

The logo for Article 19, featuring a white paper airplane shape with the text "ARTICLE 19" inside. The background of the entire page consists of abstract, flowing shapes in shades of orange, yellow, and dark blue.

ARTICLE 19

# **International Annual Report 2020**

Defending Freedom of Expression  
and Information around the World



International Women's Day protest in Mexico City on 8 March 2020. Among other demands, protesters called for justice for the more than 10 women murdered daily in Mexico and the decriminalisation of abortion. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Mexico & Central America)

# Contents



- 6 **From the Executive Director:**  
Quinn McKew
- 7 **From the Chair of the Board:**  
Paddy Coulter
- 8 **Viral lies:** Misinformation  
and COVID-19
- 9 **A global response to a  
global crisis**
- 12 **"It's all about prioritising  
wellbeing":** Supporting our  
staff through the pandemic
- 13 **Reporting on the pandemic**
- 14 **Global Expression Report  
2019/2020:** Most people  
now live in a freedom of  
expression crisis
- 16 **Researching rights**
- 18 **Law and policy**
- 22 **International advocacy**
- 28 **Freedom of expression:** A tool  
to achieve women's equality
- 32 **Campaign updates**
- 34 **Building capacity, enhancing  
safety:** Training and workshops

International Women's Day protest in Mexico City on 8 March 2020. Among other demands, protesters called for justice for the more than 10 women murdered daily in Mexico and the decriminalisation of abortion. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Mexico & Central America)

## Civic Space



- 37 **Huge step forward for the right  
to protest worldwide**
- 39 **Combating "hate speech"  
worldwide**
- 40 **Holistic protection of journalists  
and civil society in Kenya,  
Malawi, and Myanmar**
- 41 **Research uniting civil society  
in the Middle East and North  
Africa**

Hundreds of people protest on 8 February 2020 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in repudiation of gender violence and in memory of those who died because they were women. (Photo: Dario Oliveira/NurPhoto)

## Digital



- 43 **Artificial intelligence:** A Global  
South perspective
- 43 **Working with dating apps  
to protect the LGBTQI+  
community**
- 45 **Lawsuit against facial  
recognition in São Paulo  
subway**
- 46 **Assessing the human rights  
impacts of Internet registries**

Supporter of Net Neutrality Lance Brown Eyes protests the Federal Communications Commission's decision to repeal the program in Los Angeles, California, 28 November 2017. (Photo: REUTERS/ Kyle Grillot)



## Media



- 48 Launch of first independent press council in Middle East and North Africa
- 49 Protecting independent media in fragile contexts
- 50 Social Media Council pilot greeted with enthusiasm by stakeholders
- 51 Major improvements to media legislation in Tunisia following ARTICLE 19 advocacy

People hold a banner reading 'Free country, free press' as they march in Budapest during a protest for media freedom after the editor-in-chief of Index, Hungary's leading independent news website, was fired. (Photo: REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo)

## Protection



- 53 **SLAPPED:** New commitments to end "gag lawsuits" in Europe
- 55 Addressing the online harassment and abuse of women journalists
- 56 Protecting journalists during COVID-19
- 56 **ARTICLE 19** sets to work in Algeria
- 57 **The Hub:** A dynamic security platform in Mexico
- 58 Standing up for media freedom in Malaysia
- 58 **ARTICLE 19** co-chairs new Media Freedom Coalition network

Thousands of people demonstrated in Paris against the Global Security Law, promoted by French President Macron and his majority, which would forbid anyone from photographing or filming police members and would have a chilling effect on journalists, photographers, and videographers. Police arrested 150 people, including journalists, and several were injured. (Photo: Fabien Pallueau/NurPhoto)

## Transparency



- 60 Importance of transparency and access to information recognised globally under COVID-19
- 60 Transparency in 2020: A Global Perspective
- 61 Major regional developments on the right to information
- 62 Iran's Freedom of Information Act: New audiovisual guides
- 62 Implementing Kenya's Access to Information Law
- 63 Law reform a first step to improve transparency in Mexico
- 63 UN HRC adopts freedom of expression resolution

64 Governance

66 Our donors

68 Contact us

Whistleblowers Edward Snowden, Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are seen in the installation 'Anything to Say?', by Italian artist Davide Dormino on the Place des Nations in front of the UN European headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, September 2015. According to a press release the bronze sculpture, which weighs more than a tonne, is a testimony in favour of freedom of expression and information, without any political controversy. (Photo: REUTERS/Pierre Albouy)

# Abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
DNS	Domain Name System
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
UN HRC	UN Human Rights Council
IML	Information and Media Literacy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PIR	Public Interest Registry
PRIMED	Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development
PROTECT	Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency-Enhancing Civic Transformation
SLAPP	Strategic lawsuit against public participation
SMC	Social Media Council
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

## From the Executive Director: Quinn McKew



“From campaigns supporting indigenous people in the Amazon to television broadcasts in Bangladesh, and from disinformation trackers in Western Africa, to an award-winning health channel in Tunisia, the breadth of work as seen in this year’s report highlights the remarkable resilience and resolve demonstrated by teams across the organisation.”

**Quinn McKew**  
Executive Director

2020 fundamentally changed the world in ways we are still discovering. While the virus infected millions across 2020, lockdowns and other restrictive government measures have affected millions more.

Because what hasn’t changed is the inclination of governments to exploit crisis to entrench power and gain greater control over our lives.

In times of crisis where there is a threat to public health on this scale, governments are allowed, and often required, to take more restrictive measures than they would in normal times. However, such powers typically have limits by way of a shelf life and an expiry date.

Alarming, many governments have exploited the coronavirus outbreak to entrench repressive measures, and in doing so, have crossed the limits that are set by international human rights laws. Dramatic increases in surveillance (including the widespread increase of deeply intrusive biometric technologies), extended Internet shutdowns (that prevent people from accessing health information, medical care, earning a living or connecting with their families), and unreasonable limits on public participation (through the suppression of protest or dissent) are some of the major trends we’ve seen this past year.

Power holders know that control of information and the public narrative is crucial to maintaining their control over public life. Protection of the right to speak and the right to know is an essential bulwark against this creeping authoritarianism around the world. ARTICLE 19 rose to this challenge in 2020, working with our partners in civil society and government to shine a light on the erosion of freedom of expression and adopt innovative programmes to protect people’s freedoms and ensure their voices can be heard.

Internally, ARTICLE 19 has adapted its processes to prioritise well-being and flexibility, offering tailored support to teams around the world. While many have struggled with adverse circumstances, particularly our teams in Brazil and Bangladesh who have faced uniquely dark situations, without exception, all have risen to the challenges of the pandemic and continued to deliver.

From campaigns supporting indigenous people in the Amazon to television broadcasts in Bangladesh, and from disinformation trackers in Western Africa, to an award-winning health channel in Tunisia, the breadth of work as seen in this year’s report highlights the remarkable resilience and resolve demonstrated by teams across the organisation.

As we look ahead, 2021 will see ARTICLE 19 reflect on the way forward through the design of a new five-year strategy. As we look to reduce inequalities and tackle the climate crisis, two of the biggest challenges facing humanity ahead, we know that true innovation and sustainable solutions will only be possible if we can guarantee that all people everywhere are free to speak and know how to access the information they need to make decisions about their lives.

## From the Chair of the Board: Paddy Coulter



“Looking outward, even as our annual *Global Expression Report* in 2020 showed that over half the world was living in a crisis of expression, we are painfully aware of how governments have used the pandemic to entrench repression. We foresee further declines this year. But, as the Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei has urged, it is in extraordinarily challenging times that we need to hold more than ever to common principles of freedom of speech and expression.”

**Paddy Coulter**  
Chair of the Board

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is credited with the notion that change is the only constant. But surviving, indeed thriving on change, requires adaptability too. If the pandemic has taught us a lesson this past year, it is that a shared sense of struggle has made ARTICLE 19 stronger than ever.

The ability for our teams around the world to continue to function at the level they have and for programmes and campaigns to continue delivering against their objectives is a staggering achievement in the face of an unprecedented crisis. I credit our very experienced Senior Management Team with showing extraordinary flexibility and versatility in rising to the challenge.

This unique spirit of collaboration and sincere mutual partnership displayed in 2020 will, I believe, continue to shape our culture here at ARTICLE 19 and drive us to new levels of impact. The organisational growth, achieved over the span of the current six-year Expression Agenda strategy, gives us a platform to build on. It has seen:

- An expansion of our regional office capacity – our staff numbers have increased from 85 in 2015 to 186 in 2021 and most of this growth has been in our regional offices,
- The development of our digital work – the addition of critical expertise and skills over the last six years has meant that we are now defining key global debates within the tech space, and
- A phenomenal increase in the amount of money we can grant to partners from 2015 to 2021, going from £217,000 to £3.3 million.

I must put on record how grateful we are for the strong relationships we share with our partners and donors over this period. But, even as our growth has been rapid, we are keenly aware that we have much more to do in order to ensure that our internal systems are keeping in step. The [governance section](#) of this report outlines initiatives the International Board has been taking in this regard.

We have also considerably strengthened the Board through the addition of expert new Trustees – even as we bid farewell to our Vice-Chair, the redoubtable Russian media lawyer Galina Arapova who is standing down after nine years' service on the Board. I speak for all my fellow Trustees in extending heart-felt thanks for her stalwart support and advocacy for free expression. We are delighted that our Malaysian board member, journalist and activist Gayathry Venkiteswaran, has agreed to take over as Vice-Chair.

Looking outward, even as our annual *Global Expression Report* in 2020 showed that over half the world was living in a crisis of expression, we are painfully aware of how governments have used the pandemic to entrench repression. We foresee further declines this year. But, as the Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei has urged, it is in extraordinarily challenging times that we need to hold more than ever to common principles of freedom of speech and expression.



# Viral lies: Misinformation and COVID-19



A healthcare worker is seen crying outside the Regional Hospital in Malaga, Spain, in May 2020 as she receives applause from the public during the country's partial lockdown. (Photo: Jesus Merida / SOPA Images / Sipa USA)

“This is a time when, more than ever, governments need to be open and transparent, responsive and accountable to the people they are seeking to protect.”

**António Guterres**  
UN Secretary-General



In 2020, the advent and rapid spread of COVID-19 was accompanied by grave threats to human rights, from a hurricane of misinformation about the coronavirus – and effectiveness of measures to suppress it – to restrictions on human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and information and the right to freedom of assembly.

In a public health crisis of this scale, governments are allowed – indeed, required – to take more restrictive measures than usual to protect us. But the virus emerged into what was already the worst global environment for freedom of expression in a decade, and many governments used it as a new excuse to limit speech, control expression, and entrench repression online, in the media, and on the streets.

In light of these developments, ARTICLE 19's work became even more crucial. And we acted fast. In March 2020, we published a briefing on how states, the media, and social media companies could combat COVID-19 by committing to transparency, tackling misinformation, and promoting genuine health advice. Throughout the year, we challenged threats to freedom of expression around the world, monitoring and reporting on governments' overreach and ensuring human rights did not become yet another victim of the virus.



# A global response to a global crisis



Indigenous women in the Amazon's Parque das Tribos wearing face masks with the inscription 'Indigenous life is important'. Here, they show the face masks they have made for other residents in the region, which was severely affected by COVID-19. (Photo: Lucas Silva/dpa)

ARTICLE 19 proactively adapted to the pandemic, both at an international level and across all our regional offices. Here are just a few examples of our innovative work to respond to the challenges COVID-19 brought to freedom of expression, and our own operations, during 2020.

## Brazil: Supporting indigenous communities in the Amazonian Region



Having had to suspend field activities due to COVID-19 but concerned about the huge impacts the pandemic was having on vulnerable communities, we created a campaign called 'Share Information, Share Health' to support local community groups – to survive, first and foremost, but also to strengthen their fight against disinformation in their disproportionately affected communities. We supported 23 groups around the country, including five community networks in the Brazilian Amazonian Region.

**“**This was a campaign that actually helped save lives.”

**Thiago Firbida**  
Protection Coordinator, ARTICLE 19 Brazil

## Bangladesh: TV talk show on the role of religion in tackling the crisis

“The discussion brought changes in religious misbelief among common people.”

Dr AKM Shamsuzzaman  
Talk-show panellist

ARTICLE 19's Bangladesh and South Asia team organised a TV talk show, broadcast at primetime on Channel I, on the role of religion in tackling the COVID-19 crisis. The panel included a mullah scientist, a coronavirus specialist, and – uniquely for the region – a female Islamic scholar. Half a million people watched the show when it first aired, and it received nearly 2 million views on Facebook.

## West Africa: Disinformation tracker and media shows

In June 2020, ARTICLE 19 Senegal and Western Africa and partners launched an online tracker to monitor disinformation legislation and its use by law-enforcement officials during the pandemic. Since its launch, more than 500 people have used the **tracker**, and it has gained support from **influencers** and prominent **human rights** and academic organisations.

We also worked with a coalition to produce and broadcast a series of radio and TV shows relaying reliable information on COVID-19. The shows, broadcast on Senegal's most popular channels, reached a large audience across West Africa.

## Serbia: Speaking out against attacks on journalists under COVID-19

Under COVID-19, more physical attacks against journalists took place in Serbia than anywhere else in Europe. ARTICLE 19 supported journalists who were reporting on protests and the government's pandemic measures, and spoke out against attacks and harassment against them – including through the **Media Freedom Rapid Response** mechanism.

## Tunisia: School pupils create new web TV channel to raise awareness of COVID-19

ARTICLE 19 delivered a new project, **Ahkifree la Télé** (Speak Freely on TV), to promote media literacy and freedom of expression among schoolchildren by enabling them to create their own web TV channel. The schoolchildren produced and broadcast several videos to raise awareness of COVID-19 health measures and the importance of mental health during lockdown, and investigated whether their schools complied with the health measures. The project was shortlisted, for the second year in a row, for a Media and Information Education Award.



Participants in ARTICLE 19's web TV project, Ahkifree la Télé (Speak Freely on TV), to promote media literacy and freedom of expression among schoolchildren. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Middle East and North Africa)

## Mexico: Working with photojournalists to document COVID-19

ARTICLE 19's Mexico and Central America office worked with photojournalists across Mexico to show the situation in different parts of the country. The photos were shared on our **dedicated COVID-19 portal** alongside articles, vlogs, and infographics created by the team.



Reporters and journalists in Mexico continuing their work through the COVID-19 pandemic. ARTICLE 19 worked with photojournalists to show the situation in different parts of the country. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Mexico & Central America)



# “It’s all about prioritising wellbeing”: Supporting our staff through the pandemic

Maxine Harrington, Director of Human Resources, tells us how ARTICLE 19 adapted its internal working practices in response to COVID-19.

“We sent out a very early message to people emphasising that we would be prioritising wellbeing and giving people flexibility to manage their time at home. We relaxed our core hours and encouraged people not to think that, because they were working from home, they had to sit at their laptop from nine to five. The Human Resource team were quick with guidance on working from home, as well as tips for line managers.

“We were able to shift to working online quite quickly and to look at what people needed access to, including keeping staff connected informally at lunchtimes and coffee breaks. And we already had an allowance that staff could use for the gym, but now people can adapt that for apps or Zoom courses, like yoga or fitness classes.

“We rolled out a programme of online sessions on stress management and wellbeing, facilitated by an external trauma specialist. We had a real mix of people from different teams and regions on the calls, so it was another opportunity for people to get to know each other outside their teams. We provided specific sessions for line managers and senior leadership, focusing on supporting staff and crisis management.

“We also rolled out a series of four peace circles – facilitated discussions between 8 and 10 people – which enabled people to check in, process the lockdowns, and share what was going on in their lives.

“All of this contributed to the culture and working environment within ARTICLE 19.

**“This year was challenging, but it has brought us closer together.”**



**“**ARTICLE 19’s response to COVID-19 has been outstanding. The immediate reaction from senior management was that they cared about us, they cared about our families, they cared about our health. The response has always centred on our wellness, and I think that’s so rare. My lesson learned for 2020 is that ARTICLE 19 is resilient, caring, and that nothing can stop us.”

**Judy Taing**  
Head of Gender & Sexuality

# Reporting on the pandemic

## IRAN Use your right to know in Iran...

**To find out about the environment**

Download 2.5 MB

**To find out about health issues**

Download 1.4 MB

**Journalists**

Download 2.3 MB

## CENTRAL AMERICA

**Disinformation and COVID in the region (Spanish version)**

Download 21.5 MB

## INTERNATIONAL

**Ensuring the Public's Right to Know in the COVID Pandemic**

Download 483 KB

**Viral Lies: Misinformation and the Coronavirus**

Download 528 KB

**COVID-19: News Organizations Safety Protocols**

Download 2.3 MB

## RUSSIA

**Pandemic Big Brother Monitoring for restrictions of civil rights**

Visit website

## SENEGAL

**A pattern of Coronavirus-related attacks against the media**

Visit website

## BRAZIL

**Transparência para superar a crise (Transparency to Overcome the Crisis, Portuguese version)**

Download 2.8 MB

## GHANA

**Attacks on journalists reporting on the COVID-19 crisis**

Visit website

## NIGERIA

**Joint statement denouncing killing of citizens and intimidation of journalist**

Visit website

## KENYA

**COVID-19 Reporting in Kenya A Safety Guideline for Journalists**

Download 400 KB

## WEST AFRICA

**More transparency, accountability and access to information needed...**

Visit website

# Global Expression Report 2019/2020:

## Most people now live in a freedom of expression crisis

Every year in our *Global Expression Report*, ARTICLE 19 investigates the state of freedom of expression around the world and ranks every country. Our report is comprehensive, data-based, and establishes how free every person is to access the information they need and to communicate freely – both online and off.

Using our unique evidence-based metric, the GxR, we looked at 25 indicators across 161 countries, created a freedom of expression score (from 1–100) for each country, and assigned each country to one of five categories, i.e. In Crisis, Highly Restricted, Restricted, Less Restricted, and Open.

GxR score	GxR rating	Number of countries	% Global population
0–19	In Crisis	37	51%
20–39	Highly Restricted	22	
40–59	Restricted	29	11%
60–79	Less Restricted	35	17%
80–100	Open	38	7%
			15%

The number of countries and the percentage of the global population in each GxR category

Our *Global Expression Report 2019/2020* found that:

- Freedom of expression is at its **lowest since 2009**
- **More than half** the world's population now lives in a freedom of expression crisis
- **3.9 billion people** live in countries classed as Highly Restricted or In Crisis

The world's biggest and most influential countries – from the USA to Brazil to India – are in decline or crisis. Over the long term, declines in freedom of expression tended to be in countries with democratically elected leaders who used their tenure to concentrate power.



“It’s time our governments listen. In order to re-balance the power relationship between individuals, communities and state, we need to reclaim the Right to Speak and Right to Know.”

Quinn McKew  
Executive Director

## But real change is still possible.

Our report found that countries with large-scale protests leapt upwards in the freedom of expression and democratic scores. Armenia, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, and Tunisia achieved the greatest democratic gains of all. Armenia and Sudan – two of the biggest risers in score – saw major change through sustained protest, which translated into institutional reform.

BIGGEST RISES IN SCORE					
2018–2019		2014–2019		2009–2019	
Maldives	+32	Gambia	+59	Tunisia	+70
Mali	+17	Sri Lanka	+38	Gambia	+55
Sudan	+13	Maldives	+26	Sri Lanka	+39
Armenia	+13	Ecuador	+26	Myanmar	+31
		Armenia	+22	Fiji	+27

Countries with significant advances in GxR scores over one, five, and 10-year periods

Protest can force societies open, compel the powerful to listen, and reform the relationship between people and government. The message from the XpA's (a unique and innovative metric that enables us to measure freedom of expression) biggest advancers of 2020 – and from the entire decade in which we have published the *Global Expression Report* – is clear:

## Protest works.

People everywhere have been fighting for their rights and freedoms. And ARTICLE 19 has been fighting right alongside them – from our #RightToProtest campaign in Kenya to supporting feminist protest in Latin America, defending journalists covering COVID-19 protests in Eastern Europe, and successful international advocacy on the right to protest.



Sudanese protesters chant slogans as they gather ahead of a rally to put pressure on the government to improve conditions and push ahead with reform in Khartoum, Sudan, on 21 October 2020. (Photo: REUTERS/Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah)

# Researching rights

ARTICLE 19 publishes original research and insightful reports – monitoring, exploring, and shedding light on freedom of expression issues. These reports not only form the basis of advocacy and projects but also tackle impunity by creating visibility around violations of the rights of communicators worldwide.



## Audiovisual COVID-19 campaign for indigenous Mexican communities

“This campaign had a good impact, especially in Yucatán where there was almost no information in the Mayan language.”

**José Anastacio Euan Romero**  
Maya language speaker, Yucatán

Concerned at the lack of access to COVID-19 information among indigenous communities, many of whom neither speak Spanish nor have Internet access, our Mexico and Central America team created an innovative audiovisual campaign in five indigenous languages – Ch'ol Tumbalá dialect, Ch'ol Tila dialect, Tseltal, Tsotsil, and Maya – in partnership with community members in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Yucatán.

Audio pieces were broadcast on 17 community radio stations and social networks to amplify the campaign message, and we created 14 videos, which were widely shared. The campaign reached about 4,000 people from 25 different communities, who otherwise would not have had access to this vital public health information.

“It was important to spread the word in mother tongues to understand what the coronavirus is, and the care we must have, for ourselves and our families.”

**Hermelinda Díaz Shilón**  
Tsotsil language speaker, Chiapas

## Blood and shutdowns: Tightening the net in Iran

During nationwide protests in November 2019, Iran's Government cut off the Internet for over 80 million people and the authorities attacked and killed hundreds. Since then, the Iranian Government has shut down the Internet every time protests take place. As part of a series of briefings, we published a new report, *Tightening the Net 2020: After Blood and Shutdowns*, analysing the situation and offering clear solutions to the problem.

The report reached a **quarter of a million** people, **98%** of whom were inside Iran – proof that our work is reaching those who need it most. The Iranian Minister of Information and Communications Technology also engaged directly in conversation with us on Twitter after ARTICLE 19 called out his false statements.

Each briefing in this series has received extensive media coverage – including by the BBC, Verge, *Wired*, CBC, and *The New York Times* – and been used reports by UN Special Rapporteurs and the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC).

## The right to protest in Thailand

Youth-led pro-democracy protests gained momentum in Thailand throughout 2020, with protesters demanding a new constitution, a new government, and an end to the harassment of activists and political opponents. The Thai Government enacted repressive measures to quash the protests, **using COVID-19 as an excuse**. Authorities used water cannons and riot police to disperse protesters, and initiated criminal proceedings against scores of protest leaders.

ARTICLE 19 published a report, *#WhatsHappeningInThailand* (a hashtag pushed by the protesters), providing evidence of the Thai Government's crackdown and calling for change. Despite the government's attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms, the protest movement continues to grow.

## Access denied: Digital censorship in Latin America

In November 2020, in alliance with the Cyberlaw Clinic of Harvard Law School, ARTICLE 19 published a new report analysing the impact of a copyright-safeguarding tool, developed in the USA, that is often misused to censor online content in Latin America.

The report, *Acceso Denegado* (**Access Denied**), aims to help journalists, activists, human rights defenders, and civil society groups avoid censorship and protect themselves online. It was presented during a session of COLPIN 2020 (Latin American Conference of Investigative Journalism), whose attendees included journalists and communicators from many parts of Latin America, the Caribbean, the USA, and Canada. ARTICLE 19 and our partners are using the report to advocate against restrictive legislation and for human rights.



# Law and policy

ARTICLE 19's law and policy work positions us at the vanguard of freedom of expression worldwide. We provide analyses of national laws, submit expert opinions to national and regional courts, represent victims at international human rights bodies, and shape international standards on freedom of expression and information through our policy work.

Our legal experts engage with states and international actors, shaping standards addressing new challenges to freedom of expression and information, as well as creating toolkits and resources for governments, journalists, activists, and civil society.

We analyse legal drafts and bills and produce policy papers and briefs on critical expression issues across the world, creating legal documents which civil society groups can mobilise around, informing the understanding of stakeholders, and empowering others in advocacy. Working on these documents also keeps our international experts informed about issues faced at the national level.

## Legal analyses

ARTICLE 19 produced **35 legal analyses** in 2020. Here are just a few examples:



**Myanmar:** Communicable Diseases Bill



**EU:** Draft Regulation on Terrorist Content Online



**Tunisia:** Decree on distribution of financial aid to the private media sector



**Kenya:** Digital Economy Strategy



**Cuba:** Decree Law 370



**France:** *Loi Avia* (hate speech law)



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law on Online Platforms and Market Power in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on 29 July 2020. (Photo: Mandel Ngan / Pool via CNP)

## Spotlight on...

### Competition law: A crucial tool to protect freedom of expression on social media

The major social media companies have unprecedented power over our rights to expression and information, playing a huge role in deciding what we post, see, and share online. Their terms of service and community guidelines can be used to censor expression, and are enforced unpredictably, inconsistently, arbitrarily, and with no independent oversight. Yet our only alternative is to not use social media at all – which, given its ubiquity, is unviable.

ARTICLE 19 believes that, as the power of these companies grows and their unaccountability becomes more apparent, this can be dealt with through not only international human rights law but also anti-trust and competition law. Competition measures are essential to achieving media diversity – which, in turn, is essential to protecting freedom of expression. Monopolies, wherever they exist, skew markets and kill competition.

Throughout 2020, ARTICLE 19 advocated for the importance of competition law in preventing social media giants from exploiting their power and undermining freedom of expression. We:

- made submissions to **national** and EU competition watchdogs;
- published **articles** to raise awareness of the issue;
- helped establish a new network of civil society organisations capable of using competition tools to defend human rights; and
- were one of two civil society organisations to join a working group of governments (Canada, Finland, Germany, France, and Australia) and social media platforms (Google Canada, YouTube, and Twitter) aiming to ensure diversity in social media.

## Policy in Practice: “Online harms”

While challenging bullying, abuse, hate, and misinformation on social media are worthy goals, attempts to tackle these “online harms” often risk violating freedom of expression and consolidating power in the hands of social media companies and governments.

Throughout 2020, when online communication became more important than ever in the context of COVID-19, ARTICLE 19 **spoke out** about government proposals on online harms, including in the **UK** and **Pakistan**.

## Policy in Practice: Major new digital rights legislation in the EU

Throughout 2020, ARTICLE 19 contributed to the processes at the European Commission on two major new pieces of digital rights legislation: the **Digital Services Act** and the **Digital Markets Act**.

We **published** 10 recommendations for the EU Digital Services Act and **responded** to the EU consultation. In December, we **welcomed** the legislation's potential to become a blueprint for regulation and competition across online platforms, while also raising some concerns about their current form. We look forward to ensuring the acts live up to their potential and protect freedom of expression online.



“The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act are a once in a generation opportunity to get regulation right in this complex area. To be a success, the protection of human rights, including freedom of speech, and user choice must be at their heart.”

**Barbora Bukovska**  
Senior Director for Law & Policy

### Featured legal interventions



#### Turkey: Failure to act on European Court judgments puts freedom of expression at risk

In 2020, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers reviewed Turkey's implementation of judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Ahead of this review, ARTICLE 19 and the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project **warned** that the rights to freedom of expression and assembly continue to be at risk in Turkey.

We submitted two communications to the Committee on Turkey's lack of implementation of the **İşıkırık group** and **Öner and Türk group** of judgments – our first communications of this kind. These cases form part of a broader pattern of human rights violations in Turkey, which has worsened since the July 2016 coup attempt.



“With the ongoing imprisonment of philanthropist Osman Kavala and politician Selahattin Demirtas – who have both been detained for several years now, and who both have ECtHR judgments ruling for their release – Turkey is becoming more brazen in its non-implementation of judgments, making it even more crucial that we continue to hold Turkey accountable through bodies like the Committee of Ministers.”

**Sarah Clarke**  
Head of Europe and Central Asia



“This ruling represents an important precedent in the country regarding criminal regulations that restrict free expression. And it is also an important achievement that directly impacts the work of the three journalists.”

**Luis Knapp**  
Defence Coordinator, ARTICLE 19  
Mexico and Central America



### Mexico: Court grants *amparo* to three journalists in 'halconeo' case

On 20 April 2020, The Twelfth District Court in the State of Guanajuato ruled in favour of three journalists – Luis Alberto Martínez Flores, Javier Alejandro Bravo López, and José Raymundo Sandoval Bautista – prosecuted for the so-called crime of *halconeo* for publishing information of public interest about officials. This *amparo*, a constitutional protection lawsuit that permits any individual or group to seek judicial relief in abuses of rights, was filed with the support and representation of ARTICLE 19, following the incorporation of this crime into the Criminal Code in July 2019.

*Halconeo* criminalises the exercise of journalistic work and the right to information. In Guanajuato, it carries a sentence of 2–7 years and a fine. The Court's decision means no authority can use this 'crime' against the journalists. It also sets a precedent



### Indonesia: Criminal defamation charges against academic must be dropped

In April 2020, ARTICLE 19 filed an *amicus curiae* brief in a criminal defamation case before the Indonesian Court. The case was brought against Dr Saiful Mahdi, a professor at Syiah Kuala University, for statements he made in a faculty WhatsApp group concerning his university's hiring process.

Criminal defamation constitutes a disproportionate limitation on the right to freedom of expression. We *called* on the Indonesian Court to dismiss the charges, arguing that a finding of guilt would run counter to Indonesia's obligations under both international human rights law and Indonesian constitutional law.



Andrea Giuliano, an Italian gay rights activist living in Hungary, performing at Budapest Pride in 2014, after which he received death threats and harassment from members of far-right groups. (Photo: REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo)



### Hungary: European Court should clarify standard of investigation of online harassment

Following a performance at Budapest Pride in 2014, Andrea Giuliano, an Italian gay rights activist living in Hungary, was harassed and threatened with death by members of far-right groups. Giuliano made a criminal complaint to the police, after which the authorities launched a woefully inadequate investigation.

In 2020, ARTICLE 19 and ILGA-Europe *submitted* a third-party intervention before the ECtHR in the case of *Giuliano v Hungary*. We argued the Court should clarify an appropriate standard for the effective investigation of online harassment and abuse – standards that would have repercussions far beyond this individual case.

# International advocacy

ARTICLE 19 shapes standards at international bodies, informing our advocacy through the local and national priorities of our regional offices and partners. In turn, our national work uses international commitments and obligations to drive local change.



General Assembly Holds Special Session in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic (Photo: United Nations)

## The right to privacy in the digital age

ARTICLE 19 welcomed a new resolution on privacy in the digital age, adopted at the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2020. It includes new language on equality and non-discrimination, artificial intelligence, biometrics, encryption, and gender, and addresses privacy challenges in the context of new technologies deployed during COVID-19.

“The right to privacy is important for the realization of the right to freedom of expression and to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and is one of the foundations of a democratic society.”

UN Human Rights Council

“International standards are really important as they reinforce our efforts to reform national laws and policies but also provide a benchmark to measure the performance of domestic actors and institutions when it comes to the safety of journalists.”

Callum Birch  
UN Advocacy Officer



## Spotlight on...

### New UN resolution on the safety of journalists

On 6 October, the UN HRC adopted a **new resolution on the safety of journalists**. Led by a cross-regional core group and co-sponsored by over 70 countries, this signals strong international commitment to end attacks, reprisals, and violence against journalists worldwide.

ARTICLE 19 worked very closely with the core group of states, and many of our priorities were reflected in the final resolution, including on extraterritorial threats against journalists, strategic lawsuits against public participation, journalists covering protests, gender-specific threats against journalists, and ensuring journalists' safety during COVID-19.

We **welcomed** the resolution, and urge all states to translate it into concrete action to protect journalists worldwide.



The police use water cannons against protesters at a demonstration, called by journalists' unions and other organisations, to protest against the proposed 'Overall Security' bill near in Paris, France, on 17 November 2020. The bill proposed provisions to 'prohibit the malicious use' of images 'or any other element of identification' of police officers and gendarmes, which would be punishable by one year imprisonment. (Photo: Raphael Lafargue/ABACAPRESS.COM)



## Istanbul Process website launched at UN

In collaboration with Universal Rights Group, ARTICLE 19 launched its [Istanbul Process website](#) at a UN side event in September 2020. The website acts as a bank of best practice for the implementation of UN HRC Resolution 16/18 on addressing intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief. The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief spoke at the side event and recommended the website to help states evaluate their implementation of the resolution.

---

## Counter-terrorism and human rights at the UN

Over the past year, ARTICLE 19 has become increasingly active in tackling the impact of global and national counter-terrorism measures on the enjoyment of human rights, including freedom of expression. We are one of a handful of civil society organisations, leading a broad coalition of 70+ organisations from every region of the world, in pushing for free and full participation of civil society in the UN's global counter-terrorism architecture.

“Counter-terrorism measures are increasingly being abused by some governments to stifle or muzzle political dissent or criticism by civil society actors, in particular in the current context of a global pandemic. UN Member States must stop this worrying trend through adopting clear international standards on counter-terrorism, reinforcing existing international human rights norms.



The right to privacy is important for the realisation of the right to freedom of expression and to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and is one of the foundations of a democratic society.”

**Anna Oosterlinck**  
Head of UN Team

---

## Universal Periodic Reviews

Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) assess the extent to which countries have implemented human rights recommendations they accepted during their previous UPRs. They also raise outstanding human rights concerns and make recommendations to governments.

ARTICLE 19 made UPR submissions for Rwanda and Myanmar in 2020, and did follow-up advocacy on Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey.



## Policy in Practice:

### Turkey: Journalism is essential for a healthy society



Man holds a picture of Kavala in front of the Turkish Embassy in Berlin during a vigil of the PEN Centre for the Turkish publisher and patron of culture, Osman Kavala, on 15 October 2020. (Photo: Christophe Gateau/dpa)

ARTICLE 19 strongly advocated for Turkey to halt its crackdown on journalists and civil society throughout 2020, delivering an **oral statement** at the 43rd regular session of the UN HRC and leading a coalition in a submission to Turkey's UPR. States made 60 recommendations at the UPR – nearly twice the number in the previous cycle – to which our advocacy strongly contributed.

On the same day that Turkey underwent its UPR, civil society leader Osman Kavala stood trial in Istanbul on spurious charges. ARTICLE 19 collaborated with the Bar Human Rights Committee throughout 2020 to monitor trials in Turkey, **called** on numerous **occasions** for the release of Kavala and all other detained journalists, and reminded Turkey that its ongoing harassment of civil society destroys faith in the independence of the judiciary and intimidates society into silence.

## Policy in Practice:

### Kyrgyzstan: Supporting our partners at the UN

In September 2020, ARTICLE 19 supported our partner, the Media Policy Institute, to deliver a **statement** at the adoption of Kyrgyzstan's UPR outcome at the UN HRC. Our original joint **submission** was made in July 2019 (before the pandemic hit). In our advocacy with delegations in Geneva in December 2019, we raised concerns that the government of Kyrgyzstan was stifling dissent, weakening protections for journalists, and restricting access to information.

**As a result of this advocacy, a number of key recommendations were made on freedom of expression, which Kyrgyzstan adopted in September 2020.**

However, this positive development took place in the context of increasing restrictions to freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan during 2020. This is illustrated by the now-stalled attempt to introduce a draft law 'On Manipulating Information', which ARTICLE 19's **analysis** found was in violation of Kyrgyzstan's obligations under international law. In addition, ARTICLE 19 noted an increase in attacks against journalists, both offline (during protests following Kyrgyzstan's elections, as we highlighted in a **statement**) and, increasingly, online (as we detailed in a **joint article** with the Media Policy Institute for the Foreign Policy Centre).

“ We are closely monitoring developments in Kyrgyzstan and are deeply worried about the safety of journalists and their rights to freedom of expression and information in the country.”

Sarah Clarke  
Head of Europe and Central Asia

## Policy in Practice: ARTICLE 19 called for Cuban journalist's release



Roberto Jesús Quiñones Haces

On his way to work in 2019, Roberto Jesús Quiñones Haces, a 62-year-old journalist at independent Cuban media outlet Cubanet, was arrested and beaten by agents of the National Revolutionary Police, who perforated his eardrum. He was later convicted of 'resistance' and 'disobedience' and sentenced to one year's deprivation of liberty, converted to correctional labour with internment.

ARTICLE 19, alongside other civil society organisations, repeatedly called for Quiñones' immediate release, including at the UN, and presented his case to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in 2019. In the context of this pressure, he was released on schedule on 4 September 2020, having served a year in prison. Two months later, he spoke at the Latin American Conference of Investigative Journalism (COLPIN) conference, which our Central America team co-organised.

The UN Working Group has issued an opinion on this case, which will soon be made publicly available.

“The reality that we independent journalists in Cuba live with is that we are constantly harassed, psychologically and physically, we are discriminated against and totally socially ostracised.”

Roberto Jesús Quiñones Haces  
Journalist

## Building relationships with the new Special Rapporteur



In August 2020, ARTICLE 19 held the first civil society consultation with Irene Khan, the new Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, whose appointment we **welcomed**. This popular event was an early opportunity for civil society organisations to discuss our priorities and lay strong foundations for future collaboration. It solidified our relationship with Irene Khan, following on from our close partnership with the previous Special Rapporteur, David Kaye. We plan to host further follow-up regional consultations, and work to support the mandate's priorities where we can.

Irene Khan, the new Special Rapporteur Freedom of Opinion and Expression.  
(Photo: ©Irene Zubaida-Khan)

## ARTICLE 19 hosts UN event with UN Special Rapporteur, David Kaye



As David Kaye's six-year mandate drew to a close, our Executive Director, Quinn McKew, moderated a well-attended virtual side event at the 44th Session of the UN HRC which explored how threats to freedom of expression evolved over the course of his mandate and reflected on persistent challenges.

David Kaye, former Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression

## Beyond the UN

### African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

In May 2020, ARTICLE 19, as part of the African Internet Rights Alliance, submitted joint letters to the [UN](#) and the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) Special Rapporteurs expressing deep concern about Kenya's and Nigeria's cybercrimes acts. We urged the Special Rapporteurs to call on the governments of Kenya and Nigeria to ensure these legislative frameworks did not restrict fundamental rights and freedoms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

### Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Mexico and Central America Digital Rights team participated in a thematic hearing during the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' [176 period of sessions](#) (15 July) on COVID-19 and the situation of freedom of expression in Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, and El Salvador, with special emphasis on freedoms in the digital space.

In June 2020, ARTICLE 19 and our partners, Iteso and Aristegui Noticias, published a [serious investigation](#) into Mexico's news agency Notimex's coercion, intimidation, hate speech, and smears against journalists, former collaborators, and those considered government adversaries. Our investigation had a huge impact, attracting significant backlash, smear campaigns, and legal threats, but we received support from many international and local organisations.

---

### African Union

In April 2020, just as the pandemic hit African countries, the African Union published its Revised Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. The Declaration included provisions on freedom of expression and access to information online – a significant breakthrough, as no other African human rights mechanisms legislate for the importance of the Internet. ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa and ARTICLE 19 Senegal and Western Africa played an active role on the technical drafting team and provided technical support for the African Union's Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.



# Freedom of expression: A tool to achieve women's equality

The Mx Method is ARTICLE 19's cross-cutting approach to gender and sexuality, which informs every element of our work.



A student wearing a face mask holds a placard during a protest against sexual violence in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 25 November 2020. Students, female activists, teachers and journalists took part in a torch procession demanding women's safety. (Photo: Zayed Hasnain Chowdhury / SOPA Images / Sipa USA)

“When misogynist leaders use ‘freedom of expression’ as an excuse to espouse sexist speech, it’s vital for us to show that freedom of expression and gender equality are mutually reinforcing rights.”

**Judy Taing**  
Head of Gender & Sexuality

“Freedom of expression is a right and a tool to achieve women’s equality.”

**Paulina Gutiérrez**  
Legal Officer

In November 2020, ARTICLE 19 published a series of three briefings on freedom of expression, women’s equality, and the safety of women journalists online.

Our **first briefing** lays out states’ obligations to adopt measures to protect and promote both the right to freedom of expression and women’s equality under international human rights law. It shows how the right to freedom of expression and women’s right to equality are complementary, mutually reinforcing, and must be approached in tandem.

It is essential that online harassment and abuse against women are tackled in a way that both counters discriminatory abuse and protects freedom of expression. Responses need to ensure an environment for women to contribute to online and offline debate.

## Online harassment and abuse of women journalists

“Censorship as a default solution will not bring women into equal participation. Restrictions may sometimes be needed, but they still need to comply with the basic principles of freedom of expression so that we also protect women’s expression.”

**Paulina Gutiérrez**  
Legal Officer



Over the last three years, we have worked closely with women journalists in **Kenya, Mexico and Brazil** to explore what problems they are facing and what strategies they need to keep participating in public debate or exercising their right to freedom of expression. The impact of online harassment and abuse – intended to threaten, silence, and stigmatise women journalists based on gender stereotypes and attacks, and potentially excluding them from public spaces – emerged as a widespread freedom of expression problem.

**Tackling online harassment and abuse against women journalists** is therefore essential to ensuring full enjoyment of the right to free expression and creating an environment where women fully participate in public life and decision-making processes, and hold leaders to account.

Our **second briefing** explores the different measures and tools addressing online harassment and abuse by social media and looks at them from a freedom of expression and non-discrimination perspective to provide recommendations.

While most countries already have legislation that criminalises threats and harassment, law-enforcement agencies are unsure how to address these problems online. In response to this gap, we published a **third briefing**, which looks at what forms of harassment are addressed and how they can be effectively investigated.

*Ms. Magazine* published two features about our briefings, and they were shared on Twitter by organisations including **International Center for Research on Women, Internet Freedom Festival, The Women's Building San Francisco**, and **Girl Security**.

We are now working on an implementation plan to ensure these briefings have a real impact for women journalists. In collaboration with ARTICLE 19 regional colleagues, we will use them in our holistic protection trainings with women journalists and advocacy initiatives at regional and local levels.

We are also exploring how this work can be adapted to reflect the lived realities of other groups that experience discrimination, such as LGBTQI+ communities. These issues are increasingly being analysed from a law and policy perspective under the protection of the rights of freedom of expression and equality as complementary rights.

## The 'shadow epidemic' of violence against women

Global COVID-19 lockdowns were accompanied by what UN Women called a '**shadow epidemic**': an alarming rise in violence against women.

Our Head of Gender & Sexuality, Judy Taing, wrote a **blog** on International Day to End Violence Against Women, calling on governments to prioritise gender equality in their responses to COVID-19.

Our regional teams were also hard at work on this issue.

---

## Mexico: ARTICLE 19 develops new inter-institutional protocol on sexual harassment

Following their innovative Masculinity Detox programme, our Central America office, in partnership with 10 other organisations in Mexico, published a new **protocol on sexual harassment in the workplace**. The protocol promotes an antipatriarchal, preventive, restorative, and transformative workplace culture, and its provisions apply to all who work with the regional office.

“This new protocol seeks to contribute to a work culture of prevention, recognition, and transformation of violence towards a safe environment in which all people are jointly responsible.”

Member of staff, ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America



## Update: Tackling gender equality through access to information

In 2020, we revised our **briefing** on access to information as a means of attaining gender equality. The briefing was released on International Right to Know Day in September, and is now available in English, French, Russian, and Spanish.



## Senegal: Young people call on government to end violence against women

Young people in ARTICLE 19 youth clubs in Senegal **called** on the government to end violence against women, and ARTICLE 19 Senegal and Western Africa reminded governments of their obligation to protect women and girls under international and African human rights protocols.



Maty Mbaye, Communication Officer of CLUB ARTICLE 19 Senegal and Western Africa. (Photo: Yeumbeul NORD)

“ We facilitate spaces for women, young people, vulnerable, and social minority groups to access information and express their opinions on issues of public interest. They cannot be seen only as voters and beneficiaries. Their protection against violence and their needs and participatory solutions must be on top of all political and social agendas.”

**Alfred Nkuru Bulakali**  
Deputy Regional Director, ARTICLE 19 Senegal and Western Africa



Students, female activists, teachers and journalists take part in a torch procession demanding women's safety and protesting against violence towards women in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 25 November 2020. (Photo: Sazzad Hossain / SOPA Image / Sipa USA)



# Campaign updates



## #KeepItReal

Disinformation and freedom of expression in Ireland

“Online disinformation is a growing concern for our societies. ARTICLE 19 is supporting young people in Ireland to advocate for a framework that, whilst countering disinformation, will also protect their right to freedom of expression.”

**Roberta Taveri**  
Media Freedom Programme Officer



**#KeepItReal** reached 3.3 million people in its launch week alone.

In late 2020, ARTICLE 19 launched #KeepItReal, a new campaign empowering young adults in Ireland to articulate their views on how to counter disinformation and protect their right to free speech.

Fifteen young ambassadors (aged 18–25) from across Ireland volunteered with ARTICLE 19 to open up a discussion among their peers about how a democratic society should respond to disinformation and approach social media regulation. We also recruited well-known Irish artists and communicators to amplify the #KeepItReal message.

The campaign attracted significant **media attention**, with coverage in:

- *The Irish Times*
- Dublin radio stations, including **Dublin City FM, FM104 and Q102**
- **Bandwagons** podcast
- **Kildare FM**
- **Cork Beo**

#KeepItReal also ties into advocacy on the establishment of an Irish Social Media Council and our contributions to the debate on Ireland's Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill.

“This generation is concerned with social progress and human rights, and the impact disinformation has on them is long-lasting, so we wanted to bring ARTICLE 19's knowledge on disinformation out into the open.”

**Barbara Dockalova**  
Senior Campaigner

## #FreeToProtest / #LivreParaProtestar



We continued our dynamic #FreeToProtest / #LivreParaProtestar campaign in Kenya and Brazil throughout 2020, raising awareness of the right to protest, warning about restrictions to that right, destigmatising protesters, and emphasising the positive social impacts of protests.

### Feminist protests in Latin America

This year, #LivreParaProtestar focused on **feminist protests in Latin America**. We:

- launched a **new publication** on the exercise of the right to protest, which attracted **national media attention**;
- hosted a **virtual exhibition** and produced a series of **eight videos** with women artists; and
- ran webinars to connect feminist protesters and hear their concerns.

A key concern for feminist protesters was the police's use of force against them. We therefore researched these violations in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. This research will guide the campaign's next activities to guarantee Latin American women's right to protest.

“ We learn to mobilize without depending on men. To organize ourselves on the street and to take care of ourselves. Begin to understand what is self-care. That we didn't have to depend on men or the police. That we could take care of each other and create strategies.”

**Sofia**  
Argentine activist

### Training the police on the right to protest in Kenya

In Kenya, ARTICLE 19 launched a social media campaign to challenge negative narratives about protesters. We also engaged with key stakeholders – not least the Inspector General of Police, who requested we train the police on the rights to protest and freedom of assembly – and continued to monitor the media and train journalists on a human rights approach to documenting protest.

# Building capacity, enhancing safety:

## Training and workshops

In 2020, we continued to train journalists, human rights defenders, community groups, government officials, broadcasters, and others in freedom of expression and protection strategies.



The launch event in February 2020 for ARTICLE 19 and DW Akademie's online course on media laws, media ethics, and digital security in Bangladesh, taken before physical distancing restrictions came into effect. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh and South Asia)

### **Bangla course on media laws, media ethics, and digital security**

In February 2020, ARTICLE 19 partnered with Deutsche Welle Akademie to launch an online course on media laws, media ethics, and digital security – the first of its kind in Bangladesh. The course was available entirely in Bangla, free of charge and designed to be accessible to not only journalists and communication students but also activists and laypeople. Following extremely positive feedback from participants, we plan to continue this course in 2021.



## Digital hygiene workshops for marginalised groups in Iran

“We are a small group with limited resources and funds, receiving such a great training and ongoing support from ARTICLE 19 helps us a lot to stay safe and share our knowledge with others.”

Iran LGBTQI+ rights group

ARTICLE 19 delivered digital hygiene workshops to marginalised and diaspora communities – including LGBTQI+ groups, religious and ethnic minorities, and women's organisations – throughout 2020, after conducting research which found that these groups are often easy targets for the Iranian Forces. We audited participants' devices to ensure they were secure, showed them how to set up encryption, and provided them with security hardware, such as mic blocks, webcam protectors, and Google Keys.

Having originally intended to build the capacity of 100 at-risk people from 10 groups, we far outstripped that goal, training more than **300** people from over **20** vulnerable groups with a history of being targeted by pro-regime cyber forces.

## Training investigative journalists in the Maghreb

Throughout 2020, ARTICLE 19 – in collaboration with the Journalism and Media International Center – trained journalists from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya on using access-to-information laws and investigative journalism techniques. We also organised an online **panel discussion** on access to information in the context of COVID-19. Participants competed for an **award** for best investigative story and reported improved understandings of safety measures and fact-checking techniques, and a **number** of participants **published** their productions on local and international news platforms.



Paddy Coulter (left), Chair of ARTICLE 19's International Board, at an award ceremony for trainee investigative journalists in the Middle East and North Africa region, December 2019. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Middle East and North Africa)



# Civic Space

Civic space is where individuals realise their rights: it can be a physical, virtual, or legal place.

It is the space where we engage and participate in politics, and exercise our freedoms to speak and to protest. It is the cornerstone of democratic and accountable society.



Hundreds of people protest on 8 February 2020 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in repudiation of gender violence and in memory of those who died because they were women. (Photo: Dario Oliveira/NurPhoto)

## Huge step forward for the right to protest worldwide

“This is a huge achievement. The General Comment provides standards around the right to protest and gives parameters for how to assess the right. This one includes our recommendations and reflects our advocacy over many years.”

Patricia Meléndez  
Head of Civic Space



ARTICLE 19 welcomed the UN Human Rights Committee's adoption of **General Comment 37** (GC37) on 23 July 2020. GC37 strengthens international protection of the right to peaceful assembly, and provides authoritative guidance to state actors on their obligations to protect it.

General Comments elaborate and clarify the state obligations contained in international human rights treaties (in this case, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). As such, they provide a benchmark for us to use in our advocacy for even more progressive UN standards – as well as to highlight states' violations.

ARTICLE 19's advocacy to influence GC37 included:

- Our teams holding regional consultations in **Bangkok** and **Mexico**, bringing together non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and freedom of expression and assembly experts with members of the UN Human Rights Committee and Special Rapporteurs.
- Our UN and Law & Policy teams submitting comments and recommendations on drafts of GC37 and attending NGO briefings with Committee members in Geneva.
- Our Civic Space team advocating for the Committee to produce a General Comment on peaceful assembly since 2012, and for inclusion of progressive standards and recommendations in their development since 2017.

As a result, **GC37 reflects our advocacy priorities on the right to protest** – online and offline, in private and public – and, importantly, recognises that it intersects with the rights to freedom of expression and privacy.



People take part in a demonstration against the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, and against violence against women, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 9 November 2020. (Photo: Fabio Teixeira/NurPhoto)



“Our task now is to summarise GC37 in a way that’s useful to country-level advocacy, and to make sure civil society knows their rights around freedom of assembly and the right to protest.”

Patricia Meléndez  
Head of Civic Space

## Making GC37 work on the ground

GC37 comes at a pivotal time – worldwide, **people are protesting**, dissenting, and calling for governments and other powerful bodies to be held accountable. ARTICLE 19’s regional offices played a key role in protecting the right to assemble and the safety of protesters throughout 2020.

- In **Kenya** and **South America**, our #FreeToProtest / #LibreParaProtestar campaigns supported protesters on the ground, and we published a **new report** on exercising the right to protest in **Brazil**.
- In **West Africa**, ARTICLE 19 spoke out against bans on public protest in **Côte d'Ivoire**, the arrest of activists in **Guinea**, crackdowns on protesters in **The Gambia**, and called for an end to the killing of protesters in **Nigeria**.
- In **Belarus**, ARTICLE 19 **supported local partners** to protect protesters and civil society in a brutal crackdown on protest, and was at the forefront of advocacy at the **UN**, **EU**, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to hold Belarusian authorities to account.
- In **Mexico**, the UN Special Rapporteur **took on our observations** regarding indigenous women’s right to assembly.

ARTICLE 19 will continue to use GC37 to ensure the right to protest is respected in every country, and that civil society is aware of their rights.



A supporter of Côte d'Ivoire's opposition coalition parties holds a sign during a stadium rally to protest against president Alassane Ouattara's bid for a third term in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 10 October 2020. The sign reads: 'Peaceful civil disobedience is not stealing. Proud Ivoirians, the country is calling us.' (Photo: REUTERS/Macline)

## Combating “hate speech” worldwide

### Voices for Inclusion in Malaysia and Myanmar

Voices for Inclusion is our innovative project to tackle “hate speech” and intolerance on the basis of religion or belief in **Malaysia** and **Myanmar**. In 2020, we developed a curriculum to train youth groups to combat “hate speech” and rolled out initial trainings with youth networks in Malaysia. The project begins with research to understand the root causes of “hate speech” and builds on that to engage civil society networks and government and international bodies to take effective action against it.

### Improving LGBTQI+ reporting in Kazakhstan

Our Europe and Central America teams worked closely with LGBTQI+ people and **local partners** in **Kazakhstan** to produce the first Kazakh-language materials for ARTICLE 19, including a translation of our “‘Hate Speech’ Explained” toolkit, online courses, and presentations. As a result, independent journalists in the country now consult with subject experts when writing about LGBTQI+ issues and make use of our resources to publish sensitive, accurate articles.

### Tackling hate and promoting dialogue in Bangladesh

Our South Asia team organised a workshop, ‘Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief for All: Implementing UN Standards to Tackle Hate and Promote Dialogue’, to tackle “hate speech” in **Bangladesh**. The workshop engaged 40 key Bangladeshi government stakeholders – as well as diplomats, academics, lawyers, think tanks, and Islamic institutions – in implementing the UN standards.

### Launch of “‘Hate Speech’ Explained” toolkit in Spain

Following an online launch of our “‘Hate Speech’ Explained” toolkit in **Spain**, our event on freedom of expression and “hate speech” attracted over 100 participants, including organisations fighting gender, disability, and racial discrimination. We also **advocated** for an amendment to the Spanish criminal code to include provisions complying with international standards on “hate speech”, and launched a new podcast, **AltaVoces**, on the subject.

### Tunisia: Information and media literacy as a tool to combat “hate speech”

Promoting Information and Media Literacy (IML) was a cornerstone of our work to combat “hate speech” in **Tunisia** in 2020, and we successfully mobilised a wide range of stakeholders to implement an IML strategy. Our engagement with the education system was particularly successful; our manual on fighting “hate speech” in schools is currently being considered for integration into the curriculum.





## Holistic protection of journalists and civil society in Kenya, Malawi, and Myanmar

In partnership with Internews, the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, and the Humanist Institute Development Cooperation, and funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development, in November 2020 ARTICLE 19 began to implement the Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency-Enhancing Civic Transformation (PROTECT) project, a consortium working on open societies and civic space.

The project works in **Kenya**, **Malawi**, and **Myanmar**. ARTICLE 19 is implementing two key components:

1. **Holistic protection:** Supporting initiatives that protect journalists, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors from precarious safety and security situations, legal and digital censorship, physical danger, gender-based threats, and high levels of impunity.
2. **Reclaiming the narrative:** Amplifying the voices of civil society – especially women and stigmatised or marginalised groups – and giving them the tools to fight back, build strong counternarratives, and reframe key debates.

PROTECT will look at civic space through the lens of country-specific problems. In **Myanmar**, it will focus on discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities. In **Kenya**, it will focus on corruption and building solidarity with human rights defenders and female journalists. In **Malawi** – where this is the first time ARTICLE 19 has implemented a project on the ground – it will focus on gender inequality.

## Research uniting civil society in the Middle East and North Africa

To promote freedom of association in the Middle East and North Africa, our regional office carried out participatory research with civil society organisations from **Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon**. Each organisation researched the freedom of association climate in their country and met to discuss their findings.

These countries have different contexts and challenges, and bringing these organisations together – and their effort to collaborate – is not easy. This project indicated an unprecedented willingness to work together and has the potential to strengthen civil society voices on freedom of expression in the region.

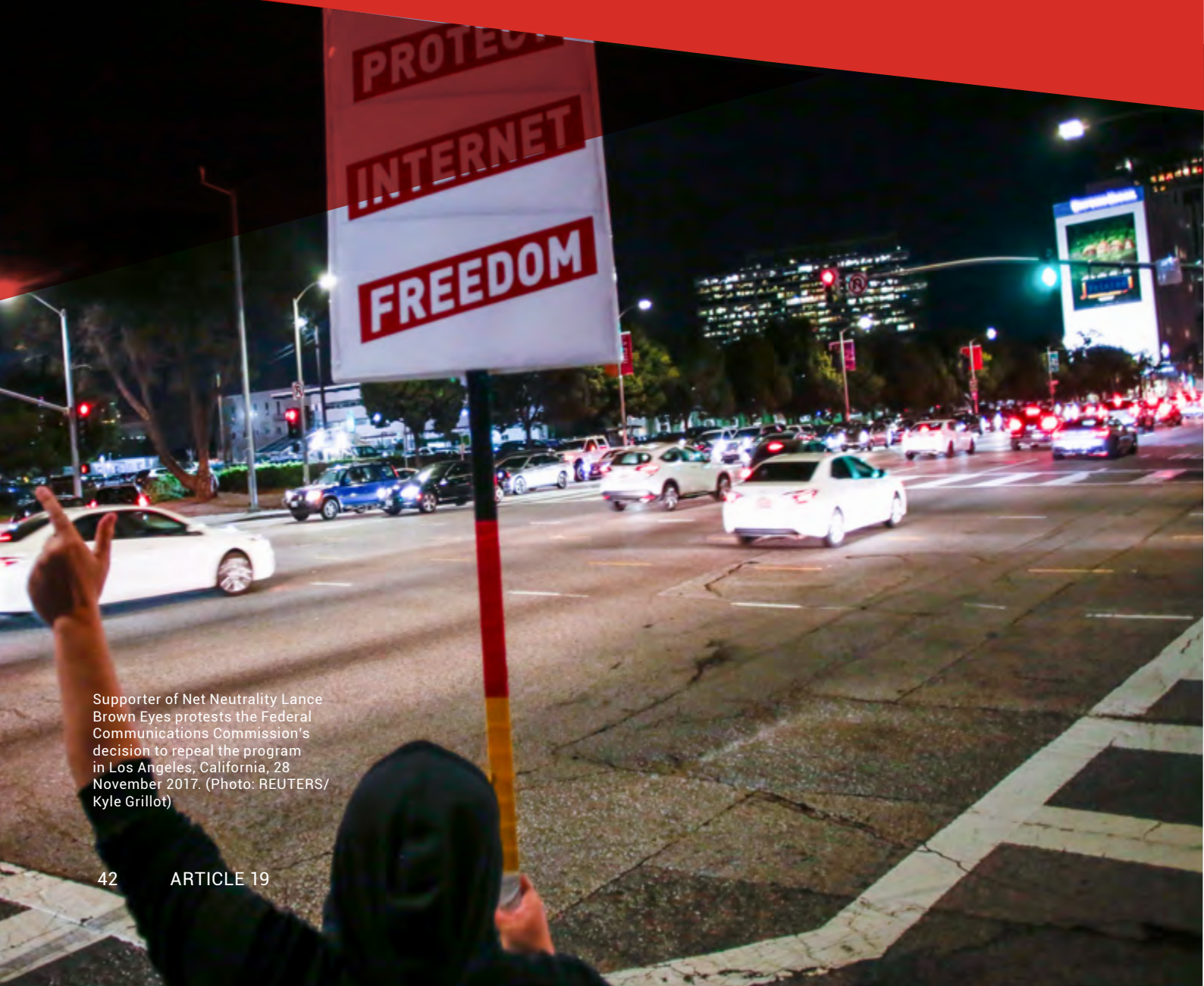


Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets in downtown Tunis, in Tunisia's biggest demonstration for years, defying a police lockdown that blocked roads in a large area of the capital on 6 February 2021. The demonstration was held on Saturday to mark the anniversary of the 2013 killing of activist Chokri Belaïd and to protest police abuses that demonstrators say have threatened freedoms won in the 2011 Jasmine Revolution. (Photo: by Mohamed Krit/SIPA USA)



# Digital

The right to freedom of expression and information is crucial in networked spaces, just as it is offline. The exercise of human rights online depends on an open and free Internet.



Supporter of Net Neutrality Lance Brown Eyes protests the Federal Communications Commission's decision to repeal the program in Los Angeles, California, 28 November 2017. (Photo: REUTERS/ Kyle Grillot)

## Artificial intelligence: A Global South perspective

“Our new research is innovative, human rights-centred, and facilitates civil society to overcome a lack of transparency to investigate the context in which these systems are deployed.”

Mehwish Ansari  
Head of Digital



ARTICLE 19's first **case study** on artificial intelligence (AI) in the Global South, which focused on predictive policing in New Delhi, was accepted at the **Association for Computing Machinery Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency** in Barcelona in January 2020 – one of the most prestigious conferences in the field of machine learning – and was the only civil society-led paper to be selected through the expert peer-review process.

Our case study not only provided useful evidence on how algorithm-directed policing works at a city level but also enabled us to develop and test a unique, new, much-needed methodology for studying AI deployment in non-Western contexts.

This is the latest in ARTICLE 19's work to build the evidence base on machine learning in the Global South – and, crucially, to analyse its freedom of expression implications.

In line with our local-to-global engagement approach, our research directly informed our advocacy at all levels throughout 2020 – from Singapore University to the UK House of Lords, European Commission, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also informed our successful **advocacy** on the **UN Resolution on Privacy in the Digital Age**, which included new language on AI and biometrics.

We will continue to build this much-needed evidence base and advocate for a more nuanced, bottom-up, diverse, and global approach to AI.

## Working with dating apps to protect the LGBTQI+ community

Back in 2017, ARTICLE 19 **joined forces** with Grindr to help protect the app's users in the Middle East and North Africa, where LGBTQI+ people continue to be persecuted. Since then, we have expanded the number of countries where we do this work, and have partnered with other apps – such as the lesbian dating app HER – to reach more members of the LGBTQI+ community.

Our project begins with in-country research, including focus groups and interviews, to establish which platforms LGBTQI+ people use in that country and whether – and how – the authorities use this against them. Our research findings inform a roundtable with independent technology partners in which we establish recommendations for technology companies on how to ensure the safety of their apps' users. We then use these recommendations to advocate for the companies to make changes.

In 2020, WhatsApp approached ARTICLE 19 to ask how they can make sure their platform is safe and secure for LGBTQI+ people to use. We were delighted at this development, given the ubiquity of WhatsApp and its parent company, Facebook. We produced a comprehensive list of recommendations for WhatsApp, on their request, and look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure the safety of their LGBTQI+ users.



“We have more companies coming forward and asking to work with us on protecting the community because it’s not only the dating apps but also social media and messenger apps who are implicated in arrests. What we’re showing is how to actively support community needs and enact effective corporate responsibility. And we’re starting to hear from partners in other regions – Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Central and Eastern Asia countries – asking for support and recommendations, which is brilliant!”

**Afsaneh Rigot**  
Middle East and North Africa Senior Programme Officer



(Photo: Flycatchr)

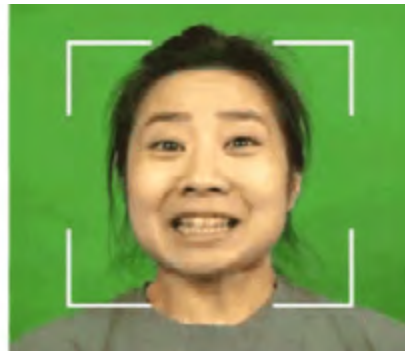
A mural of Sarah Hegazy – a queer Egyptian activist, feminist and software developer – in Amman, Egypt, with the words she left in her final note: “but I forgive”.

Hegazy took her own life at the age of 30 on 13 June 2020 in Toronto, Canada. She was arrested in October 2017 for waving the rainbow flag at a concert by Lebanese rock band Mashrou' Leila in New Cairo (the lead singer, Hamed Sinno, is one of the Middle East and North Africa region's few openly gay musicians).

After the concert, one of the biggest crackdowns on the Egyptian queer community was enforced, with 75 people – including Hegazy – being arrested. She spent three months in detention, where she was subjected to torture. Following her release, she faced criminal charges that could have seen her imprisoned for up to 15 years. Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and facing increased threats against her life and liberty, she sought asylum in Canada.

On the year anniversary of her exile in Canada, she wrote, “Even after my release, fear of everyone, family, friends, and the street continued to haunt me.”

Hegazy's experience of torture and abuse is similarly reflected and experienced by many other queer people in Egypt.



## Lawsuit against facial recognition in São Paulo subway

In February 2020, ARTICLE 19, alongside public defenders and other human rights organisations, [filed a lawsuit](#) to obtain records from the Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo (Metrô).

The system, [we argued](#), requires a transparent public debate and the public disclosure of information to the subway's users. We wanted to know:

- How will the cameras collect passengers' images?
- How will this biometric data be used?
- What measures will be taken to prevent data leaks?
- What will happen if the facial-recognition system identifies a suspect? (This is particularly important, given that [81% of alerts](#) issued by the London Metropolitan Police's similar system are errors.)

Metrô was ultimately unable to produce evidence or documentation that sufficiently demonstrated the need for facial-recognition technologies. This outcome sets the groundwork for direct challenges to the implementation of the system by Metrô and the use of facial-recognition technologies more broadly in Brazil.

This ties into our Brazil office's work on facial recognition and surveillance in the context of [civic space](#) and [protest](#).

## Assessing the human rights impacts of Internet registries

“This is vital to set a norm that yes, these registries do have human rights impacts, and they do have a responsibility to understand those impacts and provide remedy for them.”

Mehwish Ansari  
Head of Digital

Our work to assess the human rights impact of Internet registries (which manage domains like '.com') saw significant progress in 2020 when we tested our **assessment tools** with the Public Interest Registry (PIR). PIR manages the '.org' domain and, as such, is vital for civil society.

Along with the Danish Institute for Human Rights, ARTICLE 19 conducted a three-day assessment workshop with PIR, which included training on human rights due diligence and a high-level gap analysis to evaluate how well its policies and operations respect and adhere to human rights standards.

The decisions of Internet registries and other service providers in the Domain Name System (DNS) determine whose content can be accessed on the World Wide Web. ARTICLE 19's work with PIR resulted in **concrete recommendations** to strengthen PIR's compliance with the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. PIR is the first generic top-level domain to undergo a human rights assessment of this kind. As a major global actor in the DNS, this work sets a precedent for the sector and the approach it should take to respect and provide remedy for human rights.

## Setting standards for freedom of expression online

Internet standards specify norms and expectations for how actors that implement Internet technologies should deploy and operate them. As such, strategic interventions in these spaces can strengthen how well the global Internet infrastructure enables the exercise of human rights online before its deployment.

Here are just a couple of examples of the work ARTICLE 19 did on Internet standards in 2020:

- **Encrypted DNS:** Security vulnerabilities in communications across the DNS are often exploited by governments to facilitate censorship. ARTICLE 19 worked in the Internet Engineering Task Force to support protocols that enable more ubiquitous encryption of DNS communications and set requirements that give users more control over how their Internet traffic is managed by DNS providers.
- **Spectrum management:** Access to spectrum is necessary for wireless communications; however, the standards that specify how access to spectrum works can often privilege large, incumbent telecommunication network operators at the expense of smaller, community-oriented and non-profit providers. As a result, communities cannot easily build alternatives that may provide better quality of service or greater affordability or access in areas that large operators have deemed too unprofitable to invest in. ARTICLE 19 worked in the International Telecommunication Union to strengthen the consideration for community networks in its technical policy guidance for national spectrum-management frameworks.



# Media

For meaningful freedom of expression and information, we need the broadest possible diversity of sources, information, and ideas. This enables individuals to inform themselves, participate in society, and hold the powerful to account.



People hold a banner reading 'Free country, free press' as they march in Budapest during a protest for media freedom after the editor-in-chief of Index, Hungary's leading independent news website, was fired. (Photo: REUTERS/Bernadett Szabo)



## Launch of first independent press council in Middle East and North Africa

“After nearly a decade of effort from civil society, journalists, and media outlets, we are delighted to see such a significant step towards protecting and promoting press freedom in Tunisia.”

**Saloua Ghazouani**  
Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa



ARTICLE 19 welcomed the launch of a **Tunisian Press Council** in September 2020 – the first independent press council in the Middle East and North Africa, and a significant milestone in Tunisia's reform process following the 2011 revolution.

The Press Council will play a vital role in safeguarding press freedom and the right to free expression, including by acting as a Court of Honour for journalists, guaranteeing the public's right to information, and strengthening the principles of self-regulation and journalistic ethics among media institutions.

The Press Council brings together representatives of journalists, media owners, and civil society. Its members were nominated by the following groups:

- National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists
- Newspaper Directors Association
- General Communication Syndicate (affiliated to the Tunisian General Labor Union)
- Tunisian Syndicate of Press Institutions' Directors
- Tunisian League for Human Rights

ARTICLE 19 has worked closely with media outlets, journalists, and others **since 2012** to facilitate dialogue on the Council's development, advise on international standards and best practices in media regulation, and consult with stakeholders to establish the Council. As a result, we now have a close relationship with the Council, and will continue working with civil society and media actors in Tunisia to promote its success.

However, the creation of the Press Council took place amid a rise in the spread of fake news and infringement of journalistic ethics in Tunisia. It is vital that the Press Council is able to perform its role in promoting press freedom and enabling the full enjoyment of the public's right to information.

A journalist holding a placard saying 'Journalism is not a crime' during a demonstration in Tunis, organised by the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists, on 26 November 2020. Tunisian journalists protested next to the government palace demanding publication of a professional agreement they signed with the government, and requesting support for journalists affected by COVID-19. (Photo: Jdidi Wassim / SOPA Images / Sipa USA)



## Protecting independent media in fragile contexts

“The focus of the consortium is the sustainability of public interest journalism in fragile contexts. The programme also has a strong learning workstream that has been designed to support effective learning and collaborative discussions throughout the course of its implementation.”

**Pierre François**  
Head of Media Freedom Programme



A protester making a banner during the demonstration in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 24 July 2020. Artists and journalists protested against the persecution and arrests of fellow artists and journalists under the draconian Digital Security Act during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo: Zabed Hasnain Chowdhury / SOPA Images / Sipa USA)

Public interest media are vital to open societies. They provide citizens with reliable news and information, hold the powerful to account, and provide a platform for debate.

Yet in many parts of the world, public interest media are threatened by financial pressures, digital disruption, restrictive legislation and regulation, violence against journalists, and diminishing public trust in the media. The economic impact of COVID-19 has intensified this pressure, particularly in the Global South.

This is where the **Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED)** project comes in. Launched in October 2020 by a consortium – funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, led by BBC Media Action, and including ARTICLE 19 – PRIMED is a three-year project to support the provision of public interest media in **Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone**. It aims to build the resilience of these media to political and economic pressures, and to support the development of information ecosystems that enable a better flow of trusted public interest media content.

PRIMED has three objectives:

1. To improve the capacity of participating media outlets to manage their organisations and deliver public interest content;
2. To provide better coordinated and more impactful support for, and defence of, media freedom; and
3. To create and share learning about what media support works and what does not in different country contexts.

ARTICLE 19's international, Bangladesh and South Asia, Senegal and Western Africa, and Eastern Africa offices are working together on PRIMED. **Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone** were selected for the diversity of their media environments; they represent different market sizes and face varying degrees of challenges around media restrictions, political will, and economic conditions. This will enable PRIMED to apply a wide range of interventions, both established and innovative, in different contexts.





Social media, chat and communication apps displayed on a mobile phone in Dublin, Ireland. (Photo: Artur Widak/NurPhoto)

## **Social Media Council pilot greeted with enthusiasm by stakeholders**

The Social Media Council (SMC) is a model for a transparent, inclusive, independent, and accountable voluntary-compliance mechanism that will oversee social media platforms' content-moderation problems using international human rights law.

Our extensive work on SMCs has established ARTICLE 19 as a vital interlocutor in this field. As a result, the concept of the SMC is now integrated into contemporary academic and policy debates on the future of regulating social media platforms.

In 2020, we made significant progress towards our goal of launching a pilot SMC in an EU country. Once we had established that Ireland offered a fertile context – at the policy, public, media, and civil society levels – for such an experiment, we engaged in conversations (held online due to COVID-19) with a broad range of stakeholders, which confirmed a real interest among potential participants.

These conversations were also helpful in further understanding the risks, opportunities, and questions the pilot will face. We look forward to working with our partners to continue developing the Irish SMC.



## Major improvements to media legislation in Tunisia following ARTICLE 19 advocacy

Since 2018, ARTICLE 19 has played a major role in civil society advocacy to counter the introduction of damaging audiovisual legislation in Tunisia, which would have endangered the freedom of the press.

In 2020, we achieved several key **advocacy wins**:

- In July, the government decided to withdraw a problematic bill adopted by the previous government.
- In October, following our **successful coordinated advocacy** campaign, the government backed down from a dangerous amendment to the current audiovisual law.
- The government is now developing a new legal framework for audiovisual communication.

ARTICLE 19 has met several times with the ministerial committee in charge of preparing the new draft law, with the aim of ensuring it complies with Tunisia's international human rights commitments.

## Expanding our media work in South Asia

In 2020, ARTICLE 19 expanded the work in South Asia by:

- Organising a webinar with journalists in **Nepal** on their safety and working conditions under COVID-19;
- Urging multilateral Asian banks to interrogate their support packages for **Pakistan** in the wake of the country's treatment of journalists; and
- Calling on the **Kashmir** authorities to **end Internet shutdowns**.



Kashmiri men use low-speed Internet inside an office in Baramulla Jammu and Kashmir, India, on 23 December 2020. High-speed Internet services remained suspended in Kashmir valley after the abrogation of Article 370. (Photo: Nasir Kachroo/NurPhoto)



# Protection

Worldwide, attacks on communicators and human rights defenders are perpetrated with impunity, creating a toxic cycle of intimidation and self-censorship. Increased citizen journalism, blogging, and information activism have placed more individuals and groups on the frontline than ever before. They must be supported and protected holistically, with tools, training, and effective networks with strong legal frameworks.



Thousands of people demonstrated in Paris against the Global Security Law, promoted by French President Macron and his majority, which would forbid anyone from photographing or filming police members and would have a chilling effect on journalists, photographers, and videographers. Police arrested 150 people, including journalists, and several were injured. (Photo: Fabien Pallueau/NurPhoto)

## SLAPPed: New commitments to end “gag lawsuits” in Europe

“As democracy and the rule of law come increasingly under pressure around the world, we need additional tools to protect public watchdogs that help hold the powerful to account and keep the democratic debate alive.”

Sarah Clarke  
Head of Europe and Central Asia

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are lawsuits pursued by law firms on behalf of powerful individuals and organisations. Their goal is not to win the case but rather to intimidate, silence, and drain – financially and psychologically – journalists, human rights defenders, and activists. As such, SLAPPs are a form of legal harassment.

While SLAPPs have long been a problem in the USA and Latin America, they increased in Europe throughout 2020 – as did ARTICLE 19’s work to combat them. We played a leading role in coordinating a coalition of advocates, lawyers, and more than 100 NGOs to [call for](#) EU-wide rules against SLAPP suits, including publishing a [Model Directive](#). And our work paid off:

**The European Commission committed to developing measures to tackle the safety of journalists and present an initiative to protect them from SLAPPs.**



Photo: Council of Europe

ARTICLE 19 is currently undertaking research into the increasing trend of SLAPPs across Europe. Here are a couple of examples of SLAPPs that we worked on in 2020.

## Poland

Our work on **SLAPPs in Poland** expanded in 2020. We **challenged** three SLAPPs cases against Professor Wojciech Sadurski, a scholar sued for Tweets criticising Poland's ruling party and public broadcaster, one of which was **dismissed** by the courts. The number of cases we monitor and journalists we support in Poland **continues to grow**, and ARTICLE 19 often monitors these trials in person.

## London

ARTICLE 19 and partners strongly **condemned** the legal action filed in London against Swedish publication *Realtid* for their investigation of the financing of energy projects. This case received **high-profile news coverage**, in which we were quoted.

### Daphne Caruana Galizia: A catalyst for action

In 2017, journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia – who led the Panama Papers investigation in Malta, and was **described** as a 'one-woman WikiLeaks' – was murdered in a car bomb. She was facing over 40 civil and criminal defamation lawsuits, some of which continued posthumously against her family.

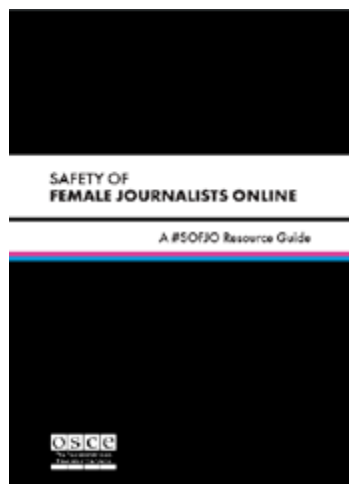
Galizia's death catalysed a group of Members of the European Parliament to call for the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive. ARTICLE 19 continues to **fight for justice** for her – including a **fair public inquiry** into her death.



Murdered Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana is remembered during a vigil in Berlin in October 2019. (Photo: Christoph Soeder/dpa)



## Addressing the online harassment and abuse of women journalists



ARTICLE 19 is prioritising addressing the online harassment and abuse of women journalists. [See the Gender section for more details.](#)

### New guide sets standards for online safety of female journalists

ARTICLE 19 contributed to a new [OSCE resource guide](#) – a landmark report setting out how to implement OSCE's standards on the safety of female journalists online. As the only guide of its kind in the world, it includes resources, good practices, and recommendations for how to address harassment from both state and non-state actors.

### Kenya: New tools launched to tackle shocking levels of sexual harassment against female journalists

In partnership with the Media Council of Kenya, ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa conducted a [study](#) which revealed that:

- 73% of female journalists surveyed said they were highly likely to experience sexual harassment while on assignment
- 64% said sexual harassment had hindered their work, either inside or outside the newsroom
- 62% had either experienced harassment themselves, either at work or while on assignment, or knew someone who had
- 49% would not feel comfortable talking to their supervisor about harassment

To tackle this problem, the office developed tools to help female journalists stay safe online and ensure media companies have effective policies on gender and sexual harassment.

## Protecting journalists during COVID-19

ARTICLE 19 played an active role in a European Council consortium working on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists under COVID-19. Around the world, threats to journalists in the pandemic ranged from physical violence to widespread unemployment and dangerous reporting conditions, and our regional offices stepped up their protection work to meet these challenges.

## Innovative employment programme for female journalists in Bangladesh

In the context of an **alarming crackdown** on journalists reporting on COVID-19 and many print publications ceasing trading, ARTICLE 19 provided legal, financial, and medical support for **85** journalists in **Bangladesh** and directly employed **15** laid-off women journalists.

“This was the highlight of our achievements in 2020. We provided training in online journalism, working from home and how to cover COVID-19 without getting infected, and they gained extra skills in working with NGOs and civil society organisations.”

**Faruq Faisal**  
Head of Bangladesh and South Asia

## Protecting journalists and bloggers in Brazil

In **Brazil**, crimes against honour (such as defamation and slander) and the crime of '*desacato*' (insulting a public official) have a huge impact on journalists and bloggers, and from January to May 2020 there were **82 attacks** against journalists covering COVID-19. Our South America office's response has included submitting **expert opinions** and legal opinions on individual cases, and providing training and resources for affected journalists and bloggers.

## ARTICLE 19 sets to work in Algeria

In 2020, ARTICLE 19 started working in Algeria for the first time, condemning attacks against journalists like **Khaled Drareni**, who was sentenced to two years in prison in March merely for filming an anti-government protest. Our work in Algeria is already being picked up by the press, both within and outside the country, and is cited by the European Parliament.



## Breaking the fear in Central America

In **Mexico**, our **Break the Fear Network** – originally conceived to enable journalists to share information about threats at protests – was activated constantly in the first half of 2020 to monitor a torrent of attacks against journalists reporting on COVID-19. Following the success of the network in Mexico, it was also launched in **Guatemala** in 2020.



## The Hub: A dynamic security platform in Mexico

In November 2020, ARTICLE 19's **Mexico** office launched a holistic online security platform for journalists, human rights defenders, and civil society organisations. Known as **The Hub**, the platform is a dynamic repository of information and resources to help people protect themselves against the risks they face as a result of their work.

## Speaking out against attacks on the media in Senegal

In August, assailants trashed the offices of the *Les Echos* newspaper in **Senegal** for reporting that a religious leader had tested positive for COVID-19. This was the fourth in a series of violent attacks against media professionals, including the **brutal attack of a cameraman** and the **destruction of a radio station's buildings**. Our Senegal and Western Africa office **spoke out** against the raft of attacks across the region in 2020, including in **Guinea** and **Mali**.



## Standing up for media freedom in Malaysia



Journalist Tashny Sukumaran, who was investigated by Malaysian police for reporting on mass arrests of foreign nationals and immigration raids in Kuala Lumpur.

In **Malaysia**, ARTICLE 19 pushed back against a fierce government crackdown on independent media:

- We raised concerns about **online attacks** against journalists and objected to the **investigation of a reporter** who reported on police raids targeting foreign nationals.
- We repeatedly called for the end to a **criminal investigation into Al Jazeera** journalists who produced a documentary on the plight of migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and shone a light on a **police raid on Al Jazeera's office**.
- We **denounced contempt-of-court** proceedings against online news outlet **Malaysiakini** and its editor in relation to third-party comments made on its website.
- We called for the reform of **laws used to target journalists**, and provided input on a draft **Media Council Act**.

These actions helped direct media and diplomatic attention to the government's assault on press freedom.

## ARTICLE 19 co-chairs new Media Freedom Coalition network



The **Media Freedom Coalition** is an initiative of more than 40 states, led by the **UK** and **Canada**, to promote media freedom and the safety of journalists. In 2020, ARTICLE 19 led on the creation of a Civil Society Organisation Advisory Network, made up of 17 organisations, enabling us to refer cases of violence against journalists to the Coalition and advise on how states can support media freedom and the safety of journalists.

ARTICLE 19's Head of Protection, Silvia Chocarro, was selected as a Co-Chair for the new Advisory Network, the first meeting of which took place in January 2020.

“ We welcome the creation of this unique initiative coalition, and we will hold States accountable of their commitment to media freedom outside and inside their borders.”

**Silvia Chocarro**  
Head of Protection

# Transparency

Transparency empowers us to hold leaders accountable, ensures that human rights are being protected, and enables us to develop a fuller understanding of the world.



Whistleblowers Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and Chelsea Manning are seen in the installation 'Anything to Say?' by Italian artist Davide Dormino on the Place des Nations in front of the United Nations European headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, September 2015. According to a press release the bronze sculpture, which weighs more than a tonne, is a testimony in favour of freedom of expression and information, without any political controversy. (Photo: REUTERS/Pierre Albouy)

## Importance of transparency and access to information recognised globally under COVID-19

Race relations campaigner Dr Hari Shukla, 87, and his wife, Ranju, read vaccination information leaflets before receiving the first of two Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine jabs at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, on the first day of the largest immunisation programme in British history. (Photo: Owen Humphreys/Pool via REUTERS)



The **COVID-19 pandemic** – and governments' responses to it – had a huge impact on transparency and access to information in 2020, both nationally and internationally.

ARTICLE 19's report, *Ensuring the Public's Right to Know in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, focused on the importance of transparency – from providing accurate public health information to ensuring procurement deals are fair and open – while our *Viral Lies: Misinformation and the Coronavirus* report set out standards for countries and international bodies on their legal obligations to ensure the public's right to know. We presented these reports to the UK Department for International Development, as well as to EU and **UN delegations**.

In 2020, the importance of transparency in responding to the pandemic was **acknowledged and addressed** by many international bodies and agencies – from the UN Secretary-General to the World Health Assembly, African Union, and International Telecommunication Union. The World Health Organization also committed to greater transparency in its Data Principles.

This widespread recognition of the importance of transparency to counter rampant misinformation and disinformation during COVID-19 gave ARTICLE 19 further leverage to push back against these restrictions, wherever they arose.



### Transparency in 2020\* A Global Perspective



\*As of 11 March 2021



## Major regional developments on the right to information

There were several major regional developments on the recognition of the right to information in 2020, which ARTICLE 19 welcomed and contributed to.

### Latin America and the Caribbean

In October 2020 – 10 years after the first model law was approved – the General Assembly of the Organization of American States formally adopted the revised **Model Inter-American Law on Access to Public Information**. This was the result of efforts, including by ARTICLE 19, to promote and advance regional standards on access to information.

The **Escazù Agreement** – the first environmental agreement adopted in Latin America and the Caribbean – also reached the required number of ratifications to enter into force. ARTICLE 19 has been involved in negotiating and promoting the Agreement since its inception.

### East Africa

ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa continued to engage with the regional sustainable development forum, promoting transparency and **Sustainable Development Goal 16** (SDG 16) – on peace, justice and strong institutions – at the regional level. Our Eastern Africa office led on the compilation of **Kenya's** civil society-led Voluntary National Report, which was presented at the UN and recommends actions the state should prioritise to achieve SDG 16.

### West Africa

Our Senegal and Western Africa office issued an **analysis** of the state of the adoption and implementation of access-to-information laws in countries across the region, and called on states to effectively implement such legislation. In **Senegal**, as co-lead of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Steering Committee, our advocacy resulted in the Committee adopting our priority themes and in strong civil society participation for elaborating an OGP National Action Plan.

### Europe

The **Ukraine** and **Armenia** parliaments formally ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Documents ('the Tromsø Convention'), making it reach the required 10 signatures to go into effect. This is the first free-standing international convention providing a general right to access to information held by government bodies. ARTICLE 19 was instrumental in advocating for the Convention and in its early development. We will continue to push for countries in Europe to adopt it, and to use it as a standard in our advocacy in other regions.

## Iran's Freedom of Information Act: New audiovisual guides

“Our research on Iran's Freedom of Information Act and the information requests submitted under it has successfully revealed the intersection of transparency with other human rights such as the right to health and disability rights as well as with human rights abuses such as the total Internet shutdown imposed by the authorities in November 2019.

**Bahar Saba**  
Middle East and North Africa  
Programme Officer

As part of **our work** to ensure people in **Iran** can access the information they are entitled to, ARTICLE 19 produce targeted specialist guides on the Freedom of Information Act in 2020, using audiovisual formats to reach as wide an audience as possible. We produced short videos and published factsheets on the Act in relation to accessing **environment** and **health** information, as well as a factsheet specifically for **journalists**. These materials reached over a **quarter of a million** readers and viewers.

Our work on transparency in Iran was also discussed at the UN, including by the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran, and we provided training to relevant groups to be able to use the law effectively and legally.



## Implementing Kenya's Access to Information Law

ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa was heavily involved in developing regulations to implement **Kenya's** Access to Information Law in 2020. The team consulted with civil society and government agencies on the regulations, developed an initial draft, and were the only civil society organisation to join a task force set up to review the regulations.

**The regulations were adopted and are now being used by the Kenyan Government.**

Our Eastern Africa office also collaborated with the Commission on Administrative Justice and the Kenya School of Government to develop a new curriculum for officials working in public services who play a key role in ensuring the public's right to information. We acted as subject matter experts in drafting and validating the curriculum, which will be rolled out to its first cohort in 2021.

## Law reform a first step to improve transparency in Mexico

On 13 August 2020, **Mexico's** Chamber of Deputies unanimously approved a reform to the General Transparency and Access to Public Information Law that obliges the judicial powers of the entire country to make all sentences public (previously, they only had to publish sentences of "public interest", which they often used to avoid publishing rulings and resolutions). This historic decision will reduce judicial opacity and promote a more open and trustworthy justice system.

This reform was a huge win for the #LoJustoEsQueSepas (It Is Right That You Know) collective, which ARTICLE 19 Central America is a member of, and which has promoted judicial transparency since 2018. The collective will continue to monitor developments to ensure the reforms are implemented and judicial powers comply with their new obligations.

## UN HRC adopts freedom of expression resolution

On 16 June 2020, the UN HRC adopted a **resolution** on freedom of opinion and expression, with a thematic focus on access to information. ARTICLE 19 **welcomed** this move – particularly as the last substantive text on this topic was adopted over a decade ago in 2009.

The resolution reaffirms that the right to freedom of expression is an essential foundation of democracy and development, that it is an important indicator of the level of protection of other human rights, and that people must have the same level of protection online as offline – although, disappointingly, it placed disproportionate focus on restrictions to freedom of expression and neglected to address persistent challenges such as criminal defamation laws and surveillance.

This international support of freedom of expression, while welcome, must now be translated into political will at the country level to make a practical difference to people's lives.

People gather in front of the culture ministry in Havana, Cuba, on 27 November 2020 to show solidarity with dissident artists and demand a dialogue over limits on freedom of expression. (Photo: REUTERS/Alexandre Meneghini)





# Governance

The extent of this annual look-back at the work of the International Board is testament to what has been an extraordinary year: unprecedented, demanding and inspiring in equal measure.

Any governance function relies on strong and effective working relationships between trustees supported – periodically – by face-to-face meetings during the year. Like most boards, all of our business had to be carried out virtually due to the impact of the global pandemic and we found ourselves in the midst of an un-precedented shift in the way international organisations work. Yet despite those challenges (not least the challenge of international time zones), we were able to meet virtually and continue implementing a demanding workplan.

Our Regional Boards, (also affected by the crisis), continued with their own priorities to ensure that both staff and operations were kept safe, and that ARTICLE 19 was able to maintain its commitments to donors wherever possible. This annual report attests to the fact that programmatic work across all offices continued largely un-interrupted despite the scale of local challenges: from Kenya to Brazil, from Tunis to Dhaka, ARTICLE 19 continued to drive change wherever we could.

Specifically, the new Chair of the Eastern Africa Board, **Patricia Munabi**, launched a full governance review of the region following the challenges faced by the team in Nairobi in 2019. The findings of that review are now with the Governance Committee of the International Board as part of the broader governance review being undertaken across all entities of the organisation. A special task group, chaired by International Board Chair **Paddy Coulter**, has been charged with reviewing internal systems and enhancing international/regional relations to ensure greater organisational solidarity and financial security. The group is aiming to report on progress to the ARTICLE 19's General Assembly in June 2021.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee, chaired by Treasurer **Mark Salway**, continued to meet regularly to push forward on the workplan focused on improved finance reporting across ARTICLE 19 among many other areas. One of those areas concerns implementation of the findings from the multi-faceted Cultural Review, overseen by expert trustee **Lesley Swarbrick**, which promises to deliver important developments for ARTICLE 19 staff across the organisation in the near future.

One of the key roles of the International Board is the appointment of the Executive Director and with the departure of former Executive Director Thomas Hughes in February 2020 (to take up a new role as Director of Facebook's Oversight Board), a search committee was formed and a detailed executive recruitment process began. After an exhaustive external search, the Board chose to appoint former deputy director **Quinn McKew** to the role on the basis of her outstanding experience, talent, and strategic vision at a pivotal moment in ARTICLE 19's history. Quinn took up her post formally in June 2020 and will lead the organisation through to implementing the new strategy and positioning the organisation for the next decade.

## Our Trustees

Abir Ghattas  
Aparna Ravi  
Arturo Franco  
Bob Latham  
David Kaye  
David Viney  
Frank Ledwidge  
Gayathry Venkiteswaran  
(Vice Chair)  
Lesley Swarbrick  
Mark Salway (Treasurer)  
Nadezda Azhgikhina  
Paddy Coulter (Chair)

Meanwhile the Governance Committee worked to nominate no less than five new trustees during the June ARTICLE 19's General Assembly. Two of these followed the departure of trustees Catalina Botero Marino, who had to leave the Board unexpectedly early in order to take up a role co-Chairing the Facebook Oversight Board, and Galina Arapova who had been a Trustee for ARTICLE 19 and Vice Chair of the Board for many years while expertly leading the Mass Media Defence Centre in Russia.

Galina's departure left vacant the roles of Chair of the Governance Committee and Vice Chair of the Board, and trustees, unanimously endorsed the appointment of Malaysian freedom of expression expert, **Gayathry Venkiteswaran** (Trustee since 2016) to both roles.

To provide additional expertise on the Russia and Central Asia region the Board welcomed **Nadezda Azhgikhina**, a hugely experienced journalist and human rights activist and is currently Director of PEN Moscow. She is joined by international corporate and finance lawyer **Aparna Ravi** who has over 20 years of experience in international corporate governance and a background in not-for-profit research and litigation on women's rights in India.

Developing from a greater focus on enterprise security led by **Frank Ledwidge** (Trustee since 2016), the Board has also appointed **David Viney**, currently Director of Enterprise Platforms at the British Standards Institute. He joined the Board formally in December and brings considerable digital technology expertise across public, private and third sectors with him. To further strengthen our digital and information security expertise we are delighted to welcome **Abir Ghattas**, a Lebanese human rights activist and a technologist currently working with Human Rights Watch. Abir's appointment also enhances our Middle East and North Africa expertise which was depleted after the resignation of Kamel Labidi in 2018. We also hope to announce the appointment of a Trustee with expertise in African freedom of expression later in 2021.

Another vital task of the International Board concerns approving our new human rights strategy once we complete the Expression Agenda at the end of 2021. As threats to expression increase across the globe, our ability to adequately prepare for them has been enhanced by the appointment to the Board of former UN Special Rapporteur for freedom of opinion and expression. Internationally renowned advocate, and former US Government lawyer **David Kaye** stepped down from his UN post in August 2020. He currently teaches law at the University of California, Irvine, and was recently appointed as the Independent Chair of the Board of the Global Network Initiative. ARTICLE 19's International Board will be meeting in June 2021 to work on the strategic direction for the organisation for the next five years.

# Our donors

Our work is made possible with the support of the following institutions:

## Governmental

- British High Commissioner in Bangladesh
- Canada Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
- Confederation Suisse
- Embassy of France in Senegal
- Embassy of Canada to Brazil
- Embassy of Finland to Kenya – Fund for Local Cooperation
- German Embassy in Mexico
- British Embassy to Guatemala
- Embassy of Sweden in Mexico
- Embassy of Switzerland in Mexico
- Embassy of the Netherlands in Bangladesh
- Embassy of the Netherlands in Brazil
- Embassy of the Netherlands in Mexico
- British Embassy in Mexico
- US Embassy in Senegal
- German Federal Foreign Office
- Global Affairs Canada – Pro-Democracy Fund
- Irish Aid
- Swedish Arts Council
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

## Multi-governmental institutions

- European Commission – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- Multi-Donor Trust Fund – Open Government Partnership
- UN Democracy Fund
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)



## Private

- Africa Digital Rights Foundation
- Angelica Foundation
- Asian Foundation
- Audacious Project Fund
- Fundación Avina
- Centre for Research Libraries
- Deutsche Welle Akademie
- Digital Defenders Partnership
- Facebook
- Ford Foundation
- FRIDA
- Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
- Fritt Ord Foundation
- Google News
- IFEX
- ISOC Foundation
- Journalist and Media International Centre – OsloMet
- Justice for Journalists Foundation
- Media Development Fund
- National Endowment for Democracy
- National Geographic
- Natural Resources Governance Institute
- Open Society Foundations
- Open Society Foundations in East Africa
- Open Technology Fund
- Overbrook Foundation
- Pan American Development Foundation
- RESET
- Rising Tide Foundation
- SAGE
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Twitter
- UK Research and Innovation

# Where we work


**ARTICLE 19 North America**  
info@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America**  
comunicacion@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa**  
kenya@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Brazil and South America**  
brasil@article19.org

[www.article19.org](http://www.article19.org)

A world map with a light gray background. The landmasses are colored in a light gray tone. Several regions are highlighted in a bright orange color. These regions include: Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East; Russia and Central Asia; Bangladesh and South Asia; Senegal and Western Africa; and Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Each of these orange-highlighted regions has a black location pin icon placed on it. Overlaid on the map are four black rectangular boxes, each containing white text that identifies the region and provides an email address.

**ARTICLE 19 Europe and  
Central Asia**  
europe@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh  
and South Asia**  
bangladesh@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Senegal  
and Western Africa**  
westafrica@article19.org

**ARTICLE 19 Asia-Pacific**  
asia@article19.org

