

# CAMERAS EVERYWHERE

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
AT THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, VIDEO  
AND TECHNOLOGY



**WITNESS WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE INTERVIEWEES AND EXPERT READERS WHO GAVE THEIR TIME AND EXPERTISE TO INFORM THE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT. THIS REPORT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THEIR GENEROSITY AND OPENNESS.**

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**SAM GREGORY** helps people use the power of moving images to create change. He is the Program Director of WITNESS where he oversees WITNESS' programmatic work, including supervising the Campaign Partnerships, Tools and Tactics, and Leadership initiatives. Over the past decade he has worked extensively with human rights activists, particularly in Latin America and Asia, to use video to push for changes in policy, practice and law.

Within WITNESS *Cameras Everywhere* Leadership Initiative, he identifies solutions to the challenges, and ways to capitalize on the opportunities presented by increasingly ubiquitous video for human rights. Sam has created training tools and programs, including the WITNESS Video Advocacy Institute, was lead editor on "Video for Change" (Pluto Press, 2005) and teaches a course called, "Human Rights Advocacy Using Video and Related Multimedia", as an Adjunct Lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School. Sam graduated from the University of Oxford and completed a Masters in Public Policy as a Kennedy Memorial Scholar at Harvard. He currently serves on the Board of the U.S. Campaign for Burma, and the Advisory Board of Games for Change.

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# ABOUT WITNESS

WITNESS is the global pioneer in the use of video to expose human rights abuses. We empower people to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools for justice, promoting public engagement and policy change. Founded in 1992, WITNESS has partnered with more than 300 human rights groups in over 80 countries, trained over 3,000 human rights defenders, developed widely-used training materials and tools, created the first dedicated online platform for human rights media, the HUB, and supported the inclusion of video in more than 100 campaigns, increasing their visibility and impact.

Videos made by WITNESS and our partners have told dozens of critical human rights stories, and have galvanized grassroots communities, judges, activists, media, and decision-makers at local, national and international levels to action. They have called attention to stories of slavery, trafficking and war crimes. They have secured basic rights to education, employment, housing and health care. They have improved the lives of children, the disabled, indigenous peoples, minorities, workers and women. WITNESS campaigns have empowered individuals and their communities to secure and protect their rights. They have shown us where governments and non-state actors have failed to meet legally-binding obligations. They have pressured those in power to act. And they have engaged millions of ordinary citizens in the struggles for human rights taking place every day all over the world.

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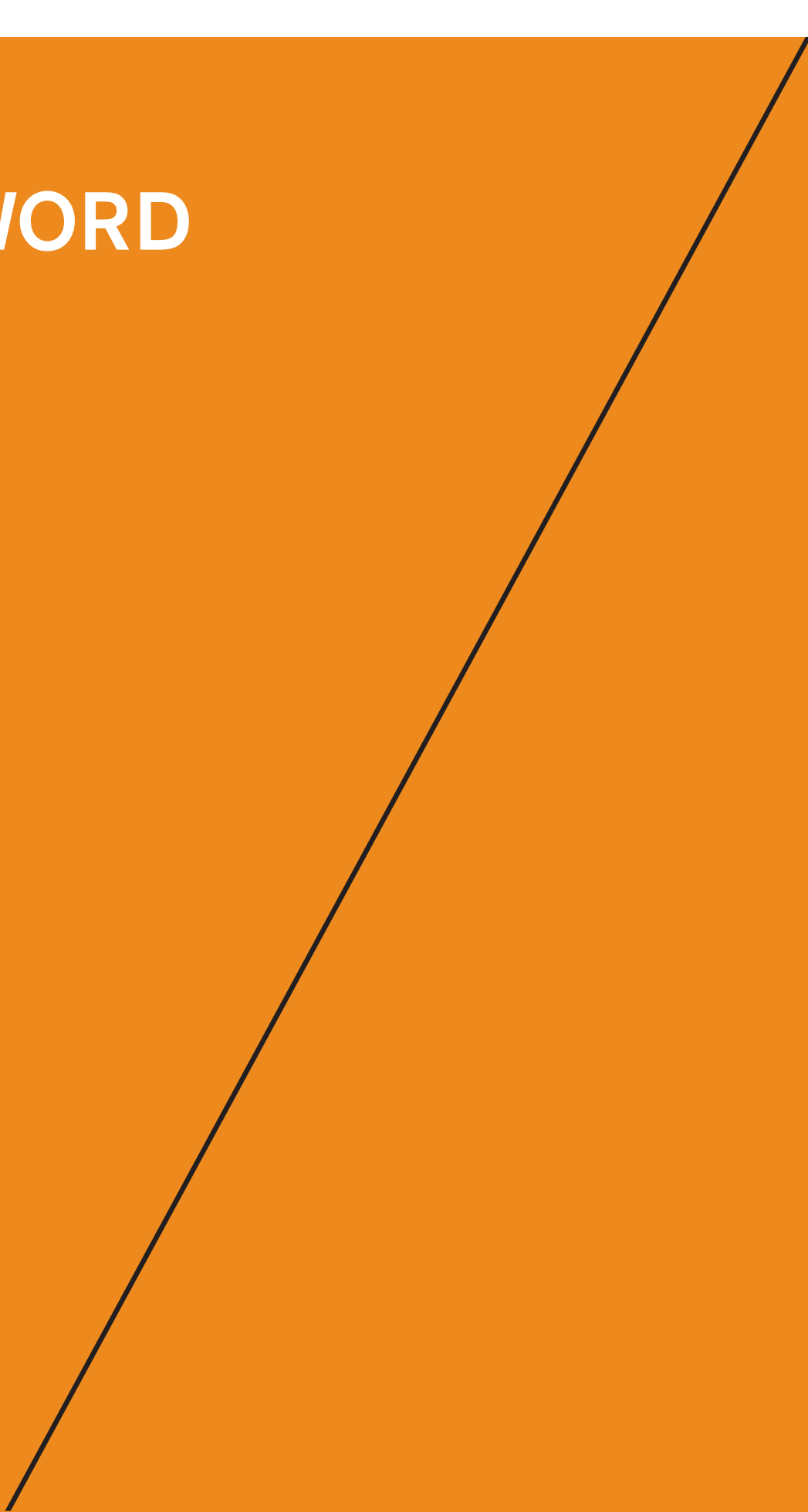
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# FOREWORD



# FOREWORD

When people have suffered human rights abuses, it seems extraordinary that their experiences can then be effectively denied, buried and forgotten. Whenever there is video, their experience and stories are not only captured, but the video becomes a tool for change. WITNESS was founded in 1992 to bring video and technology into the human rights movement.

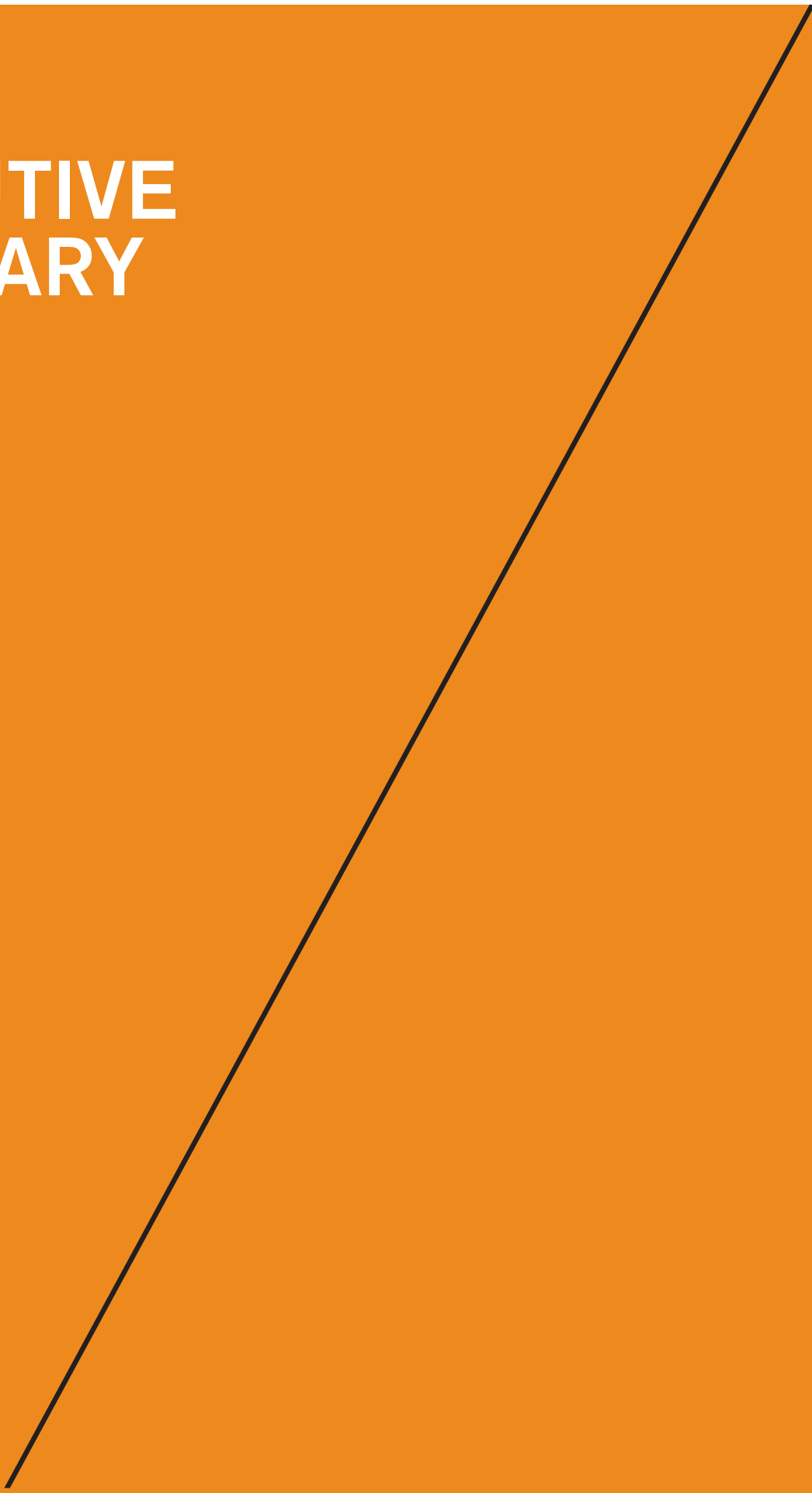
Today, almost 20 years later, technology is enabling the public, especially young people, to become human rights activists. With the global distribution of mobile phones, our original dream of getting cameras to the world is being realized and with that come incredible opportunities. Activists, developers, technology companies and social media platforms are beginning to realize the potential of video to bring about change, but a more supportive ecosystem is urgently needed.

This report asks the hard questions about how to protect and empower those who attempt to expose injustices through video. It provides specific recommendations for immediate and future actions that can reduce danger for those risking their lives. This report is an important step to understanding how we can harness the power of video and technology to empower activists to protect and defend human rights. This is the age of transformative technology.

**PETER GABRIEL**

Co-founder, WITNESS

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the Arab Spring, with its use of social media, cell phones and the internet, to the release of confidential documents by Wikileaks, new technologies and new approaches are challenging long-held assumptions about how human rights documentation and advocacy functions, and who does it.

Video has emerged as a key means through which human rights abuses can be exposed, while also contributing more broadly to ensuring that transparency, accountability and good governance are upheld.

But while video and other communications technologies present new opportunities for freedom of expression and information, they also present challenges and expose vulnerabilities. In the video age, more people, intentionally or inadvertently, have become human rights advocates than ever before. Those seeking to create lasting impact will need to develop new skills and systems for creating and handling human rights video, online and off. But their access, privacy and safety is dependent on a wider range of people too, from governments and international organizations, to companies such as Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Microsoft, Twitter and Nokia. Access to information, technology, skills and networks shapes who can participate – and survive - in this emerging ecosystem of free expression.

WITNESS' *Cameras Everywhere* aims to ensure that the thousands of people using video for human rights can do so as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. This report is based on discussions with over 40 senior experts and practitioners in technology and human rights. It presents a roadmap to emerging trends in policy and practice at the intersection of human rights, technology, social media, and business. *Cameras Everywhere* goes on to make specific recommendations on how important players in the new human rights landscape can take specific, manageable steps to strengthen the practical and policy environments for human rights video, and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) used for human rights.

There are five areas that present the most pressing challenges: Privacy and Safety; Network Vulnerabilities; Information Overload, Authentication and Preservation; Ethics; and Policy.

## PRIVACY AND SAFETY

It is clear that new technologies, particularly the mobile phone, have made it simpler for human rights defenders and others to record and report violations, but harder for them to do so securely. The ease of copying, tagging and circulating images over a variety of platforms adds a layer of risk beyond an individual user's control. All content and communications, including visual media, leave personal digital traces that third parties can harvest, link and exploit. Hostile governments, in particular, can use photo and video data – particularly that linked with social networking data—to identify track and target activists within their countries, facilitated by the growth of automatic face-detection and recognition software.

Without proactive policymaking, legislative or regulatory loopholes will be taken advantage of where they exist. Technology companies, for example, must ensure that their products, suppliers and services protect users' privacy and data by default, and should place a greater focus on privacy by design.

It is alarming how little public discussion there is about visual privacy and anonymity. Everyone is discussing and designing for privacy of personal data, but almost no-one is considering the right to control one's personal image or the right to be anonymous in a video-mediated world. The human rights community's understanding of the importance of anonymity as an enabler of free expression must now develop a new dimension – the right to visual anonymity.

## **NETWORK VULNERABILITIES**

Technology providers like Google and Facebook have recently been pushed to the forefront of human rights debates. The responsibility of these providers as intermediaries for activist and human rights purposes have been brought into focus by the Arab Spring. Though activists have long been using websites, like Dailymotion and YouTube, to rally and inform their supporters, almost none of these sites has a *human rights* content category, whether for user contributions or for curators or editors. Providers do not have publicly available editorial policies or standards specifically focused on human rights content. Some activists have faced content, campaign or even account takedown for “violating” terms of use policies. Video content is vulnerable to interception, takedown and censorship, and needs active protection. Mechanisms are evolving to make automatic censorship of video content more widely possible. On commercial platforms videos showing graphic violence or killing are vulnerable to takedowns. Copyright policy, backed by powerful music/film industry lobbies, impacts public interest content using parodies or remixes.

Surveillance technologies that can have a legitimate law enforcement use, such as in tracking child exploitation online, can also be used to block or censor political or human rights content or to covertly monitor advocates. International standards for scrutiny and export control of such dual-use technologies do exist, but these need revision and strengthening.

We must increase the resilience, reach and accountability of communications networks, public and private. The human rights community must also invest in alternative means of communicating, preserving and distributing human rights content.

## **INFORMATION OVERLOAD, AUTHENTICATION AND PRESERVATION**

With more video material coming directly to the public from a wider range of sources, it is increasingly urgent to find ways to rapidly verify or trust such information. Alongside more manual, forensic techniques of verification, technology-driven initiatives are underway to provide technical verification and digital chain-of-custody footage, and to help underpin the use of video in evidentiary, legal, media and archival contexts. However, significant questions remain over how to vouch for authenticity, protect safety, and communicate the original intention of human rights footage. Civil society organizations may need to develop common information standards or shared protocols –or adapt them from journalism.

As the store of human rights content grows, curating and aggregating it in ways that are clear and appealing becomes a major challenge. In addition, ensuring that human rights video remains persistently available is important for awareness, advocacy and justice – and commercial organisations cannot be relied upon to do this. Neither is it easy for individual users of commercial platforms and technology to understand how to back up their human rights content, especially in crisis situations.

## **ETHICS**

The place of ethics in social media content and conduct is increasingly under the spotlight, primarily around usage by young people and other potentially vulnerable

groups. Human rights needs, including how consent of video participants is secured, can come into conflict with the free flowing spread of content and identity through social media. Ethical frameworks and guidelines for online content are in their infancy and do not yet explicitly reflect or incorporate human rights standards.

More needs to be done to tie together ethics in digital spaces with ethics in the physical world, which might prove helpful both for those “born digital” and those that are not.

## POLICY

Technology, and the internet in particular, evolves much more quickly than legislative and policy responses to it. When policy responses are introduced, they are often inconsistent across different policy domains and, moreover, developed behind closed doors, beyond public debate and scrutiny.

United States and European Union policy towards the internet and mobile communications strongly influences similar policies in other parts of the world. Yet neither the United States nor the European Union routinely applies human rights standards in forming internet policies. Intergovernmental organizations such as the UN are—in general—not yet agile players within the policy-making arena of the internet, though some specific agencies and Special Rapporteurs are developing new, widely-consulted frameworks. Meanwhile some governments, notably China, are making headway both shaping policy against freedom of expression domestically, and seeking to influence international standards bodies.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Long-term and sustainable change for the effective use of video for human rights requires genuine engagement between civil society, business and government to be impactful. We outline several key steps—for technology companies and developers, investors, human rights organizations, funders and policy makers—that must be taken to enhance the potential of video for human rights, and more broadly, to ensure that all people can use technology safely, effectively, and ethically.

## TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

Recommendations to technology companies and developers focus on four sets of changes—to policy, functionality, editorial content, and engagement. Making these changes would not only positively affect the entire environment for online and mobile video, but would also free up resources in civil society.

1. **Put human rights at the core of user and content policies:** Reevaluate current policies using human rights impact assessments, create human rights content categories that are not vulnerable to arbitrary takedowns and highlight key values around context and consent, and ensure content is preserved wherever possible.
2. **Put human rights at the heart of privacy controls and allow for anonymity:** Make privacy policies more visible and privacy controls more functional using principles of *privacy by design*, and allow for visual privacy and anonymity with the help of new products, apps and services.
3. **Create dedicated digital human rights spaces:** Support curation of human rights videos, facilitate user education and understanding of human rights issues, make takedown and editorial policies transparent, employ Creative Commons licensing, and support users in dealing with ethics and safety issues.
4. **Engage in wider technology-human rights debates and initiatives:** Draw on expertise across companies in order to collaborate on human rights guidelines, participate in multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Global Network Initiative, and address supply chain and environmental impact issues.

## TECHNOLOGY INVESTORS

Venture capitalists and investors play a critical role in bringing high-quality technology products and services that could yield major gains to the human rights community.

1. **Put human rights at the forefront of investment:** Work to understand the human rights implications of technologies.
2. **Collaborate with human rights funders:** Use joint funding mechanisms for technology development for human rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The fight for human rights is increasingly intertwined with technology usage and policy. In the digital age, it is proving to be increasingly critical for human rights organizations to collaborate more with non-traditional partners, while standing firm on core universal human rights values, standards and principles until they take root in the technology sphere.

1. **Engage with technologists:** Dedicate resources and expertise to strengthening own capacity and communicating and collaborating with technologists on human rights issues.
2. **Support training and learning on using technology for human rights.**
3. **Collaborate more, compete less:** Create a human rights-technology network, coordinate cross-platform discussions and engage with key policymakers, civil society, media, business and technology funders/investors, and develop human rights principles for investments in information and communications technologies.
4. **Invest in research:** Develop more effective monitoring and evaluation systems, create predictive models that can anticipate trends in technology and policy that may impact human rights policy, and share findings with key players.

## FUNDERS

Governmental, foundation and private donors play a critical role in conducting and supporting research, activism and advocacy on issues related to human rights and technology. To increase impact, their funding need to become more transparent, accessible, harmonized and less risk-averse.

1. **Increase transparency in funding around who is funding what and how.**
2. **Collaborate with other funders, investors and technology developers:** Create multi-donor spaces on technology and human rights, including emerging crowd-funding platforms, as well as new donors outside U.S./Europe, and create both joint funding mechanisms with investors and review boards that can assess risk in proposals.
3. **Lead in developing effective monitoring and evaluations methodologies for human rights and technologies.**

## POLICY MAKERS

Policy and lawmakers play a central role in guaranteeing that citizens have access and the capability to use information technologies in a manner that protects and promotes their rights. They also often set the frameworks within which ICTs are governed and held accountable. The recommendations below are an initial subset primarily centered on the U.S. and EU.

1. **Review existing legislation for consistency:** Ensure policies are human rights-compatible across key areas of legislation and policymaking, both domestically and internationally.

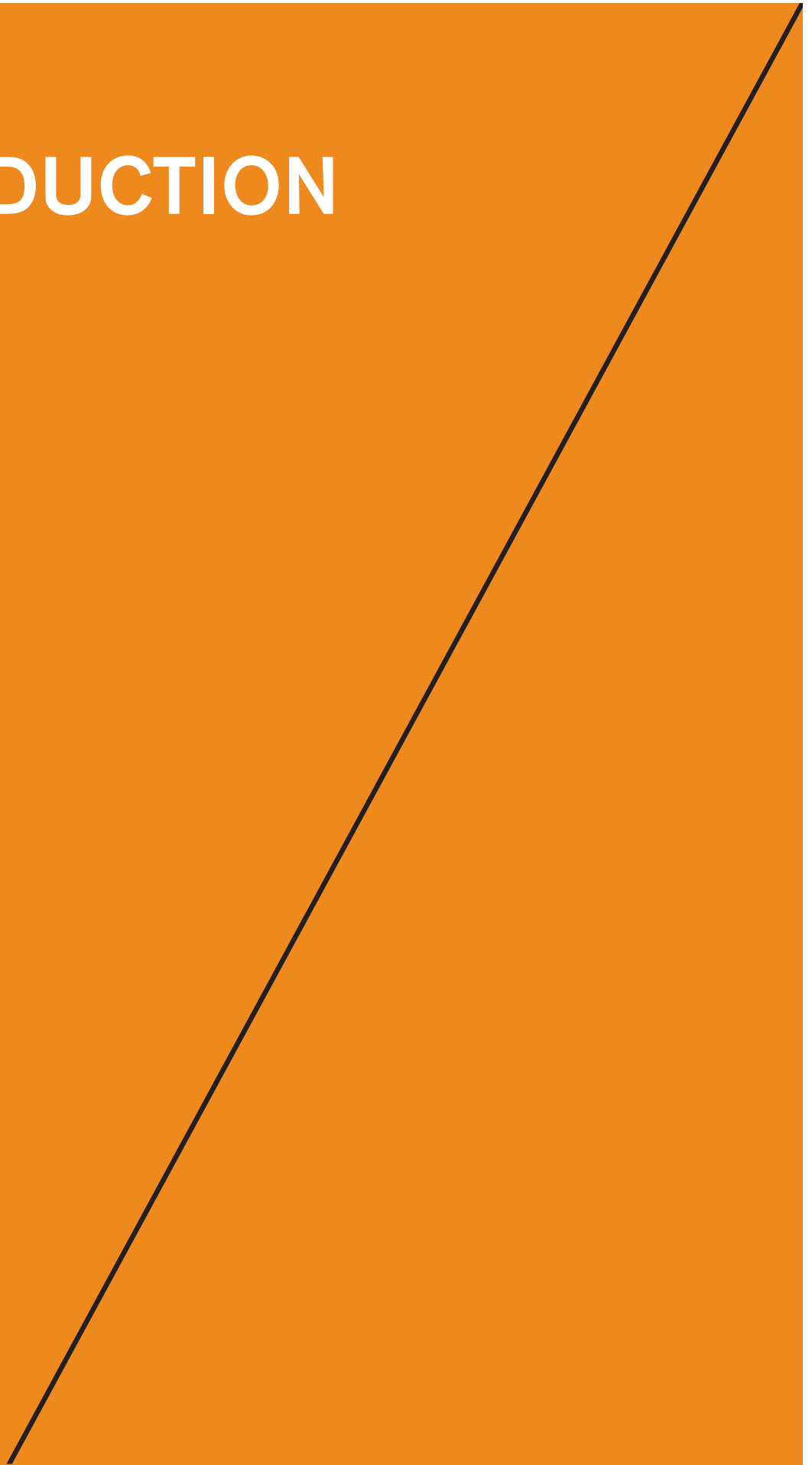
- 2. Update legislation on visual privacy issues:** Review the Safe Harbor Principles and incorporate visual privacy data into existing restrictions on the transfer of personal data between countries.
- 3. Review national legislation and international agreements on dual-use technologies:** Scrutinize and update monitoring practices for dual-use technologies, particularly those used by repressive regimes and other governments for repressive purposes.

## **WITNESS NEXT STEPS**

WITNESS will work to ensure that the millions of people turning to video for human rights can do so as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. Never before has there been such potential for diverse stakeholders to harness the possibilities of human rights video. As video becomes more central to human rights struggles, WITNESS will deepen our global leadership role by fostering a more conducive environment for video to support human rights. We plan to:

- 1. Create WITNESS Labs:** Support a series of collaborations with technology developers to create innovative tools that support human rights and address the challenges raised by the increasing use of video, particularly within grassroots human rights campaigns.
- 2. Engage with key stakeholders in technology and human rights:** Advocate on the key recommendations outlined in this report through private advocacy, public discussions, events, blogs and online debates.
- 3. Build broad-based digital media literacy and advocacy skills for effective use of video:** Develop comprehensive training tools, effective guidelines and spreadable media to support a growing number of human rights video-users.
- 4. Promote public policy solutions:** Review participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives, push for further discussion around visual privacy, and facilitate collaborations with key players on critical issues outlined in this report.
- 5. Mobilize support for a growing field–“Why Video Matters”:** Through collaborative research and reporting, further deepen the evidence-based understanding of the challenges and opportunities that video and related technologies can play in facilitating social change.

# INTRODUCTION



# CAMERAS EVERYWHERE: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, VIDEO AND TECHNOLOGY

Video is increasingly central to human rights work, campaigning and advocacy. It has been critical in drawing worldwide attention to corruption, torture, denial of rights and repression around the world. More human rights video is being captured, produced and shared by more people in more places than ever before, often in real-time. It is happening in organized and spontaneous ways, by people with training and without. In this video-saturated environment, those seeking to create lasting impact will need to develop new skills and systems for creating and handling human rights video online and off.

Video has a key role to play, not just in exposing and providing evidence of human rights abuses, but across the spectrum of transparency, accountability and good governance. Video and other communication technologies present new opportunities for freedom of expression and information, but also pose significant new vulnerabilities. As more people understand the power of video, including human rights violators, the more the safety and security of those filming and of those being filmed will need to be considered at each stage of video production and distribution. Access to information, technology, skills and networks shapes who can participate—and survive—in this emerging ecosystem of free expression. Poverty, inequality, marginalization, discrimination and repression reinforce the significant divides between those that can access this ecosystem, and those that can't.

New information and communications technologies (ICTs)—the internet, mobile phones, social networking sites, mapping and geospatial technologies like satellite imaging—are playing a powerful role in contemporary human rights work. From facilitating and strengthening networking among local activists to building international solidarity for a cause, from unearthing street-level eyewitness footage to providing satellite evidence of attacks on civilians, these new technologies are challenging long-held assumptions about how human rights documentation and advocacy functions and who does it. More and more people, including many who might not see themselves as human rights activists, are now using video and social media to create, share and organize around issues they care about.

This is, in turn, bringing a new range of players into the human rights field, many of whom never before regarded themselves as having a stake in human rights—most notably, leading social networks, social media platforms, internet companies, mobile manufacturers and operators, including companies such as Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Microsoft, Twitter and Nokia. By virtue of the sheer numbers of people using their products to document, share and expose human rights violations, these companies have both a stake and a say in how human rights are understood and handled worldwide and are increasingly being pressed to meet these responsibilities. What's more, local and international laws and policies that govern these companies often take little account of human rights needs or standards. This has been made much more apparent as the Arab Spring has unfolded.



The WITNESS *Cameras Everywhere* initiative aims to ensure that the thousands of people using video for human rights can do so as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. This report—accompanying other aspects of the initiative—is based on in-depth discussions with over 40 senior experts and practitioners in technology, media and human rights. We engaged decision-makers at major content publishers and technology platforms, senior staff at international human rights groups, policy-makers and legislators, journalists, experts and researchers in technology, privacy, and media. In some discussions we focused particularly on the opportunities presented by the growth in the use of video, in others, the broader context of the internet and technology. The report presents a roadmap to emerging trends in policy and practice at the intersection of human rights, technology, social media, and business.

While grassroots movements and human rights organizations are vital and remain at the heart of WITNESS' work, we must also recognize that the media, policy and technology sectors shape many of the standards and structures for the creation and distribution of human rights video. Opportunities for new kinds of thinking, partnerships and solutions to the challenges posed by new technologies are abundant. By setting the parameters within which video is created, seen and shared, these new human rights actors have the power to influence how grassroots activists can operate – and the scale of their potential impact. This report makes specific recommendations on how important players in the new human rights landscape can take specific, manageable steps to strengthen the practical and policy environments for human rights video, and other ICTs used for human rights.

We have identified key challenges in relation to:

- Privacy and Safety
- Network Vulnerabilities
- Information Overload, Authentication and Preservation
- Ethics
- Policy

These are shaping the immediate future of the human rights sector as it relates to visual media, and to ICTs more generally. In particular, the events of 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa have brought some of these challenges into sharper focus and highlighted the need for a more comprehensive lens trained on the intersection of human rights, the internet, new communications technologies and technology policy. The reality is we no longer have the luxury of treating these different sectors in isolation from each other. They increasingly intertwine and human rights run through all of them, which means we can no longer collectively pretend that this is not the case.