

SESSIONS 6 & 7

INSPIRED BY STORIES – EMPOWERED BY TACTICS

Talking tactics

Tactic and story posters



Member of MACHSOM WATCH in conversation with an Israeli soldier. www.machsomwatch.org

Witnesses at military checkpoints, Israel

In 2001, three Israeli women decided to monitor the behaviour of soldiers at an Israeli military checkpoint, in the hope that this would help prevent violations of the rights of Palestinians crossing between the occupied West Bank and Israel. Their initiative grew into the organisation MACHSOM WATCH which now has 300 women volunteers monitoring several checkpoints every day.

When soldiers try to stop people crossing or to confiscate ID cards, monitors quietly but assertively intervene, if they think it could make a difference. They complain to higher-ranking army officials when they witness serious violations and encourage Palestinians to do the same. They publish detailed reports of abuses witnessed.

Source: New Tactics in Human Rights, www.newtactics.org



TACTIC PREVENT

Prevention tactics involve trying to prevent abuses from happening in specific situations. For communities and civil society organisations, this often involves having a visible, physical presence to deter abusers. This could involve accompanying people who are at risk of being attacked, in order to provide safety in numbers or accompanying people to police stations to ensure that officials know they are being watched and reported on.

For authorities it involves putting systems of monitoring and reporting in place to ensure that abuses or failures by officials come to light and are suitably dealt with.



Tactics for promoting human rights



EMERGENCY

Prevent
Stop and save
Call for help
and warn

CHANGE

Campaigning
Advocacy
Incentives
Defiance



BUILDING

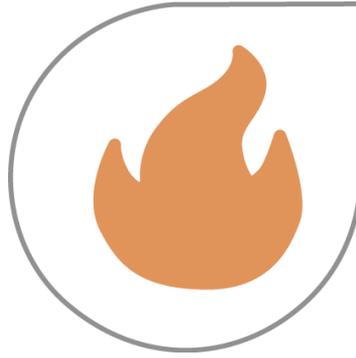
Awareness
Engagement
Skills
Networks



HEALING

Support
Document
Seek justice
Commemorate





EMERGENCY TACTICS

We use emergency tactics to tackle human rights abuses that are about to happen or are happening now to particular people, in particular places. Emergency tactics are used to prevent imminent abuses, to stop abuses that are in progress and save those affected, and to call for help or warn people of danger.

Emergencies are not always large scale – being subject to hate speech on the bus to work is an emergency for the person affected.

EXAMPLES OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF ‘EMERGENCIES’
Harassment, hate speech and hate crimes – for example online or face to face verbal attacks, incitement to violence, assaults, vandalism of property, attacks on places of worship, communal violence and arbitrary arrests.



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PHOTO EDDIE GERALD /ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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Sources: New Tactics in Human Rights, www.newtactics.org; MACHSOM WATCH, <https://machsomwatch.org>





A 'peace wall' dividing republican and loyalist areas, Northern Ireland.

PHOTO ANDREW PARSONS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Talking over the wall, Northern Ireland

More than 3500 people died in 'The Troubles' – 30 years of political violence between Protestant Unionists (who want Northern Ireland to remain in the UK) and Catholic Irish Republicans. These communities live separately, sometimes physically divided by 3-8m high 'peace walls' that aim to minimise violence.

During the Troubles (1968-1998), suspicions about what was happening across the wall could lead to violence. Interaction Belfast created a network of volunteers on both sides of the wall, giving them mobile phones to communicate. Volunteers called each other to warn of situations developing and to share information. They then spread accurate information, reducing suspicions and preventing violence, especially during sensitive events like political parades.

Source: New Tactics in Human rights, www.newtactics.org; Interaction Belfast, www.peacewall.org





TACTIC STOP AND SAVE

Stop and save tactics involve intervening directly to stop abuses that are in progress and taking people who are in danger to safety.

Challenging or distracting people who are engaging in hate speech or harassment is one way to stop abuses that are happening in public places and online. Other examples include creating physical barriers to stop abuses, for example forming human chains around vulnerable places of worship or abandoning vehicles in the road to slow down the progress of violent mobs, militias or the military. These tactics often involve risks.





PHOTO R.M. Modi / Alamy Stock Photo

Protecting interfaith couples, India

In India, the traditional caste system divides people into four castes with different levels of status, plus Dalits (outcastes). Inter-caste and interfaith marriages are severely frowned upon. The law states that interfaith marriages must be registered 30 days before the wedding, and families are notified of wedding plans. Many couples live in fear of reprisals from family members during this time. Some states of India have also introduced laws banning 'conversion by marriage', putting couples at risk of arrest.

'Right to love' is a campaign to protect interfaith and inter-caste couples. They provide couples with help in getting police protection and safe accommodation, legal help to get the marriage registered and counselling to deal with stress. It is run on a voluntary basis by two journalists.

Source: Newslick, www.newsclick.in





TACTIC CALL FOR HELP AND WARN

Often, we lack the power to prevent or stop a violation ourselves. We may need to call for help from people who have the influence necessary and to warn people who are in danger, so they can find safety.

We might ask for help from community leaders, including local and national faith leaders – for example to help calm tensions or violence in the community. If a public official is committing violations or failing to intervene to stop a violation, then calling for help might involve asking political leaders or more senior officials at the regional or national level to intervene. We can also use the media to call for help and create pressure on officials to intervene.





PHOTO MATYAS REHAK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Calling for help to avoid a riot, India

In 2007, Hindu nationalists tried to engineer a communal riot in the city of Panipat in Haryana state. They stealthily placed idols of Hindu gods inside a mosque in order to 'claim the mosque' as a Hindu place of worship where Hindu gods had 'emerged', convert it into a temple and incite a riot.

On finding the idols, the mosque leadership realised the danger and urgently contacted Bhagat Sigh Se Dosti, an organisation working to promote interfaith dialogue and peace in the city. Together they asked Muslim community members to remain calm and not protest, as this might result in a violent response. The interfaith organisation mobilised leaders from the Hindu community to remove the idols. The idols were respectfully removed and there was no rioting.

Source: Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism and Adv. Ram Mohan Roy





The White Rose Campaign, Myanmar.

PHOTO BHRN

Solidarity leads authorities to act, Myanmar

In 2019, an armed mob of over 100 Buddhist ultra-nationalists in Yangon threatened Muslims who were gathering at three officially sanctioned temporary prayer houses during Ramadan. Local Muslim leaders were forced to sign a statement agreeing not to hold prayer gatherings and, under pressure from the mob, the local authorities shuttered the prayer houses.

Activists and high-profile Buddhist monks responded immediately by visiting the affected Muslim communities, giving them white roses as a gesture of solidarity. The White Rose Campaign, primarily led by young Buddhist activists, gathered momentum through social media, spreading to other towns and cities. Meanwhile, leaders from Religions for Peace Myanmar approached the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, urging the re-opening of the prayer houses, which took place within 24 hours.

Source: Kyaw Win, Burma Human Rights Network, bhrn.org.uk





CHANGE TACTICS

We use change tactics to influence decision-makers. A decision-maker is a person who has the power to change rules, policies, and ways of working. Decision-makers can be found in government (including traditional leaders), in public institutions like schools, hospitals or the justice system and in faith communities and businesses.

Change tactics put pressure on decision-makers to solve human rights problems that they have influence over. These tactics highlight the strength of public concern about problems and propose solutions. They are often used to tackle long-term human rights violations that are built into the way society works, for example by changing laws, policies and ways of working.

There are four types of change tactics: campaigning, advocacy, incentives and defiance.



TACTIC CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning is about ordinary people taking mass actions to create pressure for change. It involves making public opposition to human rights abuses as visible as possible and highlighting public support for the solutions we propose. Getting media attention is an important part of campaign strategies. Social media can be a key tool to highlight public opinion and mobilise public involvement in campaigns.

Campaigning includes all kinds of protest: from petitions and letter writing, to street protests, to protest through singing or street art, to symbolic actions like wearing clothes of a particular colour or using particular hand gestures, to coordinated actions taken from the safety of the home – like switching the lights off or banging saucepans at a particular time of day.





Protest art on the streets of Delhi.

PHOTO SUDIPTA DAS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Artists protest citizenship laws, India

The Indian government has introduced a law requiring everyone to prove that they are citizens. Anyone who can't, risks losing their citizenship and being detained. Many poor people lack the necessary birth certificates. The law applies to everyone, but another new law grants citizenship to minorities that are vulnerable to persecution in neighbouring Muslim majority countries, such as Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. Taken together these laws mean poor Muslims risk statelessness and detention.

Artists across India have participated in widespread protests against the new laws, transforming public spaces by putting up posters, creating wall murals and a sculpture in the form of a giant iron mesh map of India with the protesters demands.

Source: Al Jazeera





TACTIC ADVOCACY

Advocacy is about persuasion and usually takes place quietly, through dialogue behind closed doors. It focuses on getting decision makers to support specific proposals for change or take specific actions.

Successful advocacy tends to build on relationships of trust that are built over time. The greater the legitimacy and influence of the 'persuader', the more likely success is.

Arguments that can help to persuade decision makers include:

- evidence of the negative effects of the problem and information about how the proposed solution has worked elsewhere
- highlighting risks to the decision-maker or their institution if problems are allowed to continue – for example loss of face
- highlighting political or reputational advantages to the decision maker of taking initiatives to support change
- highlighting the decision maker's worth as a moral or legal duty bearer, entrusted with protecting the welfare of society.





Parliament House, Kyrgyzstan.

PHOTO ROBERT WYATT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Religious leaders join together to influence Parliament, Kyrgyzstan

When changes to the law on religion were proposed in 2012, leaders from the six largest religious communities in Kyrgyzstan decided to react. Having previously received training on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the leaders knew the proposals violated several aspects of the right and risked creating tensions between religious groups. The six religious communities issued a joint letter to the State Commission on Religious Affairs and the Parliament, asking them to reject the proposed amendments. Parliamentarians considered the joint letter and voted against the amendments.

Source: Vladislav Hegay, Interfaith Council of Kyrgyzstan





Government sponsored thugs attacking the monastery.

PHOTO BPSOS

International advocacy for local communities, Vietnam

Engaging civil society at the international level can contribute to successful advocacy and campaigning for the rights of local faith communities. In Vietnam, local authorities have been trying to expropriate 107 hectares of pine forest belonging to the Thien An Abbey, a Catholic monastery, for the last four decades. The land-grabbing campaign has intensified in recent years.

In 2020, organised mobs hired by the local government surrounded the abbey, attacking monks and priests in a bid to seize the remaining 59 hectares of land. State TV also broadcast false, defamatory information about the monastery. In response, BPSOS – a Vietnamese diaspora organisation, led a campaign of international advocacy and media work which resulted in the mob dispersing and a strong show of international support.

Source: BPSOS, www.bpsos.org





PHOTO PACIFIC PRESS MEDIA PRODUCTION CORP. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Campaign for the right to burial, Sri Lanka

From April 2020, the Sri Lankan government required the cremation of all COVID victims despite the World Health Organisation saying burial poses no risk. Islam prohibits cremation. By March 2021 two thirds of COVID victims were from minorities. Many victims avoided seeking treatment, fearing diagnosis and cremation.

In response to the regulations, political parties, lawyers, Islamic organisations and civil society activists of all faiths petitioned against the bill. Regular demonstrations were held and eleven families took a case to the Supreme Court. The forced cremation of a baby led to broader public engagement, with people of all faiths tying white bands to the gates of the crematorium concerned.

Source: BBC news, Alarabiya.net





TACTIC INCENTIVES

Incentive tactics make it easier for individuals and organisations — for example schools, business owners or public officials — to choose to do the right thing by providing them with an incentive. Incentives can be financial or related to prestige and recognition.

For example, awards recognising the contribution of a teacher, school board, business or faith leader to stopping bullying or countering discrimination and hate, can encourage commitment to these goals.





PHOTO FRIEDRICH STARK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Incentives to end FGM, Sierra Leone

Although the practice is now illegal, an estimated 90% of women in Sierra Leone have experienced Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – a traditional cultural practice with roots more ancient than Christianity and Islam.

Grassroots campaigners are working with communities to inform them of the health dangers of FGM. The campaigners recognise and try to transform the roles of the local women who perform the practice. The goal is to provide incentives for these women to move away from the practice, both by finding alternative income sources and reinventing their roles as guardians of traditional culture through rites of passage that don't involve cutting.

Source: The Lancet





TACTIC DEFIANCE

Sometimes governments and religious or other powerholders stop people from exercising their human rights peacefully. Defiance involves openly exercising our human rights despite norms, informal or legal limitations or bans. Illegal protests are perhaps the most common example of this. Other examples of defiance are faith communities that continue to meet for worship despite illegitimate bans, interfaith couples who marry despite bans and the open expression of peaceful but banned views (for example atheist beliefs in some contexts). These tactics are often very dangerous.





Transgender women attending an HIV awareness event in Karachi.

PHOTO ASIANET-PAKISTAN / SHUTTERSTOCK

Safe spaces for transgender women, Pakistan

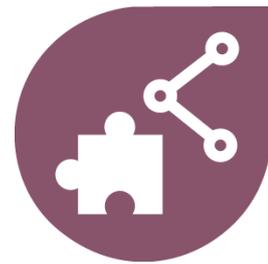
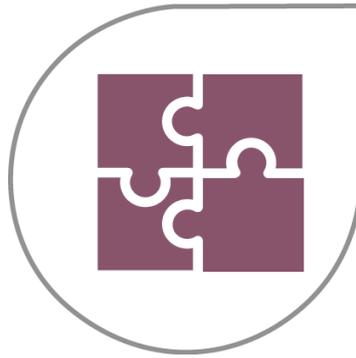
Transgender people in Pakistan are often rejected by their families and forced to live on begging, dancing or prostitution. Although there are no official limitations on transgender people attending places of worship, transgender people are often turned away.

In the outskirts of Islamabad, a transgender woman has defied norms by opening the country's first Madrasa for transgender people, offering a safe space to gain education and deepen their faith. Meanwhile a female pastor in Karachi opened the first church for transgender people in the grounds of her house, after church officials refused to allow her to use church premises.

“When we go to other churches, they ask us to cut our hair before entering.”

Sources: Aljazeera; gandhara.rflerl.org



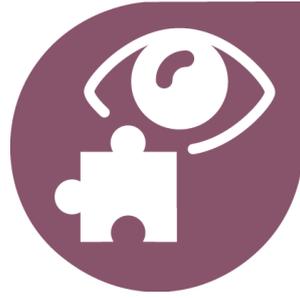


BUILDING TACTICS

Building tactics are about long-term work to build a ‘culture’ of human rights. That means working towards a society in which everyone:

- knows what human rights we all have
- sees respect for human rights as normal and right
- understands their role in respecting and protecting human rights – for example as a teacher, police officer, legislator, businessperson or faith leader
- knows HOW to stand up for their own and other people’s rights and what to do if rights are violated.

Creating this kind of ‘culture’ is a long-term process that involves building awareness, engagement, skills and networks, both among the general public and within all the public and private institutions of society. Building tactics create pre-conditions for change in the form of aware, engaged, empowered citizens and institutions.



TACTIC BUILD AWARENESS

Making everyone in a community aware of human rights is the first step towards building a community that cherishes those rights. Often people don't know what rights they have – either according to international standards or according to national legislation. This lack of awareness leads people to accept, tolerate or ignore abusive actions by the government, ruling class or other powers in the community.

This tactic involves building awareness of:

- human rights as a concept
- the international and national level protections people have
- the many community level human rights issues that affect ordinary people's lives.

Building awareness is one of the most common tactics used to promote human rights. The biggest challenge lies in helping people realise the importance of human rights for their own lives and how human rights can be a tool to help them overcome abuses.

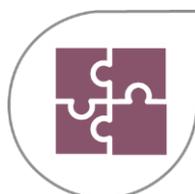




PHOTO GUISEPPE MASCI / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Awareness for peacebuilding, Tanzania

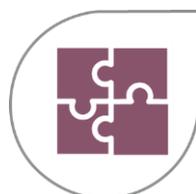
When Christians in the village of Kianga built a church, some members of the majority Muslim community built a make-shift mosque right in front of it in protest, even though there are several mosques in the village already. An ongoing feud developed between the churchgoers and the Muslims who gathered to protest, and mud-throwing developed into physical violence.

The Zanzibar Interfaith Centre organised an interfaith committee in the village that spent months working hard to end the conflict. They taught people about the right to freedom of religion or belief and explained how important it is. In the end, the communities agreed to peaceful co-existence.

“Interfaith committees are working hard to give education on peacebuilding among Muslims and Christians here in Zanzibar.”

Hidaya Dude, a member of the Zanzibar Interfaith Centre.

Source: Zanzibar Interfaith Centre





Dalia and Rueda praying.

PHOTO TAADUDIYA

Praying together, Lebanon

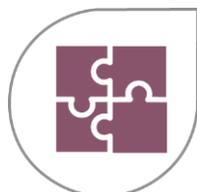
In 2015, Dalia, a young Shiite woman from Beirut, wanted to challenge sectarian rhetoric and divides between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. On Facebook, she asked if there was a Sunni woman who would like to pray with her both in a Shiite and a Sunni mosque. Rueda responded and the two attended prayers together, sharing photos of both visits on Facebook.

They received mixed responses but succeeded in creating awareness and drawing attention to the sectarian debate. Nine months later, Dalia was contacted by a Saudi man living in Egypt who had been inspired to copy her idea with a Coptic Christian friend.

"A person needs to take a step. Any change in society begins with one person."

Rueda

Source: Taadudiya, www.taadudiya.com





TACTIC BUILD ENGAGEMENT

This tactic is about helping people to move from simply being aware to becoming active. It involves expanding the base of people who are willing to speak up and act to promote human rights, using any of the tactics. This might mean creating ways for people to get involved in reacting to or reporting violations they see, connecting people up to campaigning activities or encouraging people to volunteer in community awareness raising programmes or programmes providing psychosocial and material support to victims.

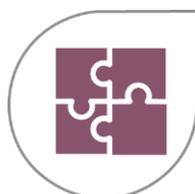




PHOTO PROSTOCK-STUDIO / SHUTTERSTOCK

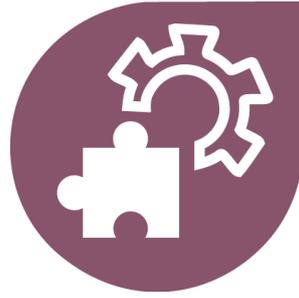
Activating people to show solidarity, Canada

In recent years there has been a global rise in attacks on religious sites. Following an attack on a mosque in Quebec, mosques in Toronto (another Canadian city) were surrounded by rings of peace formed by people from local synagogues, churches and temples to show solidarity. The idea was inspired by Muslim young people in Norway who surrounded a Jewish synagogue with a ring of peace, following an attack on a synagogue in neighbouring Denmark.

“To see there are people out there – Jews, Christians, people of other faiths or no particular faith, who really care about the Muslim community – it’s really reassuring.”
Ilyas Ally, Assistant Imam, Islamic Information and Dawah Centre, Toronto

Source: CBC News

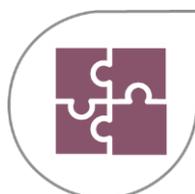




TACTIC BUILD SKILLS

Often, people of goodwill lack the skills or the confidence to promote human rights. This applies to ordinary people who need skills and confidence to engage in the promotion of rights in the community. But it also applies to public officials and employees, and to business, community and faith leaders, who have responsibility for the well-functioning of different aspects of community life, and for contexts in which people can be vulnerable to rights abuses.

Sometimes human rights abuses keep happening because community leaders and officials do things ‘the way they have always been done’ and don’t know how to do things differently – in ways that help protect rights. Helping people to gain skills and to find new, practical and realistic ways of working that better protect people from harm, is a very important tactic for change.





An indigenous woman participates in a traditional festival, Mexico.

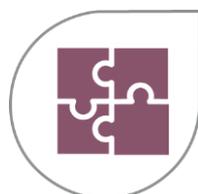
PHOTO ARTERRA PICTURE LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

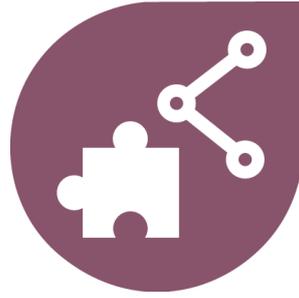
Learning skills to defend rights, Mexico

The Network of Community Human Rights Defenders trains indigenous community members nominated by poor rural communities to monitor and defend their human rights. They are trained in human rights and in practical skills, such as photography and computer use.

When violations occur, they collect testimonies, gather video and photo evidence, present complaints to the government and inform the press and human rights monitoring groups. They also seek the release of people unjustly detained and know how to file a request for precautionary measures when human rights violations are imminent. Their experience demonstrates that marginalised communities can get involved in defending their own rights.

Source: New Tactics in Human Rights, www.newtactics.org

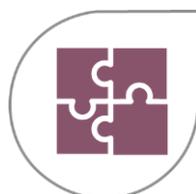




TACTIC BUILD NETWORKS

Research shows that change is most effectively achieved by networks of people and organisations who take coordinated, joint and complementary actions to achieve a common goal. Networks can be built between people and organisations within communities, but networks can also connect organisations at the local level to the national level, and the national level to the international level.

Building alliances across communities or between sectors – for example alliances with the business community or between faith communities – can create new types of influence. The broader the network, the wider the range of actions it can take and the greater its influence and legitimacy. Networks also help to break the isolation felt by individuals and organisations working for human rights, and help reduce the risks they face.





Members of the network briefing diplomats at the UN, Geneva.

PHOTO IRAQI WOMEN'S NETWORK

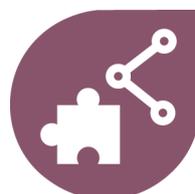
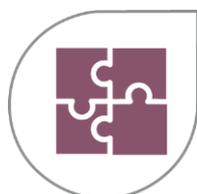
Networking for women's rights, Iraq

During the drafting of the new Iraqi constitution in 2004, the Iraqi Supreme Court proposed Decree 137 enshrining Sharia jurisprudence as the basis of personal civil status laws. The Iraqi Women's Network is a country-wide collective of over 100 civil society organisations. Arguing that the decree institutionalised discrimination and would legalise child marriage and honour killings, the network coordinated a huge campaign of protests and advocacy, which continued until the article was withdrawn. Today they raise women's awareness of their rights, encourage women to stand for local and national election and train women to run political campaigns.

"Working together gives us real strength. It gives us a louder voice in demanding our rights and helps us achieve real justice."

Amal Kabashi, Coordinator of the Iraqi Women's Network

Source: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, www.wilpf.org





Women at a water pump in a rural Chhattisgarh village.

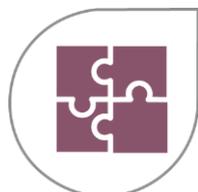
PHOTO JOERG BOETHLING / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Defending rights in Chhattisgarh, India

After taking part in a training on Freedom of Religion or Belief, around 25 people in Chhattisgarh state, India, formed a group that meets regularly and works to protect freedom of religion or belief for Christian communities in the state.

Religious minorities commonly experience social ostracisation in rural parts of India. In Chhattisgarh, one convert to Christianity faced difficulties when members of his village met to discuss denying him basic amenities such as food and water, as a way of forcing him to leave the village. On hearing about this, the group approached the local villagers and talked about the man's constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, pointing out that it was illegal to target individuals because of their faith. They also called the police as a safeguard, to inform them about developments. In the end, the villagers decided not to go ahead with their plans.

Source: Stefanus Alliance International, www.stefanusalliansen.no





HEALING TACTICS

The impact of human rights abuse lasts far longer than the immediate suffering caused by the abuse itself. Lives and communities can be shattered by trauma, by economic hardships resulting from violations, and by a collapse of trust. Healing tactics are about what we do to help individuals and communities find healing, justice and reconciliation after violations have happened.

These tactics involve providing practical support, such as safe accommodation or counselling; documenting violations to ensure they can't be covered up and to secure evidence for legal processes; efforts to help victims get justice and compensation; and the commemoration of abuses.

Although these tactics focus on things that have happened in the past, they play an important role in preventing abuses in the future. They strengthen damaged communities, help bring an end to the impunity that allows abusers to go unpunished, and create a space for the pain of victims and their families to be acknowledged and commemorated.



TACTIC MATERIAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

People who experience human rights violations can need immediate and more long-term support. The kind of support needed, varies depending on what has happened. For example, an individual might need someone to sit with them while they are in shock, access to medical care or a safe place to stay; people displaced by violence may need temporary housing and food; and people suffering from trauma need long-term psychological support.

Many of the resources needed to care for people can be found through informal networks of support within communities. Strengthening these informal support systems can contribute to building community resilience. At the same time, it is important to demand that the state fulfills its responsibilities to look after citizens whose rights have been violated.





PHOTO DENYS SMYRNOV / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Yoga and friendship for survivors of ISIL, Iraq

Yazidis are an ethno-religious community based in northern Iraq whose religion is influenced by pre-Islamic, Islamic, Christian and Zoroastrian traditions. Yazidi's have been persecuted for centuries, most recently by the Islamic State (ISIL).

In 2014, Azeezah was taken captive by ISIL militants and forced to convert to Islam. She escaped after 4 years but suffers from post-traumatic stress and finds life without her family, most of whom had fled to Germany, very difficult. In 2019, she joined a yoga class provided by WEPO, a local NGO. The classes are a safe space for displaced women to relax, discuss their feelings and make friends in their new environment.

"It helps us to escape from our reality. I made friends there."

Azeezah

Source: www.kurdistan24.net





TACTIC

DOCUMENT VIOLATIONS

Documenting violations involves creating a permanent, public record of human rights violations and their consequences. This could mean documenting the facts of what happened in a specific situation or documenting the negative effects of laws, policies and ways of working that discriminate, limit or violate rights more broadly.

Documentation is vital to ensure human rights violations can't be covered up and forms an important foundation for several other tactics. Stories and evidence gathered can be used:

- to seek justice and compensation for victims in legal processes
- to help victims commemorate what happened
- as a basis for advocacy work to persuade decision-makers to tackle the causes of violations
- and to raise public awareness of the problems and mobilise people to take part in campaigns.





PRVI volunteers discussing their work.

PHOTO NAHLA CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Documenting hate crimes, Bosnia Herzegovina

At the end of the Bosnian war in 1995, the religious landscape of the country changed dramatically. Some areas that had a Muslim majority became Christian majority and vice versa. Ethnic and religious tensions remain, and people who return to their original home areas are vulnerable even today.

PRVI is a group of volunteers who use reports from reliable local and national media to document violations of freedom of religion or belief. They categorise and compile incidents in an annual list which they send to the authorities and the media in Bosnia, and to international bodies. The volunteers believe that highlighting the incidents at home and abroad can create pressure for change.

“I think all our actions make a difference, no matter how small they seem.”

Emina, PRVI volunteer

Source: Emina Frljak, PRVI and the Nahla Center for Education and Research





Sign notifying Muslims of restrictions on their right to enter a village in Shan state, Myanmar.

PHOTO BHRN

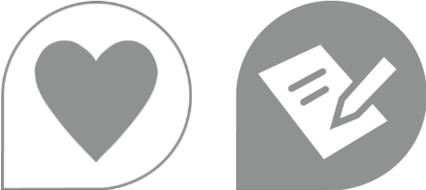
Documenting violations, Myanmar

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is a grassroots organisation, working to highlight the situation of Muslim and other religious minorities in Myanmar. In 2016, BHRN activists collected hundreds of testimonies from across the country. Findings included cases of Muslims being prevented from obtaining ID cards, authorities blocking the rebuilding of damaged mosques and a sharp rise in the number of villages that ban Muslims from entering. They also documented the situation facing around 120,000 ethnic Rohingya Muslims confined to internal displacement camps with restrictions on their movement, access to healthcare and education. Violence and persecution against the Rohingya community escalated in 2016 and 2017, resulting in almost 800,000 Rohingyas fleeing to neighbouring Bangladesh.

"We compiled and published the evidence so that we could effectively highlight the scale of the problem to the international community."

Kyaw Win, BHRN

Source: Burma Human Rights Network, www.bhrn.org.uk





TACTIC SEEK JUSTICE AND COMPENSATION

The state has a duty to ensure that people have access to justice if their rights have been violated. Compensation for victims and their families and the punishment or shaming of abusers cannot undo the wrong that was done, but they do fulfil an important function. Compensation can help victims get back on their feet, while punishments send a clear message that rights violations will not be tolerated, helping to combat the culture of impunity which is all too often present in society.

This tactic focuses in part on helping victims to use the legal system to access justice and compensation – for example by accompanying them in the process of reporting crimes or providing legal advice and assistance. But action against injustices can also take place outside legal structures. There are lots of creative ways to bring abuses to light and hold perpetrators accountable – for example using the media or social media.





A Cao Dai ceremony.

PHOTO All Canada Photos / Alamy Stock Photo

Legal aid for a victim of assault, Vietnam

In Vietnam, the government heavily controls religious activity, having created government loyal religious communities to which people are expected to adhere. People who exercise religion through independent religious communities can face harassment.

BPSOS, a Vietnamese diaspora organisation, engaged a lawyer to represent one independent Cao Dai follower who was physically attacked by members of the state-sanctioned Cao Dai group after she and fellow Cao Dai followers resisted that group's attempt to take over their temple. As a result, the woman received financial compensation through the legal system, and the state-sanctioned Cao Dai group ceased their take-over attempt. This was not only a win for the woman but also a promising sign for freedom of religion or belief in the country, given that the judiciary in Vietnam is highly politicized.

Source: BPSOS, www.bpsos.org





The constitutional court of the Russian Federation.

PHOTO OLEG BELOV / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Legal challenge to fines for worship, Russia

In Russia, law enforcement bodies have imposed administrative fines on religious communities who meet for worship in private homes, citing 'misuse of the land plot'.

In 2019, lawyers specialised in freedom of religion or belief, successfully defended a religious community who objected to these fines. The Constitutional Court delivered a unanimous decision that religious organisations have the right to conduct worship services and perform religious rites in residential premises without any hindrance. This ruling could have the potential to clarify Russia's legal framework on meetings for worship outside officially recognised religious buildings and sets a precedent of protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Source: Slavic Centre for Law and Justice, www.sclj.ru





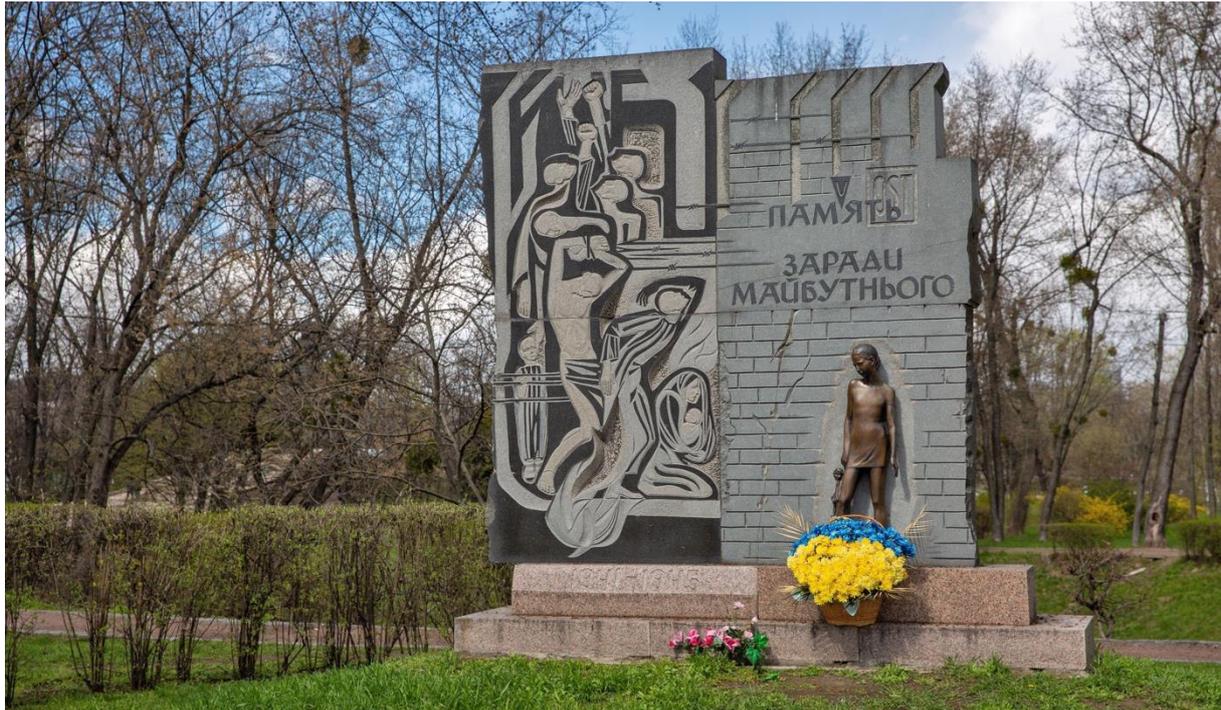
TACTIC COMMEMORATE

Sometimes human rights abuses are followed by a collective silence. Authorities may try to hush up abuses to protect influential perpetrators, or to save face; community leaders may think that it is better to talk about harmony than to speak openly about violations experienced; and victims of sexual violence may be silenced by a culture of shame.

Wounds that are not treated fester. Resilient, just and reconciled communities are only possible when we acknowledge injustices, give victims a voice and give perpetrators the chance to acknowledge their wrongs and commit to change. In situations of conflict, there are usually victims and perpetrators on all sides.

Commemoration can take lots of forms, for example annual commemoration events; public hearings in which those involved tell their stories; exhibitions of photographs, stories and records or street art and music.





Monument to the victims of the Nazi massacre in Babyn Yar.

PHOTO SERGIY PALAMARCHUK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Commemorating the holocaust, Ukraine

In 1941, on 29 and 30 September, 33,771 Jews were shot dead in the Babyn Yar ravine in Ukraine. The massacre was barely recognised in the Soviet era but has since been memorialised and is now commemorated each year.

Ukrainian Jewish Encounter is an NGO that works to produce a shared historical narrative – a truthful historical account of Ukrainian-Jewish relationships – and to address historic wounds, for example by restoring awareness about pre-war Jewish life in Ukraine. On the 75th anniversary of the massacre, UJE organised a week-long program of activities, including a youth conference, public symposiums and an opera to commemorate the massacre.

Source: Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, ukrainianjewishencounter.org

