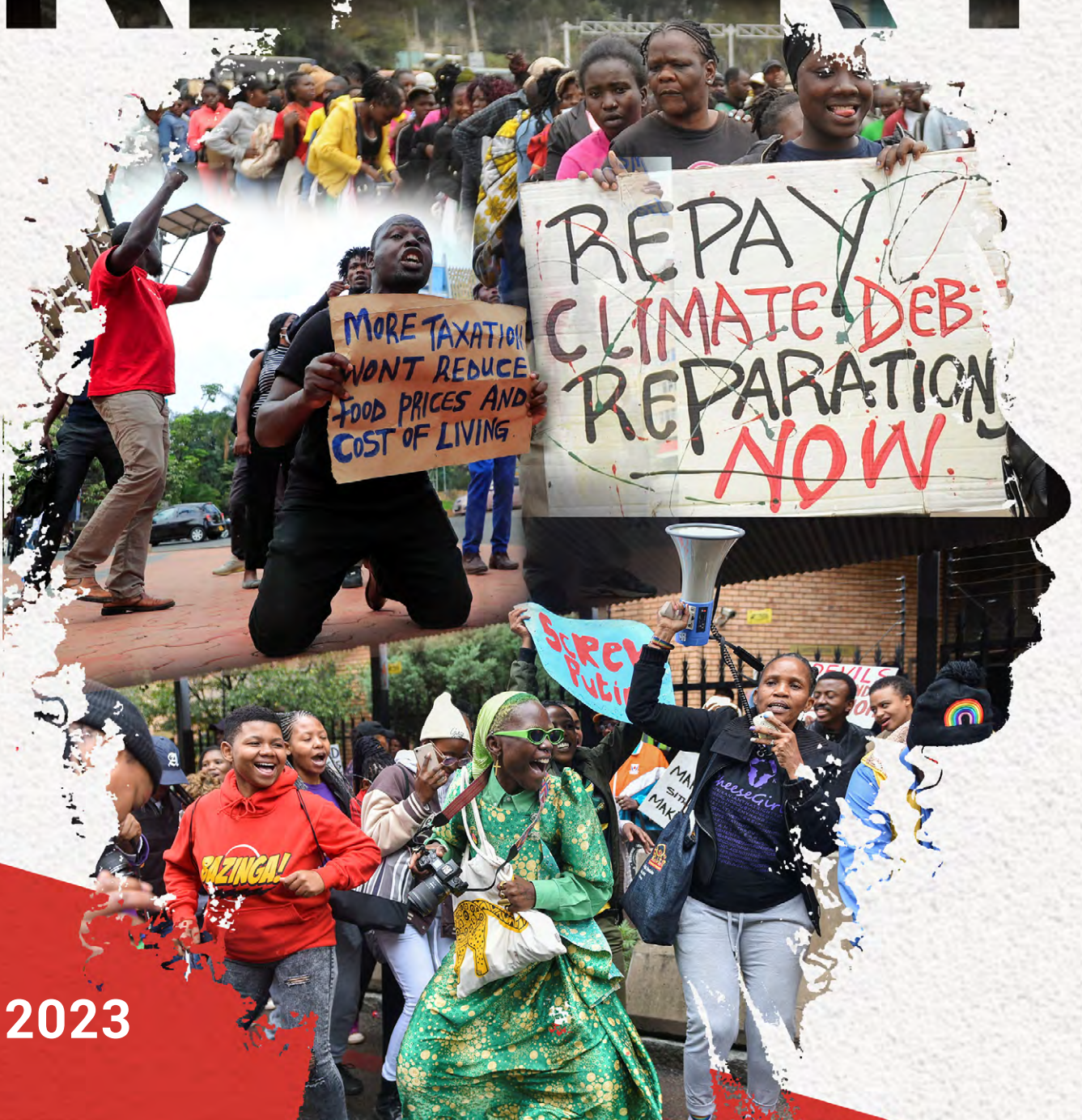


ARTICLE 19

ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa

ANNUAL REPORT



2023



ARTICLE 19 is an international think–do organisation that propels the freedom of expression movement locally and globally to ensure all people realise the power of their voices.

Together with our partners, we develop cutting-edge research and legal and policy analysis to drive change worldwide, lead work on the frontlines of expression through our nine regional hubs across the globe, and propel change by sparking innovation in the global freedom of expression movement. We do this by working on five key themes: promoting media independence, increasing access to information, protecting journalists, expanding civic space, and placing human rights at the heart of developing digital spaces.

✉ kenya@article19.org

🌐 www.article19.org

✂ [@article19eaf](https://twitter.com/article19eaf)

📘 [@article19easternaf](https://www.facebook.com/article19easternaf)

📷 [@article19eaf](https://www.instagram.com/article19eaf)

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ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa would appreciate receiving a copy of any materials in which information from this report is used. ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa bears the sole responsibility for the content of the document.

Front cover photos (clockwise from top)

Photo 1:

Activists call on lawmakers to reject the proposed finance bill at a protest outside Parliament in Nairobi, Kenya, 13 June 2023.

(Photo: Thomas Mukoya/Reuters)

Photo 2:

Protesters demonstrate against the use of fossil fuels in the region and demand that governments and industries transition to renewable energy at Africa’s inaugural climate summit in Nairobi, Kenya, 4 September 2023.

(Photo: John Muchucha/Reuters)

Photo 3:

Papa De aka DeLovie Kwagala, a queer Ugandan photographer and LGBTQ rights activist, takes part in a demonstration against Uganda’s proposed anti-gay law in Pretoria, South Africa, 31 March 2023.

(Photo: Alet Pretorius/Reuters)

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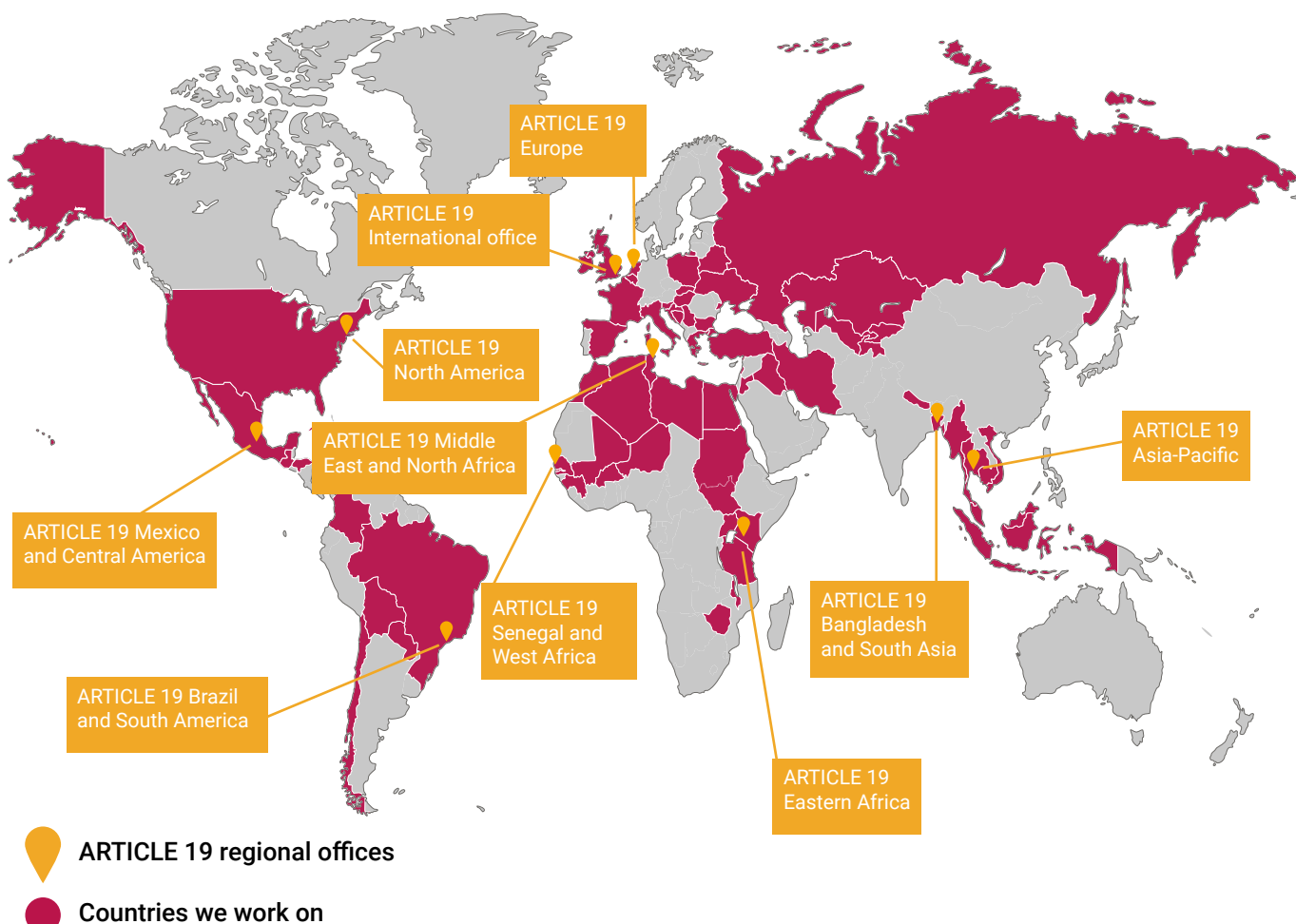
Design

SantoStudios.Design

Typesetting

Chris Solomons

Where we work



ARTICLE 19 Asia-Pacific:

asia@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Mexico and Central America:

comunicacion@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Bangladesh and South Asia:

bangladesh@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Middle East and North Africa:

mena@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Brazil and South America:

brasil@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 North America:

info@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa:

kenya@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Senegal and West Africa:

westafrica@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 Europe:

europe@article19.org

ARTICLE 19 International Office:

info@article19.org

Abbreviations

ACHPR

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

ATI

Access to Information (Act)

CSO

Civil society organisation

GDP

Gross domestic product

GxR

Global Expression Report

KMSWG

Kenya Media Sector Working Group

LGBTQI+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex

NGO

Non-governmental organisation

OGP

Open Government Partnership

PROTECT

Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency Enhancing Civic Transformation

UNESCO

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Strengthening free expression in the context of everyday struggles

Half of all people in Eastern Africa are living in a freedom of expression crisis.

This was the key regional finding in ARTICLE 19's *Global Expression Report 2023*. Democracy is backsliding – and, while Eastern Africa experienced real GDP growth of [over 5%](#) from 2020 to 2023, huge numbers of people are still struggling to access food, water, healthcare, and other basic necessities.

That's why, throughout 2023, ARTICLE 19 worked to strengthen free expression in the context of people's everyday struggles:

- PROTECT, our Kenyan campaign, went from strength to strength. The coalition made concrete improvements to people's lives in a diverse array of settings: from better staffing levels and drug availability in Mombasa County health services to more community radio stations adopting our Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy.
- Halfway through our **#FreeToProtest** campaign, we were invited to train new police officers in Mombasa County on protesters' rights and the Public Order Act. This was a crucial and sorely needed step forward, given the [increase in police brutality and arrests at protests in 2023](#).

- After five years of advocacy, the regulations that operationalise **Kenya's Access to Information Act** finally passed into law in February 2023, which will enable people to access the information they need to hold our leaders accountable.

As nearly 180 million of us vote across Eastern Africa in 2024, this is what we want our elected leaders to focus on:

1. **Enact** laws to protect freedom of expression;
2. **Protect** journalists and human rights defenders, particularly women and the LGBTQI+ community;
3. **Respect** the right to freedom of assembly and association.

We are deeply grateful to our partners and donors for supporting our vital work. But to reverse democratic backsliding and ensure everyone in Eastern Africa can realise the power of their voices, we need sustained investment.

[Invest in expression today](#) and help us build a free, open, and inclusive Eastern Africa.



Mugambi Kiai
Regional Director,
ARTICLE 19
Eastern Africa

“
To reverse democratic backsliding and ensure everyone in Eastern Africa can realise the power of their voices, we need sustained investment.”

Expression is under attack – but there is still cause for hope

Across Eastern Africa, the democratic reversals captured in ARTICLE 19's *Global Expression Report 2023* are having a devastating impact on people's right to free expression.

Throughout the year, we saw this manifest on numerous levels region-wide – but we were ready to rise to the challenge:

- **Press freedom** deteriorated, from internet shutdowns to the surveillance, harassment, and prosecution of journalists. In response, ARTICLE 19 successfully lobbied for a new resolution at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and for more community radio stations to adopt our Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy.
- **LGBTQI+ people** are under attack. Uganda passed one of the most draconian anti-LGBTQI+ laws in the world in 2023; Kenya could follow suit; and the situation is no better in Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Tanzania. In 2023, we launched Our Data, Our Voices to help LGBTQI+ journalists, creatives, bloggers, and human rights defenders protect their data, reducing the risks they face.

- **Digital platforms** are allowing hate speech, incitement, and disinformation to proliferate, exacerbating polarisation and erecting serious obstacles between the people and accurate information. In 2023, as part of our work on Social Media 4 Peace, ARTICLE 19 launched a coalition in Kenya to bridge these gaps between global tech giants and local communities.

- **Civic space** is under threat, and people's capacity for civic engagement is greatly reduced due to economic crises, the soaring cost of living, and unemployment. In response, via our Free Expression Platform, ARTICLE 19 supported nearly 100 student leaders and human rights defenders to build resilient social movements.

Despite the challenges, in Kenya alone, [85%](#) of people say that human rights reflect values that they believe in, and [8 out of 10](#) still believe in democracy. Freedom of expression is the lifeblood of democracy. In other words, even – or especially – in times of crisis, ARTICLE 19's mandate remains critical.



Patricia Munabi
Chair of the Board

“
Even – or especially – in times of crisis, ARTICLE 19's mandate remains critical.”



Internally, too, ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa is rising to the challenge. Our reinvigorated Board, strengthened by new members with an array of expertise who are representative of the region, is well positioned to lead and oversee the organisation – as is our young, diverse, passionate team under the leadership of the Regional Director.

In 2024, we will launch a new strategy setting out how, over the next three crucial years, ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa will become a stronger advocate of free expression.

Until then, I hope you find the stories of impact in this report as inspiring as I did – and thank you, as ever, for your support.

Protest in support of Uganda's LGBTQI+ community, London, April 2023. (Photo: Edrisa Kiyemba/Peter Tatchell Foundation)

Knowledge is power: How free were we in 2023?

The [Global Expression Report \(GxR\)](#) is ARTICLE 19's data-driven look at the right to freedom of expression and information across the world. The report uses a unique metric to examine freedom of expression trends at global, regional, and national levels. We measure the freedom of everyone – not just journalists or activists – to express, communicate, and participate.

Our data tracks freedom of expression across 161 countries using 25 indicators to create an Expression Score between 0 and 100 for each

country. This score places each country in an expression category: Open, Less Restricted, Restricted, Highly Restricted, or Crisis.

In Eastern Africa in 2023:

- **Half of all people lived in a freedom of expression crisis.**
- Kenya was the only country in the region classified as **Less Restricted**.
- Not a single country in the region was classified as **Open** (see [Table 1](#)).

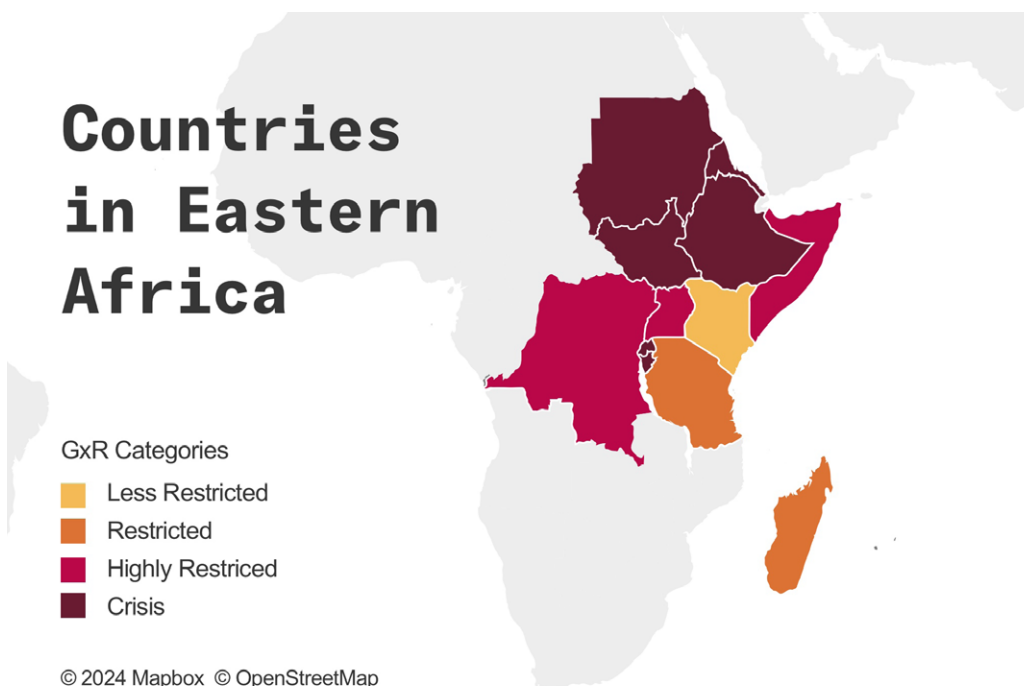


Figure 1: Global Expression Report classifications for countries in Eastern Africa in 2023.

Country	Global Expression Score 2023 (1–100)*	Expression Category 2023
Kenya	67	Less Restricted
Tanzania	52	Restricted
Madagascar	52	Restricted
Somalia	35	Highly Restricted
Democratic Republic of the Congo	27	Highly Restricted
Uganda	23	Highly Restricted
Ethiopia	14	Crisis
Rwanda	10	Crisis
Burundi	10	Crisis
Sudan	10	Crisis
South Sudan	5	Crisis
Eritrea	1	Crisis

Table 1. Global Expression Scores and categories for countries in Eastern Africa, 2023.

* Each country scores between 0 and 100, with 1 being the most open and 100 being the most restricted. The data does not cover Comoros, Djibouti, or Seychelles.

Crisis 0-19	Highly Restricted 20-39	Restricted 40-59	Less restricted 60-79	Open 80-100
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What’s more, we’re not seeing much movement. Freedom of expression is stagnant across the region. Apart from Ethiopia, which fell from Highly Restricted to Crisis, no countries experienced a change in their expression category compared to 2022.

Compared to 2022, only **a quarter** of countries in the region improved their position in our global rankings. **Two-thirds** took a tumble down the league table. Kenya – the highest-ranked country in the region, coming in at 61st place (out of 161 countries) – is trading water (see [Table 2](#)).

Country	Global ranking 2023 (out of 161 countries worldwide)*	Change in global ranking since 2022
Kenya	61	◀▶ no change
Tanzania	84	▲ 9
Madagascar	91	▼ 10
Somalia	107	▲ 9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	116	▼ 4
Ethiopia	126	▼ 9
Uganda	126	▼ 8
Rwanda	130	▼ 1
Burundi	133	▼ 2
Sudan	134	▼ 10
South Sudan	145	▲ 2
Eritrea	160	▼ 4

* Each country scores between 0 and 100, with 1 being the most open and 100 being the most restricted. The data does not cover Comoros, Djibouti, or Seychelles.

Table 2. Global rankings for countries in Eastern Africa, 2023.

But it's not just Eastern Africa where the picture is stark. **Globally, more than half of us are now living through a freedom of expression crisis.** At no point in the last 20 years have so many people been denied the benefits of open societies.



Photo: Red Confidential/Shutterstock

How long will we let our leaders continue to ignore the data – and us?



Human rights defenders at a movement-building event in Siaya County, Kenya, February 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

ARTICLE 19 has been warning of a deepening digital divide, greater attacks on journalists, and the decline of information integrity since 2017. And we're not the only ones. From [V-Dem](#) to [Freedom House](#), civil society initiatives to measure trends in our rights and civil liberties have come to the same conclusion: **democracy is backsliding**.

In researching our annual *Global Expression Reports* over the past seven years, we've witnessed leaders across the globe taking increasing control over what information we are fed and what we can see, say, or share with each other. The evidence has been there all along – and as we can see, these alarming trends are now crystallising.

So far, 2024 has been a year in which global leaders continue to place profit

over people, from delaying decisive action on the climate crisis to failing to stop wars, leading to a profound and tragic loss of precious human lives.

But 2024 has also been dubbed the Super Election Year. Nearly a quarter of the world's population is going to the polls, including **nearly 180 million people in five countries across Eastern Africa**.

This means that 2024 can become the year for our voices, our choices, and our power. When we come together, we can reclaim democracy from those who seek to crush it.

Our collective future depends on our freedom to express our views, debate freely, and access the information we need to hold our leaders accountable.

Use the *Global Expression Report* to track progress, call out backsliding, and celebrate success.

Most of all, use it for change.

[Explore the data](#)

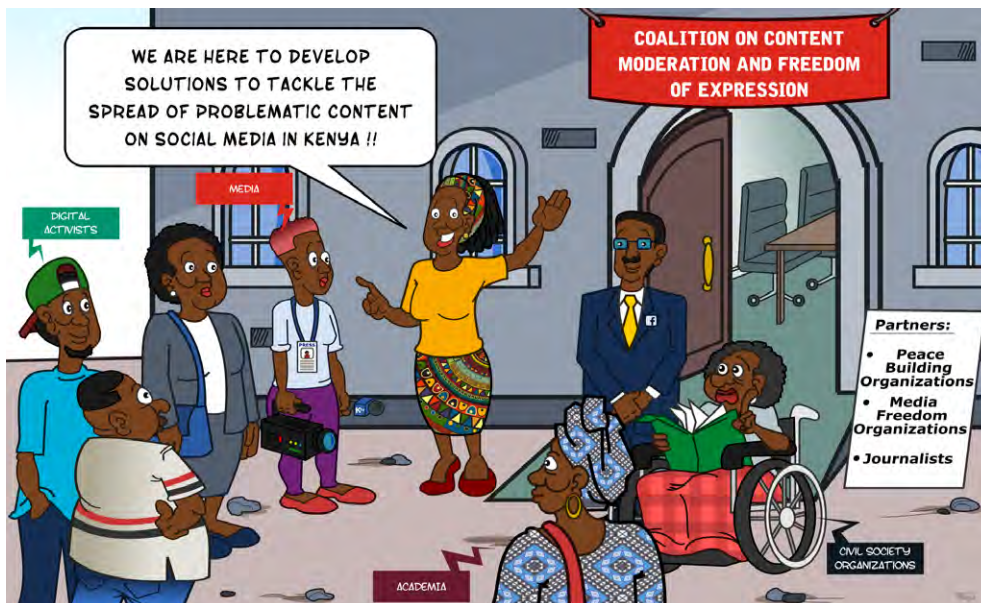
NOT SURE WHAT THE A19 D-BLUE IS, SO I HAVE MADE IT A BLUE – NEEDS CHECKING/CHANGING

SECTION

I

Defining a new digital era for all

Social Media 4 Peace: Amplifying local voices to global tech giants



Infographic by Social Media 4 Peace.

“Bringing together all these brains in one room makes for a stronger platform for us to speak in one new unified voice. Then the tech organisations can actually listen to us.”

Virginia Gitome
Code for Africa
(coalition member)



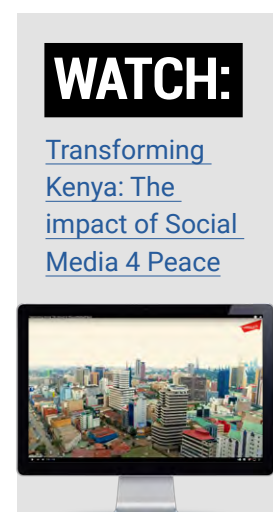
As part of [Social Media 4 Peace](#), a UNESCO project funded by the EU, ARTICLE 19 [launched a coalition](#) in Kenya in March 2023 to address the challenges global tech giants pose to local communities.

The creation of this coalition follows [research](#) ARTICLE 19 conducted in 2022, which found that social media companies don't listen to local

communities in Kenya and fail to consider context – cultural, social, political – when moderating users' content. This can have a dramatic impact, online and offline, including increasing polarisation and the risk of violence.

We set up the coalition to bridge this gap between local communities and social media companies. Its members come from a diverse range of backgrounds: from national regulators to media associations, tech companies, fact-checkers, peace-building organisations, NGOs, and academia.

By harnessing the power of collective voice, collective participation, and collective action, our aim is to contribute to sustainable peace and democracy in Kenya.



Strengthening data protection for a healthier data economy



WATCH: [Our Data, Our Voice](#)

In Kenya, many journalists, creatives, bloggers, and human rights defenders are not well informed about how to protect their data, exposing them to undue risks in their personal and professional lives. This is especially true for marginalised groups, such as women, youth, and LGBTQI+ people.

That's why, in 2023, ARTICLE 19 launched **Our Data, Our Voice**: a campaign to ensure these groups understand their rights and obligations under data protection law, and to build trust in the data economy.

In partnership with the Association of Media Women in Kenya, Bloggers

Association of Kenya, Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya, Kenya Correspondents Association, Kenya Union of Journalists, and Media Council of Kenya, we are:

- **Training journalists and media workers** on how to protect interviewees' data and privacy, the obligations of data controllers and processors, and journalistic exemptions under the Data Protection Act 2019; and
- **Creating and distributing audiovisual content** – including videos, illustrations, pamphlets, and infographics – to raise awareness of data protection and privacy.

Improving female politicians' digital literacy in Tanzania

In February 2023, with our partners Omuka Hub, we delivered training to enhance the digital rights literacy of female councillors in Bukoba, Tanzania. The training included coverage of online safety, media engagement, and access to information.

As a result, these female leaders are now better equipped to use social media to showcase their work, engage with their communities, and identify opportunities to serve women.



Female leaders at our digital rights training in Bukoba, Tanzania. (Photo: Omuka Hub)

SECTION



Safer communities, stronger voices

Halfway through our campaign, are we #FreeToProtest?



Protesters demonstrate against the Finance Bill 2024.
(Photo: Mathare Justice Center)

Across time, history, and geography, protest movements have been central to change. When people unite to demand justice, the power of our voices can change the hearts and minds of millions.

Yet instead of listening to our voices, many governments try to silence people, attacking those who march and preventing us from coming together.

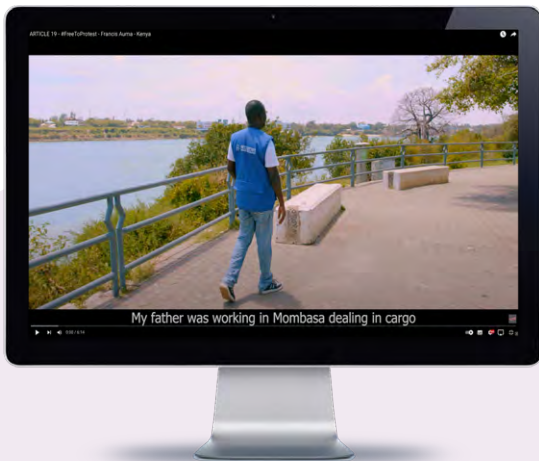
- Weak laws.
- Stigmatising media coverage.
- Police brutality.

These trends affect everyone who protests, but especially those who are ignored or silenced, like women, LGBTQI+ people, and racial, ethnic and religious minorities.

That's why ARTICLE 19 is [campaigning](#) to ensure that all people, especially those who face discrimination, feel empowered to use their right to protest.

“
I don't fear authorities any more.
I can question them.”

Francis Auma
Human rights defender,
Mombasa, Kenya



2023 marked the halfway point in our four-year #FreeToProtest campaign.

Throughout the year, ARTICLE 19 Kenya and Eastern Africa worked with our partners to advocate for amendments to two laws: the Public Order Act and the Penal Code. Both these laws restrict people's right to protest and disproportionately affect marginalised groups.

We also called out incidents of police brutality that took place at protests between March and July 2023, including drawing them to the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

WATCH: [Francis's story](#)

As a result of our advocacy:

- **The Special Rapporteur visited Kenya in July 2023**, when we took part in consultations through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- **We were invited to train new police officers in Mombasa County on protesters' rights and the Public Order Act.** This was a crucial step forward – and one sorely needed, given the [increase in police brutality and arrests of protesters in 2023](#), in which at least 10 people were killed and over 200 arrested.

We will lobby parliamentarians further throughout 2024 to make sure that courageous demonstrators remain safe across Kenya.



Members of Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) with Martin Kivuva, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Mombasa, at a protest photo exhibition that ARTICLE 19 supported as part of the #FreeToProtest campaign. Holy Ghost Cathedral, Mombasa, 22 February 2023. (Photo: MUHURI)

Find out how you can help keep demonstrators safe across Kenya.

[+](#) **Find out how**

From ripples to waves: PROTECT's impact in 2023



We all want a world where we can express ourselves freely, participate in society safely, and access the information we need to make decisions about our lives.

In Kenya, the Constitution guarantees these rights to all citizens. But in practice, a complex set of challenges has prevented us from fully enjoying our rights.

Complex challenges require holistic solutions. That is why the PROTECT (Protecting Rights, Openness and

Transparency Enhancing Civic Transformation) coalition – a diverse group of activists, journalists, NGOs, lawyers, thinkers, dreamers, and doers¹ – came together to build a free, open, and inclusive Kenya.

In 2023, PROTECT went from strength to strength, making concrete improvements in a diverse array of settings: from local health clinics to community radio stations.

“
I just want to thank ARTICLE 19 and the PROTECT project because it has enabled us to be game-changers in this industry.”

Grace Wafubwa
Radio journalist, KBC, Kisumu

¹ The PROTECT consortium comprises ARTICLE 19, Hivo, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, and Internews. We collaborate with local CSOs and state partners in Kisumu, Mombasa, and Nairobi to achieve our common goals.

Kisumu County adopts our Public Participation Policy

While Kisumu County has had a Public Participation Act since 2015, there was no policy in place to implement the Act. Meaningful public consultation on planning processes, the county budget, and local service provision was sorely lacking.

That's why PROTECT [brought together](#) civil society and county government officials to co-create, draft, and validate a county-wide public participation policy.

In late 2023, Kisumu County Assembly adopted our Public Participation Policy, making it an official county policy.

Patient feedback app transforms health services in Mombasa County

As part of PROTECT, the Mombasa-based CSO Local Empowerment for Good Governance (LENGGO) developed a new app called TEMA. TEMA collates patients' feedback on health services – from waiting times to cleanliness to drug availability – and uses the data to improve services in Mombasa County.

Feedback gathered via the app has already prompted improvements in staffing levels, drug availability, and other key aspects of healthcare delivery.

TEMA was officially launched in October 2023. At the launch event, Dr Lucy of Coast General Teaching and Referral Hospital, Mombasa, [lauded](#) the app for its transformative impact. She emphasised how it empowers healthcare providers by granting them immediate access to patient feedback, concerns, and opinions, enabling them to address issues promptly and efficiently.

WATCH:

[Using data to inform service delivery in health centres](#)



Two more community radio stations adopt our Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy

“

The major threat we have is sexual harassment. Politicians are the worst culprits. He [a prominent politician] literally told me hands down: ‘I know your boss. I’ll tell your boss you have refused to come with me.’

I was fortunate to participate in PROTECT. It’s been magnificent. I have never heard of a space where female journalists are exclusively selected to talk about our issues, to get that connection, to get help ... This has been a wake-up call.

Laura Otieno

Journalist, Citizen TV, Kisumu

PROTECT has [spearheaded](#) a holistic, multisectoral, sustainable approach to tackling sexual harassment of journalists in Kenya.

As part of this work, we developed a model Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy for media houses, which two community radio stations adopted in 2023.

[Evidence](#) shows that such policies are essential to increase victims’ confidence in reporting harassment, improve managers’ responses to it, and enhance women’s safety at work.

'A house of hope': Women journalists and human rights defenders unite



Women human rights defenders, journalists, and police officers at an International Women's Day event hosted by ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa and MUHURI, Mombasa, 8 March 2023. (Photo: MUHURI)

Gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination are pervasive human rights issues in Kenya, particularly in the media sector. This is why we have worked with our PROTECT partners to create networks that bring together women journalists and human rights defenders in Kisumu and Mombasa.

In 2023, the networks partnered with their county governments to procure

safe spaces in which to provide women with psychosocial support.

They also welcomed more LGBTQI+ members, who bring unique perspectives and experiences to this work, and whose inclusion has improved attitudes towards sexual minorities among members.

“We call it [the network] a house. It is a house of sharing, it is a house of smiling, it is a house of giving hope. In our house, it is a free space for everyone.”

WATCH:

[‘A house of hope’: Women journalists and human rights defenders unite](#)



Topister Juma

Field Officer, MUHURI
(PROTECT partner)

Free Expression Platform: Building resilient social movements

Back in 2022, ARTICLE 19 launched the Free Expression Platform to enhance the resilience of movements and activists across Kenya. As a result, the activists we worked with in Isiolo, Nakuru, and Siaya counties resolved to form a network to advocate for their own needs and resist rising authoritarianism.

We extended our movement-building efforts in summer 2023, including:

- **Hosting a Day of Expression in Nairobi county**, where, with the Sarakasi Trust, we supported artists to express themselves, showcase their creativity, and discuss how the power of art can spark social change;



Day of Expression in Nairobi County, hosted by ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa and the Sarakasi Trust, 1 August 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

- **Supporting 45 student leaders in Kisumu and Nakuru** to revitalise student activism, resist civic space restrictions, and document rights violations (with Tribeless Youth, Community Initiative Action Group Kenya, and WITNESS Africa); and



Student leaders at an activist event held as part of the Free Expression Platform, Kenya, July 2023. (Photo: Tribeless Youth)

- **Training 50 human rights defenders in Isiolo and Siaya** on how to build sustainable movements and stay safe.

Journalists covering protests released from detention following sector-wide solidarity



Activists call on lawmakers to reject the proposed finance bill at a protest outside Parliament in Nairobi, Kenya, 13 June 2023.

(Photo: Thomas Mukoya/Reuters)

Protests broke out across Kenya in March 2023, called by the opposition Azimio la Umoja One Kenya Coalition Party in response to the government's failure to address grievances such as the cost of living crisis. In just three days (30 March–1 April), there were 21 cases of journalists being arbitrarily arrested, harassed, threatened, and attacked.

In response, ARTICLE 19 immediately convened the Kenya Media Sector Working Group (KMSWG), which condemned the attacks and called for all perpetrators – including senior government officials, the National

Police Service, and the Director of Public Prosecutions – to be held accountable.

Following pressure from ARTICLE 19 and other CSOs, President Ruto denied any plot to shut down the internet and media ahead of the protests. He assured journalists that any officers who had violated their rights would be held to account.

Sadly, we are yet to see any evidence of this. But ARTICLE 19 and the KMSWG will continue to defend journalists' right to do their important work free from the fear or reality of violence.

SECTION



Information is power

Access to Information law moves from policy to practice

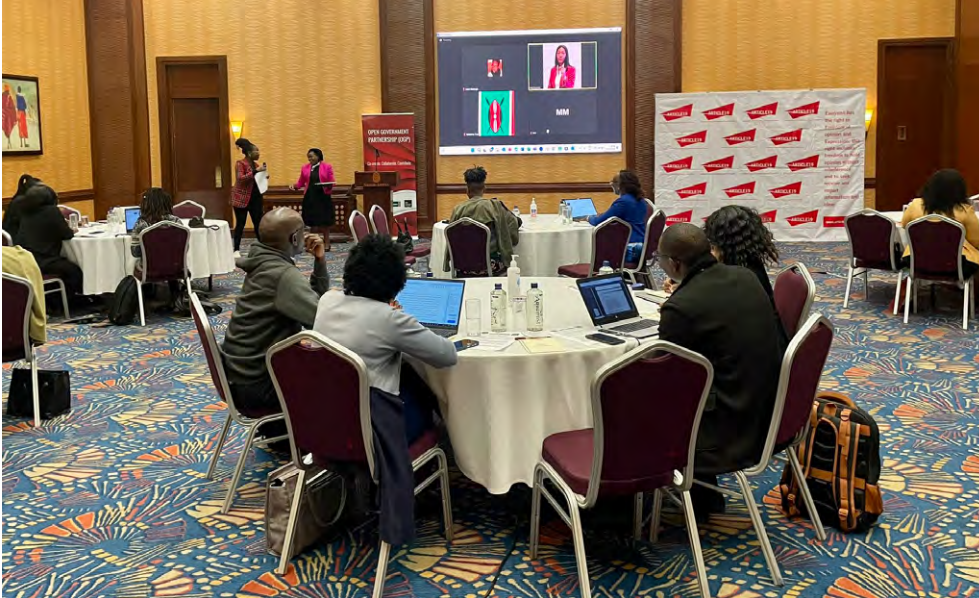


ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa's Sarah Wesonga making the opening remarks at the Committee on Development of the Access To Information Policy For Kenya, May 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

In Kenya, the regulations that operationalise the Access to Information (ATI) Act became law in February 2023, following five years of advocacy on the part of ARTICLE 19 Kenya and Eastern Africa.

We were appointed to the Multi-Sectoral Committee on the Development of the National ATI Policy. On this committee we will advise policymakers on information disclosures across government and contribute to strengthening implementation of the ATI law.

Strengthening open government in Kenya



Participants from various sections of Kenya's civil society attended the multi-stakeholder forum on Access to Information hosted by ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa and Mzalendo, in collaboration with the Commission on Administrative Justice, 7 August 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

The [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP) seeks to transform government by promoting transparency, ending corruption, and involving civil society in decision-making. In 2023, ARTICLE 19 was delighted to be re-elected to the OGP Global Steering Committee.

With our partners, we also launched the Kenya OGP Parliamentary Caucus, through which Senate and National Assembly members will

provide leadership on government transparency. In a significant show of commitment, the Prime Cabinet Secretary mandated all state departments, ministries, agencies, and county governments to support and resource Kenya's OGP commitments.

We are optimistic that these measures will help advance Kenya's position as a global leader in open government initiatives.

Find out more

Sarah Wesonga, Program Officer for Transparency and Access to Information at ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa, tells the blog 'Faces of Open Government' about our work with the OGP.



[Read the blog](#)

Supporting the next generation of human rights advocates



The launch event of the inaugural edition of The Academic Almanac, August 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

In March 2023, we were proud to support the All Kenyan Moot Court Competition: an annual competition between all of Kenya's law schools, hosted by the Kenyatta University School of Law.

We also supported the development and launch of the inaugural edition of the competition's e-journal, [The Academic Almanac](#), which showcases

exceptional papers by competition winners in the research category.

This collaborative effort aims to bring together academia and practice. By providing opportunities for engagement and skills development, it equips the next generation of human rights advocates with tools and resources needed to champion justice and accountability in Kenya.

African Commission adopts three resolutions following ARTICLE 19 advocacy



Topsy-Sonoo, ACHPR's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Information in Africa, presents her activity report at to the commission in October 2023. (Photo: ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa)

At the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in November 2023, we advocated urgent action to protect freedom of expression in Eastern Africa, including by giving oral statements and organising side events to discuss the state of civic space, freedom of assembly, and the use of crowd-control weapons in Kenya and Uganda.

In particular, we called for action to protect female journalists, to address unregulated mass surveillance, to reverse the [trend of shrinking civic space](#), and to tackle the [use of excessive force](#) during protests.

Following our advocacy, the ACHPR adopted three resolutions:

Resolution on the need to protect civic space, freedom of association and assembly in Africa: Addressing harassment, intimidation, and attacks on human rights defenders and journalists, and calling for thorough investigations and accountability for perpetrators.

Resolution on the need to undertake a study to assess the level of compliance of national legislations with the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa: Aiming to reduce threats to democratic space, promote accountability, and ensure these fundamental freedoms are protected. The results of this study, due around November 2024, will be crucial for future advocacy.

Resolution on the deployment of mass and unlawful targeted communication surveillance and its impact on human rights in Africa: Addressing concerns related to privacy, communication surveillance, and the protection of personal data and calling on states to ensure that any restrictions on fundamental freedoms are necessary, proportionate, and in adherence with international human rights law and standards.

These resolutions mark significant progress in addressing human rights challenges in Eastern Africa.

Our partners and donors

National partners

Kenya

- Access Now
- Association of Freelance Journalists
- Association of Media Women in Kenya
- Bloggers Association of Kenya
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Commission on Administrative Justice
- Communications Authority of Kenya
- Community Initiative Action Group Kenya
- Creative Economy Working Group
- Defend Defenders
- East Africa Internet Governance Forum
- Facebook
- Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya
- GROOTS Kenya
- Human Rights Defenders
- Institute for Social Accountability
- Institute of Economic Affairs
- International Commission of Jurists, Kenya Section
- Katiba Institute
- Kenya Correspondents Association
- Kenya Human Rights Commission
- Kenya ICT Action Network
- Kenya Internet Governance Forum
- Kenya Media Sector Working Group
- Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
- Kenya Private Sector Alliance
- Kenya Union of Journalists
- LakeHub iHub
- Lawyers Hub
- Local Development Research Institute
- Media Council of Kenya
- Ministry of ICT
- Mozilla Foundation
- Mugambi Laibuta (individual)
- Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI)
- Mzalendo
- Namati
- National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management
- Network of African National Human Rights Institutions
- Open Contracting Partnership
- Police Oversight Authority
- Reporting on Good Governance (RoGG) Kenya
- Sarakasi Trust
- Transparency International Kenya
- Usalama Reforms Forum
- Women's Empowerment Link

South Sudan

- #DefyHateNow
- South Sudan School of Internet Governance

Tanzania

- East African Court
- East African Law Society
- Journalists Workers Union of Tanzania
- Omuka Hub
- Pan African Lawyers Union
- Paradigm Initiative

Uganda

- Africa Freedom of Information Centre
- Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa
- Unwanted Witness

Regional partners

- Africa Women Journalism Project
- Congress of African Journalists
- WITNESS Africa

International partners

- Free Press Unlimited
- UNESCO

Memberships and coalitions

- Africa Internet Rights Alliance Coalition
- African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms Coalition
- African Platform on Access to Information
- Association for the Implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption
- CIVICUS
- Civil Society Parliamentary Engagement Network
- Civil Society Reference Group
- Crime Si Poa
- Defenders Coalition
- Free to Protest Coalition (with Constitution and Reform Education Consortium, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Open Government Partnership Kenya)
- Kenya College of Accountancy
- Kenya Human Rights Commission
- Pan-African Parliament Civil Society Forum
- Social Justice Centres Working Group
- Strong in Diversity – Bold on Inclusion consortium (with African Men for Sexual Health and Rights, Coalition of African Lesbians, Hivos East Africa, Kaleidoscope Trust, University of London, University of Pretoria)
- Sustainable Development Goals Kenya Forum
- Tribeless Youth

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