Advocacy for journalists
What is advocacy?

• In Week 1, we defined advocacy as “building support for an idea of a plan or a change we want to see in the world”. This is just one definition.

• In general, advocacy is about power - who has it, how they are using it, and how its dynamics can be changed.

• Designing and launching a campaign using the elements we learned about in Week 1 and Week 2 can be a strong component of advocacy, but there are other ways to build support for your demands and engage in this struggle for power.
Should journalists engage in advocacy - and how?

• As with launching campaigns, journalists - and all individuals and groups - must weigh whether they want to engage in a power struggle that may affect the perception of their independence, which in turn could affect the credibility of their reporting and investigative work.

• One critical advocacy area for journalists is around the rights, protection and wellbeing of journalists.

• Another advocacy area is around the public interest issues that journalists uncover in their reporting and investigative work. Even where journalists might not want to engage directly around certain demands, they can choose to engage in advocacy in order to elevate engagement with their reporting.
Examples of advocacy by and for journalists

• In NAWA, Lebanon-based SKeyes, the Samir Kassir Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, signs joint open letters demanding freedom for imprisoned journalists.

• Every year, the Samir Kassir Foundation gives awards for press freedom, and the ceremony is often attended by members of the government and the media, giving speakers a chance to make demands directly to decision-makers.
Organisations that support human rights, press freedom and journalists are calling on United Nations mechanisms and member states to help save the lives of four Yemeni journalists who were sentenced to death in April 2020 in the capital Sana’a on charges of “spying” and “spreading false news.” Of the six other journalists in the same case whom the judge ordered to be freed, after five years in detention, only one has been released so far. The de facto authorities in Sana’a, the Houthis, must immediately overturn the death sentences and free the other nine journalists who have been convicted in violation of their right to freedom of expression.
• A host of organisations worldwide work toward the rights and the protection of journalists.

• The Committee to Protect Journalists, for example **collects data and evidence** on violations against journalists as a way to raise **awareness** and **pressure** those engaging in violations to stop attacks.

• They write **letters** to states and international human rights bodies and issue **alerts** to immediately raise the profile of urgent cases.
Data & Research

17 journalists killed in 2020
248 imprisoned in 2019
64 missing globally

Journalists attacked since 1992
• The ACOS Alliance (A Culture of Safety Alliance) is “an unprecedented coalition of news organizations, freelance journalist associations and press freedom NGOs working together to champion safe and responsible journalistic practices for freelance and local journalists worldwide.”

• One of their most prominent tactics is the formulation of a set of principles called the “Freelance Journalist Safety Principles” which aims at shifting the culture, or the norm, of what is appropriate in newsrooms.

• See more: www.acosalliance.org/the-principles
• The Syrian Female Journalists Network mobilised solidarity for journalists facing harassment and bullying rooted in sexism.
ABOUT THE ACOS ALLIANCE

IMPROVING ACCESS TO
RESOURCES JOURNALISTS NEED
TO KEEP SAFE
International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

• UNESCO uses the date of November 3, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, to raise awareness and mobilise governments, organisations and the public to act against the issue of impunity.

• They host panel events to discuss current issues facing journalists and potential solutions, allowing those affected to advocate for their demands.
EACH YEAR, ONE JOURNALIST GETS A PULITZER AND ONE HUNDRED GET SHOT.

Each year, journalists are killed to be silenced. Now, you can become their voice.

#TruthNeverDies
• Reporters Without Borders also uses data and statistics to advocate for press freedom, using a **World Press Freedom** Index.

• They issue **press releases** demanding freedom for journalists.

• They also **campaign** around **policy asks**, for example for the creation around a Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General for the safety of journalists.
Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls for the immediate release of two Egyptian journalists employed by the Cairo-based newspaper Youm 7 who were taken from their homes late last month. One of them, who had Covid-19 at the time of his arrest, has had to be hospitalized.
Elevating issues

- At times, journalists may want to advocate not just for their own rights, but to elevate issues or stories they have uncovered or engaged with.

- Of course, many media outlets already have strong editorial lines and activist values, but at times, they may want to engage in advocacy around certain issues.

- The Guardian for example, has taken a direct advocacy approach on climate change, lobbying charitable organisations to divest from fossil fuels, you can engage in the same tactics and principles outlined before.
Keep it in the ground

Join us and thousands of others in urging the world's two biggest charitable funds to move their money out of fossil fuels

Sign the petition

To Bill and Melinda Gates, founders of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Jeremy Farrar and Sir William Castell, director and chair of the Wellcome Trust:

Your organisations have made a huge contribution to human progress and equality by supporting scientific research and development projects. Yet your investments in fossil fuels are putting this progress at great risk, by undermining your long term ambitions.

Climate change poses a real threat to all of us, and it is morally and financially misguided to invest in companies dedicated to finding and burning more oil, gas and coal. Many philanthropic organisations are divesting their endowments from fossil fuels. We ask you to do the same: to commit now to divesting from the top 200 fossil fuel companies within five
How do we engage in advocacy?
Components of advocacy

- Shaping a **clear policy or an ask** for people to get behind
- **Awareness around rights and standards**
- The importance of **evidence**
- **Lobbying** decision-makers, publicly or privately, to take a certain action, publicly or privately
- Changing power dynamics by **building the power and legitimacy** of your ask
- Do the **outreach**
- Take advantage of the **platforms** at your disposal
• There is no science to advocacy or a methodology for how to formulate your advocacy work.

• As with campaigning, let a **Vision, Theory of Change, and Tactics** guide you.

• Ask yourself the following questions:
  - What do we want?
  - What will we ask for?
  - Who can get it done?
  - What do we know about our target?
  - How can we convince them?
  - What can we achieve?

• Because you are engaging with power and how it is used, a **power map** is particularly important. (See Week 1)
Formulating a clear ask or policy

“To be effective, activists have to make strong, simple, urgent demands, at least some of the time—the kind of demands that fit on stickers and placards, the kind that can be shouted in the street by a thousand people. And they have to recognize that their victories may come as subtle, complex, slow changes instead, and count them anyway.”

Rebecca Solnit
Hope in the Dark
Shaping the ask

- A strong, simple ask, can be a useful rallying cry for your advocacy work. Something like “Stop censorship of the media in Belarus!” acts like an alert, is easy to rally people behind and paints a story of the struggle at stake.

- This however, is a broad ask, and while it is useful for demonstrations, social media content and so on, you may want to formulate a more specific, concrete ask.

- This will help pressure your target, and create a perception of their being a clear action that they can either take or not take to meet your demands.
• For example, in the struggle to stop censorship of the media in Belarus, a more specific and concrete ask can be for the **US company selling the technology to the Belarusian government** to censor the internet.

• Another example is what the **Families for Freedom**, the families of people forcibly disappeared in Syria, have adopted as an ask. Though they have clear demands for parties to the conflict to reveal the fate of their loved ones, they have a more achievable, short-term ask: A UN Security Council resolution for “a large-scale unilateral release of all people held in prisons and unofficial detention centers, where detainees are held in cramped conditions and exposed to torture and depravation of proper food, water, sanitation, and medical care.”
• Specific, short- and medium-term asks are a powerful advocacy tool. They can help achieve some progress toward our goals, particularly those that seem overly complicated or impossible to achieve.

• Clear, concrete asks can present a solution for people to connect with and mobilise around.

• Formulating asks you can win - and that end up being met - is also motivating for everyone involved in the cause and can light a fire in the movement. These asks can be for example for public statements or commitments or resolutions... and where the decision-maker is particularly intransigent, for example a repressive head of state or government, it can be their allies, corporates or other entities close to them.

• Of course it is important not to lose sight of the bigger goal with these step change asks. They are a means to an end and not an end in themselves.
Rights and Standards

- There are international laws and standards that you can appeal to in order to support your cause, e.g., CEDAW, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

- This “rights” language can help lend legitimacy and power to your advocacy with targets who want to be perceived as rights respecting - for example, newly appointed ministers building reputations, corporates with public image concerns and civil society organisations.

- It is also an important way to frame and establish what you are fighting for as a right, which can help give power to your demands.
In Lebanon for example, the struggle for women to pass on their nationality to their children is framed around CEDAW. Protesters shape their message around demanding the government ratify Article 2 of the convention, which would give them the right to pass on their nationality.
• There are however advocacy processes through rights processes that can be useful.

• Statements in front of the Human Rights Council can help elevate your cause among human rights defenders around the world as well as diplomats that may have some influence for your cause.

• Engaging with the Universal Periodic Review in your country can help engage state actors in a platform where they may be more willing to engage on human rights terms rather than through political maneouvring. States must justify whether or not they accept recommendations, and if recommendations are accepted, they must be implemented by governments.

• You can also engage Special Rapporteurs, who are engaged by the Human Rights Council to investigate and report back on certain themes.
Support your policy and your ask with evidence

- Data, statistics and monitoring are incredibly powerful tools to support your advocacy. Advocacy rooted in evidence and fact-finding can give clarity to your cause and help mobilise public opinion.

- We see with the RSF’s World Press Freedom Index and CPJ’s monitoring of violations against journalists.

- Organisations like the Syrian Archive and Yemeni Archive root all of their advocacy in data. This is especially useful in building power for demands.
• Violators of human rights tend to deny wrongdoing as a first response to demands from advocates

• Rooting your demands in strong, irrefutable and objective data can help build your case and your power.

• The Yemeni Archive for example (next slide), in order to pressure perpetrators of attacks on health care by warring sides in Yemen, compiled a database of evidence, explaining their methodology and how they concluded each attack had taken place.

• This evidence helped media to pick up the story and served as a basis for engaging allies and for campaigning tactics.

• With such meticulously documented information, it made it difficult for warring sides to engage in denial - or increased the cost for them to do.

• Published evidence helps increase the political cost of human rights violations.
In this database, Yemeni Archive has documented 133 attacks on medical facilities and health care in Yemen since April 2014. All 133 unique incidents (based on 1,755 observations) of attacks on medical facilities include violations committed against medical facilities and/or other health workers, who are specifically offered protections under International Humanitarian Law. This

**This database shows:**
- The impact of the attacks on medical facilities as a result of airstrikes and rocket attacks by various parties to the conflict.
- Civilian victims of the airstrikes, including children and women.
- Remnants of ammunition used in the attacks allegedly by the Saudi-led Arab coalition.
The Syrian Archive advocates for fairer content moderation policies from the major social media platforms. They are concerned with platforms taking down content that document human rights violations and may serve as key evidence in courts of law or for advocacy. To describe the scale of the problem, and identify trends related to content moderation, they monitor how much content from Syria, Yemen and Sudan has been taken down by Facebook, Youtube and Twitter and publish the statistics monthly. By showing the scale of the problem, and who it affects, they have gained access to staff from social media platforms to advocate for their demands directly.
Presenting policies

• Research and in-depth information can also help, you as an advocate, create a policy or set of policies or recommendations that you would like to see adopted - this is what ACOS did with their principles for example. They presented their targets with a way forward.

• Putting forth policy recommendations is especially useful when you are able to engage targets constructively, and what they asking for is a way forward

• At times, you may want to ask yourself if it’s your job to put together a policy. At times, it may be a government or other entities job to do the work - and your part may be to just inside that they do.
Lobby decision-makers

- Within your power map, you will have identified your targets for advocacy. One way to make progress on an issue is to request a face-to-face meeting with your target to make your case directly for the change you want to see.

- It is worth requesting a meeting even if you don’t think they will agree - you can then publicly point out the fact that they rejected engagement with you to help mobilise public pressure.

- Consider sending an advocacy letter. Within it, you can outline your demands and your case, and request a meeting. (See the resource on writing an advocacy letter.)
Tips for lobbying meetings

• If you manage to get a meeting to lobby your target directly - be prepared. Make sure everyone attending the meeting is aligned. What is the tone like - is it more friendly or accusatory? How much do you want to push back on what they? Who talks about what?

• Pick your 3 key messages - and stick to them. Try not to go off message.

• Support your demands with stories and evidence - the more personal the better.

• Take notes, and send an email to the target afterward with the minutes and the main action point. Documentation is your friend, particularly around promises and commitments made or not made.
Building power means building networks

- Join or build alliances to support your cause. By reaching out to people or institutions to join your cause, you can leverage the power.

- For example engaging major rights orgs like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch to sign an open letter or take up a cause, your targets may be more likely to feel the heat.

- Alliances and networks really help build power - but they can also dilute your message or make processes take much longer. Consider what is appropriate for you.

- Organisations with ECOSOC Status may help get you access to UN platforms such as the Human Rights Council to make statements and meet decision-makers. Consider allies with ECOSOC status.
Ask for help

- It is always worth asking for second eyes with your advocacy work and strategy - and for help.

- You could consider forming an advisory group for people to volunteer their expertise to your cause.

- Asking for help, and consulting others, may also help avoid conflict and unnecessary competition. People are attached to their causes and may feel threatened when new players come in. A way to avoid this is to pick up the phone! Collaboration is not always easy, but it’s an instinct that, once honed, can make activism not just about winning progress for your cause, but the community around you, working toward the same goals, with the same values.
The next section we look at an example of an advocacy letter