

THE  
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# Tech Tools for Human Rights

A scoping study on the use of tech tools for human rights documentation

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# Background

# 5 uses of tech tools



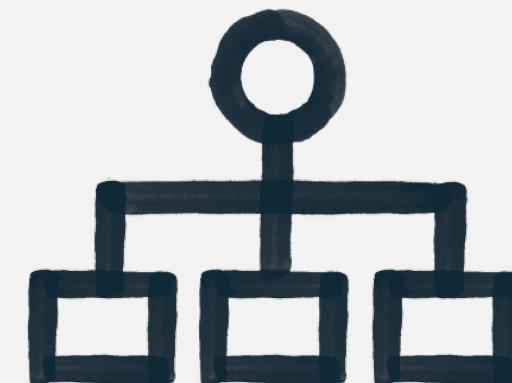
# Identifying new incidents

- using digital tools and digital data to discover, verify or corroborate violations



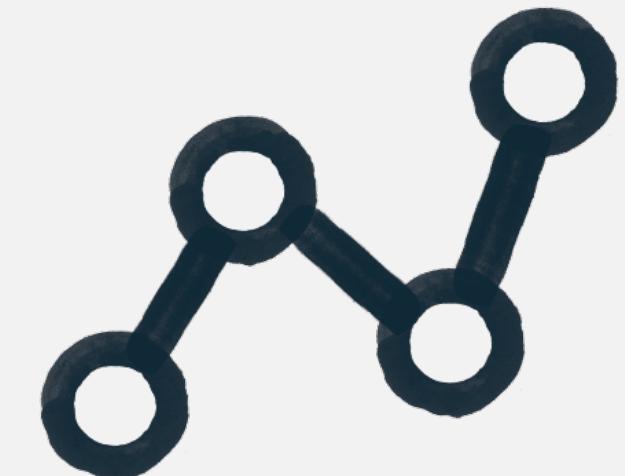
# Information management

- to catalogue, store, and manage information about incidents and events related to human rights cases, and share it with others working on similar issues



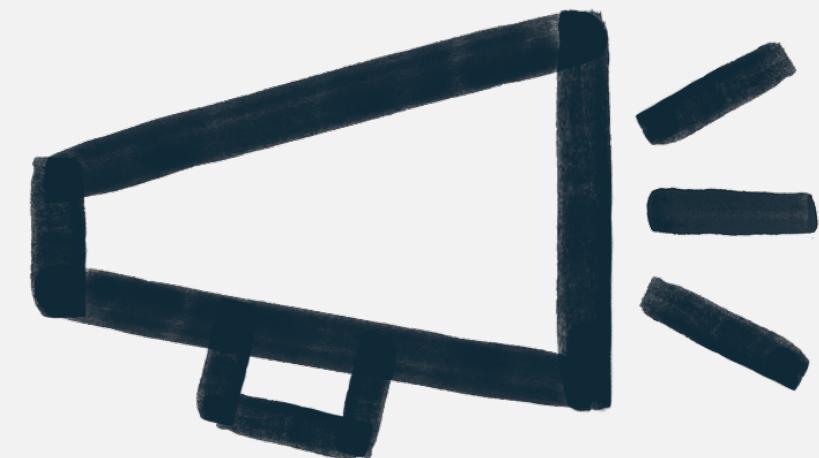
# Analysis

- to identify patterns that otherwise would have been less visible



# Communication

- to share findings more broadly, such as through videos + press releases
- to connect online with groups working on similar issues



# Historical archiving

- to scan paper documents, classify and tag them, make them machine-readable, encrypt them and make backups in case they get lost
- to manage and maintain datasets in perpetuity for purposes of preservation and future recall



# 5 uses of tech tools

- Identifying new incidents
- Information management
- Analysis
- Communication
- Historical archiving

# Key findings



# Universal challenges

- Sustainability
- Data storage
- Managing expectations
- Human capacity
- Control

# Challenges from HRD perspective

- Understanding different tools options
- Introducing new tools —> more resistance in the future + growing cynicism
- Language limitations
- Overwhelmed at choices available, difficult to know where to go for help
- Conflicting advice on digital security, tools choices, etc.

# Challenges from tools developer perspective

- Build new tool, or adapt existing tool?
- Staff turnover in the human rights org
- Encouraging initial uptake + systems change
- Longterm usage and sustainability
- Cynicism from users after bad experiences
- Practical and appropriate update practices

# Recommendations



# Recommendations: tools developers

- **Communicate clearly** about tools and realistic use cases
- Work with **partner organisations** from the beginning
- **Reality check your assumptions** often
- Understand **your tool might not be the best fit**

# Recommendations: funders

- Be patient
- Thoughtful innovation
- Think about sustainability
- Invest in strategy and planning
- ~~One-off trainings~~ → long term, sustained support

# Recommendations: intermediaries

- Encourage **second opinions**
- Be clear about what tech tools **can** and **can't** do
- Find multiple internal advocates within human rights orgs (not just one)
- Think long term

# Tools and Platforms



# Tools and platforms

A summary of tools built specifically for human rights defenders

PROJECT NAME	OPENEVSYS	RIGHTSCASE	MARTUS	CASEBOX	PALANTIR (GOTHAM & METROPOLIS)
PROJECT OWNER	HURIDOCS	E.qualitie	Benetech	HURIDOCS/Ketse	Palantir Technologies
LOCATION	Geneva, Switzerland	Montreal, Los Angeles, Dublin	CA, US	Geneva, Switzerland	CA, US
CREATED	2009	2009	2003	2011	2004
SUPPORT PROVIDED?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PRIMARY AIM	Database application	Case management system	Information management + collection	Information management	Information management
CUSTOMISATION?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, by Palantir
HOSTING?	Through HURIDOCS (for a fee) or self-hosted	Through eQualit.ie (for a fee) or self-hosted	Through Benetech or self-hosted	Through HURIDOCS or self-hosted	Needs to use cloud technology
OPEN SOURCE	Yes: <a href="#">source code</a>	Yes: <a href="#">source code</a>	Yes: <a href="#">source code</a>	Yes: <a href="#">source code</a>	No
LANGUAGES	Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, Khmer, Spanish, Turkish		Arabic, English, Chinese, French, Khmer, Burmese, Farsi, Russian, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Nepali, Armenian	Unclear	"All languages including Elvish"
TRAINING OPTIONS	Provided by HURIDOCS	Provided by eQualit.ie	Provided by Benetech	Provided by HURIDOCS	No
SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS	Audited code	Audited code	Audited code	Audited code	From CIA-funded start up

# App functionalities

Some mobile applications developed specifically for the purpose of helping human rights defenders

PROJECT NAME	MEDICAPT	EYEWITNESS TO ATROCITIES	CAMERAV	VIDEO VAULT	UMBRELLA
PROJECT OWNER	Physicians for Human Rights	International Bar Association	Guardian Project and WITNESS	RightsLab/Enrique Piraces	Security First
LOCATION	NY, US	London, UK	NY, US	NY, US	UK
CREATED	2014	2015	2015	2015	2015
PRIMARY AIM	Information gathering	Verifiable photo and video capture	Verifiable photo and video capture	Video preservation	Info on security
CAN THE TOOL BE USED OFFLINE?	Yes, but needs internet to submit.	Yes, but needs internet to submit data.	Yes, but needs internet to submit data.	No	Yes
OPEN SOURCE	Unclear	No	Yes: <a href="#">source code</a>	Unsure	<a href="#">open source</a>
LANGUAGES	English only	English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, and Portuguese	English, Spanish, Portuguese (Brazilian), French, Arabic, Norwegian, Swedish, Portuguese (Portugal), Sinhala, Turkish	English	English
SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS	Data is encrypted	Not open source; has quick dispose function	Data is encrypted	Currently in beta	Optional password
PLATFORM	Unclear	Android	Android	Unclear	Android

# Your data

## WHAT KIND OF DATA ARE YOU USING?

Videos? Photos? Audio recordings?  
Social media posts? Files (such as PDFs)?  
Satellite imagery? Text? SMS messages?  
Medical records? GPS coordinates? Paper documents? Something else?

## WHO COULD YOUR DATA PUT AT RISK?

Think about the people that create the data, who are described in the data, who provide or deliver the data, who store the data (including your team)!

## WHERE WILL YOUR DATA BE STORED?

Even information stored “in the cloud” ultimately exists on a physical server somewhere. Will you use your own server or someone else’s? Can you access it safely? Do you trust the owner?

## HOW CAN YOU HANDLE YOUR DATA SECURELY?

Look for a tool that offers **Encryption**, as well as **Audited Open Source Code\***. Data should be encrypted wherever it exists:

- **at rest** (stored on a device or server)
- **in motion** (sent over email, wifi, etc.)



\* **Open Source** means the code is available for review. If the code has been audited by people or organizations you trust, and no one has found any flaws, then it may be as secure as possible.

# Your tool

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?

Preserve data? Collect data? Verify data?  
Analyse data? Manage data? Some combination of the above?

## WHERE WILL YOU USE THE TOOL?

Will you use it in an area with high mobile phone usage or in an area with low cellular network coverage?  
Will it ever have to work offline?

## WHAT DEVICE WILL YOU USE IT WITH?

Do you need it to work on a mobile device? iOS, or Android? Or do you need it to work on a laptop? PC. Linux. Mac?

## DOES YOUR TEAM HAVE THE RESOURCES IT NEEDS?

**DOES THE TOOL SUPPORT ALL THE LANGUAGES AND CHARACTER SETS YOU NEED?**

**IS IT EASY TO USE?**

- Will it require customization to use?  
Do you have the time and staff to do that?

**IS TRAINING AVAILABLE?**

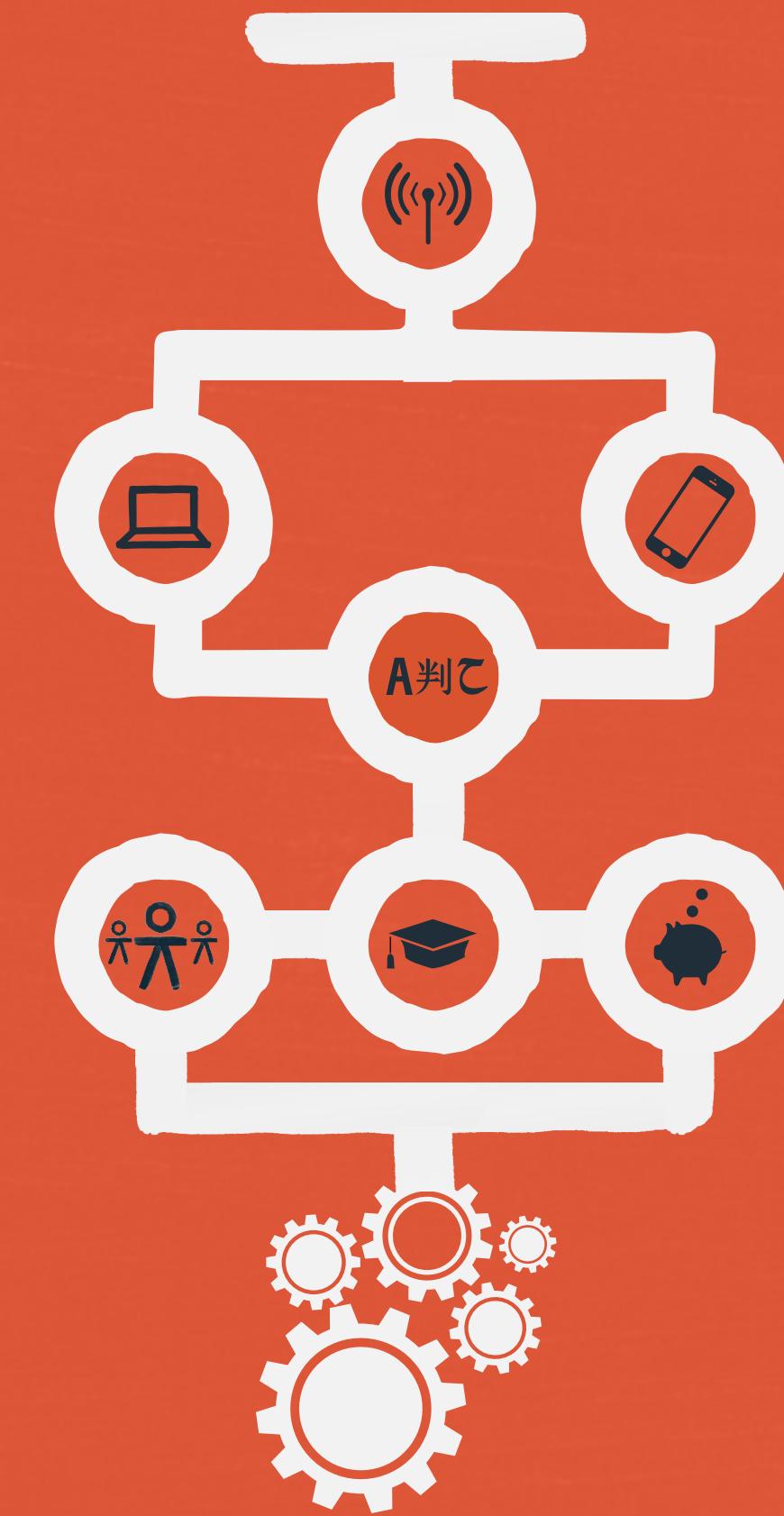
- Does the tool include documentation or technical support?
- Does your team have in house tech support, or people willing to learn?

**HOW MUCH WILL THE TOOL COST?**

- Is the tool free to use? Does the license require a fee?



**A COMBINATION OF THE ABOVE?**



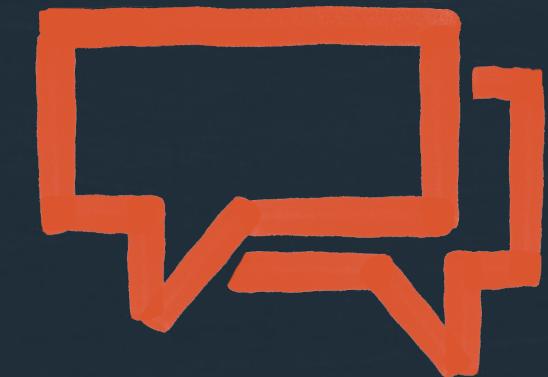
# Questions



# Questions

- Where do human rights tech tools developers sit in this ecosystem?
- How can funders effectively support an ecosystem of tools built especially for human rights documentation?
- Where do you draw the line between funding and advising?
- ... and the line between advising and dictating?

# Further reading



- Online version of report: <https://engn.it/hrtech>
- PDF report: <https://engn.it/hrtechreport>
- These slides: <https://engn.it/hrtechslides>

# Thank you!

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