

Free Expression Handbook

The International Freedom of Expression eXchange (IFEX) has published "Campaigning for Free Expression: A Handbook for Advocates" aimed at equipping human rights activists around the world with essential tools to campaign more effectively for freedom of expression and press freedom.

The publication is a 120-page manual that provides a toolbox of tips, best practice case studies and resources for campaigning.

The handbook showcases a variety of campaign tools, including investigative missions, coalition-building, legal advocacy and Internet-based actions, such as blogging, e-mail protest letters and SMS text messaging.

Case studies include organisations that campaign on other issues such as the environment, landmines and other human rights.

The handbook also gives activists important tools for mounting campaign strategies and doing power analyses of their local situations.

"This handbook gives us vivid examples of how a variety of campaign techniques have been used to persuade governments to act in less repressive ways," says Luckson Chipare, IFEX Convenor and Regional Director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

"By doing skillful, tactical and strategic campaigning, free expression advocates can maximise their resources to become even more powerful agents of change," he adds.

With threats to journalists, writers, Internet users and human rights activists on the rise in many countries, the need for more concerted campaigning on free expression issues is increasingly urgent. "Governments and other forces are employing more sophisticated methods to restrict freedom of expression," says Chipare.

Criminal defamation laws are being used to hinder proper scrutiny of the activities of public officials, business leaders and others. Internet censorship is spreading worldwide as governments find new ways of limiting citizens' expression and access to information on the World Wide Web. And since September 11, 2001, many countries have passed sweeping anti-terrorism laws that infringe on human rights.

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