



# THE BIG PICTURE

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## IFEX: A FORMIDABLE COUNTERFORCE

The roving spotlight of the world's attention can be narrow, fleeting, and fickle. While much of the western world's focus in 2022 was on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its devastating impact, we have not lost sight of the fact that authoritarian rulers are shrinking civic space and undermining democracies across the globe. And those marginalised based on their intersecting identities continue to be impacted the most.

The impacts on our work are many. Free expression is being systematically dismantled through despotic legislation. There is continued, widespread surveillance and harassment of activists, journalists and CSOs, and increases in gendered attacks. Public trust in information channels and democratic processes is being further undermined by rampant disinformation, and internet shutdowns are suppressing access to information - at times when communities need it the most.

As volatile geopolitical events continue to unfold, **IFEX** members' work has been further impacted by funding cuts, rising inflation, travel restrictions, and the climate crisis, as well as by direct attacks on their work, organisations, and staff.

**To meet this head on, we remained informed by the context and driven by members always ensuring:**

- Responses were flexible and creative
- Continuous innovation drove us forward
- Harmful narratives were turned upside down
- Relationships were grounded in respect and honesty
- Connections were sustained across and beyond the network

**And to keep the 'human' in our human rights work, we also made sure to find opportunities to connect, as a network, through music and dancing - online or offline!**

The title of this report is *The Big Picture*. By its very nature as a network of over 100 member organisations that span more than 70 countries, **IFEX** is the big picture. We bring this rich perspective to all of our work and stick with it for the long game. It is what makes us such a formidable counterforce to these trends.

**THIS CHALLENGING CONTEXT IS NOT GOING  
AWAY ANYTIME SOON – BUT NEITHER IS IFEX.**

**Rachael Kay**  
*IFEX Executive Director*

A WIDE-ANGLE  
LENS: THE  
CROSS-CUTTING  
THEMES THAT  
CUT ACROSS  
OUR WORK





FEX strives to revitalise its work on a regular basis to remain ahead of the curve and effective in delivering on our strategic plan. We believe that a thoughtful and responsive approach is key to achieving progress toward our vision. With this aim, we push ourselves to renew our approaches. This includes learning from mistakes, leveraging successes, and harnessing fresh ideas from across the network - and a growing list of allies.

In 2022, we refreshed our toolbox of advocacy tactics, found new ways to build important relationships, and challenged wider systems of oppression that undermine our work - and members themselves.

### A REVELATION ON A REVOLUTION

Shifting norms, assumptions, and attitudes towards human rights, failing trust in multilateral institutions, and a rise in authoritarianism and populism pose tough challenges to achieving progress on our goals. Creating spaces of reflection and exchange with others is key to expanding the base of support and knowledge critical to this work. To make real progress, we continue to make even greater efforts to break out of our echo chamber and generate more cross-pollination of ideas.

### Innovation and collaboration lay at the heart of our work throughout 2022, and encompassed various strategies:

- Implementing the **Innovating Change** initiative, conceived in 2021 and subsequently refined and applied to our work, to seek original ways to achieve change in a way that reflects our network approach and values.
- Promoting **meaningful exchange opportunities** among members and partners, and creating spaces for peer sharing and learning, innovation and renovation.
- **Supporting institutional development and consolidation**, as well as building – with members – inventive new forms of funding assistance.
- **Multilayered communications work** that drives our advocacy and amplifies the voices of members and their strategic analyses of national, regional and global trends.
- Establishing the **IFEX** network as a relevant stakeholder in **decision-making spaces**, enabling greater member contributions to these spaces, and engagement with **influential actors**.

## THESE STRATEGIES ARE ALL IN SUPPORT OF IFEX'S 2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN:

### OUR VISION

Everyone is free to exercise the right to freedom of expression and able to access, generate and share ideas and information in any way they choose without fear

#### NETWORK BUILDING

IFEX drives change through a diverse, informed network based on strong organisations, meaningful connections among members, and strategic relationships with external allies

#### SECURING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Strengthened circulation and integrity of information, both online and offline

#### ENABLING AND PROTECTING CIVIC SPACE

Through countering restrictions on civic space as it relates to FoE&I and reinforcing its value among IFEX's target audiences

#### IMPROVING SAFETY AND ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Through strengthened normative environment for FoE&I and improved justice for those experiencing violations

### CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

IFEX is committed to meaningfully integrating equity and inclusion into its work, from operations and internal functions to programming, content, and member support. IFEX is committed to freedom of expression and information both online and offline, and considers and integrates a digital lens throughout all aspects of its work.

A WIDE-ANGLE  
LENS: THE  
CROSS-CUTTING  
THEMES THAT  
CUT ACROSS  
OUR WORK

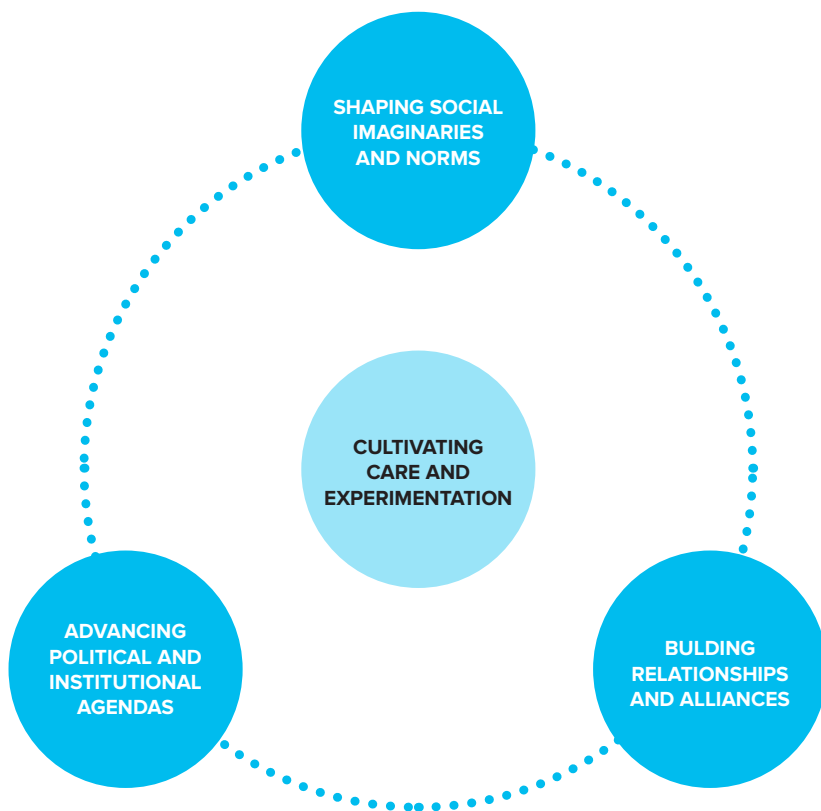
## INNOVATING CHANGE AS A NETWORK

Following our foundational work in 2021 developing the Innovating Change approach with 27 organisations from a diverse range of sectors, we brought these growing allies together on four occasions in 2022 to exchange ideas and tactics for achieving real change in current contexts.

We gained fresh perspectives and breathed new ideas into each other's work, and through these conversations we were able to unpack the broad concepts of the approach and its four key elements, or "spheres of change."



## CHANGE PERSPECTIVE



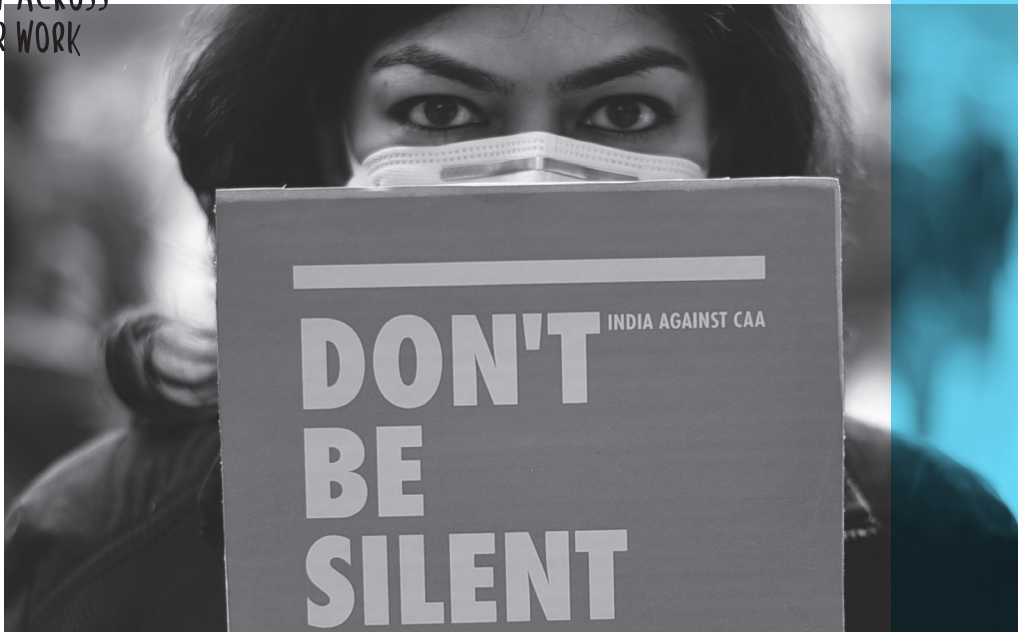
**1 SHAPING SOCIAL IMAGINARIES AND NORMS:**  
Fostering a broader and deeper understanding of certain issues; creating an environment that will enable the desired change.

**2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND ALLIANCES:**  
Mobilizing the power of collaboration; creating opportunities to exchange experiences and enhance connections.

**3 ADVANCING POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL AGENDAS:**  
Engaging with local, regional or international democratic mechanisms to reverse unequal and unfair situations and to promote social justice.

**4 CULTIVATING CARE AND EXPERIMENTATION:**  
Balancing collective creativity and experimentation while creating a sense of support and security needed for individuals to flourish.

A WIDE-ANGLE  
LENS: THE  
CROSS-CUTTING  
THEMES THAT  
CUT ACROSS  
OUR WORK



We discussed how we can meaningfully apply this approach, both as a compass to navigate contextual challenges, and as a tool to assess the value of specific campaigning tactics and strategies. Innovating change is not a 'one and done'. It is a commitment that we must sustain. We will continue to build on these strategies as a network, and, as we have always done, exploring, experimenting and finding new ways to leverage the impact of our network and to reinforce members' work.

## DROPPING THE "D"

### ● Modelling and promoting equity and Inclusion (E&I)

In the current IFEX Strategic Plan, we widened the focus of our gender strategy to include other, often marginalised, identities. The approach integrated the broader concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion – "DEI" – into our work. We also wove this approach into objectives across our plan, rather than housing it in a separate strategy. During 2022, at the midpoint of our Plan, we recognised that we were surpassing our targets in this area. We took this as a sign to stretch ourselves further, as well as to reflect on what we had learned to date. We undertook an intense internal exercise to explore what the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion really mean to IFEX, to our network connections, and to our impact on free expression and information rights. We determined that our focus should be deepened on equity and inclusion, as this is where we have the agency to create a difference. Furthermore, we found that the word "diversity" was becoming so ubiquitous that it was at risk of losing its meaning; it was often misused as a box-ticking exercise, standing in for the broader change we are trying to achieve through this work. For these reasons, we decided to stop referring to diversity as a target, and instead focus on modelling and promoting equity and inclusion - from DEI, to E&I. IFEX's approaches strive to ensure equity and inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices, and accountability for identity-based FoE&I violations. Our values push us to include the reflection and integration of different social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural contexts, as well as the intersectional identities that exist within them (including gender and sexual identities).



DISSENT IS

HEALTHY.

FEEL FREE TO

DISAGREE.

CIVIC SPACE



IFEX WORKED WITH 92 MEMBERS AND 25 ALLIES DURING 2022  
TO ENABLE CIVIL SOCIETY AND PROTECT CIVIC SPACE AS IT  
RELATES TO FREE EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION RIGHTS.

DISSENT IS  
HEALTHY. FEEL  
FREE TO DISAGREE.

For organisations like ours that promote and defend freedom of expression, it's becoming increasingly clear that this cannot be achieved without directly addressing the accelerating threats to civic space.

Civic space – whether physical or virtual – is where our societies live and grow. It's where we exercise our rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly. We use civic space to solve problems and improve lives. It is the cornerstone of accountable, responsive democratic governance, and stable societies. It belongs to all of us.

**IFEX** elevated the protection of civic space and the role civil society has in helping it flourish as a thematic goal area in our 5-year strategic plan.

Authoritarianism is fuelled, among other things, by anti-rights rhetoric, attacks on journalists, and a constant erosion of civic space. The continued activism and programming of **IFEX** and its members is pushing back against autocratic rights violations in countries around the world.

Our initiatives are working to strengthen the foundation of civic space by reinforcing its value and supporting advocates to promote and defend it, underscoring its intersections with a healthy democracy and freedom of expression. Our responses in cases of civic space actors facing urgent and serious threats have been strategic and collaborative.

## COORDINATION, COHERENCE AND CONTINUITY

In 2022, our efforts to strengthen international awareness and action in response to civic space challenges in the countries mentioned below has benefitted from building on a foundation of our previous work, and from the coherence and continuity of **IFEX's** approach.

### Belarus – Visibility, solidarity, and recognition

Since the contested elections of 2020, the government in Belarus has intensified suppression of civil society. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine and President Lukashenka's decision to



CIVIC SPACE - WHETHER  
PHYSICAL OR VIRTUAL-  
IS WHERE OUR SOCIETIES  
LIVE AND GROW

DISSENT IS  
HEALTHY. FEEL  
FREE TO DISAGREE.



more closely align with Russia, the already fraught situation has been further aggravated.

Many staff and board members of **IFEX** member the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) – themselves human rights defenders – were targeted, and forced to leave the country.

Visibility can contribute powerfully to the security of CSOs and those who work in them. We have actively promoted the value of BAJ's work and the importance of Belarusian civil society and civic space through our communications platforms, and supported the nomination of BAJ for the 2022 Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Day Prize, which was awarded to them on 3 May.

### **Nicaragua – Continuous support, allyship, and multiple strategies**

In the aftermath of social protests in 2018 and in the lead up to elections in 2021, **IFEX's** regional network of members in Latin America and the Caribbean (IFEX-ALC) has been working with international and local partners in Nicaragua to respond to growing restrictions on freedom of expression and civic space.

Throughout 2022, the network collaborated with allies on different initiatives, which sharpened the coordination of activities in response to the crisis.

One of these collaborative initiatives is Colectivo 46/2, which advocated for the creation of an investigative mechanism, under the oversight of the UN Human Rights Council, to collect information on rights violations that have occurred in the country since 2018. IFEX-ALC participated in a campaign in 2022 to build support for the creation of this mechanism, which made effective use of its broad reach over social media channels.

The campaign and advocacy efforts by Colectivo 46/2 were successful, and in its 49th session the Council approved the creation of the mechanism - at least for an initial period of one year – with a mandate that explicitly includes freedom of expression and information violations as part of the human rights violations to investigate.

DISSENT IS  
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## Complementary efforts

A great example of the systemic manner in which **IFEX** and **IFEX** members work in complementary ways is a project carried out by Costa Rican member IPLEX to facilitate the safe relocation and resettlement of Nicaraguan journalists in danger, as well as Central American journalists affected by the closing of civic space in other countries in the region.

**IFEX** support enabled IPLEX to assist 15 Nicaraguan journalists to relocate to Costa Rica, where they could safely continue covering the ongoing crises in their home countries. They were assisted in covering their basic expenses, provided with mental health support, and put in contact with media workers and journalists in Costa Rica.

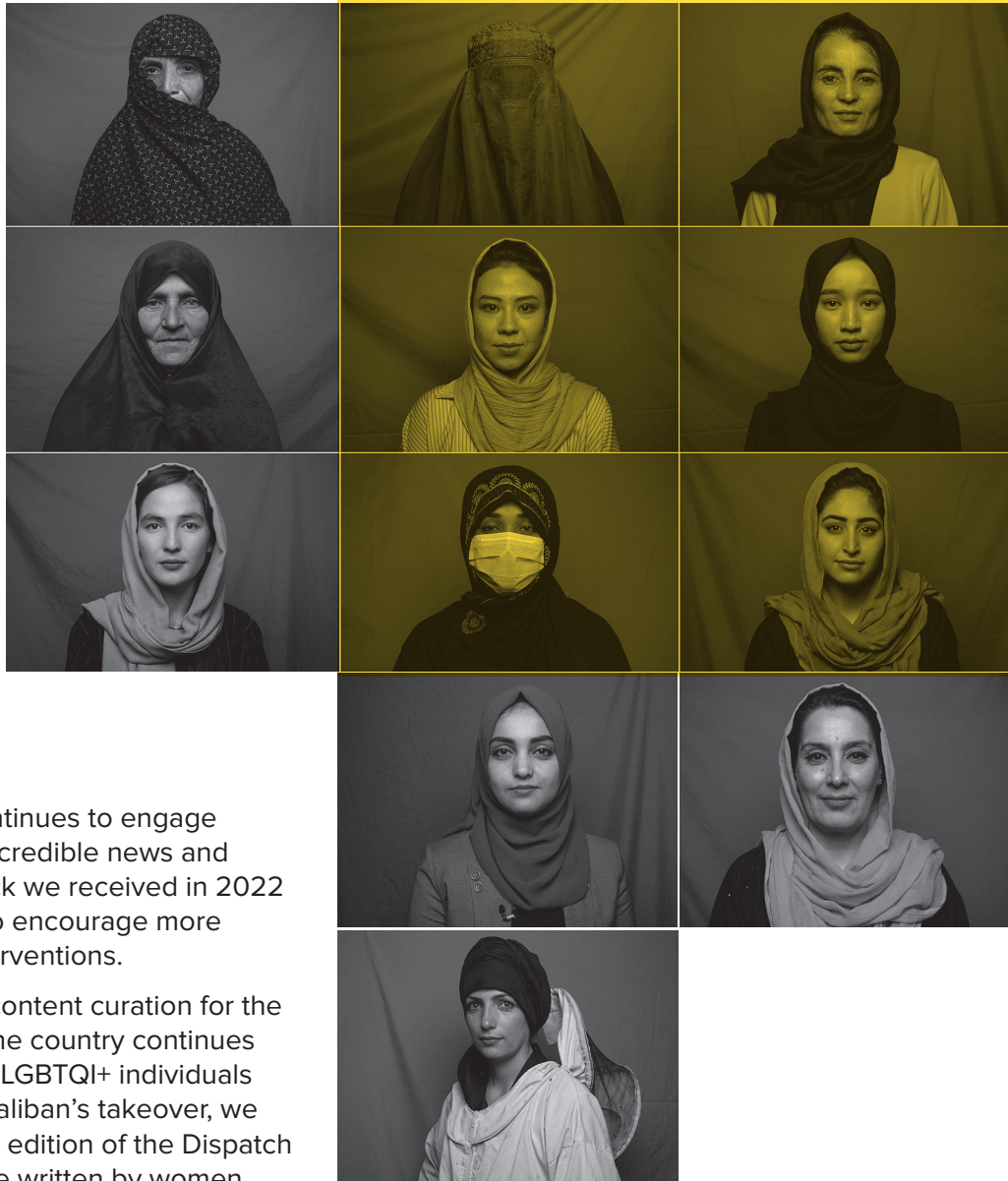
Local refugee organisations were consulted in order to ensure support was tailored to be sensitive to the particular needs of people in exile. This was especially important for exiled women journalists, who experience different impacts.

## Afghanistan – Differentiated impacts of a civic space crisis

**IFEX** continued to coordinate work with allies and partners inside and outside of Afghanistan, focusing on the deterioration of civic space and working to defend the safety of human rights defenders, journalists and others, as well as organisations forced into exile.

**IFEX's** weekly Afghanistan Dispatch continues to engage key activists and organisations, sharing credible news and reports to support their efforts. Feedback we received in 2022 emphasised how valuable it has been to encourage more efficient, collaborative and strategic interventions.

**IFEX** is bringing an inclusive lens to its content curation for the Dispatch, recognizing that the crisis in the country continues to disproportionately affect women and LGBTQI+ individuals and groups. On the anniversary of the Taliban's takeover, we published a [Twitter thread](#) and a special edition of the Dispatch – an edition in which all the articles were written by women.



DISSENT IS  
HEALTHY. FEEL  
FREE TO DISAGREE.

"OUR JOINT EFFORT  
CONTRIBUTED TO THE  
PARLIAMENT'S DECISION  
TO POSTPONE THESE  
DRAFT LAWS."

GLOBE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE



### ● Under-represented languages and regions

In Kyrgyzstan, in 2022, IFEX member the Public Association of Journalists (PAJ) - hosted a media event entirely in the Kyrgyz language, devoted to the problems of regional media. It was the first large-scale media event to take place in the town of Naryn; the mayor and the minister of culture, information, sports and youth policy both attended. The choice by PAJ to host the meeting outside of a major city was designed to promote participation by journalists working in remote and rural areas, as was the choice of language - media events in the country are usually held in Russian, limiting opportunities for Kyrgyz-speaking media.

### Mongolia – Defending civic space from obstructive laws

IFEX worked with member Globe International Centre's (GIC) in aligning problematic national legislation with international human rights standards. This work is in support of their wider advocacy to promote a more sound legal environment for those exercising their freedom of expression and information in Mongolia.

This initiative included advocacy against proposed revisions to a current law that risked further narrowing of civic space, obstructing the right to association and restricting NGO operations. GIC, together with more than 50 other civil society organisations, coordinated an action calling for the amendments to be withdrawn. Defamation laws can suppress access to information, which is the lifeblood of a robust civic space.

GIC coordinated a working group with the National Human Rights Commission to review and provide recommendations to parliament around outdated defamation laws in the country.

This resulted in a legal review, as well as a proposal on how to improve the legislation, which was directly shared with parliament. So far, at least five members of parliament have reached out to GIC expressing their support for the changes.

### Hungary – Equipping watch dogs...and guard dogs

During an electoral year in Hungary, and in the context of crackdowns on civic space, IFEX supported member, the Center for Independent Journalism-Hungary, to equip civic space actors with the information and skills needed to enable their watchdog functions and to effectively resist attacks. The organisation held five public roundtable discussions on topics including the threats posed by surveillance technology, platform regulation in the EU, countering government propaganda, smear campaigns, and SLAPPs. Experts provided technical support and advice to individual journalists, newsrooms and journalism students. To multiply their impact, the public discussions were held in a hybrid fashion and streamed live to over 1,500 viewers.

DISSENT IS  
HEALTHY. FEEL  
FREE TO DISAGREE.



"BRAZILIAN CIVIC SPACE NEEDS TO BE PROTECTED TO ENSURE THAT JOURNALISTS, ACTIVISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DON'T BECOME AN ENDANGERED SPECIES. WE NEED TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY BY PROMOTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY. CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS AND JOURNALISTS HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY - THEY HAVE BEEN EXPOSING AND CORRECTING WEAPONIZED DISINFORMATION THAT AIMS TO MISLEAD VOTERS AND SUPPRESS VOTING DURING ELECTIONS IN EVERY REGION OF THE WORLD."

ANNIE GAME  
FORMER IFEX EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## The digital rights of children

As a network of diverse organisations that come together around common goals, IFEX is able to effectively advocate for the right to freedom of expression in all its forms and amongst all people - including children, whose rights are too often ignored. Member Child Rights International Network recently produced, with IFEX support, the report "Privacy and Protection: A children's rights approach to encryption," in which they capture the richness and dangers of the online lives of children, and set out an approach to encryption that recognizes and respects the full range of their rights.

### THE PROTECT CIVIC SPACE CAMPAIGN

We are pushing back against the closure and erosion of civic space the **IFEX** way: by championing a free and accessible civic space as it relates to free expression with a powerful message, and through collaboration.

**IFEX's** Protect Civic Space campaign established an approach and materials that all **IFEX** members can adapt and use in their contexts. Two of the key ways we did this were to mark important free expression days, highlighting their intersection with civic space, and reinforcing the value of civic space during elections.

#### Connecting the dots

On WPF and throughout May, **IFEX** took opportunities to highlight the key message that a robust civic space cannot thrive without press freedom - and that, in turn, a free press relies on an open civic space.

We kicked things off with an [Editorial](#), and followed it up with a [Twitter thread](#) and civic-space campaign images, to strategically push this message out over social media.

#### A democracy on the edge

**IFEX**, in collaboration with local members ARTIGO 19 Brazil and Abrajil as well as IFEX-ALC, adapted the broader Protect Civic Space campaign for Brazil's 2022 general elections.

Brazil was chosen because of the high degree of interest of local members to collaborate on this work, the country's global importance (geopolitical, environmental), and because, as is the case in many other countries now, its democracy had been under threat by far-right authoritarianism, exploiting and encouraging polarisation.

DISSENT IS  
HEALTHY. FEEL  
FREE TO DISAGREE.



### Key campaign elements:

- **IFEX** developed and promoted a narrative that expresses our network values and principles. We were able to use the elections in one country to raise awareness about the strict relationship between an open civic space and a healthy democracy.
- **IFEX** collaborated closely with local members to ensure that the materials were specifically tailored to integrate an equity and inclusion perspective. Selected images represented women, indigenous peoples and Afro descendant activists and protesters – groups often most affected by the closing of civic space and whose voices are structurally silenced in Brazil. A series of tweets were published to add visibility to gendered attacks against women candidates and women journalists covering the electoral process, in view of the many attacks reported by Abraji and ARTIGO 19.
- The campaign provided an opportunity for the broader IFEX-ALC regional network to stand by its Brazilian members in a critical moment for their democracy. An opportunity for solidarity as well as direct involvement, as other members amplified the content, bringing the campaign themes home and reminding their own audiences that the threats to democracy in Brazil represented a risk to the future of democracy throughout the region.

IFEX DEVELOPED AND  
PROMOTED A NARRATIVE  
THAT EXPRESSES OUR  
NETWORK VALUES  
AND PRINCIPLES

# IT'S A CHAIN REACTION!

NETWORK BUILDING

IFEX WORKED WITH 102 MEMBERS AND 38 ALLIES DURING 2022 TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF THE IFEX NETWORK TO PROMOTE AND DEFEND THE RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION.



## IT'S A CHAIN REACTION!

The **IFEX** network is large and dynamic, providing a holistic space where members can find inspiration and ideas, as well as connections and collaboration opportunities, to continually refresh their approaches through creativity and innovation.

Our ability to drive change lies in this diverse, informed network, which is founded on principles of trust and transparency, solidified by meaningful exchanges between members, and bolstered by strategic relationships with key external allies.

In 2022, through the ups and downs of a year full of challenges, and despite the constraints of another year of pandemic that severely limited face-to-face opportunities, **IFEX** remained true to its members and their priorities and needs. With a foundation of long-term relationships anchored in open dialogue and mutual confidence, **IFEX** was able to provide steady, reliable and responsive support, facilitating an environment where members could be heard, share, and exchange.

This network-building area of **IFEX's** work sparks broader change – a chain reaction of effective resistance against anti-rights trends that starts with the members and expands to our broader network of partners and allies.

### MAKING CHANGE

In October 2022, we shared the Innovating Change approach with **IFEX** members in the first network-wide virtual **IFEX** convening since the onset of the pandemic. We presented the thinking developed through the project, and engaged members in discussions on how to turn its concepts into concrete changes in how we all work.

The level of exchange was high, and members were directly engaged both as interviewees and as facilitators.

In less than half a day, the convening successfully created spaces for bonding and sharing, allowing members to identify areas for learning and collaboration across regions as well as between those with diverse expertise.

It was also an opportunity to recognize and celebrate our victories – something that had been identified by members as much needed, but rarely done. One of the participants mentioned the [MENA Hub](#), where success stories of civil society work are already being showcased. They went on to say: “this meeting emphasised how important it is to look for positive stories and to work together, and perhaps learn more from other regions.” The impact of this exchange will extend far beyond the convening day itself, with many members indicating their intention to apply the Innovating Change approach in their own work.

"BUILDING A JOYFUL, OPEN, CARING, CURIOUS, STUBBORN AND RELENTLESS NETWORK."

PARTICIPANT, 2022  
IFEX NETWORK CONVENING



A FEW REFLECTIONS FROM MEMBERS DURING THE MEETING:



ON RELATIONSHIPS:

"IFEX LEADS THE PROCESS OF SHARING THE VALUES THAT BETTER ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ITS MEMBERS AND THE BROADER INTERNATIONAL AND SMALLER ORGANISATIONS."

"ENCOURAGING US TO SHOW UP NOT JUST AS COLLEAGUES BUT ALSO AS FRIENDS, AND HAVING A BUDDY SYSTEM TO CHECK IN WITH HOW OTHERS ARE DOING."



ON ADVOCACY:

"WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO FAIL... FAIL FORWARD"

"TALK FRANKLY TO FUNDERS ABOUT THE REAL CHALLENGES AND FUND EXPERIMENTATION IN RESPONSE."



ON FOSTERING CARE AND EXPERIMENTATION:

"PUTTING THE HUMAN BACK IN HUMAN RIGHTS."

"PROMOTING AND DEMONSTRATING RESPECT, TRUST AND EQUITY IN COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES AMONG CSOS."



GENERAL:

"THE POWER AND 'MAGIC' OF THE NETWORK HAS NOT SUFFERED FROM THE PANDEMIC - WE REMAIN DYNAMIC AND POWERFUL IN OUR CONTINUED SHARED COMMITMENTS TO FREE EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION RIGHTS, AS WELL AS A STRONG DESIRE TO EXCHANGE SHARE, AND GROW TOGETHER, AND TO PROVIDE EACH OTHER WITH TRUE SOLIDARITY FOR OUR CONTINUED CHALLENGES (AS WELL AS CELEBRATING EACH OTHERS' SUCCESSSES)."

"IT'S NOT A REVOLUTION IF THERE'S NO DANCING."

IT'S A CHAIN  
REACTION!



IDENTIFYING NEW  
AND CREATIVE  
WAYS FOR MEMBERS  
TO ENGAGE WITH  
ONE ANOTHER AND  
WITH OTHER ALLIES  
AND INFLUENCERS  
WAS AT THE CENTRE  
OF IFEX EFFORTS  
IN 2022

## PEER SHARING, NETWORKING AND LEARNING FOR INNOVATION AND RENOVATION

Identifying new and creative ways for members to engage with one other and with other allies and influencers was at the centre of **IFEX** efforts in 2022. We organised broad network convenings, as well as thematic and regional focused meetings and projects. Convenings responded to the working context, challenges, and priorities of members.

### **AFEX – Networks have to network too!**

When the AFEX regional network (of **IFEX** members in Africa) held its Annual General Meeting in September 2022, they invited Ourveena Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo, the new African Commissioner on Human and Peoples' Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

As she was new to the role and relatively new to the freedom of expression context, it was a fantastic opportunity to introduce her to AFEX members and other organisations who advocate for the protection of freedom of expression, access to information, and digital rights – to share their perspectives, while learning about her mandate's priorities.

The GM was planned for the same city and during the same week as the annual Forum on Internet Freedom in Africa – the first physical FIFAfrica since 2019. Leveraging her presence at the event, Commissioner Topsy-Sonoo was invited to open that event, by organiser (and **IFEX** member) CIPESA, which generated even more opportunities to create spaces for learning and capacity building through workshops and more organic, face-to-face conversations.

Relationships sparked and strengthened at events like these continue to contribute to AFEX's growing ability to positively impact the freedom of expression policy agenda in the region.

In anticipation of some critical elections coming up across Africa in 2023, **IFEX** also took the opportunity to share its Protect Civic Space campaign with AFEX members, and several expressed interest in pursuing the idea of adapting it to their contexts.

## ● Rethinking internal structures

During the AFEX meeting, members explored ways to ensure greater gender diversity to make AFEX's steering committee more inclusive as well as to promote women's leadership and agency in regional free expression organisations.

### IFEX-ALC – Putting our (virtual) heads together

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the IFEX-ALC network has been paying close attention to the issue of digital safety. Rapid datafication and digitalization in the region, especially after COVID, along with growing demand for member organisations to respond to digital attacks, illegal surveillance of journalists and activists, and data breaches affecting so many across the region, made this a priority.

In May, in collaboration with Fundación Karisma, the regional network planned and hosted a virtual meeting: *Threats and challenges in digital security for the practice of journalism in Latin America and the Caribbean*. With the participation of 19 members from the network, lively discussions centred around self-protection, protocols for CSOs to monitor aggressions in the digital space, and approaches for improved response mechanisms to attacks.

The meeting outputs underscored the need for more security training for journalists, and also for organisations that support the journalists who are attacked. While members in the regional network represent diverse approaches and foci, the exchanges identified common ground, for example around the digital safety of journalists, and opened a space for collaborative initiatives where each member could bring their specific knowledge and expertise.

In an almost immediate response to the meeting's takeaways, FOPEA decided to organise a workshop in July to better understand and address the digital safety concerns of women journalists, and to provide tools and training to Argentinian journalists. A number of other members with expertise on these issue supported FOPEA in organising this meeting and participated as speakers or facilitators.

THE MEETING OUTPUTS  
UNDERScoreD THE  
NEED FOR MORE  
SECURITY TRAINING FOR  
JOURNALISTS, AND ALSO  
FOR ORGANISATIONS THAT  
SUPPORT THE JOURNALISTS  
WHO ARE ATTACKED



"ALTHOUGH  
STRIDES HAVE BEEN  
MADE TO CONNECT  
VIRTUALLY, THERE  
IS NOTHING QUITE  
LIKE MEETING  
IN PERSON."



### ● Creating safe spaces for learning

In 2022, IFEX-ALC held a virtual *cafecito*. The objective was to create an informal space for a conversation that would contribute to members' understanding of concepts, approaches and frameworks related to equity and inclusion. It also aimed to encourage members to incorporate this into their work and to learn more about what the network is already doing in this area. The *cafecito* met its goals of sparking critical thought about these key concepts and encouraging participants to question their own assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices.

### MENA – Converting obstacles into strengths

In November, IFEX held the first face-to-face convening of MENA members since 2019. This was an important opportunity to reconnect with each other, as well as with allies and partners who were in Beirut for the 2022 Bread&Net conference.

In recent years, members in the region have been impacted by many challenges. The pandemic led to a shift to remote work and isolation; some have made that shift permanent. The working context included laws restricting the resourcing of CSOs, and harsh crackdowns on civic space.

Although strides have been made to connect virtually, there is nothing quite like meeting in person.

Themes of the convening included challenges to resourcing members' work, inter-member communication, and organisational challenges. The sessions provided an opportunity for members to exchange views, personal experience, and know-how on pertinent issues facing organisations in the region and how they've adapted.

It was great to see how members converted some pandemic obstacles into strength points, for example noting the financial efficiencies gained by using online channels to access more government officials, parliamentarians, and other policy makers.

At the beginning of the Bread&Net conference, we also supported a space for activists from across the region to discuss urgent issues and find new methods and mechanisms to resist these issues and to work together.

#### Topics included:

- Finding new ways of collaborating and strengthening the efforts of different activists and organisations from across the MENA region.
- Developing a clear strategy for defending human rights in local contexts, as well as global contexts that affect the MENA region.
- Strengthening and energising existing coalitions.

## DECOLONISING INSTITUTIONAL AND FUNDING SUPPORT

It's a tough time for CSOs. The growing volatility and insecurity of funding can undermine our ability to bring about the kind of long-term, visionary change needed to address today's human rights challenges.

In our specific context, some donor priorities are moving away from commitments to free expression and information rights in order to directly address the human rights crisis stemming from the conflict in Ukraine. Donors are also significantly reducing the number of partners they work with, prioritising funds for bigger international CSOs in order to reduce their administrative burden. During 2022, **IFEX** sought unique ways to support members' resource mobilisation efforts, and continued to contribute to institutional strengthening priorities designed and guided by members, respecting their agency in developing strategies to address funding challenges.

### Experimentation for change

One of **IFEX's** goals in 2022 was to build understanding, experimentation and direct dialogue with donors. Below, we share three examples of how we applied this approach.

#### 1) Enabling improved funding practices

To draw attention to the funding challenges faced by members around the world, **IFEX** submitted a report to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association in response to their call for inputs for a report on challenges to CSO's ability to access resources.

**IFEX** collected and submitted responses from several members, as well as drawing on its own knowledge from working with donors.

In its submission, **IFEX** highlighted that a growing number of governments have passed new laws and weaponized existing regulations aimed at restricting resources for the work of civil society organisations, especially those that engage in activities deemed critical to authorities.

Specific information was shared on Zimbabwe, Cambodia, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Egypt and Belarus, lending more visibility to the struggle of members in those countries. The report also commented on the repercussions of donor inflexibility when it came to allowing for programming shifts after COVID-19 hit.

**IFEX** concluded with concrete recommendations directed to key actors including donors, international cooperation actors, and the global community more broadly.

Our contribution had an important impact on the final report presented by the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council during its 50th session, with many references to **IFEX**



"ONE MEMBER THAT PARTICIPATED SHARED WITH IFEX THAT, AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THEIR CASE BEING MENTIONED IN THE REPORT, THEIR COUNTRY'S GOVERNMENT INITIATED CONVERSATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED IN OUR SUBMISSION."

"THE ENDURANCE OF ORGANISATIONS IS INCREDIBLE"

DONOR PARTICIPANT

and its members included in the final text.

The report, including **IFEX's** recommendations, has been channelled directly to key actors through advocacy efforts carried out by the **IFEX** Secretariat, including with the [Human Rights Funders Network](#).

## 2) A room with a long-term view

During the full lockdown of early 2021 in Lebanon, existing challenges and limitations to civil society work were amplified and compounded by a tense political situation, a severe economic collapse and the dissolution of a functioning banking sector. This directly impacted the civil society sector, as most of the funding CSOs receive is in foreign currencies and was rendered practically inaccessible to them and their beneficiaries.

In 2022, **IFEX** worked with members based in Lebanon – SMEX, Maharat Foundation and MARCH – to put together 'The Situation Room', a space to generate dynamic dialogue between members working in the region and donors.

Participants and donors came together in April to share knowledge and experiences, and analyse the situation for CSOs in Lebanon, thoughtfully exploring insights, identifying tactics and forging connections to help mitigate the related stresses.

For the civil society representatives, this was an opportunity to have a direct and frank conversation with donors about challenges. For donors, it provided first-hand information on the situation from those directly affected, and also conveyed to them the resilience and value of local groups. For all, 'The Situation Room' opened doors to renovated dialogue and commitment.

"PARTICIPANTS SAW THIS AS AN ENERGIZING TALK AND GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE SITUATION FACING CSOS IN LEBANON AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS TOGETHER ABOUT HOW BEST IDENTIFY TO OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTINUE THIS IMPORTANT WORK."

# IT'S A CHAIN REACTION!

## 3) Safety in numbers – Collaboration is key

We say this often, but it cannot be overstated: Collaboration between CSOs is critical to responding to recent developments. We are stronger and smarter when we are working together and strategically aligning our respective efforts.

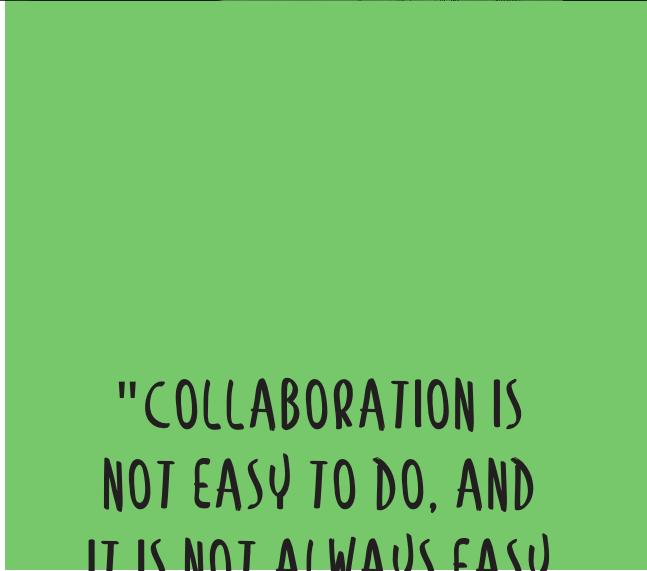
In 2022, **IFEX** applied this view to the design and drafting of the “Safety in Numbers” program proposal, that brought together four women-led international organisations – with a solid track record in advocating for journalist safety and protection – to work together on a shared goal of delivering greater safety, both online and offline, for journalists and other media workers worldwide.

The proposed programme was designed to deepen relationships, align mechanisms, and renew and expand connections, in order to:

- gain better, more regular insights into journalist safety priorities from local stakeholders,
- improve connections and pool knowledge from a range of holistic safety experts,
- enable more strategic advocacy and programmatic support among CSOs, and
- facilitate more strategic and organised collaborative engagement with and among regional and international mechanisms and supportive governments.

Collaboration is not easy to do, and it is not always easy to get funded. Such work takes time, effort, patience, and compromise. But the inputs are worth the reward.

**IFEX** and its partners pitched this collaborative program to a funder in 2022, but the application was unsuccessful. We believe strongly in this approach, and so our group is taking the programme to other funders in 2023, hoping to secure funds to implement this innovative vision.





IT'S A CHAIN  
REACTION!



FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO  
MEMBERS IS DESIGNED  
TO PROVIDE A DEGREE  
OF STABILITY,  
ESPECIALLY IN TIMES  
OF HIGH VOLATILITY.

### Funding flexibility for member stability

Financial support to members is designed to provide a degree of stability, especially in times of high volatility. **IFEX** grants are always part of a broader, holistic system of initiatives developed by members. This approach works thanks to the long-term relationships fostered over many years. Our commitment to be responsive to members' expressed priorities and requirements, as well as to evolving contexts and emerging issues, is never in doubt.

### IFEX institutional strengthening grants in 2022 assisted members to:

- remain healthy and active despite funding challenges;
- be better able to address new and emerging issues;
- tell their stories; and
- scale-up their organisational structures.

A few examples:

- A member successfully went through its first leadership change since its formation. The project's transition plan included onboarding/leadership overlap, strategic planning, and implementation of new strategies.
- A member carried out an internal evaluation and developed a new strategic plan that better responds to the current context.
- A member addressed emotional and psycho-social burnout among its staff resulting from the nature of their work, as well as from the external context.

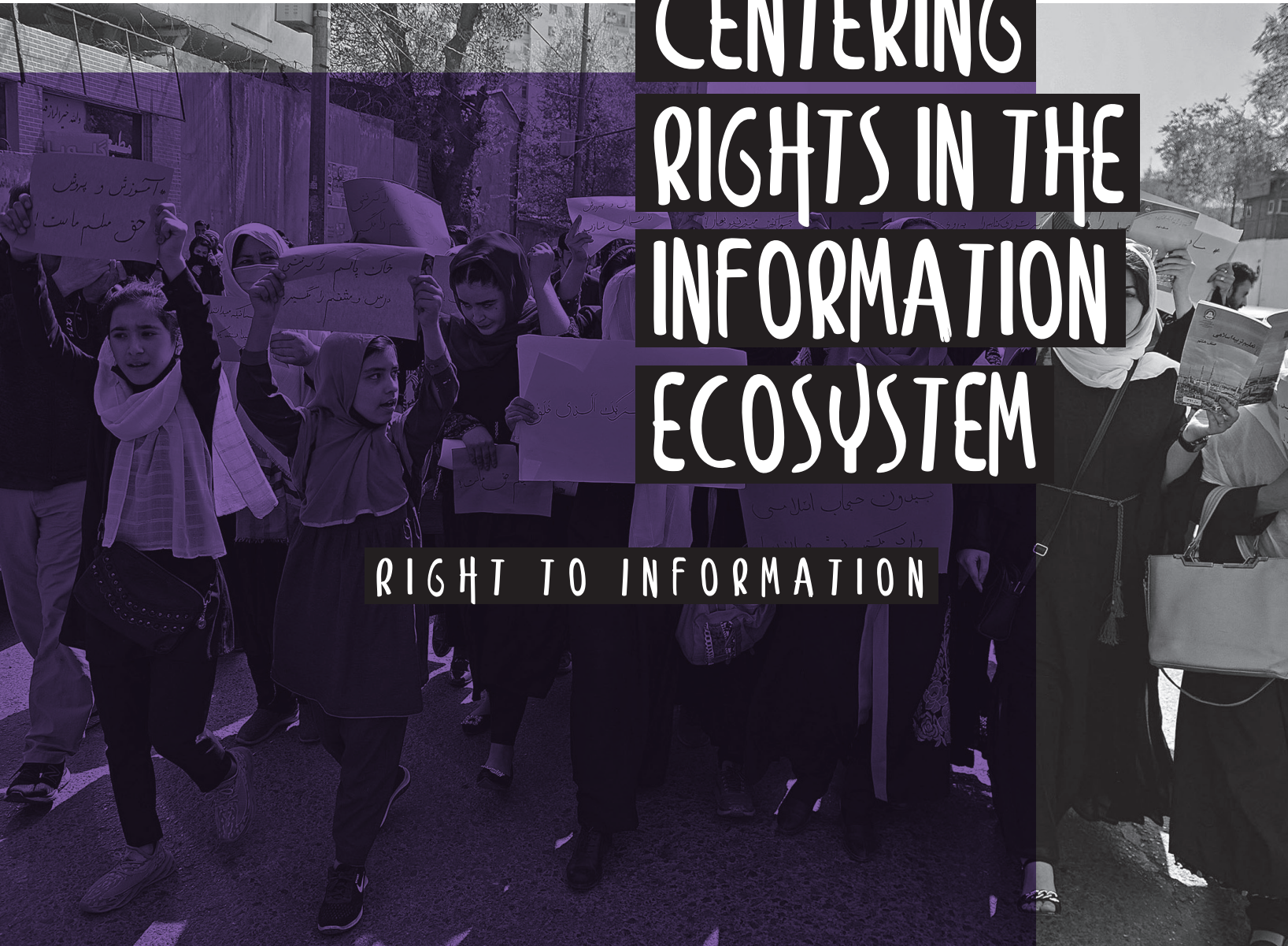
### Institutional strengthening through flexible support and peer learning

With IFEX support, member ADC developed a code of conduct and an inclusion and diversity policy. The documents were tested in the first half of 2022, and are now being fully implemented.

When Observacom reached out to IFEX for institutional strengthening support to develop their own set of policies and practices to advance equity and inclusion, we were able to link them to ADC, to share lessons learned.

IFEX's openness to providing this kind of financial support, as well as by combining it with coaching and opportunities for exchange, made it possible for these members to build their equity & inclusion policies.

It is a distinctive IFEX recipe for enhancing the strengths of individual members and the network.



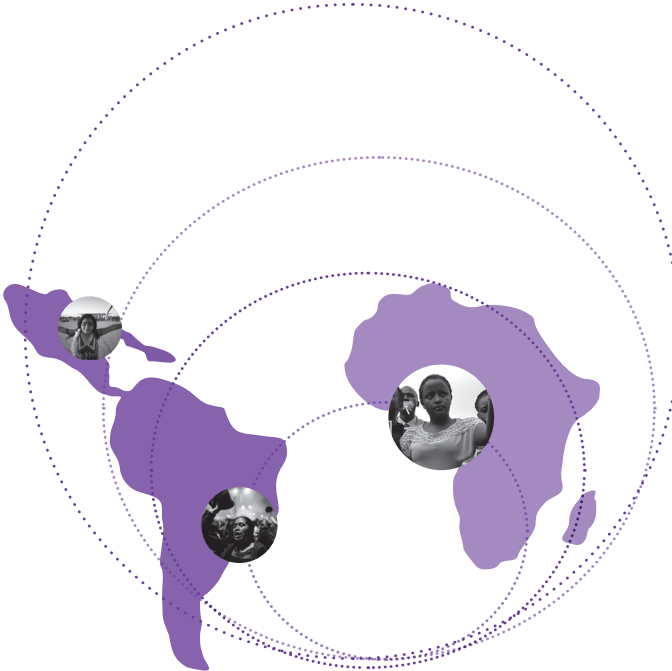
# CENTERING RIGHTS IN THE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

IFEX WORKED WITH 73 MEMBERS AND 15 ALLIES DURING  
2022 TO CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION, ITS CIRCULATION AND INTEGRITY.

RIGHT TO  
INFORMATION  
CONVENING

A SPACE FOR  
EXCHANGE BETWEEN  
IFEX MEMBERS BASED  
IN AFRICA AND LATIN  
AMERICA AND THE  
CARIBBEAN



The right to access information is an essential element of democratic societies – enabling citizens to make informed decisions, including at the ballot box, holding their elected representatives to account, and exposing corruption.

Throughout 2022, **IFEX** continued to support members - and use our voice as a network - in enabling more and equitable access to this right, as well as demanding accountability when access to reliable information is unjustly censored, shut off or distorted. The threats to this right are varied, and are just as important online as they are offline. But our approaches to defending the right to information are equally varied, thanks to the expertise, advocacy tactics and perseverance of members in promoting this right.

**LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD – LEVERAGING LAWS TO PROMOTE INFORMATION FOR ALL**

During 2022, **IFEX** continued to work for the increased adoption and implementation of robust access to information laws and standards by states - a critical cornerstone on which to build justice and accountability.

**Exchanging experiences to build momentum**

A 2022 highlight was a member-exchange facilitated between two **IFEX** regional networks: the African Freedom of Expression Exchange ([AFEX](#)) and the alliance of **IFEX** members promoting and defending the right to freedom of expression in Latin America and the Caribbean ([IFEX-ALC](#)).

Members have long noted the rich opportunities for thematic exchanges between regions. This was an opportunity to facilitate one, and then apply the learning to future cross-regional convenings.

The burning question behind the event: How to re-build momentum around ATI laws, policies, and practices? While a significant number of such laws have been adopted in the past ten years in these two regions, key challenges remain in relation to their proper implementation. There are also a number of critical countries where legislation is still pending.

Members from the two regions came together virtually. It was the first time these two sub-regional groups had taken part in a joint online convening, and the meeting attracted 26 highly engaged participants.

The "Cafecito" format chosen for the convening – a wide-ranging interview with an expert, followed by facilitated breakout rooms – was based on the success of a 2021 virtual event "Tea with Owais" attended by members from across Africa, Latin America, Europe and Asia, that focused on the efforts of the

Pakistan Press Foundation to strengthen and pass a national safety of journalists law.

**This new exchange provided opportunities for 19 members organisations from 13 countries to:**

- Identify commonalities in the challenges they face
- Share successful and innovative tactics; for example related to reaching broader audiences
- Compare strategies for policy advocacy aimed at attaining full implementation of existing norms
- Lay the groundwork for potential future collaboration

A particularly important discussion centred around equity concerns. Even in countries with ATI legislation and oversight bodies, groups in marginalised situations tend to benefit less from the legal frameworks. Participants discussed how to push for changes in this regard, and also highlighted the importance of working with allies outside of the free expression and information rights community.

**Better implementation for better accountability**

In Peru, local member IPYS used IFEX's support to launch a creative effort to monitor compliance with the country's ATI law - the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). They submitted 48 requests on critical issues of public interest, and then followed up on them, taking legal measures where a request was denied. Concerns of equity and inclusion were front and centre in this project. Some of their information requests were about the work of public servants and public institutions in areas of Peru where a human rights crisis is driven by high levels of poverty. They aimed to obtain information about public policies in those areas to improve people's quality of life and respect for their human rights.

Other requests focused on identifying the impact of gender bias in accessing justice for women victims of violence, or on access to information related to children's right to education.

**MEMBERS SHARE  
THEIR TAKEAWAYS**



"THERE NEEDS TO BE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO RAISE AWARENESS"

"DIGITIZATION IS IMPORTANT TO SAVE DATA"



"DECENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS ALLOWS FOR MORE INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENT PROCESS"



## POSITIVE REACTION



Relevant oversight bodies at the national level are functional and responsive;



Most public institutions, particularly those in the national government, have created digital channels to accept information requests under the FoIA;

## NEGATIVE REACTION



The digital format of the request forms set a limit on the number of characters, and don't accept attachments;



Requests that relate to a specialised area or issue of the State need expert assistance to complete;



The work of public servants to deliver the requested information is not yet normalised;



Most requests aren't answered within the original 10-day time limit defined in the FoIA;



Most responses are either incomplete or do not directly respond to the request.

IPYS has been able to identify gaps in the Peruvian access to information system as well as opportunities to strengthen it, which can now be targeted by the organisation in its follow up work.

### Check your source: ATI laws to strengthen investigative journalism

Any access to information law is toothless, unless it is utilised. **IFEX** supported member Abraji to promote journalists' knowledge and use of Brazil's Freedom of Information Act (FoIA).

Implemented between July 2021 and June 2022, the initiative by Abraji and the Fiquem Sabendo data agency offered free training on the FoIA, monitoring tools, and open-source data to journalists throughout Brazil. The course comprised nine modules, with a total duration of two hours, plus a live Q&A session. At the end of the program, students received an [e-book \(material práctico\)](#) for use in their journalistic investigations, and replied to a survey about the course.

Accessibility and inclusivity were a priority: One of the biggest challenges we faced was to bring all the journalists together at the same time [...] We managed to get around this by doing the course asynchronously, so that each one could do it in the most comfortable way possible.

Ultimately, 530 journalists from 12 news outlets across the country participated in the training.



**Of the journalists who evaluated the course:**

- 67% of journalists had never made a FoIA request prior to the training.
- After the training, 61.5% chose the highest rating when asked about their current confidence level in using the FoIA.

By the end of the course, some participants reported they had already begun to use the law in their work.

The timing of this initiative was strategic – offering another important tool to bolster journalistic investigation with the potential to have an impact on their work during the electoral period in Brazil.

**PROMOTING THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION AND ITS INTEGRITY**

**Information integrity before, during, and after elections**

2022 was a critical electoral year in the Philippines, and local member the Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) undertook several initiatives, with the support of **IFEX**, to address threats to the integrity of the process.

- Ahead of the elections, they organised ‘Understanding Democracy’ training for journalists and media actors on media ethics and other electoral issues. A key equity &

"IFEX SUPPORT BOOSTED THE CAPACITY OF CMFR STAFF TO WORK REMOTELY AND SUSTAIN THE ORGANISATION'S CORE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS: MEDIA MONITORING, PRESS FREEDOM PROTECTION, AND RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING JOURNALISTS."

CMFR



CONVERSATIONS  
CENTRED AROUND  
MAPPING THREATS,  
THEIR IMPACT ON  
FREE EXPRESSION  
AND INFORMATION  
RIGHTS, AND HOW  
TO RESPOND.

inclusion element of CMFR's work was a focus on women journalists and people from rural communities reporting on election issues, to promote rights-based reporting. They also included an analysis of gendered harassment of women political figures.

- As it has been doing for many years, CMFR also monitored electoral coverage by the media, paying special attention to disinformation and misinformation. In view of campaigns seeking to undermine trust in the legitimacy of the electoral process, including by raising concerns about malfunctioning voting machines, the training also addressed legal issues and the technicalities of voting by automated machines.
- In the aftermath of the election, **IFEX** support has enabled CMFR to produce a critical analysis of media coverage, which was then shared with a focus group of key media stakeholders. Based on this, CMFR are looking into the concept of a 'content hub' to coordinate sharing of timely, factual and relevant information to counter propaganda campaigns coming from political actors, going forward, as well as media self-regulation guidelines with specific measures for electoral periods.

### Countering laws that could lead to censorship

With **IFEX** support, member 7amleh launched a project aimed at halting legislation under review in Israel that threatened to impose serious restrictions on Palestinian-related online content. The so-called "Facebook Bill" (Preventing Incitement on Social Media, 2021) could be used to block pro-Palestinian expression under the pretext of terrorism, defamation, and other grounds considered under provisions designed to curtail "incitement to violence and terror".

**IFEX** support enabled 7amleh to launch a multifaceted advocacy and outreach plan.

- [A legal analysis of the bill](#) was produced in Arabic and English, and featured in the Jordan Times and [the Palestine Chronicle](#).
- An extensive social media campaign with a wide range of graphics reached more than 540,000 people and engaged more than 36,000 users on 7amleh's social media channels alone.
- 7amleh organised a webinar in January 2022 attended by 88 people, and its Facebook live-feed was followed by more than 1,000 people.

In addition, important conversations were carried out with key national and international stakeholders, including direct engagement with representatives of Facebook.

In the end, the campaign was not only successful in stopping the bill from becoming a problematic law, it raised 7amleh's profile with key decision makers, by reaching a broad, global audience and engaging them in discussions around the risks of poor content moderation rules.

7amleh has indicated that **IFEX's** flexibility around understanding changing needs in a volatile environment and the open and speedy communication lines with the Secretariat were key to the project's success.

## WE'RE ON IT... ONLINE!

### South Asia – Navigating the dangers

**IFEX** organised a virtual gathering of members in February to discuss digital threats in South Asia. Members Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) from Pakistan and Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC.in) from India were co-planners and facilitators – a great example of members collaborating and sharing expertise with other members.

Conversations centred around mapping threats, their impact on free expression and information rights, and how to respond.

Since then, SFLC.in has continued to connect with participants to plan digital security trainings, something that many had flagged as a need during the event. DRF has continued conversations with fellow members around regional collaborations on these issues, and is planning a follow-up convening for 2023 to build on the results.

### Uganda – Countering laws that suppress rights online

**IFEX** member CIPESA advocated to stop the proposed Computer Misuse Amendment Bill (2022) in Uganda (an amendment to a law with the same name from 2011). CIPESA, alongside 13 civil society organisations and individuals, filed a petition challenging the amendment.

CIPESA submitted a number of comments before a relevant parliamentary commission arguing that since its enactment, the original Computer Misuse Act had been used to suppress rights online, including free expression and access to information, and that the proposed amendment would present a further blow to online civil liberties.

**IFEX** supported CIPESA's monitoring of the abusive application of the Act, and efforts to revoke it. Despite the member's efforts, the Bill was passed in late 2022. CIPESA is not about to give up. It continues to question this law judicially, pointing out its unconstitutionality.

"THE COURSE SIMPLIFIED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS OF REQUESTING INFORMATION VIA THE FOIA AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, GAVE VALUABLE TIPS ON FILLING OUT THE REQUEST AND PHRASES WE CAN USE TO AVOID NEGATIVE RESPONSES. IT WOULD TAKE YEARS OF TRIAL AND ERROR TO LEARN SO MUCH."

CLAUDIA SILVEIRA, TV GLOBO





# IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

SAFETY AND JUSTICE

IFEX WORKED WITH 93 MEMBERS AND 29 ALLIES  
DURING 2022 TO SECURE A SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR THOSE  
EXERCISING THEIR RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION.

"TODAY THE INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS POSTED ITS JUDGEMENT ON THE CASE OF LEGUIZAMÓN ZAVÁN ET AL. V. PARAGUAY, HOLDING THE STATE OF PARAGUAY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF JOURNALIST SANTIAGO LEGUIZAMÓN ZAVÁN AND, THEREFORE, FOR VIOLATING HIS RIGHT TO LIFE AND THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION."

**IFEX's** persistent dedication to promoting a strengthened normative environment and protection practices for journalists, rights defenders, and others, as well as improved justice for those facing violations, has been a constant since its inception.

Success stories require time, consistency, and solidarity. Victories are built slowly, and sometimes the impact won't be seen until the next case.

Network support and solidarity is central to members' ability to continue their struggle for justice, even when impunity seems to be confirmed as the rule.

### LITIGATING AGAINST PARAGUAY – A VICTORY OVER IMPUNITY

Paraguayan journalist Santiago Leguizamon was ambushed and killed on 26 April 1991 while reporting on organised crime in the border town of Pedro Juan Caballero, located on the frontier between Paraguay and Brazil.

For many years, IFEX-ALC has highlighted the case. **IFEX** has also worked directly with local member the Paraguayan Journalists Union, calling for investigations and prosecutions against those responsible, as well as advocating for the adoption of a protection of journalists law, including during different iterations of the Universal Periodic Review of Paraguay by the UN Human Rights Council.

Increasingly, seeking justice – or, at the least, accountability for crimes – at the level of the Inter-American human rights system is proving effective. The system is made up of two principal entities: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IA Court). In 2022, IFEX-ALC submitted an amicus curiae to the IA Court, that stressed, among other things, the need to adopt standards to help improve journalist safety and fight against impunity along the border areas between states, where the risk is higher.

In December 2022, we welcomed the IA Court's ruling.

Several arguments that IFEX-ALC had presented in its amicus were reflected in the ruling wording.

Full justice goes beyond calling out those responsible. The ruling also ordered the State to take non-repetition measures, including the adoption of a journalists' protection law in Paraguay, and ordered it to assign an annual budget for the protection of journalists.



SHE WAS KILLED WHILE  
REPORTING FROM A  
REFUGEE CAMP ON THE  
OUTSKIRTS OF THE  
OCCUPIED WEST  
BANK CITY OF JENIN.

## IN COLD BLOOD – SEEKING JUSTICE FOR THE KILLING OF SHIREEN ABU AKLEH

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) documented 605 violations against media freedoms in Palestine in 2022, and a rise in serious attacks against journalists in a year that included the egregious murder of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Abu Akleh’s coverage of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories had helped give a voice to Palestinians and made her a household name in the Arab world. Her murder took place among growing concerns over impunity for crimes against journalists and other grave human rights abuses by Israel in the occupied Palestine territory.

She was killed while reporting from a refugee camp on the outskirts of the occupied West Bank city of Jenin. This despite the fact she was wearing a helmet and flak jacket that clearly indicated she was a member of the press.

Many **IFEX** members, including **MADA**, issued statements calling for accountability for the murder. **IFEX** also co-led a statement with IPI, calling on the Government of Israel and the larger international community of states to fulfil their obligations to investigate her murder and to prosecute crimes against journalists.

To rally the power of more allies, **IFEX** supported a submission on Abu Akleh’s case to the Media Freedom Coalition, ensuring that local members were able to include their views on the case details and recommended actions to take. Continuing in its efforts to reinforce this work, **IFEX** produced a [regional brief](#) with a detailed coverage of the killing, documenting the various efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable, as well as recognising her legacy of inspiring other women journalists.

In November 2022, after much pressure from civil society and media groups, including **IFEX** and its members, we welcomed the news that the US-FBI plans to investigate her murder as an important first step toward potentially achieving justice in her case.

## COLOMBIA – EXPANDING ACCOUNTABILITY, MULTIPLYING IMPACT

**IFEX** has an established relationship with Colombian member Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP), not only by providing direct support, but partnering with them to address individual cases, amplifying their work, and engaging in international spaces – including through strategic litigation at the Inter-American Human Rights System.

In 2022, FLIP completed a set of activities enabled by an **IFEX** grant that had already secured a historic precedent – partially reported

on in our 2021 Annual Report – in relation to an IA Court ruling in the case of Jineth Bedoya Lima.

That landmark precedent was important. But to ensure that this ruling would also advance justice in other cases of impunity and contribute to a safer environment for journalism, **IFEX** worked with FLIP to multiply its impact. This included producing and sharing an [explainer](#) in 2022 on how the ruling can be used to strengthen press freedom in Colombia and across the region more widely.

FLIP also provided legal assistance and advocacy support to journalists seeking accountability through the Inter-American system for attacks they suffered while reporting on the protests that swept through the country in 2021. Although a decision has not been provided in some of these cases, they were referenced in the IACHR's 2022 report, along with specific recommendations to the state on the protection of journalists, freedom of expression, and access to the Internet.

### SOUTHERN AFRICA – A COORDINATED REGIONAL APPROACH

**IFEX** member the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) is an umbrella organisation representing national chapters in the Southern Africa Development Community region.

They undertook a project with the ultimate goal of improving the climate for free expression and information rights in Southern Africa, through legal reform on freedom of expression and the safety of citizens exercising their rights.

The first step was to leverage the enormous potential of MISA's many national chapters – but they had been working primarily independently.

MISA was able to use **IFEX's** core support to develop a chapter-informed regional advocacy and communications strategy. A meeting brought all the chapters together – from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe – to contribute their unique perspectives, expertise and experiences.

Some of the anticipated long-term outcomes were already being seen in 2022: MISA made submissions to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, through the then Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and former Commissioner Jamesina King, urging her to write to the Mauritian Government to withdraw problematic cybersecurity legislation.

The project is a good example of how institutionally-focused



"THE GRANT WAS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS INTEGRATING THE MISA CHAPTERS AND IDENTIFYING NEW PLAYERS TO WORK WITH FOR FUTURE COLLABORATIONS. THERE IS SCOPE TO GROW IN TERMS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION AND THIS PROJECT HAS SHOWN THE VALUE OF SUCH AN APPROACH."

TABANI MOYO, MISA

IFEX COMMITS TO  
CASES IN THE LONG-  
TERM. WE KNOW  
THAT JUSTICE  
TAKES TIME, AND WE  
STAY THE COURSE.



work can directly impact how effectively members can secure goals, whether those are improving safety and achieving justice, enabling and protecting civic space, or securing the right to information. The core funding they received facilitated a more collaborative approach, and is making their respective and collective work on safety and justice more effective.

## IN BRIEF

### Turkey

In 2022 IFEX refocused resources and efforts around targeted campaigning and advocacy efforts for Turkey at the international level. We drafted an open letter to UN Special Rapporteurs and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, encouraging them to call on the Turkish authorities to drop the baseless charges against journalist (and local RSF representative) Erol Önderoğlu and his co-defendants, and more generally to uphold the mandates of their offices and protect freedom of expression and civic space – now routinely under attack – in the country.

The letter was included in our solidarity [Twitter thread](#), and was circulated and promoted online by **IFEX** members, partners, and allies.

### Myanmar

**IFEX** has been supporting Mizzima's work to defend independent media, especially journalists who have been unjustly detained, imprisoned, or forced to flee under repressive legislation. Mizzima is publicising individual cases of persecuted journalists via their online news outlet; and advocating for journalist safety and free media in Myanmar.

## ● Taking action for women journalists' safety

Women in the public sphere, online and offline, are disproportionately targeted for gendered harassment, abuse, and violence that suppresses their participation in public spaces. This harms women's right to speak, and society's right to know.

In March 2022, IFEX collaborated with member ARTICLE 19 to produce and [launch](#) an AdvoSheet entitled: 'The safety of women journalists: All you need to know about States' obligations and commitments to strengthen your advocacy.'

The intention is to strengthen CSO advocacy on the safety of women journalists, by compiling and then explaining the various obligations and commitments made by states under international human rights law. We have been promoting the AdvoSheet, and sharing it with IFEX member organisations to support their strategic initiatives, including advocating for the implementation of UN resolutions that their governments have co-sponsored.

In addition to bringing a gendered lens to IFEX work on safety and justice, the AdvoSheet promotes engagement with policy institutions in simple, jargon-free language; it also breaks down barriers by making international standards more accessible to those without legal expertise.



# RAISING (ALL) OUR VOICES

## The many dimensions of IFEX Communications

IFEX's communications not only elevate the work and voices of individual members, they demonstrate our unique strengths as a network, including our ability to provide the 'big picture' on critical freedom of expression issues, drawing on the diverse and global expertise of the members and their unique – and shared – challenges.

During 2022, IFEX continued to reach audiences in positions of influence on key issues and policies through original content and messaging that amplified member perspectives of critical local situations. Below are some examples of how our communications worked to promote strengthening the network's voice – and voices – along with its local and global impact.

### GETTING THE WORD OUT

#### Diversifying audiences

IFEX supported the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies' project to expand their online reach and impact. The member updated their communications and their use of social media platforms to more effectively reach an engaged younger and more diverse audience, as well as international, regional and local actors, for advocacy. As a result, they are better able to draw attention to MENA states' efforts to close civic space and undermine free expression and information rights in digital spaces.

#### Working through COVID

The Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) was forced by the COVID-induced lockdown to close their office in 2020. But its voice would not be silenced. Through IFEX's organisational contribution, FXI upgraded their website and better integrated it with the social media platforms needed to amplify and call out freedom of expression issues in the country. More work is envisaged with the Department of Justice and the Human Rights Commission in South Africa to support the digitisation of FXI's documents and archives.

#### Informing from exile

Having no choice but to operate in exile has also made strategic digital communications increasingly important to the work of the Belarusian Association of Journalists. They utilised IFEX support to keep their website running and enhance their publications.

Their capacity to make daily updates to their site, publish original articles, host reports, and share advice and analyses from media lawyers as well as other information on the situation in the country, is directly linked to the ability

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"I WOULD LIKE TO  
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MYANMAR [...] WITHOUT  
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COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT  
AT ALL."

SOE MYINT, MIZZIMA

of journalists and human rights organisations to cover the government's repression. Following their unjust liquidation, they have remained a steadfast and reliable source for information from the region, in a war-driven climate of growing propaganda and disinformation from the Belarusian and Russian Governments.

### Keeping the lights on

In Myanmar's post-military coup context, access to credible information has been in short supply. **IFEX** has been amplifying the alerts of local member Mizzima and other **IFEX** members, and spreading the word about the critical role that citizen journalists are playing to prevent an information blackout – including by reporting on the junta's abuses – at significant personal risk.

**IFEX** supported Mizzima in holding a strategy conference in December, outside of Myanmar, in a safe neighbouring country. In this space, they were able to strategically connect with partners and allies, advance their perspectives and priority needs, and discuss the way forward, together.

### The Big Picture – Daily, weekly, and monthly

Members are the foundation of **IFEX**'s ability to hear about, understand, and share 'the big picture'.

- **Every day**, we curate and promote important content created by members on ifex.org, where readers can search a substantial archive of articles and reports by source, topic, country, or region.
- **Every week**, our e-newsletter pulls together one member story from each region, and has open rates that regularly surpassed 30% in 2022 - evidence of its importance to subscribers.
- **Every month**, **IFEX** Regional Editors produce Briefs on key free expression and information rights trends and developments in the regions they cover, based largely on member reports, that are published on ifex.org and promoted to target audiences over social media channels and other platforms.







## IFEX 2.0 – SHAPING GLOBAL FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION POLICY

**IFEX** recognizes the powerful value of elevating the work of members in regional and international spaces to have their voices reach key decision-makers. This is particularly important in country situations where civic space restrictions hamper - and even endanger - local advocacy.

In seeking ways to innovate our changemaking tactics, and in response to member calls, **IFEX** has intentionally sought to build a stronger network voice in influential spaces. We did this largely online in 2022 given the continued barriers to meeting in person. Our approaches included:

- participating actively in networks and coalitions to bring the voices and concerns of members to influential actors.
- supporting members in reaching out to international actors to directly present their own research and findings of their work.
- sharing with members opportunities for advocacy in global policy spaces, especially at the UN and regional human rights bodies.
- directly requesting inputs from members for collation into the drafting of UN resolutions and reports.

The examples below are evidence of **IFEX** and members' growing presence as relevant players in decision-making spaces, influencing the freedom of expression and information agenda worldwide.

### Change the gatekeepers!

Scores of NGOs are denied access to UN debates, because their applications for consultative status have been blocked or indefinitely delayed by the UN's NGOs Committee. Those

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include **IFEX**, as well as a number of **IFEX** members. The April 2022 elections to the UN NGO Committee offered an opportunity to “change the gatekeepers” and ensure the UN can benefit from broad civil society expertise.

**IFEX** joined forces with a number of organisations supporting the International Service for Human Rights’ Open the Doors to NGOs campaign, which aimed to encourage the United Nations to ensure greater civil society participation, especially regarding its human rights mechanisms.

**IFEX** was featured as a key case study to illustrate how NGOs with invaluable contributions to make at the UN are being systematically denied accreditation. For this purpose, we [launched a video](#) that explains how **IFEX** and other NGOs play a key role bringing trustworthy information, expertise and perspectives to UN human rights mechanisms. We also engaged with **IFEX** members to encourage their support for the campaign, which included outreach to national governments to encourage them to either stand as a candidate for the UN NGO Committee, or to vote with integrity.

On 13 April, members of the UN ECOSOC elected 19 members to the UN Committee on NGOs. Russia, which had been a member of the Committee since its establishment in 1947, was voted out. Subsequently, several **IFEX** members have received ECOSOC status, including GCHR, another organisation profiled as part of this campaign.

### **Multi-stakeholder spaces**

**IFEX** is an active member of the Community of Democracies’ Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society. This working group (WG) fosters collaboration among states, civil society and international organisations to counter the growing global trend of constraining civil society via problematic legislation.

In 2022, **IFEX** worked with members, mostly from Zimbabwe and Venezuela, to bring to the WG their expertise and perspectives in relation to legislation that could severely impact civil society in those countries – making their work very difficult, if not impossible. This informed the development of a call to action containing recommendations for all members of the WG to implement in the Zimbabwean context, and a presentation to the WG by the members in Venezuela.

**IFEX** garnering this kind of attention and support from the WG’s international contact group, which consists of states, NGOs and intergovernmental actors, is crucial for the local members in these countries. This is especially the case in Venezuela, where civil society is already severely curtailed and members have stressed the importance of finding ways to grow international pressure against the government’s undemocratic actions.



## Civil society helping set the agenda

**IFEX** was a co-chair and active member of the Media Freedom Coalition Consultative Network throughout 2022. As co-chair, **IFEX** utilised its skill set of effectively and collaboratively organising together stakeholders to work; this resulted in the development of recommendations for member states that helped make the Coalition's work more concrete and impactful. For example, this included valuable guidance that has helped shape the development of local diplomatic networks in various countries, which include the perspectives of local **IFEX** members and other CSOs.

We have brought cases to the attention of the coalition that **IFEX** members have flagged as emblematic, but which might otherwise have fallen under the radar. One example was the case of well-known journalist and former Belsat TV reporter Larysa Shchyryakova, in Belarus. In December 2022 she was taken and kept in pre-trial detention in Homel; Shchyryakova is a single mother, and her teenage son was taken to the Social-Pedagogical Center in Homel District.

We worked with the local member BAJ to urgently put forward a submission to the MFC and, as a result, a number of member states issued statements asking for her immediate release and for her to be reunited with her son.

## Collaborating on a Plan of Action

**IFEX** took a leading role in the preparations for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on safety of journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

In partnership with the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), we organised a consultation on the issue of violence against women journalists, in Bangkok, and supported member participation in regional consultations.

In November, along with the Safety of Journalists Coalition, ARTICLE 19, APC, and other partners, we organised thematic sessions during the Pre-Conference, and actively engaged in drafting a Call to Action prepared by civil society, which was presented during the High-Level track of the Conference on 3 November in Vienna.

**IFEX** continues to work with allies and partners to raise awareness about the Plan of Action and its recommendations. This includes work that began in 2022 when, alongside the ACOS Alliance, **IFEX** became civil society co-lead of the Working Group on Protecting Journalists Safety and Security under the Media Freedom Cohort, which aims to garner concrete pledges from states and other relevant actors with a responsibility for ensuring the safety of journalists ahead of the upcoming US Summit for Democracy.

## CREATING A NARRATIVE

Through original content we are able to create narratives that spotlight the network's values and principles in relation to key freedom of expression and information events and dates. Here are a few ways we raised our voices in 2022.

### 8 MARCH

We produced a series of regional briefs ahead of International Women's Day dedicated to help transform the narrative about how the participation of women and girls in civic space enriches our societies and our rights, and promoted the series with a [Twitter thread](#). The briefs shone a light not only on the barriers women face in each region, but on their role as leaders within civil society, working toward a more equitable world for all. As a whole, the series contributed a powerful picture of what's at stake, globally - and equally important - what's possible.

### 3 MAY

**IFEX** used its platform on World Press Freedom Day to highlight the connections between access to information and a healthy and robust civic space, sharing stories of creative collaborations between media and CSOs to address threats to information integrity that don't always make the headlines. Among other examples, **IFEX's** [editorial](#) drew attention to the 'Fact-Check Ghana' initiative, which defends people's right to information, media freedom, civic space, and ultimately, democracy. Our [Twitter poll](#) asked: A week ahead of #WorldPressFreedomDay, we are curious - why is #PressFreedom important to you?

### 17 MAY

On the 2022 International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia **IFEX** showcased the work of members promoting and defending the rights of LGBTQI+ people to express themselves freely - their struggles and triumphs - through a [Twitter thread](#) that produced the highest engagement rate of all **IFEX** threads in 2022.



### 28 SEPTEMBER

The International Day for Universal Access to Information is an opportunity to celebrate and share the good work carried out by civil society organisations to defend our right to access information in the public interest. We produced a special issue of **IFEX** This Week in which we shared member articles concerning key right to information issues around the world, curated from the **IFEX** archives, and a [Twitter thread](#) that marked the day as the culmination of years of advocacy led by **IFEX** members in Africa and their partners in the African Platform for Access to Information.

### 2 NOVEMBER

The overall message underpinning our 2022 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists communications is that the status quo is NOT ok. This year marked the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and while civil society deserves recognition for all it's done to keep the Plan on track, it's high time for States and UN actors to step up and play their part. We produced an [Editorial](#) and [Twitter thread](#), a special issue Asia & Pacific regional brief on the single worst attack ever on media (and still an example of impunity) and powerful IDEI campaign images that featured world leaders who are letting people get away with crimes against journalists in their countries with impunity.

### 10 DECEMBER

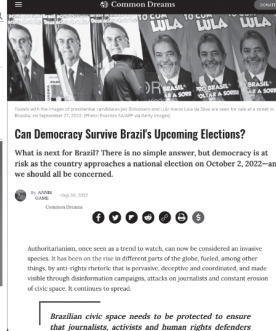
Human Rights Day is the anniversary of the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It is a key opportunity for **IFEX** to draw attention to the inspiring work of the many individuals and organisations working to promote and defend the Declaration's principles, especially the right to freedom of expression and information. In 2022, **IFEX** marked the Day by showcasing some of our Faces of Free Expression in a [Twitter thread](#) and recognizing their important work, contributions, and sacrifices in the fight for a robust, diverse and open civic space.

# MAKING NEWS – IFEX IN THE MEDIA

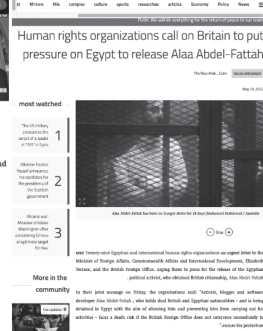
In recent years, IFEX has worked to increase its visibility by expanding and enhancing our media presence. In 2022, twenty-nine IFEX articles were republished by specialised academic outlets, such as the Columbia Freedom of Expression newsletter and website, as well as online news portals. Here is a look at some of the outlets that amplified IFEX's advocacy throughout the year:



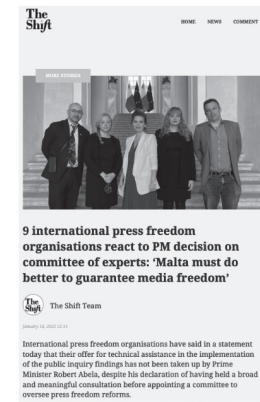
Source: [Metropoles](#)



Source: [Common Dreams](#)



Source: [The New Arab \(Arabic\)](#)



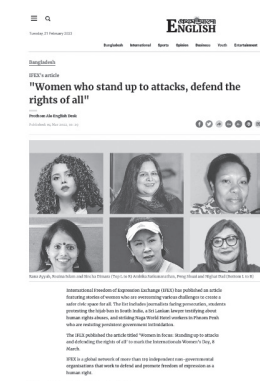
Source: [The Shift](#)



Source: [The Message](#)



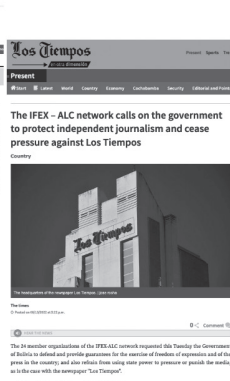
Source: [The South African](#)



Source: [Prothom Alo](#)



Source: [La Prensa](#)



Source: [Los Tiempos](#)



While 2022 presented many challenges for free expression, we also saw incredible successes in our work. From landmark case results, to campaigns that hit their targets, to the much-needed opportunities to convene - building the solidarity and relationships that drive our collective work. The strength of the network remains intact.

We remain committed, informed, knowledgeable, and engaged. And with our global presence and diverse expertise, we stay focused on the big picture, taking the pulse of as they arise - across all regions, and platforms, online and offline. We know our work is cut out for us in the years ahead. And we know that authoritarians threatening free expression rights are attempting to criminalise, divide, and censor us and our work.

But we also know that we remain strongest working together. As a network, we are a powerful counter force to these threats, in our continued mission to secure free expression and information rights for all, without fear.

**This is the world we continue to work for, and together we continue to unite, resist, and find ways to realise it.**