



GIJTR

Global Initiative for Justice,
Truth & Reconciliation



VOICES OVER VIOLENCE

**Global Perspectives
from Youth Activists**

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is a product of the Centering Young Activist Voices in Atrocity Prevention project implemented by the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR). In January 2021, GIJTR partners International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), and Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) initiated a Youth in Atrocity Prevention Working Group, selecting 10 young activists from Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, the Philippines and Serbia to participate in trainings, carry out interventions focused on atrocity prevention through a transitional justice framework, and identify common early warning signs that often precede mass human rights violations. Following a series of virtual trainings, each member of the working group was awarded \$3,500 to design and implement a community project that creates space for youth to lead as active agents of atrocity prevention, and to operationalize their understanding of atrocity prevention and transitional justice concepts. The outcomes and lessons learned from those small projects are further detailed in the following chapters of this toolkit, all authored by the young activists themselves, and provide strategies for replication and adaptation that other youth activists can apply in their own contexts.



This toolkit seeks to address a growing gap between the knowledge produced about youth and their role in atrocity prevention, and the actual knowledge production process. Youth are rarely provided with tangible opportunities to use their experiential knowledge to produce literature on the subject of youth engagement in atrocity prevention and transitional justice. Too often they are consulted but not brought into the decision-making process of how their contributions are then communicated. The community projects undertaken by members of GIJTR's Youth in Atrocity Prevention Working Group, as well as the contents of this toolkit, are a testament to the wealth of knowledge and expertise youth have. Beyond detailing youth-driven strategies for engagement in atrocity prevention, the development of this toolkit was highly participatory, ensuring that each member of the working group was engaged at every decision-making point. From the toolkit's title, to the chapter themes, to the illustrations, every decision was made by the working group members themselves.

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Learn more about GIJTR at
www.gijtr.org



International Coalition of
SITES of CONSCIENCE

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) is a global network of museums, historic sites and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the ICSC now includes more than 300 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries. The ICSC supports these members through seven regional networks that encourage collaboration and international exchange of knowledge and best practices.

Learn more at www.sitesofconscience.org

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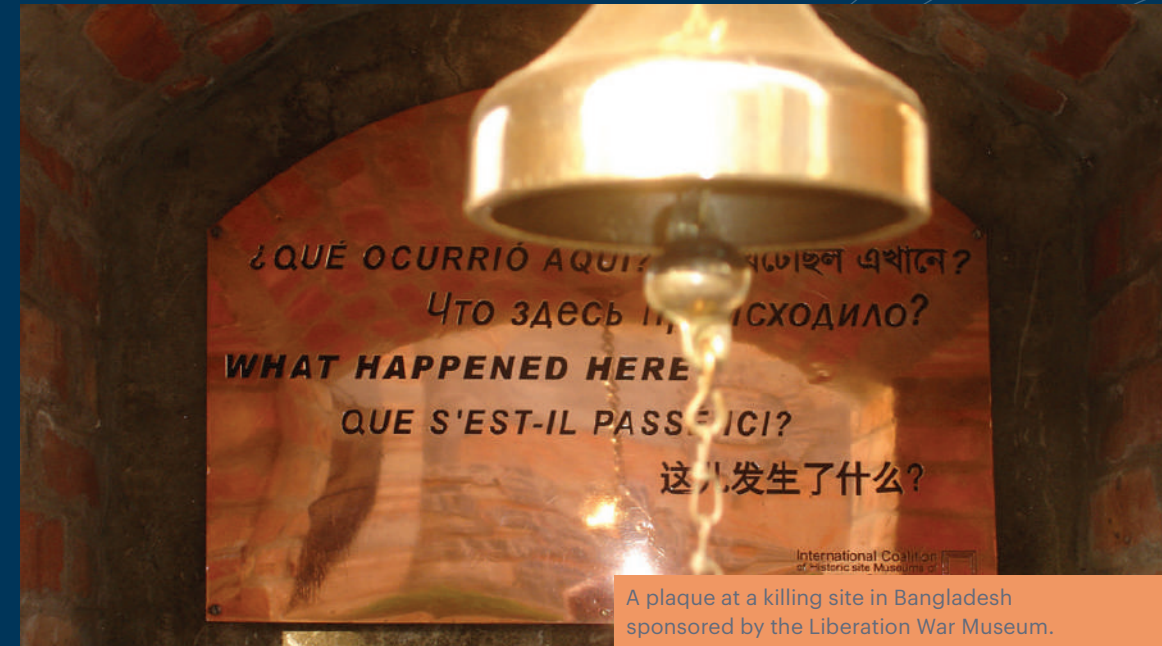
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ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION (GIJTR)

Around the world, there are increasing calls for justice, truth and reconciliation in countries where legacies of gross human rights violations cast a shadow on transitions from repressive regimes to participatory and democratic forms of governance. To meet this need, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC or the Coalition) launched the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR) in August 2014. GIJTR seeks to address new challenges in countries in conflict or transition that are struggling with legacies of or ongoing gross human rights abuses. The Coalition leads the GIJTR, which includes eight other organizational partners: American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), United States; Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR), Indonesia; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr), South Africa; Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), Cambodia; Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), United States; Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG), Guatemala; Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), Serbia; and Public International Law &



A plaque at a killing site in Bangladesh sponsored by the Liberation War Museum.

Policy Group (PILPG), United States. In addition to leveraging the expertise of GIJTR members, the Coalition taps into the knowledge and longstanding community connections of its 300-plus members in 65 countries to strengthen and broaden the GIJTR's work. GIJTR partners, along with members of the Coalition, develop and implement a range of rapid-response and high-impact program activities, using both restorative and retributive approaches to justice and accountability for gross human rights violations. The expertise of the organizations under the GIJTR includes:

- Truth telling, reconciliation, memorialization and other forms of historical memory;
- Documenting human rights abuses for transitional justice purposes;
- Forensic analysis and other efforts related to missing and disappeared persons;

- Victims' advocacy such as improving access to justice, psychosocial support and trauma mitigation activities;
- Providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of civil society activists and organizations to promote and engage in transitional justice processes;
- Reparative justice initiatives; and
- Ensuring gender justice in all these processes.

To date, the GIJTR has led civil society actors in multiple countries in the development and implementation of documentation and truth-telling projects; undertaken assessments of the memorialization, documentation and psychosocial support capacities of local organizations; and provided survivors in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and North Africa region with training, support and opportunities to participate in the design and implementation of community driven transitional justice approaches. Given the diversity of experience and skills among GIJTR partners and among Coalition network members, the program offers post-conflict countries and countries emerging from repressive regimes a unique opportunity to address transitional justice needs in a timely manner, while promoting local participation and building the capacity of community partners. Since its founding, GIJTR has engaged with people from 72 countries, worked with 681 CSOs, and has supported 323 community-driven projects and the collection of more than 5,040 testimonies of human rights violations.



A 2018 GIJTR exhibition of body-maps in Conakry, Guinea.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The key terms listed have been provided by the principle authors and use definitions for these terms that are in line with their own understanding.

Advocacy: initiatives that aim to change or influence a political, economic or social system, usually by working “within the system” (Definition adopted from [Difference Between](#)).

Activism: the act of working “outside the system” to bring about political or social change through vigorous campaigning (Definition adopted from [Difference Between](#)).

Artivism: merges social justice activism and art, empowering civilians to create visual and performance productions that aim to bring about change.

Atrocity prevention: Atrocity prevention refers to a broad range of tools and strategies that aim to prevent the occurrence of mass killings and other large-scale human rights abuses committed against civilians (Definition adopted from Peace Direct’s [Atrocity Prevention and Peacebuilding report](#)).

Commemoration: as defined by the [Centro Nacional de Recursos Literarios y Textuales](#), commemoration is “a ceremony in memory of a person or an event,” religious or otherwise. In the context of transitional justice, commemoration and memorialization can also be driven by vulnerable groups of people or those who have experienced a violation of their human rights. In these cases, memorialization can become a means of empathizing and showing solidarity with the pain of a person or a group of people, and even advocating for their rights and recognition.

Digital protection: protecting online presence, data, identity, and assets of an individual.

Feminism: the advocacy of women’s rights on the basis of equality of all genders.

Grassroots level: Common or ordinary people, local social organizations, etc.

Human rights: rights that are inherent to all human beings without discrimination.

Insurgents: a group of people who are engaged in armed resistance against a government or its laws.

Narcos List: a list of alleged ‘drug personalities’ announced publicly by the Philippines’ President Duterte in 2019 with no evidence. It includes 33 mayors, eight vice mayors and three members of the House of Representatives.

Legal protection: laws and other official measures intended to protect rights and freedoms of an individual or groups.

Memory: can be defined as remembrances of the past. In the context of transitional justice, memorialization can be a tool to preserve painful recollections in ways that can contribute to preventing future conflicts, preserving peace and social cohesion and acknowledging what victims and survivors have gone through. However, when trauma goes unaddressed, the memory of past atrocities can also be used by certain individuals to justify vengeance. This approach to memory jeopardizes the potential for peace and reconciliation when a country is coming out of a crisis situation.

Memorialization: the processes through which memory is perpetuated, both for individuals and communities.

Outmigration: to leave one region or community in order to settle in another, especially as part of a large-scale and continuing movement of population.

Physical protection: physical features, technical devices, security measures or protective forces to safeguard an asset.

Psychotherapy: the use of verbal communication and interaction with a mental health professional to help a person identify and change behavior or thought patterns and resolve issues.

Socio-economic: relating to or concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.

Surveillance: monitoring of behaviour, activities or information for the purpose of information-gathering, influencing, managing or directing.

Targeted assassinations: planned murder or killing of an individual by insurgents or governments.

Transitional justice: a set of judicial and non-judicial processes that aim to help society come to terms with a history of large-scale human rights violations within a defined period of violence or authoritarianism.

INTRODUCTION

by Bokang Poee and Devon Gulbrandsen

From the student-led pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, to the youth-driven protests in Belarus following the national elections, to the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted around the globe in 2020, youth have consistently taken to the streets and social media platforms to advocate and mobilize with their peers on pressing peace and justice issues. Over the past two years, in varying stages of COVID lockdowns, we have seen a sharp rise in hateful and discriminatory rhetoric, misinformation meant to disrupt and disempower vulnerable communities, and in worse cases, the incitement of violence against those communities. However, what we have also seen is a groundswell of youth and youth-led organizations who are pushing back against these trends and are positioned to shape, contribute and take action to hold governments, companies, their peers and community members accountable for hate speech and discrimination, and actively fight against it.

Young people are often relegated to the roles of follower, recipient or spectator by the powers that be, owing primarily to the common belief that age and experience are equivalent to expertise and wisdom. However, this discounts the extraordinary expertise and wisdom that youth can also hold, and it discounts the dynamism and capacity that young people possess. Their unique combination of intellect and energy has often been abused by those in power

to drive civil war and unrest, and to destabilize communities and countries for ulterior motives. However, young people have increasingly sought to be at the forefront of change, acting as the pivotal thrust to highlight to the global community atrocities in their own societies, as seen in the cases of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in Apartheid South Africa and the 2010 Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. While instigated over disparate places and different periods of history, such movements are characterized by the youthfulness of its leaders and foot soldiers.

Increasingly, we are witnessing the resurgence of young and determined voices reaffirming and actively building a more just and peaceful world. These voices represent the deep desire to harness the power of honest and inclusive narratives in order to create a just world and to cultivate authentic leadership and an active citizenry that can continually speak truth to power.

As young people are the inextricable link between the past, present and future, it should be them who lead the transformation of society. Many have witnessed – either directly or indirectly through previous generations – past atrocities and continue to feel their impacts. In many places, past wounds and challenges are yet to be adequately addressed through transitional justice on both the political and psychosocial levels, impeding societal growth and healing and creating fractured national identities and a disconnected citizenry – all risk factors for future atrocities. But through effective activism, community mobilization, archiving and conveyance of collective memory, young people can build a solid bridge between past and present upon which youth and others can begin to re-envision and reconstruct a better world.

Atrocity prevention, as a field, is dominated by international bodies and external interventions. While it is of course important that there be international support for these efforts, civil society and youth-led initiatives have a key role to play in local-level atrocity prevention initiatives. Localizing atrocity prevention work offers space for local actors to prioritize their communities' needs and address potential violence in ways that make sense in their contexts. *In Voices over Violence: Global Perspectives from Youth Activists*, a dynamic group of youth activists from Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Serbia and the Philippines share their personal journeys into activism and how they have asserted their voices with the aim of promoting atrocity prevention by addressing the wrongs of the past in their various contexts. Their contributions showcase a



range of strategies utilized by youth to engage others in advocacy work for societal change. While implementing their community projects across the globe, our contributors reflected deeply, as individuals and as a collective, on the importance of their work and how it can meaningfully impact subsequent generations of activists.

At its core, *Voices over Violence* is a testament to all the contributing youth activists who have risked their safety, sacrificed their leisure and dedicated themselves to being custodians of memory and defenders of human rights. Furthermore, it is a support guide for an emerging generation of activists, who have been thrust into a rapidly changing world with added challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a pending climate crisis, but have also been afforded innovative technologies and tools that bring likeminded voices closer.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, ATROCITY PREVENTION AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

by: Anđela Savić

It was not easy to understand the term “transitional justice” at the beginning. Maybe it was because I first got involved with the stories, then the theory followed. Over time I have realized that the transitional justice process is indeed a process of change that societies can go through after a conflict, a war or change of regime, and that it consists of truth-seeking, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition. It is often slow, flawed and not perfect, but it is necessary. Closely related to transitional justice is yet another term that may sound too broad at first – atrocity prevention. Its explanation, again, is quite simple and implies a variety of tools and strategies that can be used to prevent future mass violations of human rights. The remainder of this chapter will focus on challenges youth face in grappling with these concepts in the former Yugoslavia and in addressing generational grievances over past events that they have no memory of, or that have been retold through biased curriculums or personal accounts.

CONTEXT: Serbia

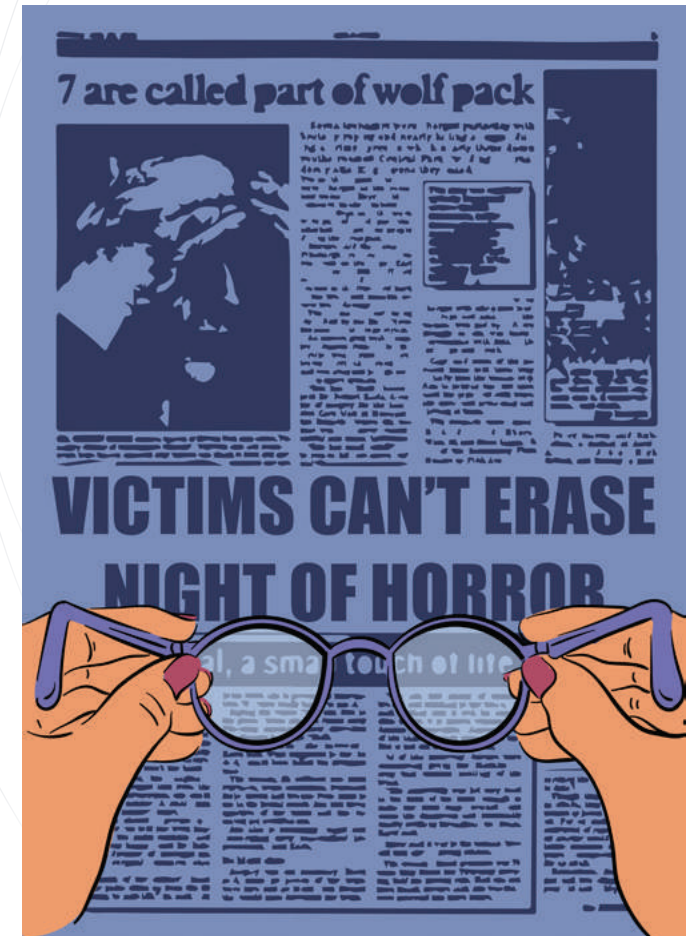
ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

- Weak state structures
- Record of serious human rights violations

During the 1990s, the territory of the former Yugoslavia became a scene of serious human rights violations, with sexual violence used as a tool of war, forcible relocation of citizens, ethnic cleansing, and other war crimes, including genocide, taking place. Now, more than 20 years after the last war has ended, Western Balkan societies still live surrounded by the narratives that seek to promote hate and fear towards the “others” while denying the atrocities that took place and minimizing the responsibilities each country had in them. One of the most infamous examples would be the genocide in Srebrenica. In July of 1995, military and police forces of the Republika Srpska killed over 8,000 people in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a safe area protected by the United Nations. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) classified those events as genocide in 2001 when Radislav Krstić, Chief of Staff/Deputy Commander of the Drina Corps of the Bosnian Serb Army, appointed Commander of the Drina Corps, became the first person convicted for the Srebrenica genocide.

In the following years, both Radovan Karadžić, first president of the Republika Srpska, and Ratko Mladić, commander of the Army of the Republika Srpska, were convicted of genocide in Srebrenica. Yet today, Karadžić and Mladić are celebrated as heroes in Serbia. They are praised by the media that promote the dominant narrative, and murals of Ratko Mladić can be seen all over Belgrade and other cities in Serbia. The facts about war crimes are constantly

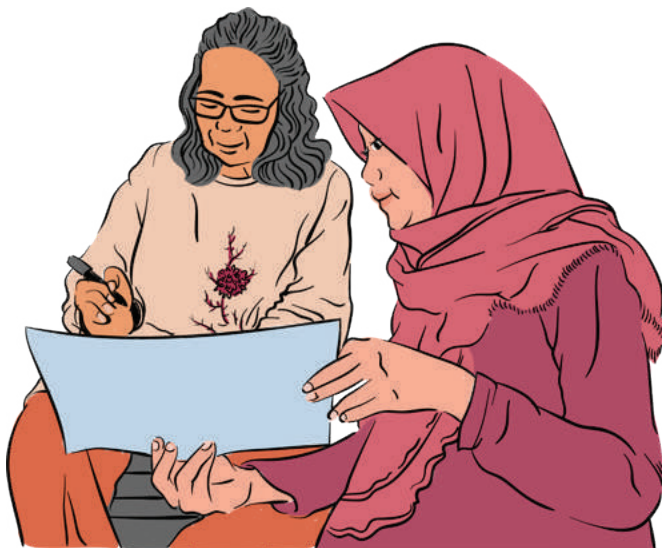


denied and the voices of survivors are silenced. Hate speech is directed to the members of “other” communities, as well as to the civil society that is raising its voice and refusing to celebrate war criminals and narratives that led to atrocities.

Bearing in mind the absence of consensus on the atrocities that took place and why they happened, as well as the fact that the current situation, at both national and regional levels, is shaped by collective denial, it is crucial for young people born during and after the conflict to use their voices and to actively participate in dealing with the past and the peacebuilding processes. It is important for youth activists to shape and create a society they want to live in, making sure not to repeat past mistakes, but to learn from them. Young people in the Western Balkans may live surrounded by the legacy of the violent past, but the future belongs to them and that is why they should be listened to and taken seriously.

As everywhere in the world, new generations listen and absorb stories and narratives they hear in their families. Unfortunately, around the Western Balkans a lot of families have their own war-related stories. Personal experiences are important and valuable, but they can often be one-sided and fueled with emotions, which can be a potential danger and can pose a risk for future atrocities. This is where the educational institutions and the media could step in, to teach and disseminate facts. Instead, the views on the past and violent events that have ruined many lives differ from one Western Balkan country to another and from politician to politician. Each country has its preferred version of the events that is promoted in the media and taught through school curricula. Textbooks

focus on isolated events such as the 1999 NATO intervention in Serbia or the 1995 Operation Storm in Croatia, which was the last major battle in the Croatian War of Independence. The public is generally not informed about perpetrators’ names; victims from other ethnic groups are marginalized;



and the numbers of victims are manipulated. Truth-seeking and truth-telling thus became the responsibility of the civil society sector, highlighting the importance of including and engaging young activists in its activities.

The ICTY managed to collect a significant number of confessions and facts about the wars, but because of its flaws and oversights, it failed to gain broad public trust.

That is why there is still an ongoing discussion in the Western Balkan public about whether or not the findings and verdicts of the ICTY should be acknowledged

or not. Domestic courts are slow and accompanied by many challenges. In many cases, victims or their family members cannot exercise their right to reparations due to shortcomings in the legislative framework. Since the state authorities do not show the political will to deal with the past, or to recognize the obstacles the victims face today, there is a lot of space for civil society actors, especially youth activists, to engage and try to re-build trust and better relations between different ethnic groups and societies.

As stated above, the Western Balkan region has a record of grave human rights violations. It is a region where acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed. Yet those events are not the subject of reflection and discussion, but are merely presented from one, nationalistic point of view. Let’s give an example. Last year, on November 9, 2021, which



is marked as the International Day against Fascism and Antisemitism, the civil society organization Youth Initiative for Human Rights, together with its partner organizations and activists, wanted to remove one of the biggest murals dedicated to Ratko Mladić, a war criminal serving a life sentence for acts of genocide in Srebrenica. The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia banned the gathering and the removal of the mural. In this manner, the state clearly chose a side and designated the mural a state-protected monument. As a response, some activists and “*artists*” threw eggs on the mural, others splashed paint over it, and stencils with Srebrenica flowers bloomed throughout the city. These acts of rebellion against the presence of war criminals in public spaces represent just one way in which activists and the youth may engage and voice their disagreement with celebrating war criminals.

One important way to prevent atrocities is to organize and attend a greater number of educational and training opportunities. In addition to teaching youth facts about the past, we should equip them with strategies to counter disinformation, fake news and gender-based violence and show them how they can contribute to democratic processes. Finally, it is of high importance to provide them the possibilities to travel, meet each other and get firsthand experiences in familiarizing themselves with different contexts.

On the same note, what we constantly notice as an important lesson in the context of the Western Balkan is the importance of education, information and facts. The more we are familiar with the truth, the less susceptible we are to propaganda and its vicious spiral of hate. It is easy to miss warning signs, especially for youth, if we do not know what to look for and be aware of. It is for those reasons that it is important to gather as many facts as possible and to listen to the voices of survivors and victims. It is our responsibility to provide space to those voices and to deny war criminals and their followers platforms to spread dangerous ideas that can lead to future atrocities.

As for my own journey into activism, it started on social media, more precisely on Twitter. Media has huge potential that can be abused, as seen in the cases of Prijedor (Bosna and Hercegovina) in 1992, where local radio in TV stations were used to target “others” and incite violence, or in Rwanda where in 1994 radio explicitly broadcasted messages that people should “go to work” and kill and be rewarded for it.³ Nowadays, media is the largest source of information, and even though it can easily and quickly spread fake news and propaganda, it can inspire change and connect as well.

I clearly remember reading about the story of Vafije Krasniqi, an Albanian woman from Kosovo, who was raped in 1999 by two Serb police officers during the war when she was sixteen years old.⁴ Soon after I read her story, thanks to the internet algorithm that suggests relevant content, I ran into her Twitter profile and, several days of hesitation later, I dared to write to her. At that time, a few years ago, I barely knew anything about the Balkan wars; I was not affiliated with any activist organization, nor did I have friends active in the field. I just knew that I must reach out to her and say something, say that I am sorry, and say that I believe her. It was then that I realized that this is the only topic I felt strongly about, and that working on it would not be just a job, but rather a calling. After that realization, I sent an email to two organizations that deal with the past and transitional justice in Serbia, the Humanitarian Law Center and Youth Initiative for Human Rights, telling them how much I would like to join them and work with them. They did not have open calls at that time, but after some time I got positive feedback – I started as an intern at one of the organizations and I became an activist and a volunteer at the other.

I started with volunteering, networking and writing. You can start from where you are – on Twitter or on the street – with what you have – a talent for writing and art, or a passion for the law. You just have to be the one to start: to go out, to grab someone, to tell why you think this work is important and how much more you would like to know about it.

Youth are often perceived as powerless, vulnerable, and easily influenced. They are seen as a passive group that should be talked about, rather than a group of young and active changemakers that should be talked with. That is why it is not enough just to tell the upcoming generations of activists about the importance of their engagement and the ways in which they can contribute. The most important thing that we can do for the youth is to give them space to grow. Today’s youth are the actors of the future: They are the ones who will live in the world they are yet to create.

WHILE THE WORLD BURNS: MENTAL HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND YOUNG ACTIVISTS

by: Iva Janković

*“on days you can’t hear yourself
slow down to
let your mind and body
catch up to each other
– stillness”*

(RUPI KAUR)

I want to ask you very openly – as a young activist in atrocity prevention – *how are you?* I’m really interested in how you feel every day in light of the situations you face. When it seems impossible to make a change. Protests on the street, police brutality, “Zoom

CONTEXT: Serbia

**ATROCITY RISK FACTORS
OBSERVED:**

- Intergroup tensions or patterns of discrimination against protected/ vulnerable groups
- Acts of incitement or hate propaganda targeting particular groups or individuals

bombing”, criminals who are yet to be prosecuted – I know that you need a world with more justice and solidarity, that you believe that people are good, and that change is possible. But how often do you stop to check on your mental and physical well-being? Do you have a support network? Do we, as young activists in atrocity prevention, have the right to rest and be well while the world is burning with problems? And do we have the privilege and money to access psychotherapy? I want to tell you that, wherever you are in the world, you are not alone. But, before that, let’s rewind.



We cannot be good to others if we are not good to ourselves. When I talk to my psychotherapist about the doubts I have about being a good activist – for example, *“How can I rest for the weekend when fascism does not sleep?”* – she reminds me of the pre-flight demonstration the flight attendant delivers when I fly by plane. What is the proper way to use an oxygen mask in case of an in-flight emergency? Answer: only after they’ve secured their own oxygen masks should adults and healthy persons help children and other passengers with their masks. This example may seem trite, but it illustrates very well the importance of taking care of ourselves first as activists.

As someone who has been in activism for a decade, I have been going to psychotherapy for more than five years, and I am currently a student at a Family Systemic Therapy school in Belgrade, Serbia. It is important to acknowledge that I am not a doctor or psychotherapist, and that I write from my personal experience. Psychotherapy has been a significant milestone for me, and remains

an important part of my life, on both a personal and professional level. In this chapter, I hope I can give some tools and strategies to help you move through your mental health needs when engaging in activism.

Mental Health Needs from Indonesian Activists

Activists in Indonesia face constant terror, both legal and extra-legal. One case in point is the 2017 assault on anti-corruption activist Novel Baswedan. An unknown attacker threw sulfuric acid on his face, which resulted in blindness in his left eye.¹ In addition to Baswedan, in May 2021 an activist of Papuan origin was arrested on the charge of treason.² Such terrors, and the knowledge that they are faced with potential attacks, put a mental health strain on Indonesian activists. Apart from the factors mentioned above, activists also run into financial problems, since it is not a secret that working in activism is not profitable at all. The financial insecurity of working in advocacy constantly haunts our daily lives. Many of us do not have healthcare or access to essential medical services, which otherwise are provided when you are working, for example, in a corporation. Financial pressures add to the mental stresses that we experience.

Mental health is not a matter to be taken lightly, a premise that remains true in the context of activism. Getting involved with social movements places you in a vortex of problems that appear to have no end in sight. Immersing yourself in your community's problems, placing yourself in someone else's shoes, fighting for a cause – all that takes a toll on your mental health. In my own experience, serious mental problems suffered by activists are caused by the 'never-ending fight.' The ongoing struggle to gain justice for marginalized communities, victims and survivors culminates in constant exposure to difficult and often traumatizing situations. Activists also struggle to strike a delicate balance between advocating on behalf of victims and not putting them at risk for further harm when you ask them to reopen dark chapters of their lives, which some of them would rather forget.

“Preventive measures are needed to safeguard activists from falling into the pit of mental illness. If accessible, mental health and psychosocial resources to help process second-hand trauma or anxiety endemic to activist work is one option. But one should not forget that within activist spaces are communities of support with likeminded and deeply committed individuals. They can play the proactive role of a support group, providing safe spaces to express feelings of anxiety and seek validation and encouragement from your peers. Paying attention to your mental health needs is a key component for activists to continue their critical work and avoid burnout.” – Manik Marganamahendra

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53434719>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ASA2142092021ENGLISH.pdf>

*The personal is political.*⁵ This saying reminds us that, like many other topics in society, mental health is a matter of community! In collaboration with the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation, I produced a video series titled *We Didn't Give Up Because We Remember.*⁶ The series focuses on the voices of young anti-war crime activists from former Yugoslavian countries. One of the four videos deals with the topic of mental health and activism. In the remainder of this chapter, I will share the thoughts and lessons from two of my interviewees, Ivana Seratlić and Tamara Šmidling.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic we cannot ignore the toll this worldwide event has taken on our mental well-being. In the video I produced, Tamara Šmidling shared that, “How we are feeling is in fact a political issue and should not be understood as an individual matter. All of the things that existed and the problems we were dealing with before the pandemic did not disappear during the pandemic but just became deeper, took on new dimensions that make them more complex. I think that young people are really in a particularly vulnerable position, because that position of precariousness, general insecurity, uncertainty, is only deeper because of the pandemic.”

It is very important that, for a start, we talk and think collectively about mental health. By doing this together we are taking a huge step towards mutual support and understanding. In Ivana Seratlić's experience, “Mental health is our ability to work, to love, for intimacy and a capacity for relaxation, enjoyment and

our authenticity – and responsibility both for ourselves and for the community.” It is essential to develop strategies to cope with situations that might cause secondary trauma reactions. Think about this: What helps you to take your mind off your work or your thoughts? How can you rest your body as well as your mind? Does an activity inspire you or put you in a better mood?

For many local helpers, there may often not be any support or resources to deal with this. If possible, meet regularly with other helpers to discuss your experiences and feelings, or do things together and take advantage of the guidelines and tools listed here.⁷ In the same video, Ivana Seratlić shared:

I think it's important that we constantly listen to ourselves, where our boundaries are, what we can and can't do. I also like Gabor Mate's story that our body speaks and signals, when our body says no, where our limits of exhaustion are and that it is important that we take care of ourselves during the whole activist process and not only when we feel bad.⁸ I often ask myself the question, 'What do I need today?' The trap of activism is when we are just identifying with that one activist role [and ignoring other roles]. Also, if we have not dealt with some of our personal traumas then it is very important to ask ourselves whether activism is re-traumatizing for me or is it a space for post-traumatic growth. I think that is also an important message that we should send; it doesn't mean that we are less worthy when we talk about activism and exhaustion, it is not some systemic strategy but a personal one: to know our limits, to make priorities, to always have a self-care plan, what helps me is to stay grounded, to feel good, to be okay with myself. We all have some activities that ground us.

It must also be recognized that access to mental health through counseling and psychotherapy is a class issue as it requires privilege and financial resources to access. In an ideal world, these services should be free, particularly for those work under emotionally stressful situations. As Ivana Seratlić shared in the video

that I produced, “More prevention services are needed, more free mental health services, more resource centers, free resources for young people where they can get free psychotherapy support, but it is also important that some new places are opened within the local community that will support people who are unable to pay for psychotherapy. It should be model of support for those who cannot afford it.”

If you are not able to access mental health resources or facilities, it is important to engage a support network of activists to ensure that your mental health is not neglected. As Jelena Jaćimović suggests in one of the videos, “I think the only way to help ourselves is to listen to each other, as I would say to cry to each other and share our struggles, to understand each other, but I really think that [activism] cannot be pleasant and that it will be even worse, and that we should support each other.” All of this may seem too demanding in the world we live in, but accessible and free resources exist that can propel us into our own self-care and into our work that grounds and drives us to do as much as we can.⁹



“We don't have to do all of it alone. We were never meant to.”

— BRENÉ BROWN¹⁰

YOUNG ARTISTS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGE

by: Madelene De Borja

Art has played a major role in movements for social change. Throughout history, art has sparked revolutions and ignited people's actions by being an instrument of empowerment and resistance for silenced and marginalized groups. In our time when populists and authoritarian governments are rising, social movements across regions experience blatant attacks through repressive policies that push different groups to adapt and defend their shrinking democratic spaces in unprecedented ways.

In 2014, the Umbrella Movement, with the youth at the forefront, pushed back against Hong Kong and Chinese government to uphold the democratic process of elections. More recently, in 2021, a large labor rights protest in South Korea with 16,000 demonstrators gained international attention as the demonstrators

CONTEXT: The Philippines

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

- Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law
- Capacity to commit atrocity crimes

used the famous costume from "Squid Game," a streaming television series that tackles social inequality. Art is a powerful weapon that touches the core of our humanity. Art helps us envision, craft and fight for a better society.

In the Philippines, artists have played a crucial role in narrating the stories of the nation. Through folklore, public murals, music, film and other mediums, artists reclaim narratives and spaces of communities. When the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines ordered censorship of the media, a lot of subversive films and alternative media began circulating to tell the stories of the Marcos administration's torture and abuses that were being kept silent.

Decades later, the artwork of resistance created during the Marcos dictatorship's martial law period continue to preserve the memories of unsung heroes. The Philippines is yet again facing tyrannical rule under President Duterte's administration, which is waging war against the poor, oppressed, and marginalized, and that weakens the foundations of democracy in the country. Policies that directly violate the principles of our Constitution and the values of human rights and dignity have been passed under the Duterte regime. Some of these policies include the Anti-Terrorism Law, which attacks the democratic right to dissent of the people by criminalizing activism. There is the "Oplan Tokhang," which legalizes the extra-judicial killings of suspected drug users or pushers, and the red tagging, arbitrary arrests, and different forms of attacks on students, journalists, farmers, environmental defenders and other sectors of human rights advocates.

During the populist and authoritarian regime of the Duterte administration, lawyers were killed, political opposition members were imprisoned, social media was weaponized to spread misinformation and propaganda, and



the media were either threatened or closed down for doing their job of telling the truth. It is high time for advocates to creatively resist and to strengthen our efforts of promoting atrocity prevention in order to counter the attacks on the marginalized and to mitigate the harms that threaten the people's political participation.

It is crucial for youth to strengthen our efforts for atrocity prevention. When traditional forms of advocating are restricted or even prohibited, we have to find effective ways to tell our stories and create more impact in organizing people into the human rights movement. We must reclaim the shrinking democratic spaces and narratives through arts and creative protests that center on people's stories.

As artists, we don't exist in isolation; we are one with our communities in the struggle to liberate and humanize our society. The young people of this generation have innate talents in occupying and reclaiming our spaces be it on TikTok, Facebook, or in the streets. The challenge now is for us to channel our talents to empower our communities and amplify our voices through our genuine knowledge of the context of the people with whom we are working and co-creating campaigns. Our goal in our creative resistance efforts is not just to create platforms but to spark a movement, and that movement is only possible if we organize together with the people in the community to which we belong.

The project Reckoning & Healing: Memorializing the Collective Trauma of a Nation is an effort

"We can create art that can liberate us or restrain us, divide us or unite us, consume us or serve us, or probably make art that can be anything in between. By recognizing that position, I'd like to think that my creative practice does not operate in isolation and it navigates along with our ever-changing world and the plurality that surrounds it. I find that it is not just through a singular or sole creation, but rather expanding efforts on inclusive education, communal interaction, and collective actions with diverse people or sectors in rural and urban communities, that art as a form, process, or medium actuates itself more purposefully as a force. A force that brings people together, fosters thought, and humanizes us all."

— **Ralph Eya**, independent art practitioner and cultural worker in the Philippines

supported by Youth in Atrocity Prevention project of the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth, and Reconciliation, grounded in the strategies of transitional justice through truth-telling and memorialization. Through this "super dupe sikret" online art gallery for youth in human rights and atrocity prevention, Filipino youth combat distortions about the history and legacy of martial law and Marcos through various social media and multimedia platforms. With the intention of breaking through the echo chambers in which fake news and calculated moves to misinform fester, the project disrupted traditional circulation of art by surprising the public with a series of social media and multimedia art installations. Thematically "click-baity," the art show is "secret" in that it is only accessible via scanning QR codes that are posted on social media, and/or stickers that are posted in many places. With the accessibility of the distribution means, the online art show targets large audiences that will see the QR code on Facebook, Instagram, news outlets, and even from the streets where the stickers are posted. Our public secret art show reached 10,800 people via Facebook, 7,500 people via Instagram, and 3,400 people through our on-ground execution of the sticker posting in the streets. Our *Martial Law Stories to Remember* animated dialogue reached 3,000 people on our page alone, plus people reached via the pages of the 20 organizations with which we partnered.

In our generation, we have launched campaigns and started trends that allow us to connect with people from all over the world



and strengthen global solidarity in the human rights movement. The key lessons we hope to share are that we must never let injustice slide, no matter how small it may seem, that we humanize ourselves as we immerse ourselves within our communities, and that the collective effort grounded in stories of our community is the primary key to our efforts in creative resistance and atrocity prevention.

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JouHRno: A RIGHTS-BASED, DO-NO-HARM APPROACH TO JOURNALISM IN THE PHILIPPINES

By: Loi Alian A. Cabaluna

Since President Rodrigo Duterte took office in the Philippines on June 30, 2016, his “War on Drugs” campaign has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Of the many who died, dozens were minors who were either targeted because they were on the “Narco list” or were negligently shot during anti-drug raids – what the enforcers call “collateral damage.” While alarming numbers of people are being killed, the “war on drugs” campaign also continues through Duterte’s weaponization of social media, specifically Facebook, as a means of maintaining a positive narrative of the campaign. Duterte’s manipulative use of social media created a narrative that has resulted in the Philippines becoming a country where “the truth no longer matters, propaganda is ubiquitous, and lives are wrecked and people die as a result.”¹¹

CONTEXT: The Philippines

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

Signs of an intent to destroy in whole or in part a protected group

Recently, Human Rights Watch found grounds that met the “specific legal elements” of the crime against humanity of murder within President Duterte’s instigation and incitement of killings in his “War on Drugs.” They also found 24 instances in which the police falsified evidence to justify unlawful killings between October 2016 and January 2017. Contrary to the claims and accounts of the eyewitness which portrayed the killings as cold-blooded murders of unarmed drug suspects in custody, official police reports justified these incidents as self-defense. To bolster their claims, the police routinely planted guns, spent ammunition, and drug packets next to victims’ bodies. No one has been meaningfully investigated, let alone prosecuted, for these killings.¹² If these cases are taken individually, where they involve one or two casualties, it may not



warrant sufficient attention, but taken together over years demonstrates a clear pattern of outsized violence and repression.

The use of mainstream social media platforms like Facebook have been used to fuel this drug war with disinformation and propaganda. According to a BuzzFeed report, Facebook influencers hitched themselves to Duterte’s rising star: “Transgender rights activist Sass Sasot (with more than 650,000 followers), blogger RJ Nieto (1.2 million followers), and former pop singer Mocha Uson (5.7 million followers) all positioned themselves as Duterte’s propaganda clearinghouses. Together, they created an ecosystem not dissimilar from the pro-Trump internet world we see in the United States.”¹³ Facebook has been



repeatedly used as the key amplifier of pro-administration narratives and sentiments, especially the “War on Drugs” campaign, and nearly two dozen pro-Duterte Facebook pages and websites shared fake news.

Lessons from Rwanda and former Yugoslavia

In periods of both conflict and peace, media has the ability to construct our perception of reality. It influences viewers, listeners and readers and it can be (ab)used as a propaganda tool. That was the case in 1992 in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s municipality of Prijedor as well as in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. The actions of Radio Prijedor and newspapers Kozarski Vjesnik from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines and the newspaper Kangura in Rwanda, are just some examples of the devastating effects propaganda can have on society and the potential role that media can play during the conflict. Nowadays, long after the violence in the Balkans has ended, some media in the Western Balkans highlight and point out ongoing tensions and challenges that post-conflict societies face. By doing so they shape the reality in which young people live. Youth born

during and after the war do not have direct experience of conflict. What they do have are dominantly hateful narratives that can be heard in the media and from state officials or other prominent figures.

“That is why it is important to educate youth not only about the historical facts, but about techniques to recognize and counter disinformation and propaganda. The importance of media literacy in today’s environment of social media and fast news is increasingly recognized by both school systems and civil society organizations, since non-formal education is just as important. Different organizations can offer trainings that encourage young people, activists and journalists to change the narratives that surround them, and give them the platform to change it directly. One of the best ways to fight hate speech and xenophobia is through celebrating positive stories and experiences that are always there, but often go unnoticed.” – Anđela Savić

Mainstream media outlets have been writing articles and making documentaries on these human rights issues, but we do not often see student journalists (15-21 years old) covering these matters. It is high time that student journalists and young activists get involved in the issues of society especially where human rights are concerned. It is essential to promote truth-telling and stories in their school papers to educate and influence their peers and fellow students as well as memorialize the atrocities that happened in the past in order to prevent them happening again. Because of fake news and misinformation, many youths support the “War on Drugs.” Furthermore, the current administration’s blatant vilification of activists has led to harassment, intimidation, and worse, killing of activists.¹⁴ The youth, especially the student journalists and activists, can help inform and educate about the atrocities committed by the government in the past, and the current issues instigated by the State that could potentially lead to atrocity.

In this regard, we, the Human Rights Youth Action Network (HRYAN) and BALAOD Mindanaw, in partnership with Tabang Sikad, a youth-based volunteer organization, held a fellowship training for campus journalists on rights-based, do-no-harm and heart-wired journalism. The fellowship training was one month long and structured by a framework that fit the demographics of our young

participants. With this, twenty-one student journalists, aged 15-21, coming from different schools all over the island of Mindanao, were trained to enhance their skills in writing rights-based, do-no-harm, and heart-wired stories or articles – an approach we termed “JouHRno.” The fellows, from public and private universities, were grouped into three clusters – gender justice, human rights and environmental justice.

In order for the trainees to understand the importance of writing rights-based articles, we discussed what transitional justice is and how it connects to atrocity prevention. Topics on the situation of Mindanao through the lenses of human rights, gender justice and environmental justice were also discussed, highlighting how they contributed and could be considered as early warning signs of atrocities. Classic examples that were shared were the killings of activists in Mindanao and the proclamation of the President to kill the wives of the armed rebels. We also discussed the situation of media and press freedom in the Philippines— commonly perceived to be among the freest in Asia, yet one of the most dangerous places in the world to practice journalism¹⁵— to ensure the fellows understood how media and press freedom directly affects them as student journalists. The role of journalists was also one of the important topics during the fellows’ training, emphasizing how student journalists play an important role in truth-telling and information dissemination. A mentoring session was conducted for our fellows by notable media and communications experts. As part of their goal in the fellowship-training, the fellows in each cluster produced one newsletter focusing on their cluster’s theme.

With the aggressive use of technology and social media by youth and the advent of new generations of applications and technology, it is important to present the truth to youth on the platform that they are most inclined to use, which is social media. It is important to maximize the use of social media in combating fake news and disinformation. Let us advance the agenda of truth-telling and memorialization of the atrocities that had happened in the past so that the new generation of youths will not be persuaded by the forces that deliberately alter the truth and distort the history. There can be no justice without remembering what has happened in the past. We cannot move forward without bringing the experiences and lessons we have learned in the past so as to prevent it from happening again. The youths of today and tomorrow should continue holding the line, bringing with them the truth and lessons of the past. Let us keep the conversation going both online and offline.

EMPOWERING YOUTH IN SOCIAL MEDIA AS A NEW PUBLIC SPACE FOR ATROCITY PREVENTION: A CASE STUDY IN INDONESIA

By: Manik Marganamahendra

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gained new momentum in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd, but the movement itself started years before that. Beginning as a hashtag on Twitter the BLM movement became the backbone of an entire anti-racism movement of the same name. According to Russell Rickford as cited by Riley E. Olson, social media's potential for mass dissemination and capacity for sharing personal, relevant stories facilitated the mainstreaming of BLM's message. This is an example of how "mass online interaction, exchange and communication links people with common goals and values and assists social media users in gaining, maintaining and cultivating resources and community support."¹⁶ BLM's use of social media

CONTEXT: Indonesia

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

Politicization of past grievances, tensions and impunity

High level of corruption and poor governance;
Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders

draws on and modernizes traditional insurgency and is a fine example of how activism and social media have become deeply intertwined.

BLM does not happen to be the only movement that employs social media to enhance and extend its influence. Another example which I will elaborate a little bit more extensively – as it took place in my country – is the ongoing social movement in Indonesia. In my own personal experience, social media has made activism more inclusive and accessible to the public. It eases the process of circulating the discourse of the movement. The internet has made social activism more democratic in the sense that everyone can access and follow any movement and has the option to join or not. Citing Cortés-Ramos et al, "The internet has amplified and enhanced the possibilities of social activism. Here, social media serve as a platform for the viral dissemination of information that has a high impact potential on the public's opinion."¹⁷ But, critically, it is not always that simple.

As an activist myself, I can confidently say that on certain matters, online campaigning is not enough. Generating public awareness is much easier today, yet because of that very condition, the public tends to have a short attention span. One issue may come to the surface and amass huge support online, but who knows if those people are still paying attention the very next day? A social movement has to stand the test of time until it reaches success. Letting a movement evaporate is a waste of resources. When you believe in the cause, you have to take a step further. In order to sustain the movement you support, you have to participate in a physical and public space as well.



Another concern for activists today is government surveillance and the ramifications that follow. Social media platforms are owned by commercial entities, making them subject to the laws of the countries in which they operate. It may not be a problem to those who live in countries that do not regulate the circulation of information online. But the problem arises when you live in a pseudo-totalitarian country the way I do. Indonesia has a law that regulates what you can and cannot say on social media called UU ITE (“Undang-Undang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik” or in English: Law number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions). The law itself is very ambiguous and therefore is vulnerable to abuse.

Security precautions to consider when engaging in online activism

In the program, we concluded that to ensure security when communicating and campaigning online with personal accounts, you have to take a few precautionary steps, which are:

- Choose secure messaging application and/or social media – these may change over time so keep up-to-date with developments and/or ask a reputable source.
- Activate 2FA (two-factor authentication) or 2-step verification.
- If you forget your password, use an authenticator application rather than sending a one-time password via text message, as it is safer.
- Avoid including personal information such as your home address, family members, etc. in your account details.

For additional details, consult this piece written by SAFEnet entitled “Panduan Memilih Aplikasi Percakapan yang Melindungi Privasi” (written in Indonesian): <https://id.safenet.or.id/2021/01/panduan-memilih-aplikasi-percakapan-yang-melindungi-privasi/>.

In addition to surveillance, Indonesia’s government also meddles in shaping public opinion and silencing critics using internet trolls, which, in our country are known as “buzzers.” According to Ismail Fahmi (Zhacky, 2019), social

media analyst for Drone Emprit Publications and Media Kernels Indonesia, the existence of buzzers has shown the Indonesian government is intolerant towards criticism and has distorted the outcome of public discussion on social media. It is common practice for Indonesia’s current government to fight against public opinion on social media by narrating the counter argument using buzzers. It is not a problem when an argument between two contrasting views happens naturally since that is one essence of democracy. But what of it when the argument is staged by one party systematically? That may sound bizarre, but it is unfortunately what is happening on the beautiful meadow of Indonesia’s social media.

So, it is up to each of us to use social media wisely, and this applies to us Indonesians. We can filter everything to suit our preferences, we can broaden our knowledge, we can support a movement, but we can also get paraded toward the jungle of distorted truth where right and wrong is not black and white but rather on the grey side, and power plays a forcing role. We can go to jail regardless of whether or not what we say is true, but we must not get discouraged. We have to administer best practices cautiously in order to stay in the game. For that purpose, our organization, Tata Muda, has developed a program through which you can get information on how to minimize risk when using social media for activism.

In September 2021, we held a workshop, Youth for Truth Month. The big theme of the program was atrocity prevention for youth in social media. The program lasted a full month, during which we trained selected individuals who have an interest and experience in human rights, more specifically human rights violations within the context



of Indonesian history. Apart from a workshop, we also created online campaigns on various platforms in the form of videos, infographics and articles about Indonesia's human rights violations. The issue we brought up is very sensitive in Indonesia since some of the perpetrators are still active in government.

We held the program very confidentially to protect our participants' private data. The materials we discussed at the workshop did not stop at only atrocity prevention. We covered the theme of transitional justice, reviewed details of technical practice for social media campaigns, and discussed informed consent before participants each executed a social media campaign about a specific human rights violation in Indonesia. Examples of campaign topics include the massacre of 1965, the disappearances of pro-democracy and environment activists, and local human rights violations. We also understood that contents about human rights violations and atrocities may trigger a range of responses. Therefore, we carefully developed content that is "easy" for people to accept, and we divided them for two different platforms: Instagram for visual content and Medium for writing. Please visit our article and campaign on: <https://medium.com/tatamuda/sekolahkebenaran/home> and <https://www.instagram.com/tata.muda/?hl=en>

From this program, I learned that the role of youth in preventing human rights violations by utilizing social media is very important. With a critical mindset and a burning fighting spirit, young people can become a turning point for activating movements and raising social consciousness on human rights issues.

From Youth for Truth Month, we learned several key lessons about preventing harm through a social media approach. Key takeaways included:

1. Ensure every event or campaign has a digital security plan in the event individuals carrying out the campaign are targeted or harassed online.
2. Center youth at every opportunity to amplify their own perspectives on the issues of human rights and transitional justice.
3. Exercise empathy toward the victims and survivors and their need for justice.
4. Engage creative methods to retell the stories of human rights violations in the past, as they are well suited for today's youth behavior on social media.
5. Where government and accountability are still stagnant, collaborate between youth and civil society organizations, as well as with legal aid.



THE ROLE OF MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION

By: **Gbadé Teloh Amandine Macoura**

In a country with a history of conflict or authoritarianism such as Côte d'Ivoire, memory and memorialization are indispensable to strategies of atrocity prevention over the long term. Memorialization and memory work can educate people about the root causes that led to these crimes, and

the reasons why the collective conscience must make sure never to commit the same errors in the future. In this context, commemorating the memory of a painful past would mean bringing groups together around a shared history, a single, inclusive identity, and a unified collective memory. Within the field of transitional justice, memory and memorialization are essential tools for creating a strong and resilient society that is without violence and is tolerant of human values, in which people are able to use intergenerational, traditional and institutional dialogue for the peaceful management of conflicts.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union explicitly recognizes the role of African youth in building solidarity and cohesion, and the strategic 2004-2007 plan of the African Union Commission made development and empowerment for young people a priority. The African Youth Charter, adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Governments in Banjul, Gambia in 2006,

CONTEXT: Côte d'Ivoire

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

Record and history of human rights violations

crystallized recognition of young men and women in the development of Africa by creating a continent-wide framework with recommendations for the role and contributions of young people to peace and security. This is especially important because youth are a group generally exploited during times of crisis to carry out the violence incited by others. In times of crisis, the youth are often used and manipulated by the decision-makers and politicians. They are both the executioners and the victims of the crises that befall their countries. But they remain on the margins of any process of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

In the case of my country, Côte d'Ivoire, post-election violence in 2010 and 2011 followed from decades of political and ethnic conflict. Security forces as well as rebel and militia groups caused the deaths of more than 3,000 people during that period. Immediately after this crisis, the Ivorian government initiated a transitional justice process guided by several institutions including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR) whose mission was to oversee the fact-finding process for uncovering the truth about the crises, and the National Commission for Reconciliation and Compensation for Victims (CONARIV), which aimed to identify and recommend reparations for victims. Though Côte d'Ivoire's transitional justice process was motivated by the will to bring relief to victims, it is nevertheless important to recognize that between the implementation of the process and the victims' expectations, there is a considerable chasm.

In this context we, Réseau Action Justice et Paix, have promoted the use of memory and memorialization as a form of communal and symbolic reparations and as a means of guaranteeing non-repetition. The goal of our project, *Promotion of Memorial Initiatives and the Fight Against Media Disinformation, a Factor of Peace and Prevention of Conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire*, was to create an online memorial to educate Ivorian youth about the history of Côte d'Ivoire and to invite them to learn the lessons of this history in order



to prevent the recurrence of mass atrocities. We created a Facebook platform for interaction as well as a website for posting articles, reports, and documents linked to transitional justice processes carried out in the country, with the overall goal of facilitating reconciliation and preventing conflicts.

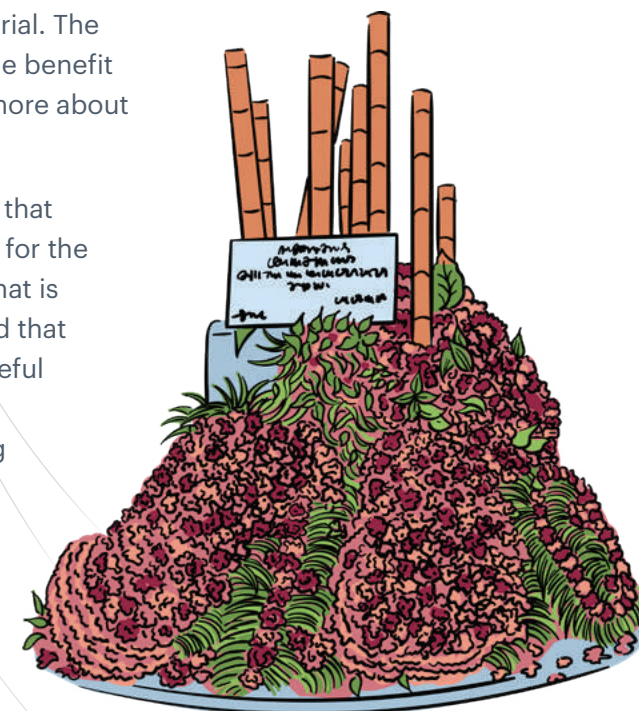
Memory and memorialization can be important tools to create a shared identity through remembering a historical event that has left its mark on persons in a city, a country, a continent, a stigmatized or other group of people. The approach to memorialization should be tailored to the context and target group. In a post-conflict environment, this must be a scrupulous exercise. Based on precursory signs of violence in Côte d'Ivoire, it is more than necessary that the State and the population take an interest in promoting memory as a form of atrocity prevention in the country. Following a study conducted as part of a previous project, it was discovered that young Ivorians are unaware of the ins and outs of transitional justice process, and unfortunately no state institution is responsible for making this known to young people. The result is that young people repeatedly engage in acts of violence following manipulation by Ivorian political decision-makers. To address this problem, our team held two exchanges with university history students to enable them to better understand the painful history of the country and the concept of memorialization, and then invite them to be guarantors and agents of the promotion of Ivorian peace. At the first exchange, it emerged that 90% of the participants did not know of the existence of transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire but wanted to know more through research in order to commit to the sustainability of the achievements related to this process. We also used the exchanges as an opportunity to urge the participants to write historical articles in an impartial way and to provide the sources of their information to avoid spreading disinformation to the population.

Following these interventions, the students wrote articles as part of the *Ivorian Memory Project* and were invited to briefly summarize their respective writings. Our project team then organized bilateral meetings with the National Council of Human Rights and the Ministry of Reconciliation and National Cohesion to present the project to them as it relates to the country's transitional justice and memorialization processes. It was noted at these meetings that the root causes of Côte d'Ivoire's repeated crises indeed date back to the time of independence, yet the process of transitional justice only takes into account the 1990s, which limits the ability to effectively deal with the country's past. There is also no archive in Côte d'Ivoire to trace the violence that has occurred and

to identify victims and the scale of these atrocities. In addition, because the Ivorian state institutions have mainly preferred a policy of forgetting, to avoid the risk of reopening the wounds that some victims still have, there is a need for security measures for the activists and civil society actors who wish to develop this practice of memorialization as a means of furthering reconciliation and preventing atrocities.

In addition, as part of the project we organized two radio programs on the *Yopougon Amitié* radio station to discuss the major periods that marked the history of Côte d'Ivoire. The radio program's location was chosen because it is a municipality of Abidjan that has witnessed the massive participation of young people in the violence related to crises that shook the country. We aimed to raise the awareness of the young people in this municipality of the country's history and about their role in the creation of peace and conflict prevention factors. Finally, we produced videos on historical topics such as the country's colonization period, the 1999 *coup d'état*, and the 2002 political-military crisis, which were then shared on Facebook and through the online memorial. As part of this study, we had the opportunity to share stories and testimonials experienced by victims of the Ivorian crises and key players in civil society who contributed to the creation of the online memorial. The videos are available online for the benefit of anyone who wishes to learn more about the history of the Côte d'Ivoire.

While our project demonstrated that Côte d'Ivoire is still too unstable for the implementation of a memorial that is unanimously accepted by all and that accompanies a process of peaceful reconciliation, it represents an important step toward achieving true and lasting peace in the country. Côte d'Ivoire needs the support of international experts to initiate this process. Young people must also be key actors



in the process of advocating for the creation of memory and memorialization in the country. Though their contribution is necessary, it must be made without violence through peaceful actions of dialogue between them and the relevant authorities. In some instances, young people lose confidence in the institutions set up to govern the country following a deadly crisis that has not been well managed. In these situations, the youth, as actors for peace, must initiate meetings among the various entities within the population. This can open a dialogue capable of restoring a climate of confidence among all the layers of society before planning together the basis of a collective memory and indicators of a memorialization initiative that can soothe the hearts of the victims or the affected groups.

It is the duty of government, through its institutions, to guarantee the peace and security of the population. The role of transitional justice processes is to find appropriate strategies to best manage conflicts in each context. States should analyze the reach of their national mechanisms of conflict management and adapt them to the requirements of their context. The creation of memory and memorialization initiatives in countries like Rwanda and Colombia demonstrate their success in preventing communal atrocities and violence. It is high time that still-reticent states unite their populations around the history of their country and the lessons learned from the crises the country has faced. These values will be passed down from generation to generation and form the pillars of a solid and united society. History has shown that the greatest powers in the world were built on memorialization, commemoration and the promotion of history passed down from generation to generation.



STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

by: **Wazi Marie-Flore Begou**

The challenges that our communities face are becoming greater and greater, and they have a considerable impact on our populations, particularly on the lives of women and young people. Violent conflicts, atrocities and terrorist threats are scourges that require structures for victims whose physical, psychological and financial care remain a concern.

The commitment of young people to initiatives to prevent atrocities is a gift, inasmuch as the youth represent a significant proportion of the population in sub-Saharan Africa. Seventy per cent of the population are under 30, and in 2050 half the sub-Saharan population will be under 25, according to an April 2021 issue of Africa Magazine.¹⁸

Youth represent a vivacious and unwavering force for social change. But in sub-Saharan regions, this force is very often used for destabilization. In Africa generally, decision-making within governmental systems is the prerogative of one class, for example, local authorities and chiefs, among others. In these

CONTEXT: Côte d'Ivoire

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

Record of serious human rights violations



decision-making instances, the voices of women and young people are essentially absent. As a result, the needs and concerns of these sections of the population are not sufficiently represented. This practice engenders intergenerational conflicts.

Advocacy can be undertaken alone or in collaboration with others to counter this exclusion. The aim of this chapter is to present the work I've carried out through the Global Initiative for Justice, Truth & Reconciliation's *Centering Young Activist Voices in Atrocity Prevention* program as an illustration of advocacy as an effective tool for young people who want to speak up in a constructive and peaceful manner to assure safe and peaceful communities.

In my work with women in Côte d'Ivoire, we use a strategy that incorporates their needs into the mechanisms of conflict resolution and management. In the context of our advocacy in Côte d'Ivoire, we have also noticed increasing insecurity in the region, and this has manifested itself through intercommunal conflicts. Women have regularly been victims of rape and other aggressions. Some even become incapable of going into the fields to work due to this insecurity, and that leads to a degradation of their financial situation. To add to this difficulty, women are uneasy about reporting the harm they suffer, and as a result, their needs are not addressed in the strategies of local government. Communities in Côte d'Ivoire are also fundamentally marked by patriarchy. This makes it difficult to achieve the acceptance of women in local decision-making processes.

To ensure women's voices are heard and their needs are met, we trained women and youth in community dialogue to identify problems in their communities that they then addressed by organizing additional dialogue sessions. We also set up face-to-face meetings with authorities and people in power to communicate the needs identified in the dialogue sessions. In this way meetings that are held with policy makers and officials are complemented by actions on the ground to

show the ability of women and young people to address the problems faced by their community. In the context of our advocacy, we have reinforced the ability of women in leadership and the participation of women in public life. Then, we went with them to the authorities, community leaders, chiefs, and national and international institutions so they could share their wish of becoming part of these mechanisms of local conflict management and resolution. Due to this advocacy action, women are increasingly listened to and their needs addressed.

Advocacy is one of several methods used by activists and organizations within civil society to push decision-makers to take measures for change in a particular situation. Advocacy is a series of actions that aims to change policies, laws, or a position or a practice that infringes the rights and well-being of populations. This means directing actions at decision-makers, those in power, or influencers.

There are many ways to influence decision-makers and the powerful, notably through original strategies of confrontation and public mobilization or with more conventional strategies of "behind the scenes" pressure. In a context in which young people's voices are in the minority during the decision-making process, advocacy presents an opportunity to influence policy, to be heard and to see our aspirations taken into account by decision-makers.

Our young people must make advocacy an inescapable tool in order to have an impact on their system of government and ensure that young people and women seize the space needed to secure equal consideration of their needs. In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline recommendations and steps that I have found to be successful when mounting an advocacy campaign.

What is the problem?

To tackle a problem, it is important to understand the contours of the problem. This requires an analysis of



the causes of the problem, as well as how does this problem affect the victims or the relevant populations?

Generally, an advocacy campaign consists of a comprehensive strategy of actions that can include meetings, declarations, the use of the press and social media. An advocacy campaign only succeeds based on the parties leading it. It is important to conduct campaigns with the relevant victims and survivors, allowing them to express their needs and to propose responses that will be appropriate and long-lasting.

How to Build an Advocacy Campaign

Advocacy follows a very specific methodology:

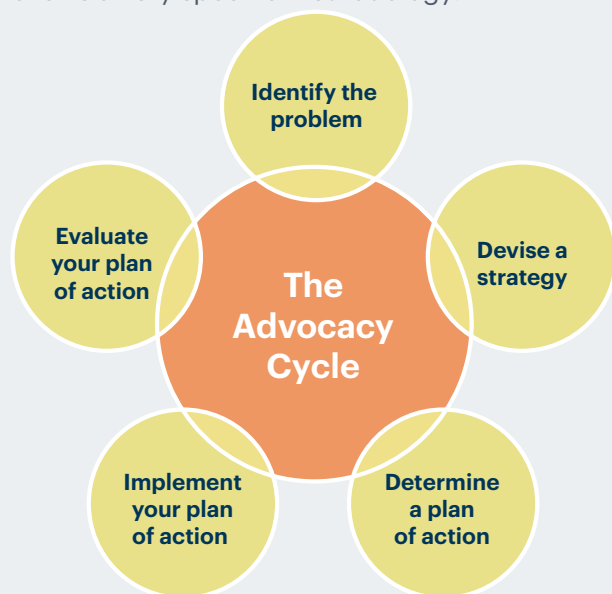


Figure 1: The cycle of advocacy

For your advocacy campaign to be successful, it is important to ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- How should I carry out this advocacy campaign?
- Who are the interested parties of this advocacy campaign?

First, we have to define who are the concerned parties for the campaign you want to launch. There are those who initiate the action, and those on the receiving end of the action. In leading a campaign it is important to ensure you are aware and conscious of your own position in relation to the issues you are trying to address. Secondly, identify the targeted groups, which can generally be divided into three subgroups: 1) pressure groups, 2) influencers, and 3) decision-makers.

Pressure groups are able to lean on decision-makers using the possibility of a sanction or of withholding something. Examples of this can be diplomatic missions, international organizations or regional mechanisms.

Influencers are those who have the ability to amplify the message, giving them a means to exert pressure. Examples are women's groups, youth groups, faith-based organizations and so on.

Finally, decision-makers are those who hold the power to change things through formal state structures, like the passage of new laws, decrees or reforms to existing institutions in the direction of the desired changes.

Once the beneficiaries have been defined, advocacy campaigners must then identify how they want to amplify their message. Today digital platforms have become indispensable tools for getting policy implemented. WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter are media platforms followed closely by young people and by the authorities, influencers and decision-makers. In terms of financing, social media platforms are within reach of many young people at a very low cost. In your social media strategy, it is important to tag all the authorities and individuals who might be able to bring a positive change within your struggle, or alternatively put pressure on them to take action.

In our strategies for action, we have used social media to make authorities pay attention to the need to involve women and young people in local mechanisms for the prevention of violence. We created a hashtag (#StopAtrocité). The messages that were sent out started conversations online and within communities in Côte d'Ivoire. Women and communities felt valued because their message reached beyond their own communities. The authorities also began paying attention to the concerns of women and young people. We saw real results and certain localities began to work with women and young people on conflict prevention. However, conducting this advocacy work has not been easy. Traditional chiefs didn't really understand the stakes of bringing women into

local mechanisms, which had long been the exclusive purview of men. There are still women who remain reticent about participating in public life.

Young people and women hold a strategic position in the development of nations and the prevention of atrocities. They understand the new challenges that the world is facing. Their potential as young people and women allows them to build a better world based on the past and the innovations offered by the present context.

Based on this, I make the following recommendations for fellow youth advocacy campaigners:

- Reinforce other young people and women’s capacities for advocacy
- Prioritize advocacy initiatives involving women and young people
- Promote advocacy as a tool for nonviolent expression
- Support young people and women’s capacities to use digital tools for advocacy

Advocacy is based on strong arguments, on the strength of ideas, and implies values like courtesy, mutual respect, listening and humility. Advocacy practiced by young people would make visible those youth who are using dialogue as a tool for change and leading the constructive search for durable, inclusive solutions. We have taken a first step, but we would like to amplify our advocacy to a level significant enough to reduce violence against women and prevent atrocities.



VOICES OVER VIOLENCE: A FEMINIST UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

by: Spouzhmai Akberzai

In August 2021, the Taliban overtook Kabul by waging war against the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan using violent means ranging from bomb blasts, suicide attacks, court martials, and other horrendous forms of attack. Consequently, women lost twenty years (2001–2021) of their hard-earned gains in civil liberties, the fundamental right to education, the right to equal opportunity, political rights, the right to freedom of expression, and to vocational opportunities. In the absence of political will and of independent international organizations, unofficial truth-seeking initiatives can lay the groundwork for initiating a broad range of gender justice discourse. Applying the feminist understanding of violence will be instrumental in documenting past

CONTEXT: Afghanistan

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

Active armed conflict

Political instability caused by dispute over power, armed or radical opposition movements

Capacity to recruit or encourage large number or group of population and availability of means to mobilize them



and ongoing human rights abuses and in raising voices against atrocities happening in the country in order to prevent further atrocities.

Due to prioritization of male perspectives, security studies has been a masculine domain in countries undergoing the democratization process. In Afghanistan, this sector has excluded women from meaningful participation in peace and security discourse. In order to gain a nuanced understanding of the severity of violence and victimization of women currently taking place, my work centers a feminist approach to storytelling, depicting violence and

women's experiences of the atrocities inflicted upon them by terrorism.

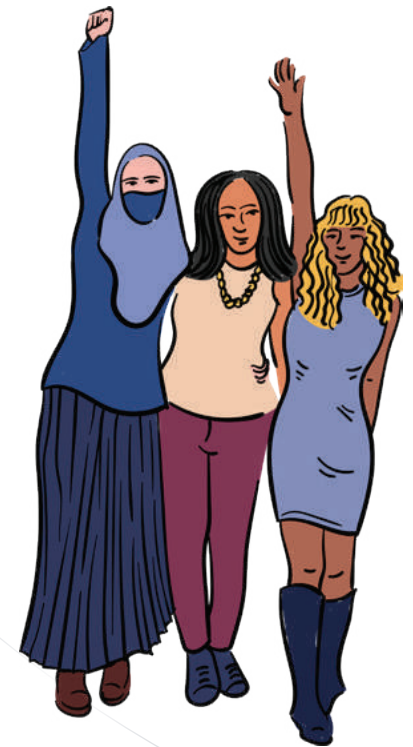
The previous government of Afghanistan had been actively negotiating peace talks until the US signed a peace deal with Taliban in 2020, which sidelined the Afghan government.¹⁹ The Taliban started target killing campaigns against Afghans, spreading horror throughout Afghanistan. Attacks on universities, schools and hospitals were specifically designed to disrupt security in the country. The increase in violence signifies a security crisis caused by defection from the peace agreement and resulting political instability.

Afghanistan has fallen into the hands of a terrorist group. Women had been actively engaged in different aspects of life but are now being displaced. Girls are banned from attending secondary school and high school almost all over the

country; women's social, political and economic participation has been halted; and women activists, journalists and political leaders are in a state of despair. They are living in hiding, fearful of execution. The weak state structure and increase in armed conflict and radical groups equipped with arms have led to a security crisis and escalation of violence, in general, and against women activists, in particular. As a means of truth-telling for future transitional justice, my work documents the recent strategies of terrorist groups' attempts to silence or kill vulnerable women who are advocate for women in Afghanistan on social media and are now part of the Afghan diaspora. Through social media, women activists are raising their voices to share their concerns about abuses against women and girls at the hand of the Taliban, centering themselves to speak about their horrendous past and present experiences. In this project, I used social media as an instrument to convey to the world Afghan women's messages about their situation under repressive regimes.

Through [interviews and video testimonials](#) with Afghan women, I sought to preserve and lay groundwork for further transitional justice, accountability, and advocacy work. Part of my campaign focused on the lack of international awareness about the status of women and girls in Afghanistan. On November 25, 2021, an international day designated for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I engaged two street artists to perform live artwork that portrays the Taliban's ban on education and sidelining of women's rights and achievements during the peace process, and women's current deprivations. Through a street performance in the Old Town area of Alexandria, Virginia, two women artists painted Afghan women's plight on canvases for passersby. It took around 5 hours to complete the paintings. While painting, we engaged with the public to spread awareness on the current status of women in Afghanistan, distributing pamphlets with information on our website and Twitter and Facebook accounts.

A second project component, and one of the most important parts of my work, is compiling



the chronological timeline of women's losses, a swift shift from the gains and achievements made as a result of US interventions, peace negotiations, sidelining and the eventual leaving of Afghan women to their fate at the mercy of terrorist groups. Girls' schools remain closed and women are banned from employment. Women leaving home must be accompanied by a male chaperon. Shelters have shut down and many women protesters have disappeared or been killed. Women's civil liberties and political rights have been dismissed.²⁰

In the coming months following this toolkit's publication, I am planning a [campaña en redes sociales](#) against atrocities committed by the Taliban, with an aim of influencing other countries to focus policies on women-centric policies that recognize and condemn the Taliban's violence and oppression of women and girls. A video series I produced for the campaign engages non-Afghans to learn about the cyclone of gains and losses of rights and liberties that Afghan women have experienced. This can also serve as a resource for other governments or international independent organizations investigating this history for the purposes of implementing transitional justice.

My contribution is a stepping-stone to the effective documentation of the atrocities against Afghan women and girls. It is accessible to the public to understand and learn first-hand from Afghan women rather than a ventriloquized voice from the international community. Based on my experience, women are eager to participate in interviews and welcome such an initiative because they want to speak out and be heard about the women's rights crisis. Afghan women activists, despite emigration and exile, the unknown and uncertain future, are even more committed to engage in demanding justice.



THE PHYSICAL, DIGITAL, LEGAL, AND FINANCIAL PROTECTION OF YOUTH ACTIVISTS, JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS

by: **Mohammad Yahya Qanie**

Outside of the African continent, Afghanistan is the world's youngest country, with people under the age of 35 accounting for almost 75% of the population. In Afghanistan, the number of targeted assassinations of youth activists, human rights campaigners and journalists in 2020-2021 was among the highest it's ever been during the war.²¹ Knowing that there are no mechanisms in place to protect youth activists physically, digitally, legally or financially, I, as the founding-member of the National

CONTEXT: Afghanistan

ATROCITY RISK

FACTORS OBSERVED:

- Active armed conflict
- Political instability caused by dispute over power, armed or radical opposition movements
- Capacity to recruit or encourage large number or group of population and availability of mean to mobilize them

Youth Consensus for Peace, conducted a series of immediate training to help protect youth activists, at least physically and digitally.

Physical, digital legal and financial safety continue to be among the most essential considerations for the groups of youth activists and human rights defenders with which I've worked. Given that we, youth activists, journalists and human rights defenders, have been on the frontlines and well-known to the public, our identity places us in a dangerous position. There is no national protection framework and, depending on the level and form of threats, the issue of protection – whether physical, digital, or legal – differs by region. The state's weakness in the years prior to the Taliban's 2021 takeover, notably in the security sector, indicated to youth activists and journalists just how vulnerable their physical safety was. In particular, targeted assassinations (widely believed to be carried out in large part by the Taliban) were one of the most challenging issues that couldn't be tackled. Furthermore, no national act existed to shield youth activists and civilians from surveillance, hacking and social media-based threats. Above all, the high level of corruption and racism in the state, security sector and judicial system made it nearly impossible for Afghan youth activists to conduct their activities safely.



Protecting against Police Brutality during Protests

Atrocities and violence can manifest in various forms and shapes. Here, I will only focus on the most recent and personal one: police brutality. In the light of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, police brutality has returned to the apex of public attention for at least the past two years. As you can probably imagine, it is naive to assume that police brutality only occurs in the US. In Indonesia – where I'm from – almost

every demonstration ends up in a scene of turmoil between the protesters and the police. However, the roar against police brutality is sporadic because it has been normalized. The idea that one is very likely to be physically assaulted and arrested by the police when participating a protest has been implanted so deeply in our society's consciousness, and that is tragic. So many of us do not understand that police brutality should be an extraordinary occurrence. We do not know that not every demonstration must be faced with tear gas and batons.



It is, of course, devastating to see the government of a democratic nation deal with public criticism with repression. Making space for differences in opinions is a sign of a healthy democracy; using brutality is not. It is our responsibility to fight against police brutality any way we can. But since we cannot change this overnight, we have to take on atrocity prevention by tactically adjusting to brutality that might happen.

The first thing we have to do to cope with brutality is to know our rights. Make sure that before you attend a protest you are aware of your right to be there and potential consequences such as being arrested or arbitrarily detained. Once that is accomplished, we must ensure our own security and anticipate brutality by doing the following:

- 1. Film as much as you can.** Bring your smartphone, camera, or other recording device and be sure to film what you see. Protests, depending on their nature, can turn quickly, and having video evidence is useful should you need it.
- 2. Protest with a group.** There is safety in numbers and going with a trusted group of fellow activists can help ensure everyone is okay throughout the protest.

- 3. Build and maintain a hotline for security and legal assistance for protesters and activists to call if they need help.**
- 4. Prepare paramedics for the day of the protest.** Make sure you can identify where to find medical support should it be needed. It is not uncommon to experience dehydration, disorientation, panic attacks, anxiety and/or physical injury during intense demonstrations.
- 5. Bringing personal safety belongings such as helmets, goggles, water and personal medications.**
- 6. If you are being arrested, shout out your name so fellow protesters know who you are and that you will need legal support.**
- 7. Consolidate legal assistance through crowdfunding platforms like GoFundMe.** Legal assistance is expensive so having platforms like this is critical if you do not have funds to secure legal support on your own.

For more information on how to maintain your security and safety during protests, you can visit: https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/SafetyDuringProtest_F.pdf – **Manik Marganamahendra**

The targeted execution of young activists, journalists and human rights defenders is just one of many examples of flagrant violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Other indicators of atrocity seen in Afghanistan include corruption and racism, systematic and planned attacks on specific groups of intellectuals, and disruption of peace-making initiatives and activities. Following the Doha Agreement between the United States and the Taliban on Afghan peace, we saw a dramatic increase in targeted killings of well-known youth activists, human rights defenders and journalists in Afghanistan, which has heightened fears among activists. Given the unprecedented escalation of unsafe spaces for youth activists, we have tried to create a two-part immediate physical and digital security strategy while tirelessly lobbying officials and international organizations to develop a long-term, international strategy, and to dedicate funding to protect youth activists.

In the first part of the immediate strategy, we, the National Youth Consensus for Peace, created a basic guide for digital protection of young activists while also developing case studies about past targeted executions. This was a significant task because information exchange over the internet is not secure. According to our findings, the majority of assassination victims were identified and tracked through social media platforms. It is also worth noting that government and third-party actors can easily intercept phone calls and even obtain access to text messages, documents, and very sensitive personal information about their target's identity. Our digital training introduced strategies for safer email exchange and messaging apps, data and document protection, storage of sensitive information such as passwords, the level and type of information safe for social media sharing, and how to adjust smartphone settings to minimize third-party access and make the phone almost untraceable.



The second part of the immediate strategy focused on activists' personal physical protection. We instruct activists on how to recognize important warning signs, as well as what to do if they realize they are being followed or physically attacked. Compared with digital security, physical self-defense and protection was difficult to apply practically, but we sought to put lessons acquired into effect by simplifying them while preserving the key principles. The question of digital and physical safety is wide-ranging, and a more in-depth assessment was required to meet the demands of various types of activists in different locations; however, we have included the essential factors pertinent to Afghanistan's situation. Our mission was to counsel activists on how to defend themselves even if the state would not. We emphasized the importance of young activists' understanding of their own ability to impact change through action.

We also lobbied for increased safety measures for youth activists. When we felt that Afghanistan's government and international community were either uninterested in this crucial subject or required extensive investigation and analyses on their side, we devised our own method of self-protection. We formed a triangle consisting of the state, peace and security specialists, and grassroots-level youth activists. The collective expertise and knowledge of this group enabled us to successfully connect the theoretical elements and apply the experiences of victims to craft a guide.

We began developing the guide with the goal of creating a well-structured tool that will provide an immediate response to Afghan activists' issues. Once developed and presented, we had planned to launch a social media campaign and petition the UN Youth Envoy's office to work on a resolution for "Global Legal, Physical, and Digital Protection" of young activists as part of the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda. However, due to the Afghan government's collapse in August 2021, we were only able to give a few trainings to four groups of young activists. Our initiative was never finalized or presented to Afghan youth activists as a complete guide.

Recommendations:

Focus on what you can do

Despite all of the advancements and human achievements of the twenty-first century, the majority of people continue to struggle to live a safe and normal life. The regulations and practices that were intended to ensure human safety and prosperity are failing miserably. Indeed, rules and regulations are complicating politics and governments to the point where we are failing to achieve our basic goal of protecting human beings. While we still need fundamental reforms and attention in areas such as physical, digital and legal protection of youth activists, human rights defenders and journalists, there are steps that you can take to minimize the negative impact of incidents. Youth groups are creative, capable and committed. They can band together and take steps within their respective circles on almost any issue. Knowing that formal procedures are time-consuming, and that national or international-level outcomes require great effort, youth groups can carve out their own space and discover immediate solutions. The upside of this approach is that youth will be able to lobby with a stronger voice, arguing they have done their part. They can gather knowledge and identify specific issues and obstacles and bypass lengthy procedures.

Find the most effective approach

Given the breadth and significance of the problem of insecurity, youth groups can devise an effective approach to address it. From the start, all parties must be identified and engaged. We identified and built a triangle of young activists, peace and security specialists, and the security organs of the state as part of our approach. Each of these parties played a unique role and made a significant contribution to our cause. Because they were the principal victims, youth activists and human rights campaigners were crucial. Survivors also had meaningful stories and experiences to share. On the other hand, we had peace and security specialists who were unfamiliar with the on-the-ground realities in Afghanistan but had enough expertise and understanding in the subject to assist in the development of an initial strategic guide. Finally, there was the state, which was in charge of security as well as practical knowledge of the reality on-the-ground. A combination of the youth activists' needs with the practical knowledge of the specialists and state organs made an effective triangle to design an actionable strategy guide that can respond to immediate needs of youth activists, human rights defenders, and journalists.

Maintain your emphasis on fundamental change

While you're actively working on resolving an issue, don't forget to advocate harder than ever to encourage policymakers, the international community, and international organizations like the United Nations to take action at a higher level. Gaining recognition of the issue from international organizations, leveraging groups who have been trying to solve the issue, and establishing methods as a policy under state and international mandates all contribute to addressing the issue in a broader context.

Call to Action: Support Afghan Youth Activists

Afghanistan's fall to the Taliban on August 15, 2021 had a severe, detrimental impact on the lives of millions of young people in the country. The collapse of the government was accompanied by the collapse of the economy, educational institutions, human rights, and hopes of at least 18 million people.

Afghan youth, who were marginalized from peace efforts, experienced the worst trauma of their lives after the collapse of the government. Most were unable to leave the country and remained, not out of choice, but out of desperation. Some were successful in fleeing to the United States, Europe, and neighboring countries. They left their families, friends, objectives and ambitions behind and packed their entire lives and dreams into a single school bag in the hopes of literally saving their lives.

Despite all, Afghanistan's youth and women continue to fight back for their rights. Let us join their voices of over violence. Let us stand with their resistance over reversal. Let us, as individuals and groups, assist our Afghan youth allies through funding, mentoring, sharing our networks, connecting them with jobs, or any other means. Afghan youth are in desperate need of your support; they are going through the most difficult days of their lives. We cannot let them down.

CONCLUSION

by Bokang Poee and Devon Gulbrandsen

Atrocity crimes like genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity are not spontaneous or random events. Instead they are planned and intentional, with clear and measurable trends that indicate intent of committing mass violence. Yet early prevention and intervention efforts can often overlook crucial indicators including small-scale violence that may not make national or international news, targeted low-casualty violence like gang or mob attacks, or non-violent strategic developments like the increasing capacity of armed militias. These indicators, while not formally recognized as risk factors, contribute to an enabling environment conducive to the commission of atrocity crimes. Even more often, prevention strategies overlook engaging youth as a key actor and the role that they can play in identifying these more localized and community-level events. Youth are often seen as both actors in and victims of violence, with very little in the literature that speaks to their tireless efforts trying to combat violence in their communities. Youth in particular, as the chapters in



this toolkit have attested, are uniquely placed to identify and call out worrying trends in their communities and countries through the use of community dialogues, truth-telling and memorialization initiatives, social media campaigns, and advocacy and awareness-raising efforts.

Identifying early warning signs of atrocity crimes is key to prevention work, and early intervention even more so. The varied interventions detailed throughout this toolkit are a testament to the capacity and nuanced approach youth take to engage in prevention efforts in their communities. They also disrupt and discredit the narrative that youth are indifferent, lazy and not experienced enough to meaningfully engage in atrocity prevention. Youth are rarely provided with tangible opportunities to use their experiential knowledge to produce literature on this subject in their own context. Too often they are consulted and not brought into the decision-making process of how their contributions are then communicated. The community projects that the GIJTR working group members undertook, as well as the contents of this toolkit, are a testament to the wealth of knowledge and expertise youth have.

The lessons learned during the implementation of these initiatives that would be advantageous to emerging activists to incorporate and consider in their work are detailed below:

Consider safety and security

While activism and advocacy are noble endeavors, not all sectors of society are supportive of those who challenge the status quo. Therefore, it is imperative that the safety and security of your team, both physically and digitally, is prioritized. Protecting each other's identities in the media and on social media platforms ensures an added level of security in volatile and hostile situations. Utilizing online security mechanisms to encrypt your data and information would also be ideal. Of course, these measures are not failsafe, therefore, where possible, ensure that your network includes legal representation, which will be able to assist in the event of an unlawful arrest.

Strategically and empathetically engage the relevant networks and stakeholders

Engage relevant stakeholders and networks strategically to create social capital that will encourage support for your initiative. Building worthwhile relationships ensures that future interventions have a basis from which to work, thus increasing the likelihood of effecting sustainable change. It is important



to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly those that can be categorized as victims, are treated with empathy. Their stories and lived experiences are what give our activism meaning and will more than likely form a collective memory archive that can act as a bridge to healing and transitional justice.

Critically analyze all information

Ensuring that all information is vetted and checked allows you to tell accurate stories and build effective strategies for your initiatives. The practice of critically analysis forces you to engage solely with facts, aiding you to build credibility among your audience and the communities in which you work, while also ensuring that your initiative remains on the just side of history.

Utilize creative solutions to communicate your message

Employ tools such as online platforms that can propel your messaging to a wider audience but also connect you to relevant allies, donors and partners that can aid in reaching your objectives. Additionally, using artistic interventions such as music, graphic arts, etc. can also deepen your messaging and engage audiences at a more human level.

Actively guard and maintain your mental health

Mental health is paramount to the success of every initiative, particularly in a time where we work in isolation and have the added tension of the COVID-19 pandemic at the back of our minds. Taking active steps to reflect inward and assess our capacity to engage with the strenuous work of activism is essential. Additionally, engaging your networks on your mental well-being as well as accessing available resources, be it online or through psychotherapy and counselling, will ensure that you and your team are able to fulfill the mission you have set.

The working group members that have authored this publication have not only taken on issues that they see plaguing their communities but are also deeply committed to nurturing a new generation of activists by chronicling their experiences in Voices over Violence. The strategies they have shared and insights they have provided will ensure that activists the world over are learning from activists who are embedded in their communities and have implemented campaigns and projects to address the many challenges in this most trying period of our recent history.

ENDNOTES

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- 2 The role of media in Prijedor was discussed in-depth in the *Prosecutor v. Stakić*, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, July 2003: <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/stakic/tjug/en/stak-tj030731e.pdf>
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- 4 *From Texas to Kosovo: Rape survivor returns as part of new gov’t*, AlJazeera, March 2021: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/25/from-texas-to-kosovo-rape-survivor-returns-as-part-of-new-govt>
- 5 The origin of this political slogan (also expressed as “the private is political”) is unclear, but it expresses a common belief among feminists that the personal experiences of women are rooted in their political situation and gender inequality. It was popularized in 1970 through an essay of the same name by American feminist Carol Hanisch. See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-personal-is-political>
- 6 **Mental health and activism:** Video conversation about mental health and activism produced by Iva Janković as part of the initiative *We Didn’t Give Up because We Remember* dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the anti-war protests during the wars of the nineties in the former Yugoslavia.
- 7 “Helping the Helpers” Mental Health and Human Rights Info. <https://www.hhri.org/thematic-pages-overview/helping-the-helpers/>
- 8 Lecture: Gabor Maté, When The Body Says No: Mind/Body Unity and the Stress- Disease Connection <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlHIWXWduFO>
- 9 For further reading and resources visit: <https://www.hhri.org/thematic-pages-overview/helping-the-helpers/>
- 10 Brené Brown is a researcher, storyteller who’s spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She believes that we have to walk through vulnerability to get to courage, therefore, “embrace the suck.” For more information, please see: <https://brenebrown.com/about>
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