigation of the case at federal level.

This wider definition views journalism as an exercise of the right to freedom of expression, without need of accreditation or affiliation with a media outlet. This is something we have been advocating for globally for many years and will bring more communicators in Mexico under stronger legal protection.

Transparency

Transparency and the right to information enable the public and civil society to access information held by public bodies, empowering them to hold leaders accountable, develop a fuller understanding of the world, and ensure other human rights. 119 countries now have right to information laws: with three new countries adopting them in 2017.

The targets and indicators adopted in the Sustainable Development Goals relating to information have provided a key foothold for freedom of expression and the right to information in the global development agenda, and more widely. Of the 13 countries which have adopted right to information laws or binding regulations since 2016, we have been involved in eight.

An anti-corruption demonstration to protest a bill that would allow an amnesty for officials being prosecuted for alleged corruption in Tunis, Tunisia, May 2017





Transparency: the long view with David Banisar

David Banisar leads ARTICLE 19's work on transparency and the right to information. He has been working in the field of access to information for nearly 30 years and is one of the leading voices on the issue, consulted by organisations and governments across the world, from the Council of Europe to the UN Development Programme and the World Bank.

We sat down with David to chat about what's new and what's next in the 'infosphere'.



What keeps you fighting for the right to information – what keeps it interesting for you?

I started out in promoting privacy rights using the Freedom of Information Act against the USA to find out government plans for surveillance, wire taps, and restrictions on encryption – it was a big part of my work and I started becoming an advocate to help others use it too.

It stays interesting because the uses are so varied: one day we are using it to find out how governments are receiving money around the extractive industries, the next to help people get the right to water or health, fight corruption, or using it to monitor how governments are trying to violate people's right to privacy.

It is such a powerful tool for so many different reasons.

What are the battlegrounds for the right to information at the moment?

Corruption is the most important area going forward – corruption is what's wasting more money than anything else globally and it is affecting people's lives most strongly: not enough funding because oil revenue disappears, or hospital supplies disappear, or money disappears into the fleet of Mercedes Benz instead of paying for schools.

“Corruption is the most important area going forward – corruption is what's wasting more money than anything else globally and it is affecting people's lives most strongly.”

That is the top thing – but it is complex: it intersects with a variety of other areas including whistleblowing and the extractive industries, secrecy around ownership of companies, etcetera etcetera...

Transparency in public procurement is another big focus: the way governments interact with private business to contract goods and services. I have

been working with the UN Commission against Corruption Civil Society Coalition and at the Information Commissioner's Conference in 2017 to try and instil a deeper understanding of the importance of all this. This is all part of ARTICLE 19's ongoing Open Contracting Project.

Integrating the environmental perspective is another important focus: the UN Environment Programme announced an environmental defenders programme in 2017. We hosted the first UN Environmental Assembly side event on law and environmental defenders in 2016, and we have been pushing to get it on the agenda for years with research like our 'Shades of Green' series.

It has been really good to see the Aarhus Convention recognising these interacting factors in 2017 in their resolutions and work plans – that is something we have been advocating for some time.

But it is a vast and complex infosphere out there – no matter how far you go, there is always further, and the challenges keep coming!

What is the biggest challenge ahead for access to information?

A lot of governments are still paying lip service to it even when they do have laws in place: they adopt the law and then do little to implement it or find some excuse not to adopt it. Ghana – the government has 17 years of broken promises – like a clock, each year, they say they will do it, and every year a new excuse.

Tech has been a mixed factor too: it gives a means for people to access more and do more with it, but on the other hand, it is often considered to be an alternative to a legal right with open data – open data without a proper legal regime is whatever the government feels like releasing – so it is used as an excuse not to give real rights of access.



Red masks formed part of activist group Rio de Paz's installation protesting corruption in São Paulo, Brazil, June 2017

What was the highlight of 2017 for you?

At the UN Meeting of the Convention Against Corruption, it was great to hear so many countries from so many different backgrounds and parts of the world all talking about how important access to information was in fighting corruption – and whistleblowing too.

Previously governments focussed on commissions and laws – they now recognise the need for the public to be involved. That tells me real change has been achieved.

What was the biggest win from the last 30 decades of the right to information?

Seeing the number of countries with right to information laws leap upwards and being able to personally shape some of those laws to make them work better.

The right to information has gone from something really unusual, and even rejected by most governments as something 'Western', to something that is really common in every region in the world now.

The understanding that it is important has changed from something only available in developed countries to something available to everyone.

Where do you see the right to information in 15 years' time?

Access also remains uneven – there is a lot of work to do on that – a significant part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda is to ensure that all groups are served, not just wealthy middle-class groups – that works hand in hand with our work on the right to information, particularly our ongoing work training focussed on women and rural areas.

I expect almost every country to have a law by the end of the SDGs in 2030 – we have another 70 countries left which do not have right to information laws.

The bigger fight will be ensuring that there really is a right of information that gives people the information they need: that is our next battle.

Allies in information: investigative journalism in Russia

‘Edinomyshlennik’ means someone who thinks as you do and shares your values: this concept has been at the heart of our project on the right to information and its impact.

As well as facilitating public interest and investigative journalism, we have fostered and reinforced an expanding community of likeminded people. It would be hard to overstate just how important this sense of shared purpose and solidarity is to journalists, bloggers, and activists working in Russia today. ARTICLE 19 has also forged a strong relationship with Team 29 – a group of experts on access to information in Russia.

Russia’s 2010 Freedom of Information Law is progressive and surprisingly liberal. Soon after the adoption of the law, however, the social and political climate in Russia became more hostile to individual rights and there are significant weaknesses in the law’s application.

Nevertheless, its existence provides an opportunity to exercise the right to know: it is vital to keep it active, so ARTICLE 19 and Team 29 have been promoting its use nationwide.

We have been supporting partners in taking advantage of this progressive law to challenge denials of access and non-compliance with the right to information, with the aim of keeping the law robust and fit for purpose, all the while setting precedents for positive interpretations of it.

Since 2016, more than 100 journalists, bloggers, and activists across ten regions in Russia have been trained and supported to submit access to information requests. In particular, we have supported and promoted RosOtvét – an online portal which allows individuals to give details of information they wish to access, which is then turned into a formal request and submitted to the relevant authority by a team of lawyers. The service is now receiving 60 information requests monthly.

100+ journalists, bloggers, and activists

across ten regions in Russia have been trained and supported to submit access to information requests.

What may have started as an individual’s request for information about their particular plight often proved to be a journalist’s way into a story of systemic corruption, abuse of power, or misallocation of funds.

The stories published by media partners 7x7 and Caucasian Knot had such wide readership that journalists and bloggers employ the expertise they gained from the project as a normal working tool of their profession.

7x7 journalists now have a reputation for successful right to information requests and often get calls and messages from the public asking for help with local concerns. Before the project began, journalists in 7x7 would file between two to five right to information requests per month: that figure is now around 30.

Caucasian Knot even received an anonymous letter about an illegal oil refinery operating close to residential area, which enabled them to investigate and publish a [full report](#) on its existence and the potential effects on the local population – despite its lack of registration or existence in official records.

In October 2017, Team 29 published an investigation into care homes in Russia based on the results from information requests to 85 regions in Russia requesting information on their care homes, of which 41 regions sent responses.

“Our work on the right to information is proof that human rights in Russia are well worth nurturing.”

Stories by 7x7 and Caucasian Knot have given hope to their readers in the Russian regions by providing an example of what can be achieved simply by invoking the laws of the land.

As well as enhancing the standard and readership of public interest journalism and awareness around the power of information rights, we supported the creation of practical resources such as Team 29’s Catalogue of Open Sources. Team 29’s own website is reaching monthly highs of 75,000 hits – “for a human rights website, the number is colossal”, the editor told us.

Through a pilot ‘mini-grant’ scheme, we have also supported 13 individual projects in seven regions of Russia, applying information rights to a huge range of work – from environmental projects to prison initiatives.

Putin’s regime is doing all it can to create a hostile environment for international NGOs, but our work on the right to information is proof that human rights in Russia are well worth nurturing.

Shoring up the foundations: strengthening information access in Tunisia

After three years of advocacy and close advisory support from ARTICLE 19, Tunisia adopted its right to information law in 2016: it is one of the strongest in the world.

The law provides a strong regional model for the right and covers all types of information held by the public sector, and private bodies managing public interest projects, as well as NGOs receiving public money. It recognises the right regardless of nationality and established an independent Committee on Access to Information.

Our work did not finish here: the right to information depends on a combination of informed, active citizens and willing officials. To make the sure the law can take its full effect, we have been building the capacity of officials, civil society organisations, and targeted groups to strengthen and enhance information access across the country. This work will ensure that the law is understood and properly used by both those requesting and those providing information.

“The right to information depends on a combination of informed, active citizens and willing officials.”

With our support, civil society organisations and rural women have been submitting information requests to health services’ providers through [info4all](#), an electronic platform. Officials from health sector are responding to requests and are even starting to proactively provide more information.

We also contributed to a law to protect whistleblowers in 2017: our recommendations were adopted, ensuring that the law will be effective in promoting the disclosure of public interest information, and protecting whistleblowers from retribution.

Expanding horizons: information in indigenous languages in Mexico

Information on the construction of a school in the Mexican state of Chiapas was requested in the indigenous ch’ol language and in audio format. When the request was rejected by the Ministry of Education, ARTICLE 19 appealed.

Our appeal resulted in a pronouncement regarding access to information and non-discrimination; the ministry was instructed to fulfil the request in ch’ol and in audio.

It is a huge step forward that the Mexican State have recognised the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Mexican people in the application of the right to information.

Requests must now be fulfilled in the petitioner’s native language, as well as in an appropriate format. This a real turning point in access to public information: not only does it benefit indigenous communities but will also act as a precedent in favour of visually impaired and/or illiterate people.

The case sets a high standard and a good maximum guarantee of the right to access to information: it will necessarily be a reference for future decisions, and is in favour of citizens from all backgrounds and abilities.

Taboo and silence: abortion in Brazil



Report: 5 years of the Access to Information Law: an analysis of transparency cases

Five years after Brazil's access to information legislation was passed, ARTICLE 19 has used the law to reveal how a lack of available information creates a violation of the right to abortion.

The nexus between information and health rights is a fascinating new area, and we uncovered a shocking failure of both information and health services, affecting some of the most vulnerable members of society.

The difficulty in accessing information about legal abortion, manipulation of scarce data, and non-compliance with the right to information pose a direct risk to women's health. The taboo and the moral and religious questions that permeate the discussion on abortion have created a tone of criminality, not public health.

77 years after the first exceptions to illegal abortion were included in the Penal Code, we discovered that lack of information not only obscures where abortion services can be found, but also disguises the inadequacy of the services available. The information also fails to take into account women who require medical support after illegal abortions at unofficial 'clinics'.

This work was part of an [extensive report](#), with five new pieces of original research on information access in Brazil, from public safety to pesticides.

Our findings were shared with women's rights organisations and we will now be working together to map information on abortion, identifying information which should be published and contrasting it with actual publication practices, as well as analysing the quality of data currently provided. The map will highlight current sources of public information on legal abortion and will facilitate access to them.

Transcending borders: sharing resources across East Africa

Most countries in East Africa have adopted right to information legislation: it is now important to help journalists use the laws in their work.

As well as giving workshops, we have been spearheading a regional coalition of more than 25 top investigative journalists, which supports cross-border investigations, shares knowledge and experience of using access to information laws, and provides solidarity.

The Right to Information and Investigative Journalism Network has members from Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, and South Sudan, all of whom were part of the regional training. The group create collective plans for responding to human rights violations in the region and share information on access to information and investigations.

The coalition has been creating strategies to keep the disappearance of Tanzanian journalists Azory Gwanda and Jalot Mangwengwe on the media agenda and in the public eye. Members and their organisations have campaigned together to pressure the Tanzanian government to ensure prompt and thorough investigation.

Governance and accountability

Over the course of 2017, our trustees focussed on a number of objectives including the induction of new board members to their roles, and the development of new regional boards.

One of the key aims of 2017 was to increase the diversity of the international board, and strengthen our capacity to develop international fundraising, and strengthen our approach to holistic security.

Governance highlights

The sub-committees – the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Governance Sub-Committee – continue to meet regularly and manage the financial and governance responsibilities of the international board.

The trustees also launched several other projects:

- **The Good Governance Guide** – a manual that will support the development of best practice throughout our governance structure. Based on the Charity Commission's Code, the guide establishes the principles of governance in ARTICLE 19 for all new trustees of both regional and international boards.
- **Security Task Force** – the focus of this group was on developing an integrated approach to security throughout ARTICLE 19. Implementation of a broad range of measures is now underway.
- **Fundraising Task Force** – this group will explore how best to support development of our new individual major donor strategy.

Accountability and transparency

ARTICLE 19 is a member of Accountability Now (AN), and trustees pay particular attention to our obligations under the charter. www.accountablenow.org

In 2017 various steps were taken in response to questions raised during the 2016 annual accountability review, undertaken by AN.

In addition, we are obliged to inform the Charity Commission of incidents that may be a cause of concern. One incident was reported to the Commission in 2017, concerning a serious breach of trust of a financial nature by an employee of one of our partners in Cambodia. Full disclosure has been made to our auditors and donor for the project, and disciplinary action has been taken against the individual. Full details of the incident can be accessed via the Charity Commission website, or obtained from ARTICLE 19.

Farewells

We would like to say thank you to all our trustees for their guidance and support this year.

We would like to say a particular thank you to Malak Poppovic, who has worked on the International Board for several terms since 2009, and to Peter Greste who has been with the board since 2016.

Our Trustees

Arturo Franco
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Gayathry Venkiteswaran
Jacob Akol
Jennifer Robinson
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Malak Poppovic
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Paddy Coulter (Chair)
Peter Greste
Tamar Ghosh



ARTICLE 19's 30th Anniversary event was one of the highlights of our year

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United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Mexico

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

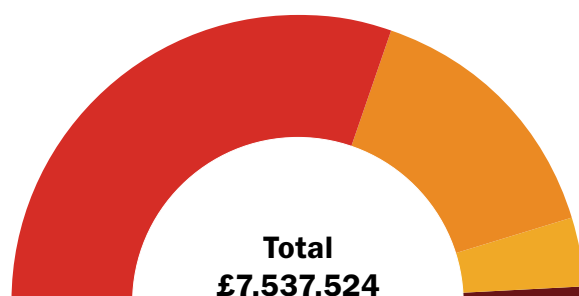
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The World Resources Institute (WRI), Tunisia

Financial summary

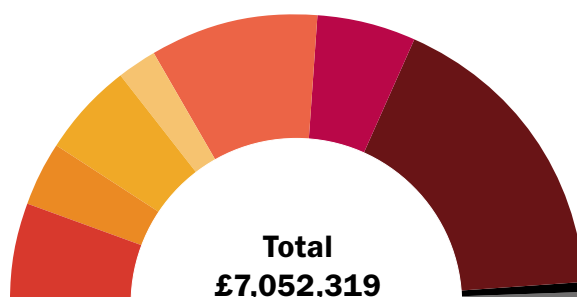
Income

● Governments	£4,599,186
● Trusts and Foundations	£2,238,281
● NGOs	£601,486
● Regional and Multinational	£77,994
● Others	£20,577



Expenditure

● Africa	£805,197
● Asia	£524,375
● Latin America	£746,781
● Law and Policy	£276,906
● Europe and Central Asia	£1,367,411
● Middle East and North Africa	£770,665
● Global	£2,421,555
● Cost of generating income	£69,628
● Governance	£69,800



Net income for the year
£485,204

Funds brought forward
£1,858,511

Total funds carry forward*
£2,343,715

*Carry forward includes reserves and restricted fund to be spent in 2018

In addition to the figures above, ARTICLE 19 Mexico recorded income of £1,228,960, expenditure of £978,494 and a surplus of £250,466 in pre-audit end of year figures.

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ARTICLE 19 works for a world where all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination. We do this by working on two interlocking freedoms, which set the foundation for all our work. The Freedom to Speak concerns everyone's right to express and disseminate opinions, ideas and information through any means, as well as to disagree from, and question power-holders. The Freedom to Know concerns the right to demand and receive information by power-holders for transparency good governance and sustainable development. When either of these freedoms comes under threat, by the failure of power-holders to adequately protect them, ARTICLE 19 speaks with one voice, through courts of law, through global and regional organisations, and through civil society wherever we are present.

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