

ARTICLE 19

Donor Report

# An update on our work in 2026

This briefing provides detail for our supporters on the work we have delivered and continue to carry out since our Giving Tuesday Appeal in 2025.

# SPOTLIGHT: Iran

As we closely monitor the rapidly escalating situation in Iran and across the wider region, we stand in solidarity with the people most directly affected and at risk. At the beginning of 2026, a deepening wave of repression unfolded. As authorities intensified internet restrictions, deployed lethal force against demonstrators, and targeted journalists, activists, and minority communities, access to accurate information remained - and still remains - critical.

## Digital Repression and Cyber Security

### New report examines China's influence on Iran's internet infrastructure | February

ARTICLE 19's latest installment in the Tightening the Net series, China's infrastructure of oppression in Iran, offers one of the few in-depth examinations of the digital cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For over a decade, Chinese technology companies and governance models have helped lay the foundations of Iran's information control system. This alignment goes beyond technology. It reflects a shared commitment to 'cyber sovereignty', centralising censorship, embedding surveillance, and disconnecting populations from the open, global internet.

The report calls for smart, targeted sanctions on non-Iranian companies enabling digital repression, as well as greater scrutiny of sanctions evasion and shell companies. States must also urgently reaffirm the universality of human rights in internet governance—the normalisation of cyber sovereignty must be resisted.

[Read more](#)

### What Iran's internet shutdown reveals about Starlink | February

Governments are increasingly weaponising internet shutdowns by activating legal, regulatory, and technical controls already built into national infrastructure, and Iran's 2026 blackout shows that even satellite internet is not immune. During mass protests, authorities combined legal orders, network shutdowns, GPS spoofing, radio frequency jamming, and equipment seizures to disrupt services like Starlink, demonstrating that so-called 'censorship-resistant' technologies remain vulnerable to state power.

The lesson is clear: technical workarounds alone cannot guarantee connectivity or rights. Protecting information requires stronger legal safeguards, accountability, and systemic solutions that address the political drivers of shutdowns.

[Read more](#)

Our **Rapid Response Helpline** is still active for all those who have been detained, are at risk of detention, or face another digital security risk. We have reached **over 3,000** high-risk people in Iran over the last four years.



## Our Advocacy Update

Our **Asia Pacific Office**, in partnership with the Centre for Independent Journalism and Sinar Project held a two-day workshop on Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Internet Safety in Kuala Lumpur. The dialogue convened representatives from government, civil society, academia, the media, and the private sector to co-develop a rights-based, inclusive model for internet safety and platform accountability.

Our **Law and Policy Team** joined the International Criminal Court's launch of the Prosecutor's Policy on Cyber-Enabled International Crimes which set out how the Office will use its mandate to investigate and prosecute crimes under the Rome Statute. We had a significant impact during its development: the policy has significantly increased references to human rights and freedom of expression as well as references to internet shutdowns, surveillance or digital threats against journalists and human rights defenders.

Our **Head of Global China Programme** joined the Democracy Defenders in Exile speaker series hosted by the University of Notre Dame, giving a key note and joining a panel discussion on issues ranging from transnational repression to technology, democracy and human rights. The series focused on China, bringing together speakers from mainland China, Hong Kong, the Uyghur region, Tibet, and US Congress.

Our **Bangladesh and South Asia Office** participated in a roundtable discussion on online narratives and mis/disinformation ahead of the 2026 Bangladesh elections. The session focused on finalising an evidence-based advocacy tool to help address digital harms in the pre-election period.

Our **Europe Office** have been very active on advocacy concerning judicial harassment in Turkey, the targeting of LGBTQ peoples in Kazakhstan, and defamation laws in Georgia. The team have also been active on the issue of transnational digital repression and led an exceptional discussion at our pre-event to the Moldova Security Forum, bringing together practitioners working on the frontline of digital transnational repression and countering foreign interference and cyberattacks.

## Become a Supporter

Start a regular donation, giving as little as a reasonably-priced coffee each month to help us work for a world in which all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination.

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