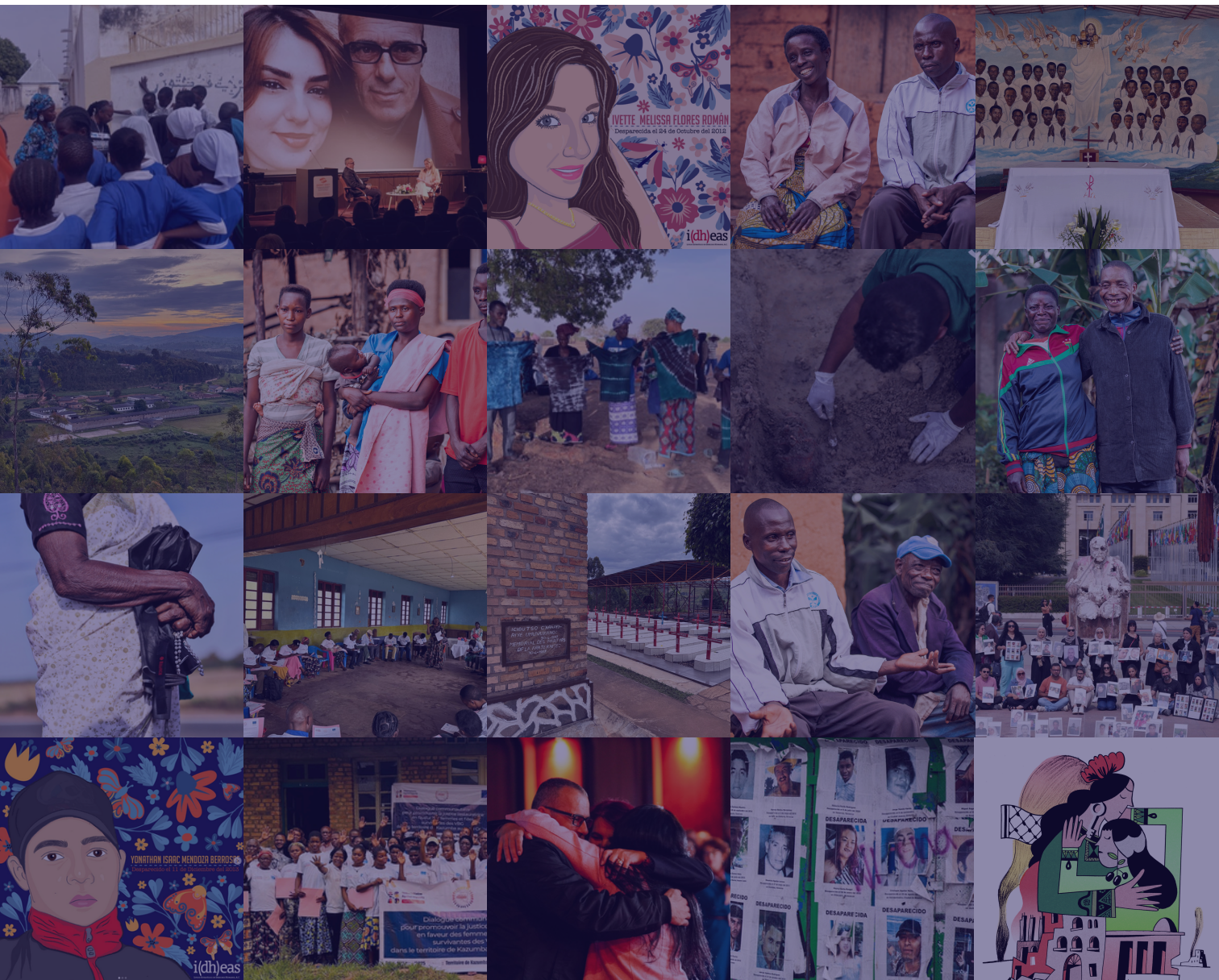


TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN ACTION



**Global Initiative
Against Impunity**
Making Justice Work

Presented by:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About the Global Initiative Against Impunity

The Global Initiative Against Impunity for International Crimes and Serious Human Rights Violations (GIAI) is a civil society-led initiative of eight organisations, the Secretariat of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) and two associate partners. Co-funded by the European Union, the Consortium endeavours to strengthen the global response to serious crimes and human rights violations, ultimately promoting a culture of accountability and respect for human rights worldwide. [Find out more.](#)



Watch: What does 'making justice work' mean to our partners?

About Civil Rights Defenders

Civil Rights Defenders is a politically and religiously independent human rights organisation, which partners with and supports human rights defenders who work in some of the world's most repressive regions. [Find out more.](#)

About Impunity Watch

Impunity Watch is an international non-profit organisation working with victims, survivors and communities affected by violence to transform deeply ingrained structures of impunity, deliver redress for grave human rights violations, and promote justice and peace. [Find out more.](#)

About the stories in this booklet

The impact stories in this booklet are collected from grantees of a Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) mechanism, implemented by Civil Rights Defenders. The FSTP programme ensures a **holistic approach to justice and accountability**, spanning both criminal and transitional justice mechanisms, by prioritising:

- Increased agency and participation of right-holders (victims, survivors, civil society organisations (CSOs)) in formal and informal justice processes
- Enhanced effectiveness of accountability frameworks and systems to fight impunity, through victim-centred, trauma-informed and gender-transformative justice lenses

INTRODUCTION

Transitional justice seeks to help societies deal with the legacy of large-scale past conflict, human rights abuses, and gross violations of international law. It encompasses formal and informal justice mechanisms towards [promoting truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence](#).

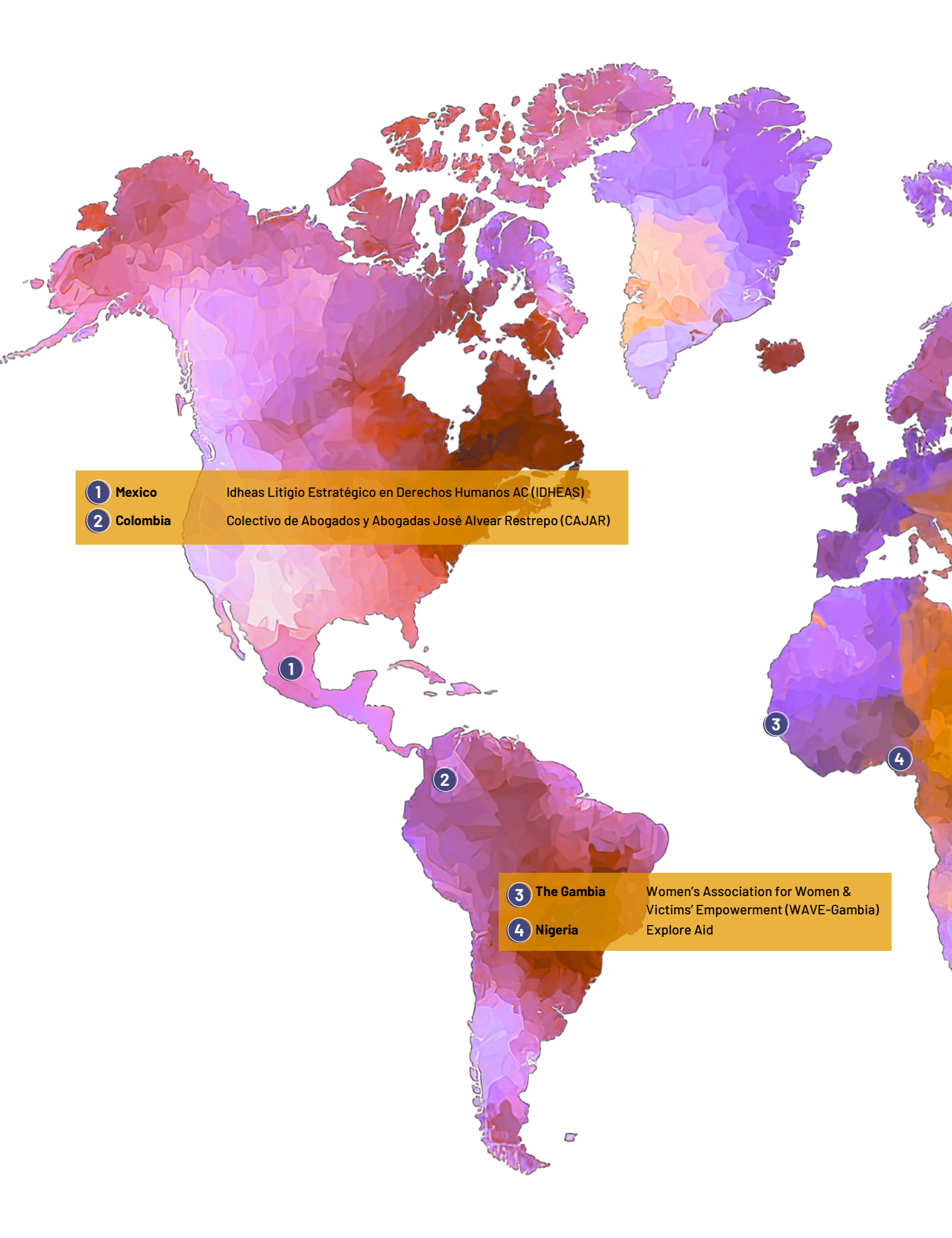
On 16 November 2015, the European Commission adopted the [European Union's policy framework](#) promoting a comprehensive, long-term approach to transitional justice. It is aimed at:

- Fighting impunity and achieving accountability
- Providing recognition and redress to victims
- Fostering trust and restoring the social fabric
- Strengthening the rule of law
- Contributing to reconciliation and non-recurrence

Victim-centred and context-specific approaches are key to ensure that the design and implementation of Transitional Justice efforts are locally and nationally-owned.

What progress has been made in the 10 years since this policy was introduced? How do we know that transitional justice indeed works for communities that need it most?

This visual booklet, **'Transitional Justice in Action'** highlights impact stories from various grassroots and civil society organisations around the world, demonstrating the value of diverse transitional justice initiatives and their continued relevance in a world full of new and worsening crises. The stories highlight a prolific movement that is actively resisting impunity in every corner of the globe. **We call for solidarity with the victims and survivors who lead and inspire these stories and movements, and for continuous support for their long fight for justice.**



1

Mexico

Idheas Litigio Estratégico en Derechos Humanos AC (IDHEAS)

2

Colombia

Colectivo de Abogados y Abogadas José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR)

1

2

3

The Gambia

Women's Association for Women & Victims' Empowerment (WAVE-Gambia)

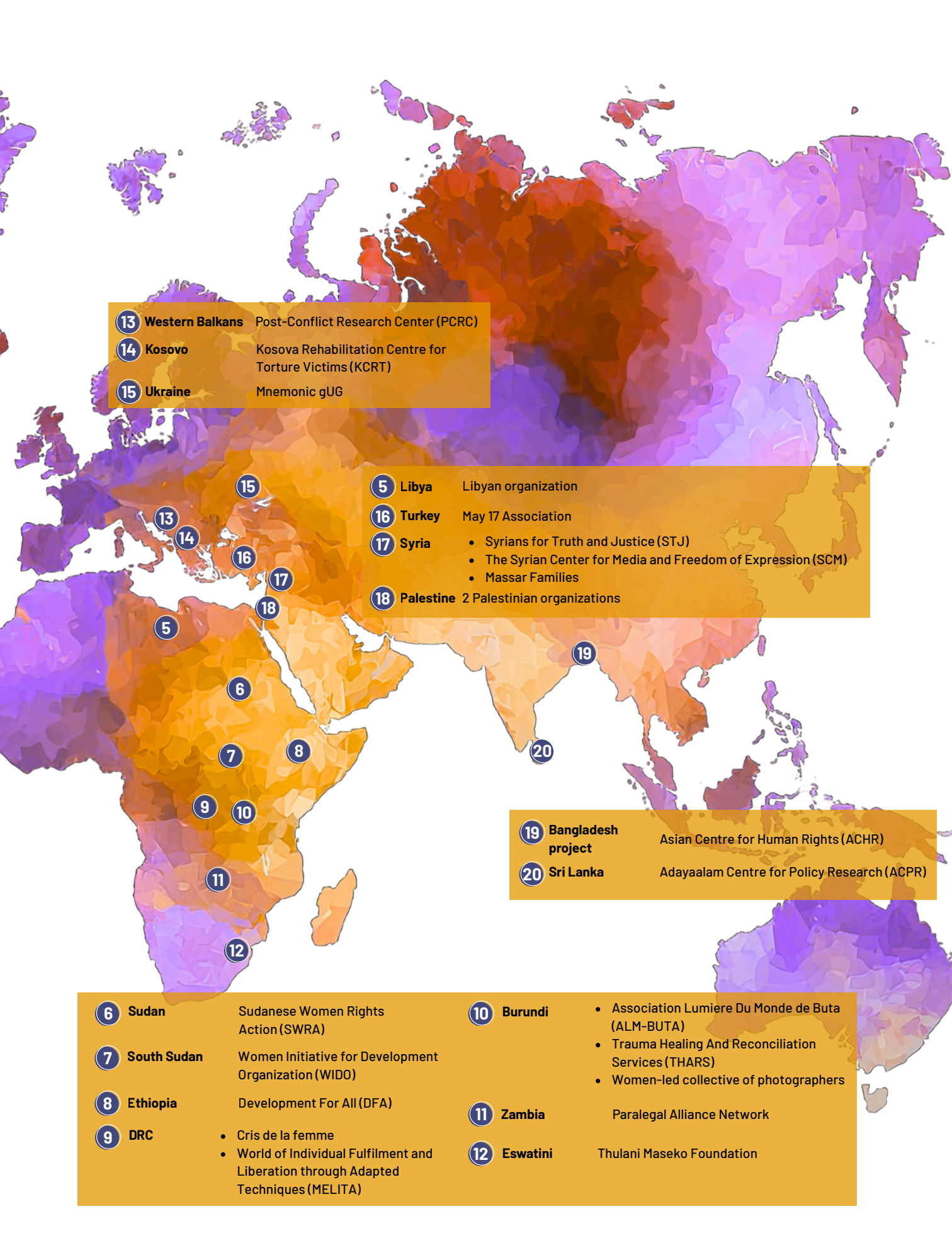
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Nigeria

Explore Aid

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4



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- 17 Syria
 - Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)
 - The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
 - Massar Families
- 18 Palestine 2 Palestinian organizations

- 19 Bangladesh project Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)
- 20 Sri Lanka Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research (ACPR)

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| 6 Sudan | Sudanese Women Rights Action (SWRA) | 10 Burundi | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Association Lumiere Du Monde de Buta (ALM-BUTA)• Trauma Healing And Reconciliation Services (THARS)• Women-led collective of photographers |
| 7 South Sudan | Women Initiative for Development Organization (WIDO) | 11 Zambia | Paralegal Alliance Network |
| 8 Ethiopia | Development For All (DFA) | 12 Eswatini | Thulani Maseko Foundation |
| 9 DRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cris de la femme• World of Individual Fulfilment and Liberation through Adapted Techniques (MELITA) | | |



**LATIN
AMERICA**

I(dh)EAS LITIGIO ESTRATÉGICO EN DERECHOS HUMANOS AC

MEXICO

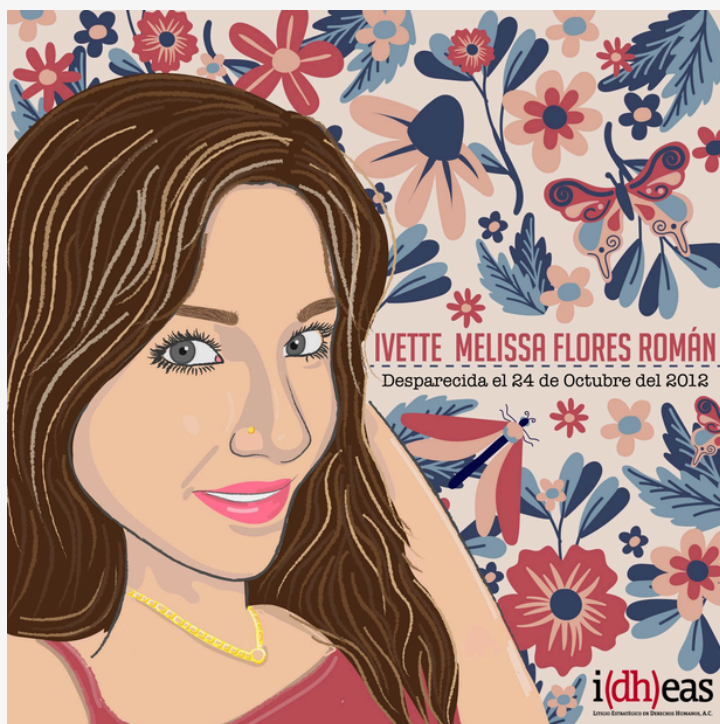
Mexico faces a severe crisis of violence and impunity, with 115,000+ missing persons as of September 2024, and a 95% impunity rate as of 2021.



Photo: OHCHR/Vincent Treméau

I(dh)eas, Strategic Human Rights Litigation, takes action towards addressing these grave concerns by strengthening investigations, ensuring accountability, and providing support to victims and their families.

In the face of complex crises and systemic impunity, I(dh)eas uses strategic litigation as a tool to achieve broader systemic change. **Two such cases are the enforced disappearances of 19-year-old Ivette Melissa Flores Román in 2012, and 17-year-old Yonathan Mendoza Berrospe in 2013.**



Ivette's disappearance involved her former partner, an investigative police officer and his family.

I(dh)eas represented her mother before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Committee established that Ivette's disappearance was inextricably linked to gender-based violence (GBV), a crucial finding that countered local authorities' refusal to investigate it as such.

[Learn more about Ivette's case.](#)

The State offered a [public apology](#) to her mother, recognising its role and responsibility for the enforced disappearance, including systemic failures and omissions of authorities—marking an essential step toward official accountability.

This case represents the first time that CEDAW issued a ruling on the enforced disappearance of women in Mexico, directly mandating the State to incorporate a gender perspective into all search and investigation protocols, ensuring structural reforms to prevent similar abuses in future.



Yonathan was among several young people who were detained and subsequently disappeared by military and police forces in Formando Hogar, Veracruz city.

I(dh)eas represented Yonathan's family before the UN Committee of Enforced Disappearances (CED-UN). The CED-UN issued a [historic ruling](#), the first against Mexico before the Committee.

[Learn more about Yonathan's case.](#)

The CED-UN established that Yonathan was a victim of enforced disappearance involving state agents, a fact long obscured by domestic authorities and impunity.

The UN ruling mandated the State to ensure effective prosecution of all those responsible, and ordered comprehensive reparations. The State offered a [public apology](#) as a symbolic act of reparation to his mother, but emphasized that this must be reflected in investigation and search efforts.

This case sets a mandatory precedent for Mexico on the standards required for a diligent search and impartial investigation in enforced disappearance cases, challenging the underlying conditions of impunity.

MESOAMERICAN REGIONAL FORUM: GENERATIONAL IMPACTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

This forum in September 2025 gathered victims, activists, and human rights defenders from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Hosted by I(dh) eas, it explored how severe human rights violations—especially enforced disappearances, genocide, torture, and forced displacement—leave physical, psychological, and cultural scars that endure across generations.

Participants shared powerful testimonies from victims of the armed conflict in Guatemala, and from relatives of the disappeared in Mexico. Juana Tipaz, a member of the Maya Quiché people and survivor of Guatemala's internal armed conflict, described how her community was uprooted during genocidal "scorched earth" campaigns under dictators Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt in the 1980s, and its lasting impacts today.

"OUR CHILDREN NO LONGER SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE; OUR CULTURE IS FADING. WE LOST OUR LAND, OUR TRADITIONS, OUR WAY OF LIVING WITH THE EARTH."

—Juana Tipaz, Maya K'iche' survivor of Guatemala's internal armed conflict, founder of the National Council of Displaced Guatemalans (CONDEG)

"INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS ARE, BY DEFINITION, INTERGENERATIONAL. TRANSMISSION IS A KEY CONDITION FOR THE CONTINUITY OF [THEIR] EXISTENCE AND CULTURES."

— Hélène Tigroudja, member of the UN Human Rights Committee

Alejandro Rodríguez from Impunity Watch followed Juana's testimony with the legal context of their struggle. He explained the recent [UN Human Rights Committee ruling](#) recognising forced displacement, cultural destruction, and the loss of family and community ties as human rights violations. The Committee also recognised the spiritual harm caused by the inability to bury loved ones according to Maya traditions.

Alejandra Díaz from the Buscadoras Guanajuato collective shared her personal story of losing her brother Felipe, who disappeared in 2020. For 18 months, she and other relatives searched relentlessly—in morgues, remote fields, and detention centres—until they found his remains.

**“THE PAIN PASSES
FROM ONE
GENERATION TO THE
NEXT, FROM MOTHERS
TO DAUGHTERS WHO
GROW UP IN FEAR,
LEARNING TO EXPECT
LOSS AS A PART OF
LIFE.”**

*–Alejandra Díaz, human rights defender,
Colectivo Buscadoras Guanajuato*

Through her work with other madres buscadoras (‘searching mothers’), Alejandra has documented the physical and mental health toll on families, especially women. Many suffer from chronic pain, diabetes, depression, and anxiety, which intensify due to prolonged stress and grief.

Alejandra described how every failed court hearing or police refusal to investigate reopens the trauma. Families with little economic means struggle to access therapy, and public health systems rarely offer specialised psychosocial care.

Javier Acevedo, director of The Center for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (El Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos - CIPRODEH), traced Honduras’s experience from the state-led disappearances of the 1980s to today’s widespread violence by criminal networks. He spoke of the silence of the state as a second form of violence, and how families face stigma and blame, **“as if the disappeared were guilty of their own disappearance.”** This lack of justice perpetuates trauma and corrodes trust within communities. The disintegration of collective movements has left families more isolated and vulnerable.

Across testimonies, participants agreed that enforced disappearance and displacement tear apart both families and communities, erasing languages, traditions, and collective memory. Juana Tipaz described how living in urban exile forced her people to abandon their traditional dress and language to avoid persecution: **“We became invisible to survive.”**

Alejandro Rodríguez added that this constitutes not only individual suffering but a form of cultural genocide, as the destruction of land and community life severs the link between people and their ancestral territories. He also noted that poverty and chronic illness among survivors are part of the long-term consequences of these traumas.

The forum concluded with a shared understanding that healing requires both justice and recognition. Participants called for:

- Regional solidarity networks among victims’ groups in Mesoamerica
- State-led psychosocial and medical care programmes sensitive to cultural and gender realities to overcome challenges in accessing such treatment
- Reparation policies that include truth, memory, and land restitution
- Integration of indigenous and women’s perspectives in all transitional justice mechanisms



[Watch a video of the regional forum.](#)



AFRICA



ASSOCIATION LUMIÈRE DU MONDE BUTA (ALM BUTA)

BURUNDI

Burundi continues to be marked by the effects of decades of political violence and armed conflict, including the legacies of historical injustices such as colonialism, that have deeply affected the social fabric and left lasting trauma.

Amid this backdrop, memorialisation using the arts, complemented with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) initiatives foster intergenerational dialogue and dealing with the past. Community-led efforts are crucial to break a culture of silence, restore dignity of victims and survivors, and strengthen peace and reconciliation among different groups and communities.

In 1997, rebels massacred 40 young seminarians (all of them boys, and most under the age of 18) for refusing to divide themselves among ethnic lines at the Petit Séminaire in Buta, Burundi. Their courageous act still shapes the lives of survivors, their families, and Burundian society today. The families and survivors continue to carry grief and trauma, yet their voices and perspectives remain largely invisible in public discourse.

The Association Lumière du Monde Buta (ALM Buta) was founded by survivors to carry forward the message of fraternity and solidarity embodied by the young students. ALM Buta supports survivors and the families of the martyrs through collective memory healing and grief processing, including group therapy sessions and training to provide peer assistance within their communities for restoring resilience.

In a joint project with a women-led collective of photographers, together they seek to shed light on the stories of the families, and preserve the memory of the 40 martyred seminarians through the production of a photo book. The book will document the survivors' testimonies and contribute to truth-telling and reconciliation efforts—serving as a tool for remembrance, dialogue, and advocacy for generations to come.



TRAUMA HEALING AND RECONCILIATION SERVICES (THARS)

BURUNDI



Burundi's cycles of conflict and political violence have left deep divisions, unresolved trauma, and persistent mistrust between communities. Many ex-combatants were not adequately supported by Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) processes and continue to struggle with psychosocial wounds, isolation, and stigma.

Additionally, tensions and violence often escalate around election periods, making the risk of political mobilization of ex-combatants and youth particularly acute.

**“AFTER MY
[MHPSS]
SESSIONS, I
EXPERIENCED
IMMENSE JOY,
AND I NO LONGER
HAVE DIFFICULTY
SLEEPING LIKE I
USED TO.”**

— Ex-combatant, Bujumbura Rural

Interventions by Trauma Healing And Reconciliation Services (THARS) have shown that ex-combatants are willing to engage in memory healing and non-violent approaches if given the tools and safe spaces.

Benefiting from psychosocial support for the first time, ex-combatant participants attested to a significant reduction in their negative mental health symptoms—93% reported a significant reduction in their mental health symptoms, and testimonies confirm positive changes in their social relationships.

Building on these lessons, THARS strengthens resilience and social cohesion, equipping ex-combatants, youth leaders, and community representatives to resist manipulation, prevent violence.

This contributes to conflict transformation through inter-community activities and dialogue to model peaceful interactions and rebuild trust. Additionally, significant work is being done to transform violent and militarized masculinities into more positive forms, that have helped to reduce acts of aggression and cases of GBV.



“BEFORE, I WAS AN IRRITABLE AND VIOLENT MAN, TOWARDS MY WIFE, MY CHILDREN, AND THOSE AROUND ME. THE TRAINING ON POSITIVE MASCULINITIES OPENED MY EYES: IT ALL STARTS AT HOME, IN THE WAY I BEHAVE WITH MY FAMILY.

TODAY, BEFORE ACTING, I TAKE THE TIME TO TALK TO MY WIFE. VIOLENCE NO LONGER HAS A PLACE IN MY LIFE, NEITHER AT HOME NOR AT WORK. THOSE AROUND ME HAVE NOTICED MY CHANGE AND I’M PROUD OF IT.”

—Ex-combatant, Muyinga province



Photos: Impunity Watch



CRIS DE LA FEMME (CDF)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

In the Kazumba territory of the Kasai-Central province in the DRC, the wounds of the Kamwina Nsapu conflict (2016-2019) continue to shape everyday life. Years after the violence, many survivors—especially women—still carry the invisible scars of atrocities committed during that dark chapter of history.

Cris de la femme (CDF) organises community dialogues and training on GBV and TJ to bring together survivors, local authorities, community leaders, and justice actors. It aims to create a safe space for truth-telling and accountability, and reparations. Rights-holders are seeing positive changes across different aspects of life:

“THANKS TO THE DIALOGUE AND THE TRAINING ON TJ, I WAS ABLE TO ENGAGE 30 FAMILIES FROM MY ASSOCIATION ON THIS ISSUE.”

—Woman leader of the association “Mothers, Wake Up”

“I HAVE NOW INCORPORATED THE NOTION OF GBV AND TJ INTO STUDENTS’ MORNING ASSEMBLIES AND NTO TEACHERS’ MEETINGS.”

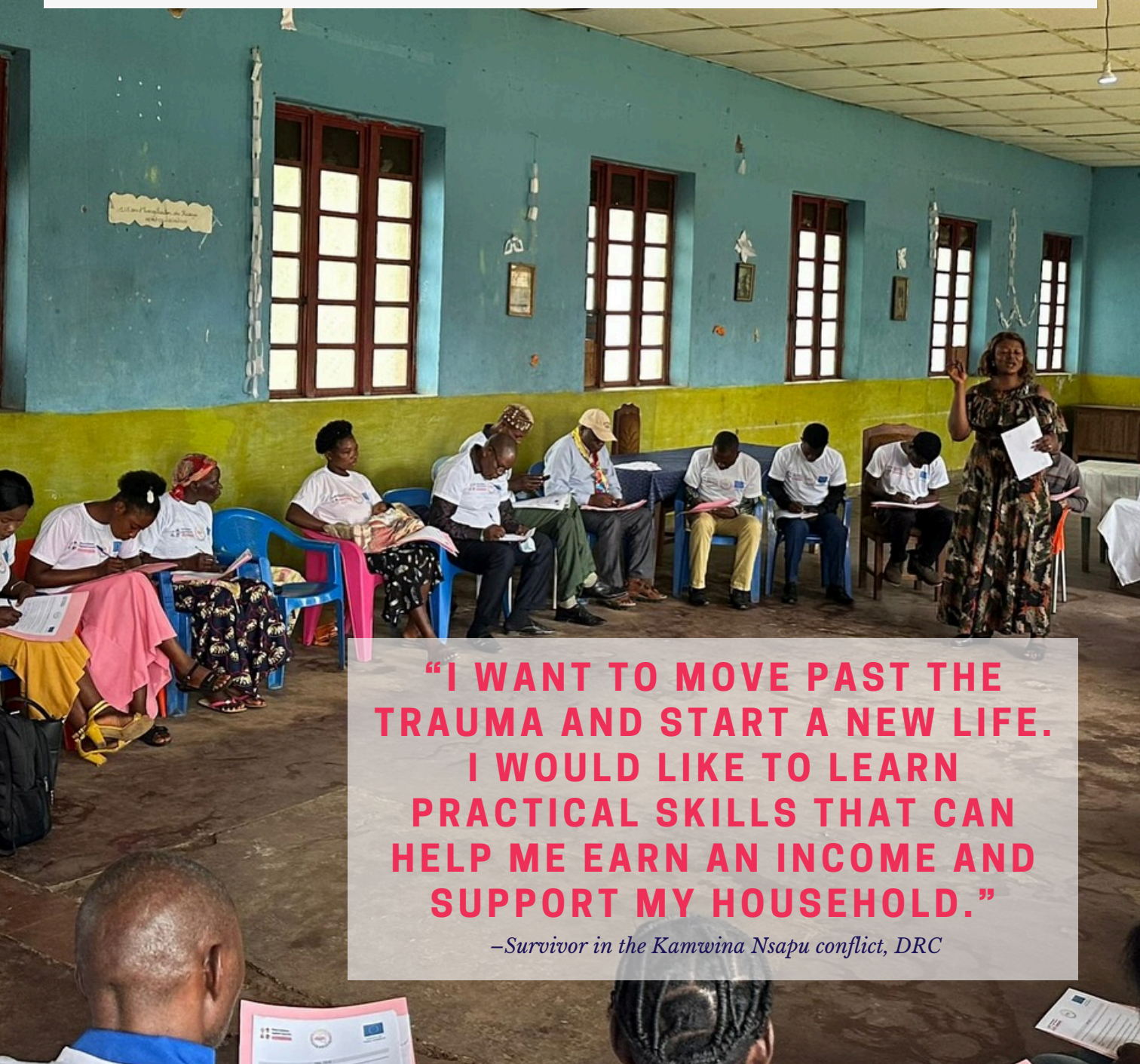
—Principal of a local school

Several women survivors have found the courage to break their silence. A young woman in her twenties shared how she witnessed the brutal killing of her uncle during the conflict, while she and her aunt were then raped by the same perpetrators. She highlights that: **“We never knew their names. We never saw justice. We never received any form of reparation.”**



Her powerful, public testimony not only broke years of silence, but helped the community recognize the pain endured by survivors. Since the dialogue, she has been receiving psychosocial support, rebuilding her confidence and emotional stability. Her courage also raised the issue of accountability and justice, prompting a territorial administrator present at the dialogue to open an investigation, and inspiring a public commitment to support survivors' reintegration to ensure that public institutions protect them from future violence.

Today, she and other women and girl survivors from Kazumba are making a heartfelt call to strengthen TJ mechanisms across their community and the country, so that their pain is recognized, justice is achieved, and reparations are made to restore their dignity. They hope that their courage will inspire authorities and partners to ensure that no woman, man, or child ever has to endure such suffering again and other survivors to come forth.



**“I WANT TO MOVE PAST THE
TRAUMA AND START A NEW LIFE.
I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN
PRACTICAL SKILLS THAT CAN
HELP ME EARN AN INCOME AND
SUPPORT MY HOUSEHOLD.”**

—Survivor in the Kamwina Nsapu conflict, DRC

Impunity remains a significant issue in Ethiopia, particularly regarding human rights violations against minorities. Long-standing marginalisation and recurrent conflicts, especially in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, have increased the vulnerability of ethnic minorities, making it harder for them to seek justice. The region has experienced grave human rights abuses, including mass killings, property destruction, and widespread displacement, creating a climate of fear and insecurity. Despite these violations, impunity prevails due to a lack of cooperation among stakeholders, insufficient involvement of victims in the justice process, limited evidence, inadequate advocacy skills, low awareness of survivors' legal rights, and a lack of understanding among decision-makers.

Development for All (DFA) promotes human rights, social justice and inclusive growth in Ethiopia. It aims to address impunity and accountability in the Metekel zone, where human rights violations have severely impacted local communities. DFA amplifies the voices of women and girls in marginalized communities, strengthens the capacity of survivors of human rights violations and grassroots human rights defenders, and facilitates open dialogue among survivors, local civil society organizations, and decision-makers. Impactful activities include:

- Trauma-healing trainings with grassroots human rights defenders, 59% of whom were women, to support recovery and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges
- Awareness-raising workshop to improve understanding of legal frameworks related to human rights violations and to encourage collective action
- Internship programme for young women advocates, to build their skills in promoting minority rights and combating impunity through hands-on advocacy experience

Furthermore, an independent investigation into past and ongoing human rights violations is currently in progress, aiming to analyze patterns of abuse and develop concrete recommendations for accountability.

Collectively, these efforts play a crucial role in strengthening local capacities, promoting accountability, and building a stronger foundation for human rights within the community—towards addressing the root causes of impunity to ensure sustainable peace.

***PARTICIPANTS
EXPRESSED EMOTIONAL
RELIEF [AT LEARNING
ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE
OF THEIR RIGHTS] AND
A RENEWED SENSE OF
HOPE, SAYING THAT
THE TRAININGS
EMPOWERED THEM TO
BEGIN HEALING AND
MOBILIZE ACTION.***

SUDANESE WOMEN RIGHTS ACTION

SUDAN

The Sudanese civil war has displaced 10.5 million people, with millions still living in active conflict zones, and millions more in dire humanitarian conditions, lacking access to food and medicine, and widespread sexual violence. The crisis in Sudan remains largely overlooked by the international community.



Photo: SWRA X account

Despite the creation of the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan, women's rights groups remain under-resourced to collect evidence and data to lead strong reporting on GBV.

Sudanese Women Rights Action (SWRA) is filling this gap by creating a platform to rebuild monitoring and capacity of local women groups to document grave human rights violations, including [conflict-related sexual violence \(CRSV\)](#). They are also developing knowledge for advocacy campaigns to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Fact-Finding Mission, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to amplify their demands for justice, accountability, and their fight against impunity to key decision-makers.

SWRA significantly enhanced local monitoring capacities by training 45 members from 12 women-led groups, resulting in a 78% improvement in documentation skills and a 60% increase in reported human rights violations (HRVs) within two months—reaching over 87% in regions like Aljazeera and South Kordofan.

Over the past five months, SWRA documented:

570

Civilian deaths
(30% women and
children)

340+

Cases of conflict-
related sexual violence

70+

Detentions and threats
targeting women,
activists, and aid
workers

40+

Complex human rights issues
monitored; including denial of sexual
and reproductive health services,
use of starvation as a weapon, and
restrictions on civic space—many of
which have been or will be published
in their reports.

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN & VICTIMS' EMPOWERMENT (WAVE-GAMBIA)

THE GAMBIA

Despite government commitment to implementing Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) recommendations in The Gambia, progress has been slow, leaving many victims facing ongoing challenges in their pursuit of justice. Women who experience enforced disappearances or other forms of violence often face unique psychological and social consequences. Patriarchy in The Gambia creates barriers to justice for women victims, silencing their experiences, and perpetuating cycles of violence and discrimination.

Women's Association for Women & Victims' Empowerment (WAVE-Gambia) aims to address systemic human rights violations in The Gambia by promoting justice, accountability, and empowerment for marginalized groups. For successful implementation of TRRC recommendations, WAVE-Gambia raises public awareness, enhances advocacy with government stakeholders regarding legal protections and measures to combat impunity, promotes necessary legal reforms, provides victim support services, and establishes monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Uniting for Freedom of Religion or Belief

WAVE-Gambia held a two-day seminar in Bijilo, bringing together participants from civil society, faith communities, and the government to advance dialogue for religious freedom and for the protection of the rights of minority faith groups.

Among the most affected by systematic exclusion and persecution have been the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Shia Muslims, and the Ndigal Sect. The TRCC specifically recommends that restitution and rehabilitation be provided to the Ndigal Sect in Kerr Mot Ali due to the severe discrimination and violence they face for their beliefs, which the government had agreed to.

The seminar transformed knowledge into concrete strategies, outlining legislative priorities and advocacy goals to strengthen ownership and collective purpose. Direct engagement with policymakers also brought about commitments, signalling political will to translate the discussions into action.

The seminar demonstrated a coherent, inclusive, and forward-looking effort to advance religious freedom in The Gambia—linking grassroots voices with policymaking and setting the stage for sustained collaboration and reform.





Making Survivors' Voices Heard

During the TRRC process, many survivors remained sidelined, particularly women and marginalized communities.

WAVE-Gambia created safe, culturally-grounded spaces for healing and truth sharing to bridge this gap.

Over 300 survivors, victim's families, and community members used oral storytelling, traditional music, and dance to share painful histories and foster collective healing. The initiative also included public lectures and discussions in various forums, educating youth on the significance of truth, justice and reconciliation.

**“THIS GATHERING
REMINDS US WE ARE
NOT ALONE, THAT OUR
STORIES MATTER AND
THAT JUSTICE AND
HEALING GO HAND IN
HAND AS A COLLECTIVE
JOURNEY.”**

—Youth participant

**“I FOUND THE COURAGE
TO SPEAK THE TRUTH
ABOUT MY SUFFERING
WITHOUT FEAR. IT GAVE
ME STRENGTH TO HEAL
AND HOPE FOR
JUSTICE.”**

—Woman survivor from Kerr Mot Ali

Many survivors noted that participating in these circles empowered them to reclaim dignity and counter the stigma attached to their victimization. The community initiative complemented formal TRRC processes by amplifying marginalized voices and promoting societal acknowledgment of abuses.



Photos: WAVE-Gambia



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



Photo: The Syria Campaign / Zakaria Abdelkafi

*The fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024 presents a historic opportunity to integrate a **comprehensive and inclusive transitional justice (TJ) process** in Syria—one that ensures justice, reconciliation, and long-term stability. However, amid hopes for accountability and a democratic transition within Syria, a culture of impunity remains a risk.*

The Assad regime is responsible for decades of large scale and systematic human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The actors in the conflict have also been responsible for serious violations since 2011.

Criminal justice is a key demand of survivors and civil society. Despite efforts by victims' families, civil society organisations, and international bodies to document and prosecute these crimes, significant gaps persist.

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) focuses on mapping victims and survivors of arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance and their families who have sought refuge in European countries where large Syrian refugee populations are located, and where international litigation related to Syria is active to support ongoing international legal mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable in foreign courts.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) focuses on international tools to pressure for victims' rights, becoming a leader in strategic litigation and supporting similar efforts in other conflict zones like Egypt and Libya.

During its control over vast areas of Syria between 2013 and its military defeat in 2019, ISIS committed crimes of murder, kidnapping, and enforced disappearances in order to subjugate the population, spread terror, and impose its grip on those areas.

Since 2021, Massar Families (a coalition of families of persons kidnapped by ISIS) has been documenting these various crimes through interviews with witnesses or families of persons kidnapped and disappeared by ISIS in Syria, aiming to uncover the fate of the missing and hold the perpetrators accountable—with 700 documents collected to date.

PALESTINE

Israel launched a full war on Gaza in response to the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2024, conducting an aerial bombing campaign and a full siege, followed by ground invasions into Gaza's most populous areas. This operation resulted in unprecedented human loss and large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure (with over 80% of buildings damaged or destroyed).

Israel restricted aid delivery, leading to famine-like conditions. Reports of brutal torture of Palestinian detainees by Israeli authorities have emerged. Around 80% of Palestinians killed are estimated to be civilians—an international consensus recognizes the war on Gaza as an ongoing genocide. Despite ceasefires, Israel continues its attacks on Gaza and around the region with impunity.

The escalation of war in Gaza and the intensifying silent war and annexation in the West Bank have resulted in a daily surge of severe human rights violations. This pervasive violence poses a significant challenge to documenting these human rights violations, as journalists in Gaza are being directly targeted and killed, or their movement between cities is severely limited by settler violence and military checkpoints, jeopardizing their physical and mental well-being. The result is a critical deficit in coverage and documentation of daily violations.

The GIAI supports two Palestinian organisations working on impactful advocacy, documentation, and engagements with international courts for the realisation of justice, truth, and reparation for victims, while holding states accountable for their obligations to prevent, investigate, punish, and redress for intense international crimes and serious human rights violations committed in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.







ASIA



**“WE DON’T WANT TO
WORRY ABOUT
RELIGIOUS RITES OR
ABOUT THE
SKELETONS... WHAT
WE REALLY WANT IS
ACCOUNTABILITY.”**

—Mother of a disappeared person

ADAYAALAM CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH (ACPR)

SRI LANKA

Across Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war, many Tamils were forcibly disappeared, with United Nations estimates being as high as 40,000 civilians. Sri Lanka's shifting political landscape leads to constant changes in policies and TJ mechanisms.

Repressive legislation and the Truth & Reconciliation Commission further marginalise these communities. Human rights violations frequently go unreported, and victim/survivor demands remain unheard in TJ processes. With limited research addressing Tamil-speaking communities' needs, they are often excluded from both national and international forums.

Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research (ACPR) documents rights violations daily and works on capacity building of victim/survivor communities—many of whom are women leading the fight for accountability since the end of the civil war in 2009.

Recently, ACPR conducted two regional advocacy trainings, bringing together civil society actors, grassroots human rights defenders (HRDs), and family members of victims of enforced disappearance. The training covered key concepts such as accountability, legal knowledge on human rights mechanisms, and mass graves.

**“YOU KNOW YOU'RE
HEALING; YOU'RE
CREATING SPACES
FOR HEALING THAT IS
ALSO GOING TO
BENEFIT THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
WOMEN AND THEIR
CHILDREN AS WELL.”**

—Participant

Family of the disappeared who attended the trainings indicated their appreciation for the psychological validation received, and acknowledged that they now better understood the mandate of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) and how to utilise its obligations. Those that participated in the advocacy training on mass graves reported feeling empowered to engage more strategically with the Chemmani exhumation process (the second-largest mass grave site, recently exhumated). The Chemmani mass graves hold particular importance for the families, and for Sri Lanka's progress towards accountability.





EUROPE

KOSOVO REHABILITATION CENTER FOR TORTURE VICTIMS (KRCT)

KOSOVO

Kosovo's transitional justice processes aim to address the aftermath of the tragedy of its armed conflict (1998-99) through efforts such as the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, efforts to document war crimes, creation of war memorials, and restoring the dignity of victims.

The Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) protects and promotes the rights of survivors of torture and violence through rehabilitation, legal aid, advocacy, and socio-economic support. KCRT has played a key role in addressing wartime sexual violence, challenging stigma through a holistic approach combining psychosocial, medical, and legal services. It expanded its mandate to monitor human rights in detention and care institutions, support refugees and returnees, and lead research efforts—including the creation of the first database documenting wartime sexual violence in Kosovo.

KCRT focuses on strengthening access to justice for CRSV survivors through capacity-building for CSOs, targeted training for minority groups, and public officials, legal support, policy engagement, and awareness campaigns. Positive stories include:

- 13-year prison sentence for a perpetrator of war rape crimes after a three-year legal battle, marking the first time that a [survivor triumphed at all levels of the judiciary](#).
- Double pensions granted for wartime sexual violence survivors, [setting a key legal precedent](#) that ensure survivors can receive both recognition and age/contribution-based pensions
- [A male survivor shares his story for the first time](#)—breaking taboos and opening a new chapter in justice and dignity for all survivors





UKRAINE

Traditional investigative methods alone cannot address the scale and complexity of crimes committed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, making it essential to adopt innovative technological solutions. Open-source intelligence (OSINT) has become a crucial tool since the armed conflict in Syria, allowing for remote investigations, enabling information to be recorded directly by witnesses, survivors and victims—thus breaking down barriers that have historically silenced certain voices in traditional investigations.

Ukrainian Archive (developed by Mnemonic gUG in March 2022), is at the forefront of addressing these challenges and facilitating the use of open-source information for justice and accountability efforts. By systematically monitoring, collecting, analysing, and archiving open-source information at scale, Ukrainian Archive ensures that the evidence meets the highest standards required for legal proceedings.



Currently housing over 7 million digital records, collected and archived in close collaboration and contribution of Ukrainian civil society organisations (CSOs), Ukrainian Archive serves as a vital repository of evidence for ongoing investigations into war crimes and gross human rights violations conducted by international and Ukrainian accountability actors.

In addition to data collection, Ukrainian Archive is working to strengthen the capacities of human rights defenders (HRDs) and CSOs by providing them with the tools and training necessary to effectively utilise open-source data in their pursuit of justice, accountability, and memorialisation.

CONCLUSION

Despite important advances in strengthening justice and accountability responses for serious human rights violations, several systemic and political challenges persist:

1. **Progressive erosion of justice ecosystems and declining adherence to international legal norms.**
2. **Fragmentation and limited coordination across accountability actors.**
3. **Insufficient integration of victims' and survivors' rights and perspectives.**
4. **Disinformation and the strategic manipulation of narratives.**
5. **Chronic underfunding and short-term project cycles.**

Consequently, accountability remains elusive, grievances worsen, abuses continue, institutional trust diminishes, cycles of violence continue as root causes are unaddressed—and impunity prevails.

This underscores the urgency for a more cohesive and inclusive approach to justice and accountability.

The work of the grassroots organisations highlighted in this booklet, among many others, emphasize that solidarity and a strong victim-centered approach is the only way forward.

With long-term, sustained, and meaningful support for Transitional Justice initiatives, we can continue fighting and mobilizing against the rising tide of authoritarianism, and dismantle the structural root causes of impunity.

Disclaimer

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