



Students by day, rebels by night?

Criminalising student dissent in
shrinking democracies

Written by

Chris Millora and
Renee Karunungan

A Chilean police water cannon sprays
anti-government demonstrators in
Santiago, Chile, Friday, Jan. 10, 2020.
Photo credit: Fernando Llano, AP Photo

SAIH | Norwegian Students' and Academics'
International Assistance Fund

About the authors

Chris Millora

Originally from the Philippines, Chris is currently finishing his PhD in education and international development with the UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation at the University of East Anglia (UK). Chris' study looks at the role of learning in spaces of community action (such as volunteering) among young people. He works with theories around participatory development including the role of literacies and learning in instigating social change.

Chris was Editor-in-Chief in their university paper and student council officer back in the Philippines. He was involved in lobbying for specific university policies, better student engagement and, through the school paper, ensured that issues important to students were featured.



Renee Karunungan

Renee is currently in her second year of PhD researching the impacts of social media in politics in the Philippines. Renee has experience in working with human rights defenders and student activists in the Philippines and internationally. She was a student activist herself and became a full-time human rights worker for seven years before going back to university to do her masters and PhD. She has worked with young feminists, environmental activists, and human rights defenders across different regions.

Renee has personally experienced harassment and threats from her country's government for her activism. Her personal experience as an activist facing repression has given her insights about the issue and she is able to empathise with other activists who face the same situation.



Acknowledgements

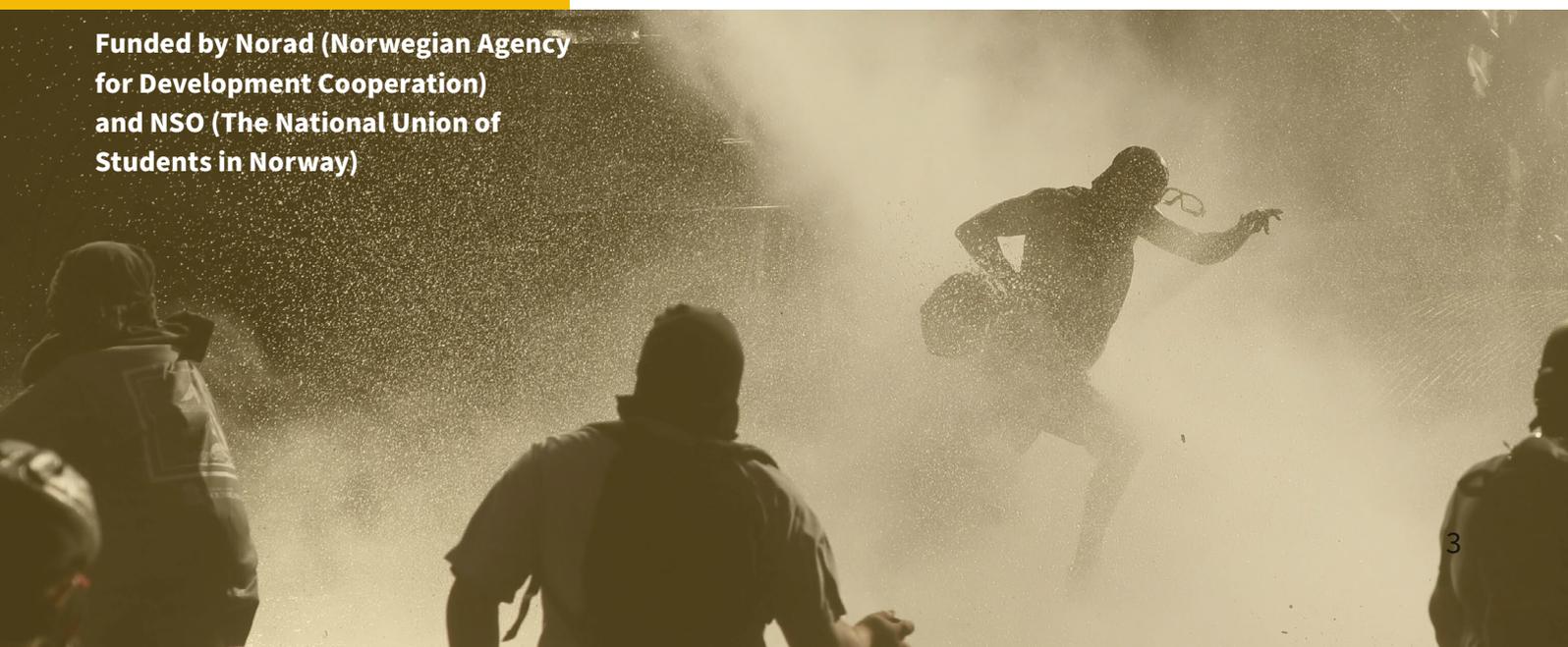
We are grateful to SAIH for the opportunity to write this report, which is especially relevant with the rise of authoritarian populist governments in recent years. We would like to thank all the student activists who agreed to be part of this report and whose personal struggles have been kindly shared with us. We would also like to thank our translators -- Areeya Tivasuradej, Lina Yaseen, and Ron Segismundo -- who helped connect us with interviewees and ensured our they were comfortable speaking their own languages. Lastly, thank you to the SAIH team -- Stian, Kasper, Roya, Malin, and Sunniva -- who all helped make this report possible with their guidance.

ISBN 978-82-90897-25-8

Contents

p.6	1. Introduction
p.8	2. Method Weaving local and global narratives of student activism
p.10	3. Understanding student activism
p.15	4. Disrupting power structures Spaces and impacts of student activist movements
p.17	Case Study The Philippines
p.21	Case Study Egypt
p.24	5. Shrinking spaces for dissent Trends in criminalisation of student activism
p.26	Case Study Zimbabwe
p.29	Case Study Colombia
p.32	6. Digital media A strategy and a threat
p.34	Case Study Thailand
p.37	Case Study Sudan
p.40	7. Concluding remarks and Recommendations

Funded by Norad (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) and NSO (The National Union of Students in Norway)



Preface

By **Sunniva Folgen Høiskar**,
President of SAIH



At any other time, this report could and should have been read as a celebration of student activism and the power of it.

However, as it is published at a time when students globally face lockdown, closed campuses and economic hardship it becomes harder to conjure the familiar sounds, images and feelings of a proper student demonstration. The pandemic has robbed student activists of their most effective tools: demonstrations too large to be ignored, lecture halls crammed with opinionated activists and the all-important unity and solidarity. While students must find new ways to organise, demonstrate and influence – their adversaries still have access to the same tools of repression, and a pandemic as a cover for using them. That opportunity is unfortunately being used to the fullest.

SAIH, the Norwegian Students' and Academics' Assistance fund, has worked with and for student activists since 1961, when we were founded by Norwegian students to support black student activists in South Africa in their struggle against the apartheid system. Since then, students have changed the world again and again, recently in Hong Kong, Nicaragua, Algeria and South Africa – where students are at the forefront of movements to change oppressive structures. SAIH's motto "education for liberation" is founded on the *Pedagogy*

of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire. Our belief is that through education an individual can be equipped with the knowledge and tools of critical thinking that is necessary to understand and therefore challenge the unjust structures of the society one lives in. Students all over the world prove this to be true every day, taking personal risks to improve society for everyone. With this report we explore student activism and the repercussions student activists face in their work for human rights.

In the making of this report, numerous student activists have been interviewed about their work and their struggles. Though every context is different, there are striking similarities to be found in the attacks that student activists endure. A student activist from the Philippines, Mico, describes how the authorities try to create narratives to discredit the students: "They say, '*estudyante sa umaga, rebelde sa gabi*' (students in the morning and rebels in the evening). That form of attack... we are rebranded as enemies of the people and enemies of the state... our demands are immediately being discredited because we are being branded as enemies, but we try to propose solutions. Of course, we want government programmes to work!". This tactic is not only in play in the Philippines but in all parts of the world. Peaceful student activism is too

often and too easily rebranded as thugs inciting violence. Combined with the rise of fake news, these tactics can have extreme consequences. Students are being branded as terrorists, rioters, enemies of the state, foreign agents and traitors, and in many countries, this branding is not limited to the creation of government friendly narratives, but also leads to arrests and prosecution. The increasing criminalisation of student activism is a threat to democracy and leads to the silencing of important voices of dissent. In Zimbabwe, one student interviewed for this report stated on her arrest: “It affected other students and instilled fear in them so that if they wanted to demonstrate, they are now scared to air out the abuses of the government.”

Students play a vital role as human rights defenders with their relentless activism. Fighting for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and free elections in contexts where others do not dare take to the streets, students take great personal risks for the benefit of the whole society. As human rights defenders their activism warrants protection that they are often not getting today. As the UN declaration on human rights defenders (A/RES/53/144, 1998) article 12, paragraph 2 says:

“ The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection... of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”

Throughout the examples and interviews that you can read in this report, it is crystal clear that states are not fulfilling their obligations. In

many instances it is even the state that is the perpetrator of violence, threats, retaliation, discrimination, pressure and arbitrary actions. At other times, the state simply does not step up to protect students. When internationally agreed rights are being breached in this scope, the international community cannot simply accept it, but must raise these issues with the states, provide protection and raise awareness. Protecting human rights defenders is a global obligation, as the struggle for human rights is a global one. Today, student activists are not receiving the protection they need.

The interviews in this report should serve as a warning of what the world might lose if this criminalisation continues to increase. Despite the numerous examples from history and the present, students do not get the attention they need and deserve. Numbers from Scholars at Risk's Free to Think reports show an alarming number of attacks on student expression (118 reported incidents in the latest report), and this is only the tip of the iceberg. While other human rights defenders in many cases have international networks, strong organisational backing and exit strategies – students in too many instances find themselves alone and improvising their response to the repercussions they face. This report aims to showcase the work of student activists, while at the same time highlighting the need for further documentation, recognition and action.

This report was commissioned to highlight the work of student activists and raise awareness of their conditions. I hope it inspires every reader to stand in solidarity with student activists globally, to raise awareness of their struggles and to take action for the protection of human rights defenders globally. ■

1. Introduction

Student activists have been at the helm of social movements around the world throughout history. Inspired by stubborn optimism and undying dreams for a just society, students have long confronted dominant social and political norms. They have been actively campaigning for solutions to broader issues beyond the campus and the classroom – from the apartheid and Vietnam war, austerity measures and unemployment, neo-liberal policies and capitalism, environmental justice and climate change, to responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. As students continually prove that they are neither ‘apathetic’ nor ‘disengaged’, their acts and voices of dissent have been met with stringent surveillance, vicious policing, criminalisation, and killings – violent responses that have become more frequent, coercive and intense in light of the current pandemic. Several public and policy discourses have the tendency to frame students as ‘dangerous subjects’ that must be feared, justifying the need for their governance and control. This report challenges these binaries that seem to frame these activists as ‘students by day, rebels by night’ (as in report title) by highlighting the many roles, motivations, aims and approaches of student-led movements globally.

Against the backdrop of pervasive social issues and newer ones (such as the pandemic), this report aims to give an overview of the current landscape of student activism in different regions of the world, the threats student activists encounter, and the strategies they use in the face of such threats. Drawing from first-hand interviews with student activists from Egypt, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Philippines, Thailand, and Sudan, this report is a bid to urgently put a spotlight on the alarming oppression of student activist movements all over the world. To do this, we draw attention to the significant roles students have played across moments of mass movements throughout history that have led to widespread policy changes, falls of regimes and shifts in perspectives. By highlighting the legitimate and powerful impact of students now and then, we aim to encourage policymakers, practitioners, academics and agencies to engage in a serious conversation about how to best recognise and protect student activists as defenders of human rights. ■

Photo Credit: Kierran Allen



Report Structure

In the first section, we aim to conceptualise and ‘make sense’ of student activist movements and their criminalisation by looking into some of the dominant academic and policy debates in this area. Recognising that student activism exists within a wider ecosystem of social movements, we identify specific characteristics that provide impetus for student action to form and grow. As we review the ways and justifications of stifling student voice, we propose a human rights-based approach in understanding student activism.

In the second section, we look at the spaces that student activists occupy as well as their impact in the larger society. We take a historical approach to understand how student activism has been an important force for social change, looking particularly at case studies in The Philippines and Egypt. Aside from a temporal review, we also look at spaces of impact, particularly how students have fought for reforms at local, national and even global levels.

In the third section, we look at the trends of criminalising student activists. Our two case studies, Zimbabwe and Colombia, are both in a political precipice where student activists are facing shrinking spaces for dissent and an increase in the number of incidents where student protesters are arrested. Both countries have toppled dictatorships in the past, but negative public perceptions of student activists combined with new laws criminalising dissent has allowed for successful state-sponsored repression, surveillance, and violence against young dissenters.

In the fourth part, we discuss the role of technology in student movements. First, we tackle the role that technology has played in helping students organise and mobilise protests. Second, we look at the way technology is used by the state to harass and repress students through surveillance and censorship. Our case study countries, Thailand and Sudan, have both seen student-led uprising in 2020 where technology, particularly social media, has played a crucial role in information dissemination and even in raising funds. Both countries, however, also face heavy censorship and surveillance from the state.

Finally, we end with some policy recommendations that hopefully can guide actors in the field on how to better protect student activists.

2. Method

Weaving local and global narratives of student activism

This report employed a comparative multiple case study approach combining an analysis of both secondary and primary data (through semi-structured interviews). Complementing desk research with first-hand data produced a robust report leading to evidence-based recommendations. The research process began with a review of current scholarship around student rights, student campaigning and social movements. We quickly realised that student activist movements are happening in real time – many of which have not yet been covered by academic literature, so we also analysed so-called ‘grey literature’ such as news articles, media, videos, blogs and think pieces. Informed by Mitchell’s (1983) notion of a ‘telling case’, the case study countries were selected because of their potential to illustrate certain themes and issues that we identified through the desk-based research – thereby allowing for a more conceptual discussion as opposed to generalisation (as in a ‘typical’ case study). The case studies were embedded in the subsections as illustrative examples of the debates being discussed.

Once the case study countries have been identified, we, the report authors, alongside SAIH, tapped into our networks to invite student activists to be interviewed. The questions were both exploratory (e.g. what is your experience of student activism in your country?) and focused (e.g. can you tell us a bit more about any oppression you have experienced?) to get

a more holistic view of the issues. Many respondents were interviewed via phone or an online video messaging software while other respondents, specifically those in Sudan, Egypt and Colombia preferred written interviews using an interview schedule that was translated in Arabic and Spanish respectively. In total, 10 student activists were interviewed. All interviews were transcribed and analysed using conceptual lenses emerging from our literature review. We also developed a cross-country analysis of emerging themes from the case studies which we used in drawing up and tightening policy and practice recommendations.

Recognising that many activists face harassment and persecution in their countries, we ensured that their identity remained anonymous. In the process of inviting interviewees for this report, we experienced how some student activists were reluctant about being interviewed. Some withdrew their participation due to/ out of fear of criminalisation, red tagging or surveillance as consequences to speaking out. Such concerns exemplify the hostile environment within which student activists operate. While these issues further frame the rationale for the need for this report, it also compelled us to pay close attention to ethical measures that will ensure confidentiality, anonymity and protection of student activists in this research. Included in such a strategy was working with the student activists themselves to identify the interview medium

(e.g. written, video/voice interview online) that they felt most safe using. All names reflected in this report are pseudonyms and no specific descriptions were included that might identify a particular respondent. We protected the data we gathered using secure and encrypted apps/technology such as Signal and ProtonMail. Recordings and transcriptions were stored safely in password-protected laptops and hard drives. Raw data were only accessible to the report writers.

This report has its limitations, not least because the scale of student activist movements globally could not be captured in its entirety. It has been argued that academic research on student activism seems to be focused on experiences in the so-called Global North (cf Gill and DeFronzo 2009). Because of this (amongst other reasons), the report is dominantly focusing on experiences of student activism in the so-called Global South – attempting regional reach through case studies in the Middle East, Africa, Asian and Latin America regions. The sampling size in this report may be relatively small compared to global estimates of student activism, but our aim is not to produce statistical generalisations. Rather, we discuss the case studies comparatively and relate them to wider themes and issues found in the literature. Thus, this report should not be read in solitary, but rather as a contribution to the body of literature in the field. ■

Understanding student activism

To understand student activism, close attention must be given to the history and context within which a movement takes place. While it is difficult (some say impossible) to present an all-encompassing review of the field, useful points of departure are to locate student activism within wider debates on youth participation, to explore the unique identities students embody in the process of protest and to identify the various spaces student activists occupy and claim in society.

Student activism: shattering the myth of the 'disengaged' youth?

Young people's participation in political and social processes have been dominantly framed through a "youth deficit" model (Earl, Maher and Elliott, 2016, p. 1) wherein "expectations have spread about a disenchanted, frustrated, apathetic youth cohort" (della Porta 2019b, p. 1408). In a collection of studies of youth social movements in Chile, South Korea and Canada, it was found that youth activists themselves saw how – as Millennials – they were being imprinted as a 'screwed generation' (see della Porta, 2019a) as they face dire social and economic situations produced by policies of generations that came before them.

Yet, evidence and experience tell us that young people all over the world – despite challenges of unemployment, precarity and diminishing

social services – are not only increasingly active but have taken leadership roles in setting up social movements that challenge political systems. They design new ways of engaging with stakeholders and committing to solutions to societal problems.

Presented with both old and new issues, young people are also equipped with fresh tools and tactics – particularly social media technologies – to propose alternative ways of addressing social issues and reimagining social futures (see particularly Ting, 2017). The youth climate strike, youth-led mutual aid groups during COVID-19, and student activist movements continue to shatter myths surrounding youth disengagement.

Students as changemakers, universities as sites of struggles

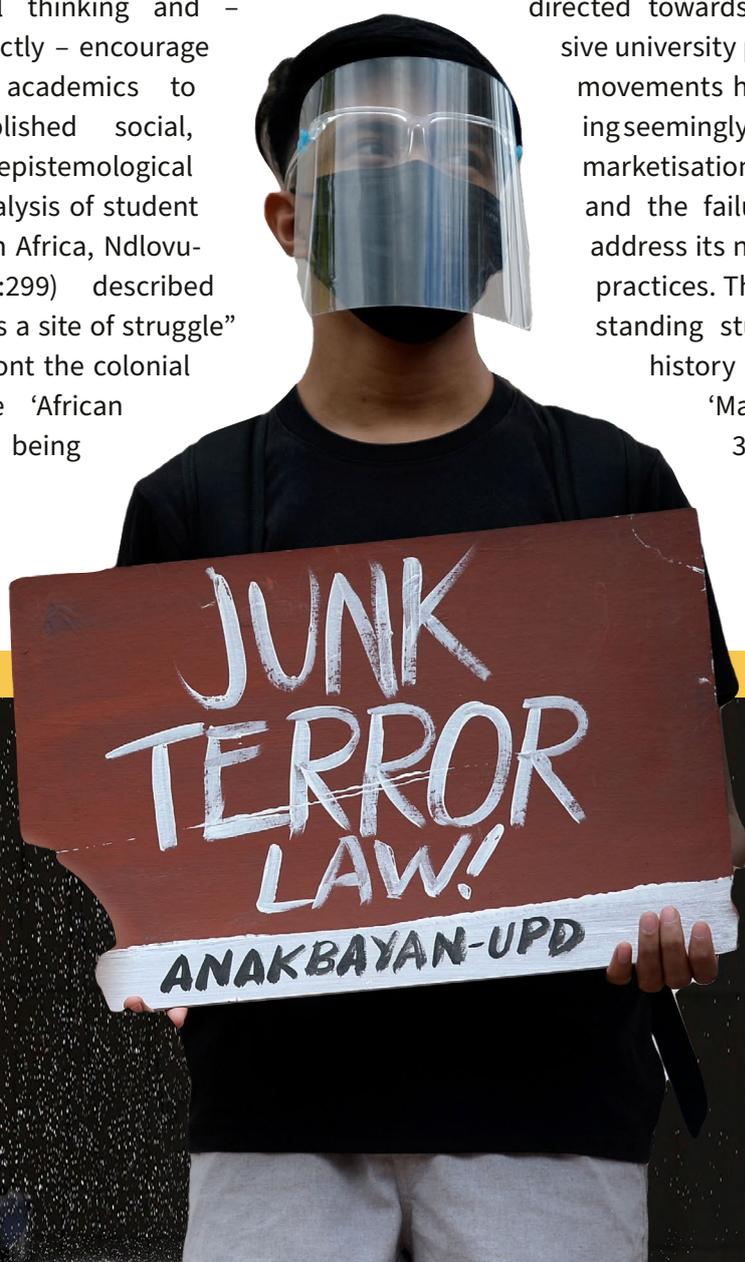
But what makes voices and acts of student activism unique? For researchers, it is a combination of student identity and experience, and the higher education environment. 'Studentship' or the 'state of being a student' "can be highly conducive to 'acting collectively in a public sphere' to express interests, ideas, make demands on some authority, or hold that authority accountable" (Klemenčič, 2014 p. 399). For Barnett (2007, p. 3) studentship could be understood as a life-stage where students are "free and becoming" – a disposition that could increase propensity for collective political

action. By the turn of the 20th century, many universities were no longer reserved for the social 'elite' and welcomed students across differing socio-economic status (as cited in Klemenčić, 2014). Individuals from ethnic and racial minorities have been claiming their spaces within academia (Altbach 2006) although this still remains a challenge in many universities. Increasingly diverse student populations mean increasing diversity in views, identities, concerns and priorities. Social networks within and amongst universities are wide and well-established which increases possibilities of politicising student grievances (Klemenčić 2014).

Education institutions are favourable environments for student activism to form and develop. Several universities maintain an active intellectual environment, promote critical thinking and – directly or indirectly – encourage students and academics to question established social, political and epistemological norms. In his analysis of student protests in South Africa, Ndlovu-Gastheni (2018:299) described “the university as a site of struggle” – students confront the colonial legacies of the ‘African university’ as being

transplants from Europe and North America. We have also seen global trends in how universities are changing – diminishing public support, increasing privatisation and marketisation and growing efforts to ‘govern’ student activity (cf Selenica, 2018). Neoliberal policies coupled with conditions of uncertainty within universities shrink spaces for student participation – “students’ free and autonomous time is drastically reduced...where spaces and opportunities for aggregation are also reduced” (della Porta 2014b, p. 1411). Universities and education institutions generate a paradoxical situation – they encourage free thinking and sow the seeds for student activism but also create policies that curtail student expression and organising.

In fact, notable student movements were directed towards challenging oppressive university policies. Many student movements have aimed at disrupting seemingly unstoppable trends of marketisation of higher education and the failure of universities to address its neo-colonial and racist practices. The biggest and longest standing student protest in the history of Canada, called the ‘Maple Spring’, saw over 300,000 students (75%



of the student population at that time) walk the streets of Quebec as a response to increased tuition fee following government's austerity measures (Bégin-Caouette and Jones, 2014). Student activist movements in South Korea in the 2000s were also a retort to rising tuition fees following privatisation of higher education and decreasing public expenditure (Shin, Kim and Choi 2014). In the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, the struggle was not only about the neoliberal university but a wider concern over decolonisation and epistemic freedom. It was described as a revolution 'from below to disrupt this unequal, racialized social and economic order. It rekindled and questioned the idea about the university in a postcolonial society' (Chinguno et al. 2017, p. 1 as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni). Even in the face of shrinking spaces and opportunities for dissent within universities, student activists all over the world find ways to claim their spaces.

Legitimising violent responses to student dissent

Many institutions – including states – meet the power of student activism through punitive tactics of delegitimization, governance, surveillance and criminalisation. They reframe young people no longer as 'disengaged' or 'screwed' millennials or Gen Z's – but as 'troubled', disorganised and at-risk of being derailed from responsible adulthood (cf. Bessant and Grasso 2018). Analysing various student activist movements in the UK, Power (2012, p. 416) found that "students began to find themselves constructed as a new kind of enemy – "domestic extremists." Long criticized by the media for being politically "apathetic," they were now demonized for becoming the opposite". Public and policy discourses around student activism have been peppered with descriptions such as 'raging', 'dangerous' and 'violent'. Informed by the concept of 'development as discourse' (Escobar 1995), the way



Photo credit: Bret Kavanaugh Unsplash

institutions and stakeholders label segments of the society (e.g. the 'poor', 'women', 'youth') crystallises in policies, assumptions and actions. For example, narratives that 'problematise' student activist movements then justify the need for students to be criminalised, policed (cf. Power, 2012) and governed (cf. Bessant and Grasso, 2018).

What Bessant and Grasso (2018) said about young people in general also seem to be applicable to students: they are some of the most intensely regulated groups in society as compared to other segments. They notice that there seem to be a tension between promoting youth political participation and "...states [sic] using everything from surveillance, summary offences, expulsion from universities, 'gag laws' and 'antiterrorism' legislation, and even imprisonment to repress certain forms of young people's political activism" (Bessant and Grasso 2018). State responses to student activism ranged from simply ignoring student voices to violent dispersion of student protests. While these repressive tactics can sometimes abate certain student activist movements, they could also be a source of inspiration that increase and intensify others. In Argentina and Uruguay, control of student activist movements led to the rise of urban guerrilla groups, while in Nigeria and Myanmar the closing of universities and expulsion of students caused students to bring their movements to the countryside (Altbach 1989).

The hows of student activism: some models

There have been different conceptualisations of how student and youth activism are expressed. For example, dissent may be categorised into three types: dutiful, disruptive and dangerous (O'Brien, Selboe and Hayward, 2018). Each type is differentiated by the extent by which it is oriented to, or dissenting of, prevailing

relationships of power. Dutiful dissent works within existing systems and power structures to effect policy change (ibid:42) which could be exemplified by student representation in higher education management or students being members of board of race and diversity councils. Disruptive dissent challenges dominant social norms and policy practices to redirect policy and change outcomes (ibid:43), for instance, protest marches on campus pressuring university leaders to reverse tuition fee increases. Finally, dangerous dissent creates and (re-)generates new and alternative systems that subvert existing power structures (ibid:43). For example, students developing and sharing a 'decolonised' curriculum as part of the wider movement to decolonise universities. Typologies such as this may be helpful in providing a conceptual framework to explore the possible relationships between activism and power. For instance, the ways by which power relationships are constructed, enhanced, maintained and/or challenged through young people's activities.

Other scholars offer models that help us understand the changing dynamics of student activism. Two strands of social action are proposed: a so-called traditional model where student activist movements are linked to political parties, often with a single, central leader and concerned with a singular issue. Another that is more 'emergent' and dispersed, critical towards political parties and power structures are much more horizontal rather than 'centric' (Bellei, Cabalin and Orellana, 2014). Castells (2012) outlines what he called an emerging pattern of 'networked social movements' within which the internet plays a key role. These 'new' forms of social movements are spontaneous in their origin. They start 'local' but have the potential to be 'viral' and projected into global arenas. They do not require any formal leadership but grow from the horizontality of support and solidarity.

Conceptualising student activism: what can human rights-based framework contribute?

While the previous models highlight student agency and the complex dynamics of activism, there seems to be less recognition of the often-violent state and non-state responses to student organising. To remedy this gap, this report frames student activism through the lens of human rights. In 1948 the UN passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that outlines a set of fundamental human rights that everyone should enjoy and that should be universally protected. The declaration has provided renewed motivations for social movements, led to formation of various human rights organisations and enhanced international networks of social activists (Tsutsui 2006). Student activism could be understood as a powerful pathway to ensure that human rights are upheld. Suddenly, there was a framework within which to align student activists' understandings and identities - providing impetus for existing movements to progress but also new opportunities for fresh movements to grow.

What does it mean to view student activism through a human rights lens? It begins by recognising that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression” (UDHR, Article 19). Students' participation and/or dissent in political and social processes are part of wider practice of public organising and expression that needs to be respected. Therefore, approaching student activism through the lens of human rights produces questions such as: to what extent do state and non-state actors enable and/or limit students to understand, recognise and claim their rights as enshrined in the UDHR? This way, we look not only at the dynamics of student activism (as in the models reviewed above) but, through a human rights-based framework, critically

appraise state and institutional responses to activist movements. Within this framework, students are identified as ‘human rights defenders’ – a term that according to UNHCR is used “to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights.” In 1998, the UN General Assembly, through A/RES/53/144 adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The declaration defines human rights defenders as



Individuals, groups and associations... contributing to, the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals...” A/RES/53/144, 4th paragraph in the preambular text

The declaration stresses that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. Within these provisions, support and protection of human rights defenders in the context of their work must be ensured:



The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection... of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”



Photo credit: Mat Reding, Unsplash

Therefore, when student activists are seen as human rights defenders, they warrant protection as they engage in peaceful protests. In a recent report on the horrific student criminalisation in Latin America, CLADE (the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education) argued the “importance of deepening the analysis of the context, visibility, understanding, reporting and systematization of situations of [student] criminalization” using the human rights lens. A human rights-based framework provides a language and legal framework by which to understand criminalisation of student activist movements. They are no longer just forms of governance, curtailment or domination but institutional/state-sanctioned impingements on the fundamental rights of students to express their opinion and participate in public discourse.

However, the lack of specificity of who qualifies as a human rights defender can also be problematic. “The label ‘HRD’ is used for certain actors within a sociopolitical context and not others, without clear explanation or consistent rationale” (Nah, et. al., 2013:9). Therefore, there is a need to carefully consider how the identity

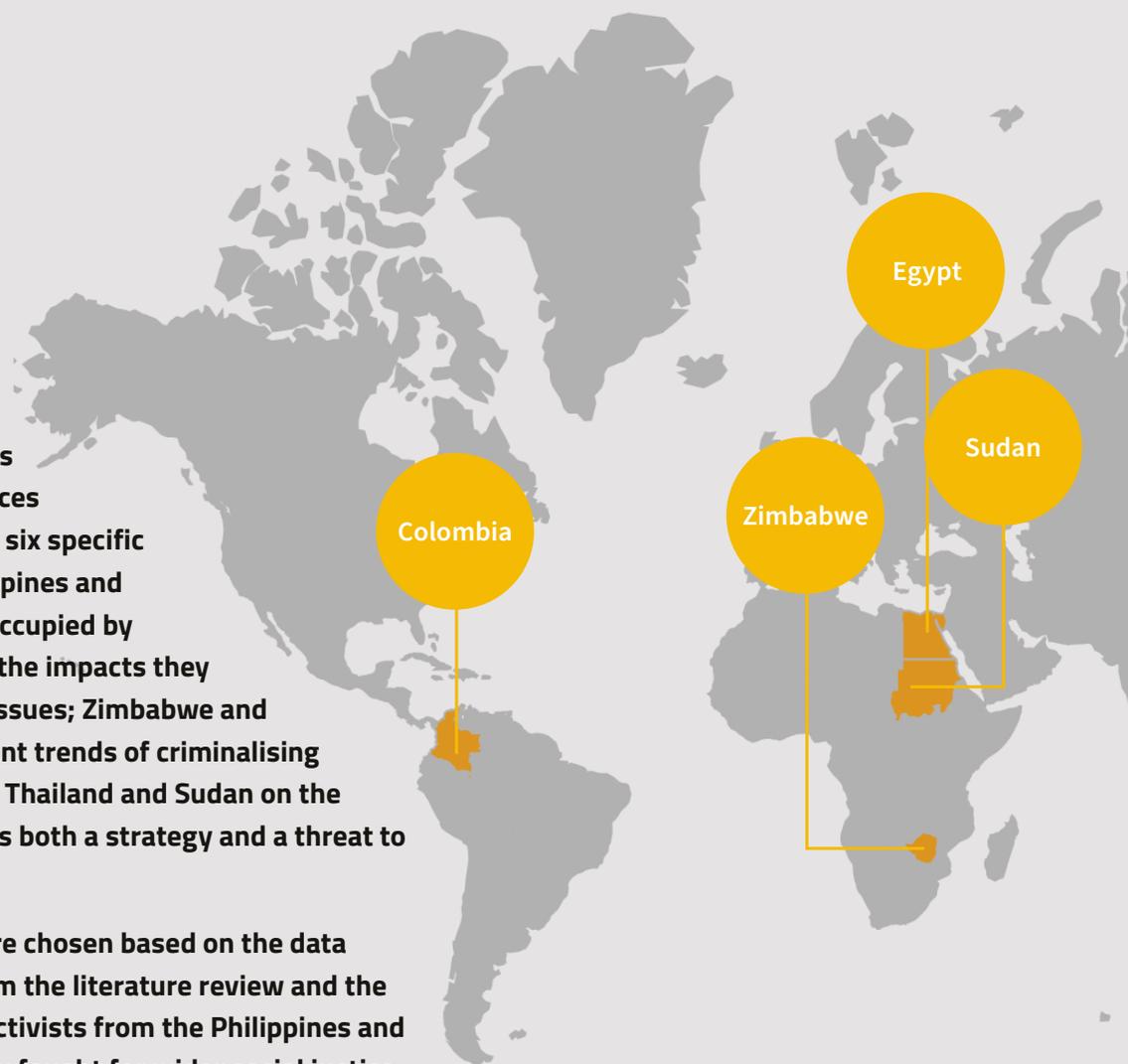
of a Human Rights Defender is influenced by and taken up within changing contexts and situations. For instance, the applicability of the ‘non-violence’ criterion seems problematic in a context of occupation or conflict such as in the occupied Palestinian territory (see Jaraisy and Feldman, 2013). Nah and colleagues (2013:9) ask whether the criterion excludes: “those who engage in ‘stone throwing’ as a form of protest, as well as those who organize peaceful protests that turn violent in response to aggressive and violent policing”.

The students we interviewed consider themselves as human rights defenders. In doing so, they challenge the notion that they are enemies of the state, and rather than individuals who protect their rights and of those who are often oppressed. Taken together, understanding student activism through the lens of human rights sees these acts and voices of dissent as contributory towards upholding and defending fundamental human rights. Student activists are seen as human rights defenders who must be protected in ways that are responsive to the realities of their contexts. ■

The following chapters dive into the experiences of student activists in six specific countries -- the Philippines and Egypt on the spaces occupied by student activists and the impacts they have on wider social issues; Zimbabwe and Colombia on the current trends of criminalising student activists; and Thailand and Sudan on the role of digital media as both a strategy and a threat to student activism.

The three themes were chosen based on the data we have gathered from the literature review and the interviews. Student activists from the Philippines and Egypt have historically fought for wider social justice issues in spaces outside the academe. Zimbabwean and Colombian student activists are currently facing persecution, facilitated in part by state propaganda creating negative narratives and labels against them. And finally, Thai and Sudanese student activists share their clever use of social media to mobilise and organise protests despite facing surveillance and censorship from the state.

The following chapters also touch on the impacts of COVID on the criminalisation of student activists.



Chapter 4 - About this section

In this chapter, we look at the spaces student activists occupy outside the four walls of the university, as well the wider social justice issues they fight for. We will give you an overview of different student movements in history, around the world, and their roles in challenging and dismantling oppressive regimes. We then hear about the stories of student activists from the Philippines and Egypt, countries who both have a long and deep history of student activism and have toppled dictators in the past. Student activists of both countries today look at the successes of their predecessors in the past in pursuit of their current fight for justice.



Thailand

The Philippines

4. Disrupting power structures

Spaces and impacts of student activist movements

Previously, we argued that universities directly and/or indirectly provide a conducive environment for student activist movements to develop and grow. However, it would be inaccurate to think that concerns of student activists are only towards the universities and that the impact of their actions are confined within educational institutions (cf Altbach 2006, 1983; Klemenčič 2014). In this section, we will look closely into their roles in campaigning for the mitigation of wider social challenges such as democracy and human rights, climate change, poverty and inequalities, and broader political concerns around racial justice and gender inequalities. While they have begun and grown in universities, spaces and impacts of student activist movements go beyond campuses and classrooms.

Throughout history, student activists have been important actors in the realisation of significant historical milestones such as the fall of political regimes and disrupting unequal segregation policies (Altbach 2006:335-337). In former colonial regions of Africa and Asia, students have played a key role in nationalist and decolonial struggles in various countries. In Indonesia, for example, students from former Dutch East Indies studying in the

Netherlands were said to have been exposed to and later brought home ideas of nationalism – creating the notion of the Indonesian Nation. Student leaders not only provided intellectual leadership in conceptualising nationalism but became some of the most important leaders in nationalist movements that later ousted the Dutch (Bachtiar 1968 as cited in Altbach 2006). The same pattern was found among Indian students who were educated in England, engaged in student movements in the 1920s, remained active in the struggle for independence and contributed to the departure of the British in 1947 (Altbach 1968).

In the United States, the civil rights movements were said to be stimulated by black college students in the South, campus students fought against the arms race, and the American escalation of the Vietnam war invigorated student movements leading to mass demonstrations, nationwide campus disruptions, and major protests in Washington DC (Altbach 2006). Historically, at the height of the apartheid period, “one of the most distinctive characteristic features of anti-colonial resistance was the prominent role of students and student organisations. Universities and schools became hotspots of political contestations targeted at racial superiority and injustices beyond the university community to include all South African citizens” (Muswede 2017). More recent student activist movements have also proved that their impact goes beyond the university. The Maple Spring in Canada, for example “played a key role in the fall of the government and the decision of the new government to roll back and then index [college tuition] fees.” (Bégin-Caouette and Jones 2014:422). Anti-apartheid and decolonial student protests in South Africa such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall had a significant influence in toppling down the era that segregated the South African education system along racial lines.

Another important historical example of student political activism that led to widespread impact is that of Latin America, particularly in the first decades of the 20th Century (Altbach 2006; Lipset 1966). A string of student movements known as the Latin American University Reform Movement or *reforma* started at the University of Cordoba in Argentina in 1918 and have spread rapidly across the region from Mexico to Chile. The demands led to significant changes in the region’s university system (Lipset 1966) including student representation in all university decision-making processes.

However, in the past two decades, “severe political and economic pressures, military regimes and the growth of private universities have weakened the power of the *reforma* ideals” (Altbach 2006). While the examples so far – and the case studies of the Philippines and Egypt below – show that the impacts of student movements may be scalable and/or ‘viral’, the experience of Latin America also brings to fore the question of whether these changes would persevere throughout time. The experience in South Korea grapples with similar issues. The tuition fee increases in the 2000s revitalised what was considered a weakening student activist space in the late 1980s. However, the long-standing and historical fight against tuition hikes had no ‘significant effect’ in terms of lowering the tuition fees (Shin et al. 2014). However, they have accomplished to put a spotlight on the issue, gain involvement and support from the student body and veered away from elitist decision-making processes within South Korean universities. ■

‘Students in the morning, rebels at night’?

The legacy and impact of student activism in the Philippines

Student activism in the Philippines dates as far back as the 1800’s when young Filipinos demanded reforms from the Spanish colonial regime (Abinales, 2012). The criminalisation of student activists also dated as far back as the Spanish regime where the national hero, Jose Rizal, was imprisoned and eventually executed for his dissent towards the Spanish government. This also shows that while student protests in Philippine history have included pursuits of student concerns, more impactful protests were over wider, national issues (Santiago, 1972). The 1960’s-1970’s was perhaps one of the peaks of student activism in the country’s more recent history as students protested over the Marcos dictatorship. Most of the organising and mobilising was led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) that promoted the Maoist communist ideology among students (Abinales, 2012), with admiration for Vietnamese and Chinese revolutionaries (Malay, 1984).

The significant imprint that student activist movements have had throughout the Philippine history have become inspirational for more contemporary student activist movements. “We see that while we are fighting for demands relevant to our time, knowing that similar uprisings have happened in the past proves that the changes we want are not just superficial... it’s not just about one or two policies, our fight is about systemic change, it is about power structures that need to be dismantled and that takes time...” shares Mico, student leader of a national union of Filipino students. Embedded in his statement is an understanding that their student struggles today are neither discrete nor fragmented, rather part of a broader, long-lasting legacy of demanding change. 16-year-old student activist Angela has been accompanying her parents in street protests since she was a toddler. This experience, alongside an early understanding of the history of activists



An activist holds a placard with the text “Junk Terror Law” during a protest in commemoration of an 1971 uprising at the University of the Philippines, in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, February 1, 2021.

Photo credit: REUTERS/Lisa Marie David

Case Study **The Philippines**

in the country, has inspired Angela to continue her activist work now focusing on urban social movements among landless peoples in Manila. “When I started, I was very much inspired by the movements during the Martial Law years... and there are several activists that I look up to, especially women who then had to go underground...”

Student activists in the Philippines either become political prisoners or a desaparecido - the disappeared. Three famous cases of students disappearing include Jonas Burgos, Karen Empeno, and Sherlyn Cadapan. Cadapan and Empeno’s case was brought to justice when the court found Jovito Palparan, retired army general nicknamed “The Butcher”, guilty of kidnapping and killing both student activists and dozens of others (Al Jazeera, 2018). The roots of student activism in connection to communism will prove to be important as it established the image of student activists in the Philippines, even those who are not connected to the CPP-NPA, as anti-establishment terrorists. This has in turn allowed for the normalisation of the criminalisation and violence against student activists.

For Mico, this process of vilifying student activists' intentions has wider impact than just simply naming and shaming. “They say, ‘estudyante sa umaga, rebelde sa gabi’ (students in the morning and rebels in the evening). That form of attack... we are rebranded as enemies of the people and enemies of the state... our demands are immediately being discredited because we are being branded as enemies, but we try to propose solutions. Of course, we want government programmes to work!” More recently, in 2020, the Duterte government passed an anti-terror law which permits warrantless arrests and allows authorities to hold individuals without charge (Ratcliffe, 2020). This

was a response to the growing dissent against Duterte’s populist authoritarian regime. In June 2020, eight student activists were arrested in Cebu City for protesting the said law (Mayol and Semilla, 2020), another 16 students arrested in Iligan City and 15 in Quezon City for holding an Independence Day protest (Talabong, 2020). In January 2021, the Department of National Defence, under the Duterte administration, unilaterally severed a three-decade agreement that prevented state forces from entering the University of the Philippines campuses without prior notice to the administration. The accord was a product of the struggles during the Marcos dictatorship to ensure that student activists are not unlawfully detained and persecuted while on campus. Many critiques, students and academics tag this termination as a violation of academic freedom and human rights.

While state oppressions and criminalisation exist, our interviewees shared that it is the continued impact of their work that has inspired them. The organisation that Mico led has been part of various protests and policy lobbying free higher education. This has led to a recent policy change making tertiary education free for several Filipinos - a first step, Mico says, towards equal access to education. The fight for land rights being supported by Angela and her organisation continues and they have already seen several wins. A significant one was the creation of a community-led development plan that has received the support from a local official who has now become their ally. ■

Case Study **Egypt**

“...that revolution showed me how activism took down a destructive system”

The lasting impact of Egyptian student activist movements

Throughout history, student movements in Egypt have changed shape and form in response to issues of the time. In their mapping of student activism in the country, Nagy, Atta and Abdelhamid (2017) noted that student movements have “witnessed many sessions of rising influence and reach, as well as long periods of stagnation and decline.” It has been recognised that young people including student activists were “decisive ingredients” in the 2011 Arab Springs including in Egypt (Kohstall 2011). Post-2011, student activist movements in the country remained strong. 1,677 student protests were formed across Egypt in the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014 alone (Hamzawy 2017). The state responded with excessive legal and physical measures instead of protecting the students; security forces and police were positioned inside campuses, students have faced police raids, expulsions of politically-affiliated students, and banning of any political demonstrations and activity. All these contributed towards the government’s desire of “keeping politics out of school” as the former Minister of Education Mahmoud Abo El-Nasr explained (Dunne and Bentivoglio 2014).

Akl*, a student activist in Egypt, is part of an organisation of students from different univer-

sities that aims to raise awareness about the human rights violations of the state against students. He shares that their association “focuses on human rights issues, freedom of speech and political freedom. All of these don’t exist right now in Egypt. I can be jailed just for doing this interview.” The violations that Akl is describing here have cost students’ lives in the country. In 2013, 19-year-old Mohamed Reda was shot three times, leading to his death, when the police violently dispersed a student demonstration in front of their campus (Carlstrom 2013). Rahmenda’s death sparked nationwide protests that were faced by even harsher responses from state forces. In the academic year following the 2013 coup, 14 students were killed in campus violence (Hamzawy 2017). From the academic year 2013 up until 2016, 1181 arrests have been documented (see Nagy, Atta and Abdelhamid, 2014). In 2015-2016, arrests were at 21, which was a significant decrease from 998 arrests in 2013-2014. The authors argued that “...this sharp decline does not necessarily signal a change in the repressive policies of the security apparatus. Rather, it reflects an evident weakening of the student movement after a series of intensive security blows targeting student activists and student unions.” (Nagy, Atta and Abdelhamid 2014:24).



Plain-clothed riot policemen detain a student, who is a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood and ousted President Mohamed Mursi, after clashes broke out during a demonstration outside Cairo University May 14, 2014.

Photo credit: REUTERS/Mohamed Abd El Ghany

This is why the work of Akl and his group remain vital. “Through our work, we were able to get the public’s attention on some jailed activists’ cases and put pressure on legal authorities to either give those activists charges or set them free. It has worked on some incidents but there is still a long way to go”. The recognition that much more needs to be done and the long history of student activism in the country has motivated Akl and his group to continue their fight for justice. “I am personally inspired by the 2011 revolution; I was only 11 at the time but that revolution showed me how activism was able to take down a destructive system and give power to the people. Sadly, the revolution was stolen from us and we need to take it back. I have been involved in political activism for 3 years now and my activism and methods have indeed changed. I have learned how to navigate through the restrictions and the limited freedom of speech, to still be able

to speak up while not being myself at risk of getting arrested or even worse, getting killed.”

With the hostile climate that he and his colleagues are navigating, Akl calls for solidarity from global concerned groups: “There are hundreds of activists who have been jailed for years without any legal charges. I know some people who have been in jail for over 3 years just because of a Facebook post, it’s outrageous and the international community must interfere. They can make a change by speaking up against what the government is doing and putting pressure on decision makers to release those activists”. ■

5. Shrinking spaces for dissent

Trends in criminalisation of student activism

Pifer (2020, n.p.), defines dissent as “not merely an act of resistance against a prevailing set of ideas, though that meaning remains, but is a process through which changes in the dominant cultural forms are achieved.” Student activists have participated in different forms of dissent throughout history, but with the increasing impacts of neo-liberal policies around the world, such as inequality, unemployment, debt, and unaffordable housing (Bessant et al., 2017), young people are currently “at the forefront of political campaigns promoting social rights and ethical ideas that challenge authoritarian orders and elite privileges” (Bessant and Grasso, 2018). This of course is not without consequences from governments and intra-state agencies who view young people’s dissent as a threat and have created hostile environments for student activists through surveillance, legislation, and criminalisation.

Ironically, many of these countries that criminalise student activists also promote the active political participation of young people. However, Pearson (1983) points out that governments allow for this participation only insofar as what they deem legitimate and appropriate, like youth roundtables.

Chapter 5- About this section

In this chapter, we examine the trends in normalising the criminalisation of student activists. We see the role of state propaganda in labelling and creating negative narratives about student activists and how it makes it easier to normalise student arrests and harassment. We also touch on how this abuse is deeply embedded in the system. We then take a glimpse at the experience of Zimbabwean and Colombian student activists who face the stigma of being called “terrorists” and whose states have created legal instruments to put them in jail.

Other forms of dissent like protests are considered violent and deviant. Young people are then represented as “terrorists,” “irresponsible,” “unruly,” “vulnerable,” “in need of care” requiring governance “for their own good” (Bessant and Grasso, 2019). Taylor (1992, p.25) calls this the “politics of (mis)recognition.” Young people are not recognised as capable of legitimate political action and their negative public representations justify the criminalisation process (Bessant and Grasso, 2019).

In 2011, the Indignados of Spain protested against corruption and called for social justice (Calvo, 2013) led by young, disenfranchised people. Young people who joined the protests were labelled a danger to social order and the protests were framed as criminal and violent, delegitimising protesters and their actions (González-Sánchez and Maroto-Calatayud 2018). Laws were reformed and new offenses like “breaching peace by acting in groups” and the “distribution or public diffusion, through any means, of messages ... which incite the commis-

sion of any crime of public order disturbance” were created; “resistance to authority” by disobeying police officers was criminalised and was used to justify violent police interventions (González-Sánchez and Maroto-Calatayud 2018).

In 2018, Nicaragua saw protests against President Daniel Ortega’s regime triggered and led by student activists. The protests started with a call to change the pension system but eventually this led to a brutal crackdown against student activists who were killed, abused, and arrested. According to Human Rights Watch (2019), many of the student activists have been detained for crimes in connection to participating in the anti-government protests.

For many authoritarian-minded leaders around the world, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has offered “a convenient pretext to silence critics and consolidate power” says Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. Journalists, health workers, activists and other critics of government responses to COVID-19 have faced detention in countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Venezuela, Bangladesh and Turkey. In Colombia, death squads took advantage of the lockdown measures in March 2020 and executed three social activist leaders (Daniels, 2020). For Gimena Sanchez, human rights activist and director at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the focus on the pandemic has pulled the spotlight away from human rights violations in Colombia: ‘Coronavirus gives the Duque government more elements to excuse themselves from properly protecting social leaders and investigating cases of killings.’ In some US States, lockdown measures, limited mobility and travel restrictions did not stop deportations, ICE raids and criminalisation of undocumented communities and their advocates (Graceffo, 2020). In the Philippines, the lockdowns, curfews and quarantine measures ‘justified arrests and assaults on [climate] defenders in the guise of enforcing COVID-19 measures’ says Leon Dulce of People’s

Network for the Environment (see Mongabay.com, 2020). In the interviews we conducted for this report, student activists expressed how COVID-19 is being weaponized to oppress their work – from the military distributing of relief goods as a guise to collect names of urban poor leaders in the Philippines to extending jail times from 24 hours to up to 60 days in Zimbabwe. Despite the pandemic, many social movements including student activism persist and even flourish. Similarly, the often oppressive and violent reactions that they face also continue. ■

Case Study **Zimbabwe**

“We fear arrest and harsh retribution from the state”

Experiences of student activists in Zimbabwe

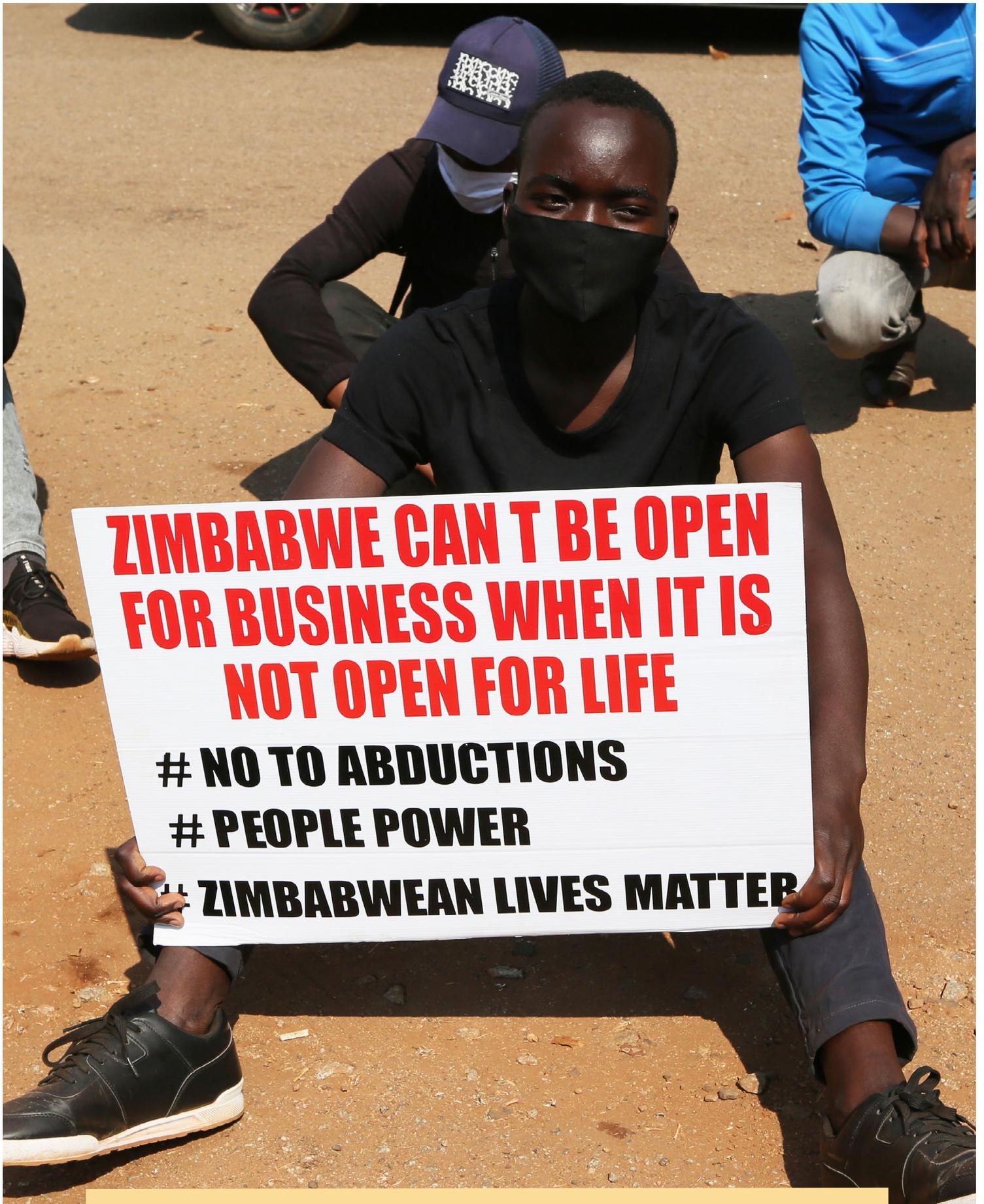
In 2020, a series of protests held by student activists in Zimbabwe calling for freedom of expression, an end to corruption, and better living conditions have led to arrests (Ruwoko, 2020). One of the more prominent student activists, union leader Takudzwa Ngadziore of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), said that the government’s continued harassment and surveillance has created an environment of fear among student leaders (Mashinga, 2020).

“Our union leaders ... are being followed by unknown people. We have to clearly state to all that we are a constitutionally abiding institution with a vision of ensuring the realisation of academic freedom as part of the daily lives of students. This includes political, social, cultural and economic rights,” said ZINASU spokesperson Donald Marevanhema in his interview with University World News.

The repression of student activists in Zimbabwe is not new. Robert Mugabe, who served as

Zimbabwe’s Prime Minister from 1980-1987 and then President from 1987-2018, successfully took control over universities by deploying state security agents to spy on every aspect of campus life as a response to the growing restlessness of university students over Mugabe’s leadership (Gukurume, 2019). Not only did this lead to self-censorship during lectures, but also normalised police violence during student protests on and off campus (Gukurume, 2019). During Mugabe’s regime, the government has also crafted laws to crack down on student activists, including the Public Order and Security Act and the Protection of Privacy Act that criminalised freedom of expression, association, assembly, and action.

“The right to freely express yourself, the right to research on key political methods, the right to question the government has been impeded due to the authoritarian regime,” Runako*, a student activist from Zimbabwe said. He shares how his colleagues have been abducted, tortured, jailed, and made to fail



A student and human rights activist holds a banner during a peaceful protest in Harare, Monday, Sept. 14, 2020.

Photo credit: AP/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

Case Study Zimbabwe

deliberately from universities and unable to graduate as forms of violence and intimidation against student activists in the country. In more extreme circumstances, student activists have no choice but to escape to another country to avoid persecution.

“We fear arrest and harsh retribution from the state,” shares Runako. Fear has been instilled in student activists, especially for women student activists, who fear the consequences of participating in activism. Even the Zimbabwean judiciary has been involved in ‘persecution through prosecution.’ Runako said many student activists are jailed and found guilty of different crimes and are tortured while they are in jail.

Zira*, another student activist, was arrested for being involved in a demonstration demanding for the freedom of jailed student activists. Fortunately, she was bailed immediately as there was not enough evidence against her. Zira said she was traumatised from the event and that the arrest has instilled fear among her colleagues

“It affected other students and spread fear mongering so that if students wanted to demonstrate, they are now scared to air out the abuses of the government. No one wants to be arrested, especially if you are a student. It ruins your reputation,” said Zira.

COVID 19 has also been an excuse to stop the activities of student activists and criminalise them for violating the curfew or gathering in groups, instruments which were put in place to curb the spread of the virus. In fact, some of their colleagues are currently in jail for violating COVID rules. Zira also notes that there have been changes in the way cases are handled during the pandemic. Where before, arrested student activists would only stay in prison for a day, they can now remain in prison for up to 60

days, with many cases postponed for hearing.

The Zimbabwean government has used the media to paint student activists in a negative light and has tried to instil fear among the public by depicting them as ‘hooligans.’ According to Zira, student activists are labelled as ‘terrorists,’ and ‘rebels.’ However, this propaganda has failed, largely in part because most student activists in Zimbabwe are fighting for broader causes like socio-economic justice which the public supports.

“Because many of the students are sons and daughters of peasants and workers facing challenges in their own spaces, student activists have become a ‘darling’ in the fight for democracy in the country,” said Runako. ■

“The perception towards me is the same as towards my fighting companions, a revolutionary, agitating, the stone in the shoe...”

Colombian student activists fighting for their lives and country

Between 2000 and 2018, over 10,000 student activists have been arrested in Colombia, making it one of the most dangerous countries for student activists (Alsema, 2020). The abuses against student activists do not stop at arrests, but include assassinations, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, and forced displacement; most of these perpetrated by right-wing paramilitary groups in collusion with state security forces (University College Union, 2009). A similar finding was reported by CLADE (2020) where they found the police using threats, kidnapping, execution, and infiltration among others. The establishment of the Anti-Disturbance Mobile Squadron (ESMAD) has made it easier to repress, harass, and threaten student activists. These abuses are systematic, occurring in universities all over the country, and with little measures to protect student activists, the state is complicit in the deliberate persecution of these activists (University College Union, 2009).

According to CLADE (2020), there are high levels of stigmatisation of student activists especially in the media where they are labelled as “vandals,” “guerrilleros,” or “terrorists,” which lead to narratives and misconceptions that normalise the criminalisation of student

activists in Colombia. Jorge, a student activist in Colombia, has similar observations. “It is clear that Colombian society sees the student movement as enemies and revolts, they call us vandals or hooligans. The perception towards me is the same as towards my fighting companions, a revolutionary, agitating, the stone in the shoe, which does not silence itself in the face of injustice for certain people who do not know the fight”

The increasing privatisation of education in the country has led to the student movement to be one of the most critical against the government and has successfully mobilised for protests. The CLADE report also highlights that the state plays an important role in the criminalisation of student activists. Jorge himself has received several threats in raising his voice and he has observed the same pattern quite strongly with his colleagues in the past and even today. The constant persecution of the state towards their organisation has led to the murder of two presidential candidates, 7 congressmen, 13 deputies, 11 mayors, 70 councilors, countless militant base leaders who could pass from 3,000 people. He described that negative responses would begin from insults, social rejection and then physical violence. For Jorge, the landscape



A police chases a protester after a student march turned violent when a group attacked police vehicles, in Bogota, Colombia, Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020.

Photo credit: AP/ Fernando Vergara

in Colombia is changing. “The change in the conflict in Colombia is now associated with the local and regional reconfiguration of the actors involved, areas in which some armed groups have political and economic control and also regulated social relations were now subject to the possibility of new orders between groups that are now in conflict.”

In 2019, students protested against corruption and violent student repression. The ESMAD attacked students with stun bombs, tear gas, and batons and arrested 75 students in the protest (People’s Dispatch, 2019). The protests were triggered by the corruption scandal of Francisco José de Caldas District University

where officials mismanaged 10 billion pesos of the University’s budget. In November of the same year, larger protests were held, organised partly by students, opposing changes to Colombia’s pension and labour laws. The police shot 18-year-old student protester Dilan Cruz, which fuelled more anger against President Ivan Duque. Against the backdrop of this hostile environment, Jorge recognises that “student youth have championed the fights for the transformation of the country’s educational, social and economic system. The interference of students in national political and collective changes has been and will continue to be of great value in our fight for the change of a better country.” ■



Photo credit: Dole777, Unsplash

6.

Digital Media: A strategy and a threat

There is no doubt that technology has changed the face of activism in recent years. Studies by Diamond (2010) and Saleh (2012) argued that the Internet, mobile phones, and social media are technologies of liberation. The Arab Spring, for example, was said to be facilitated by digital media by turning individualised and localised dissent into a structured movement (Howard and Hussein, 2011) resulting in the overthrow of some autocratic governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya.

There are different ways in which social media and the Internet can strengthen democracy. First, the Internet enables the communication between citizens and the government (Margetts

Chapter 6 - About this section

In this chapter, we investigate the role that digital media plays in student movements, especially in countries facing state surveillance and censorship. We first talk about recent studies about digital media's role in protest movements from the early 2010's up to the present and how it has changed structures and hierarchies within these movements. We then move to looking more closely at Thailand and Sudan, countries that have regulated the Internet, with laws easily criminalising student activists for their online activities. However, both countries also see student movements using creative ways to circumvent the law and to continue using digital media to organise and mobilise for protests.

and Dunleavy, 2013). Second, they provide a platform for citizens to expose and report any wrongdoings like human rights violations, thereby making governments accountable for their actions (Diamond, 2010). Third, they allow civil society to reach a larger audience to organise and mobilise for protests (Jha and Tedika, 2019). Additionally, a recent study by Gainous et al. (2020) shows that exposure to political information encourages citizens to protest.

The rise in the use of technology by student activists has led to changes in student movements. For one, social media have given student activists a new platform for debate

where discussions are more open for the wider membership of student organisations (Gismondi and Osteen, 2017) and the dissemination of information has helped in base-building efforts. Allowing for more public input, social media has allowed for a wider-scale participation among members of any student movement, making the members empowered in shaping the movement alongside their peers (Gismondi and Osteen, 2017).

Student movements have also become non-hierarchical and are described as “leaderless” and decentralised such as we have seen in different global movements from earlier movements like the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street in the United States in 2011 to the more recent Black Lives Matter and the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong (Serhan, 2019). Serhan (2019) argues that digital platforms have allowed for this decentralised organisation.

“Technology enables leaderlessness in a way that was not possible before. Technology means you don’t need a leader to disseminate strategy. The strategy disseminates horizontally,” said Carne Ross, the executive director of Independent Diplomat, in his interview with The Atlantic. With no one person sitting on the top of the structure (Gismondi and Osteen, 2017) this means that student movements will be more difficult to repress (Serhan, 2019). Juris (2005, p.191) believes that this horizontal structure “represents a broader model for creating alternative forms of social, political, and economic organisation.”

The role of social media in facilitating protests was seen not only in North African countries during the Arab Spring, but also in other countries like Sudan where young people used them to organise protests demanding regime changes (Kadoda and Hale, 2015). In Hong Kong, young people are said to have developed

their political consciousness through social media (Maragkou, 2019).

Additionally, these platforms have been used to help protesters in numerous ways. Social media apps like the encrypted platform Telegram and Firechat have been used by Hong Kong protesters to disseminate information, “initiate new agenda, campaign ideas, and strategies,” according to King Wa Fu, associate professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at Hong Kong University, in his interview with CNBC (2019).

However, while technology and digital media have played crucial roles in different student protests, it has also become a tool for authoritarian regimes. Recent studies on the role of the Internet in democracies show that the Internet is not only a tool for liberation but can also be used by authoritarians and populists where governments attempt to regulate and control citizens through the use of censorship and surveillance (Phoborisut, 2019). For example, in 2020, Peking University announced new rules for attending academic online conferences in line with the Chinese government’s restriction of academics and researchers allowed to attend international conferences (Leung, 2020). ■

“The more they use the Internet to instil fear, the more it becomes important to use it.”

How Thai student activists are resisting state surveillance

In Thailand, student activists have been using various tactics to protest against the Thai junta ranging from the use of cultural symbols like The Hunger Games to alternative events such as an outdoor picnic (Phoborisut, 2019). With Internet penetration at 75% and 52 million social media users (Kemp, 2020), it is also no surprise that Thai student activists have used digital media as a platform for protest.

In 2020, a series of protests led by students demanding a new constitution and a reform of the monarchy have seen the use of K-pop, emoticons, and even the dating app Tinder to spread pro-democracy messages. Areeya*, a Thai protester who also manages a Twitter fan page for K-Pop group Girl's Generation, was able to raise 780,000 Baht (\$25,000) from K-Pop fans to help unarmed protesters who were attacked by the police using water cannons (Tanakasempipat, 2020). The money was then used to purchase protective equipment like goggles and helmets. Protest organisers also used Facebook emoticons as a voting mechanism on whether protests should continue: “care” emoticon was a symbol to rest for one day and “wow” meant to keep going; these tactics have thrown Thai police off guard (Thanthong-Knight, 2020).

However, it is also true that Thailand has increased Internet militarisation, control, and surveillance after the 2014 coup (Laungaramsri, 2016) and in 2016, the Computer Crime Act, used to criminalise insulting, threatening, or defaming Thailand's royalty, underwent amendments that increased potential abuse against dissidents of the government (Gebhart and Kohno, 2017).

Chaiya* and Isra*, two student activists from Thailand who have been fighting for democracy, both agree that the Computer Crime Act has suppressed their freedom of expression and has easily criminalised anyone who criticises the government online. For Isra, this law needs to be amended. “If it's going to be a democracy, we should be allowed to criticise the government. We need to open this law, amend it, and make it better,” Isra said.

The distrust with the Thai government's draconian laws regulating the Internet has become more pronounced during the pandemic. A new app was developed by the government to track people's activities and the places they visited. However, Chaiya is cynical about how the government is using the said app.



A student activist makes the three finger salute during the demonstration. The small demonstration to mark the Teachers' Day was staged by the "Bad Student" group.

Photo credit: Peerapon Boonyakiat/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

"The question is about privacy and what information the government can take from you. Is it worth it to check in when the government can take your personal information? We understand the risk of COVID but at the same time the government can do a lot of things with that data," he said.

In addition, both know that the government has been quickly adapting with the use of technology. In the southern provinces, the military and government are using disinformation and propaganda against activists. "Before it was obvious this propaganda is fake, but now they share information that sounds real and people are confused which ones to believe," Chaiya shares.

Harassment online is also different for women, as Isra experienced. The attacks become more personal, with comments targeting their bodies. Isra knows that this is meant to make them dissuade them from posting online. "They harass me and my friends personally because they cannot criticise our arguments, so they resort to attacking our appearances," she said.

While both activists recognise the risks they

face when using social media and other online tools, they also know its power in organising and mobilising people for protests.

"Online platforms like Facebook are a good channel to communicate with the youth. With social media you can see what political issues are being talked about and how many people are talking about them," said Chaiya.

Isra agrees. "Social media is where people express their anger and a powerful tool to communicate. All you have to do is post on Facebook and people come, they show up. In the past, people thought that social media and digital platforms are just for keyboard warriors. Now, pressure can be built online that can lead to something to happen or change in the real world," she adds.

Digital media also changed the structure and decision-making in Thai movements. Isra shares that when they needed to have a common message to communicate their demands, they used social media to get a consensus from the public. According to Isra, the best part of using digital media is that they can be creative in what they do. ■

“Without social media, the 2018 revolution would have never succeeded”

How social media helped restore democracy in Sudan



Alaa Salah, a Sudanese woman, propelled to internet fame in April 2019 after clips went viral of her leading powerful protest chants against President Omar al-Bashir, addresses protesters during a demonstration in front of the military headquarters in the capital Khartoum.

Photo credit: AFP

Sudan's youth-led revolution, which called for and eventually led to the overthrow of Omar Al-Bashir's Islamist authoritarian government, was deemed to have been successful due in part to their use of social media. The Sudanese have been actively fighting against the government for decades (Elmilleik, 2018) and youth mobilisations have been historically successful through grassroots organising and unions (Faupel and Wojtanik, 2020), but the recent protests were more successful due to the use of social media to organise and mobilise young people.

Kadoda and Hale (2015), argue that social media facilitated mobilisation and raised consciousness among the youth. The Facebook account managed by the Sudanese Professionals Association, which has over half a million followers and posts anti-regime content, was considered to be the most influential social media page. When the government denied that masses of people were protesting, the activists used Facebook live to spread information and stream the protests (Emont, 2019).

As a response to these protests, the government posted misinformation on Facebook about the dates and times of protests in hopes of disrupting activists' efforts (Emont, 2019).

Eventually, the government blocked Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp to suppress the public demonstrations happening all over the country (TRT World, 2018). In fact, Sudan is one of the world's most censored countries. In a BBC interview (2019), Sudanese student activists said the Internet blackout hampered their efforts in organising and killed the momentum of the protests, but that they have had to think of other creative ways to continue mobilising.

In 2020, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Sudan 159 out of 180 countries in its World Press Freedom Index. According to RSF

(2020) the Cyber Jihadist Unit was created "to spy on the Internet and monitor journalists' activities online, continues to operate and is spreading false information on social media with the aim of undermining the transitional government and protecting the interests of certain old regime figures who still control most of the media."

"Technology is an essential part of our activism. We use different tools, including popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, combined with in-person meetings to plan and organize protests," says Nazir*, a student activist from Sudan whose role in his organisation is to raise awareness among students by discussing their issues and how to work to achieve their demands.

Aisha*, another student activist in Sudan agrees. "After the 2018 revolution started, technology - mainly social media - became an essential part of our activism without social media, the 2018 revolution would have never succeeded," she said.

Nazir and Aisha are both aware of the dangers of technology. While there have been no cases of surveillance by Sudan's new government, the opposite was the case during the al-Bashir regime where there was a high-level of surveillance that violated privacy and exposed student activists to arbitrary arrest and dismissal. There have been students in the past who were dismissed from universities because of their political activities.

"The technology wasn't safe to use before the 2018 revolution, my parents wouldn't allow me to share my political opinions online because it could have had negative impacts on their work or I could have been arrested," Aisha shares.

"Surveillance hinders students' activism

and allows the authorities to take away their freedom of speech by threatening them with legal actions,” Nazir adds.

Despite the dangers they faced in 2018, Aisha also shares how they found creative ways to use social media as counter-surveillance. “During the 2018 revolution we had to get creative about how we use technology, most activists started using fake profiles to document the protests and they would try to keep their identity hidden, blur peoples’ faces from the protest videos, and use secured apps to share sensitive information,” she said. ■

Concluding remarks and recommendations

Student activists all over the world are under fire. From arbitrary arrests and state violence towards non-violent protests to surveillance and oppression – these myriads of tactics are not only curtailing students’ acts and voices of dissent but, more disturbingly, impinging on students’ (human) rights to mobilise, educate, and fight for reforms. However, we have seen in the case studies that while oppression limits, it also agitates. When efforts to shrink civil society spaces persist, students’ agency and power will continue to claw into the banks until the river swells. In this report, we hope to have unravelled the conceptual and real-life dynamics of student activism around the world. Bringing in a comparative perspective - drawing from contrasting countries of Egypt, Colombia, Zimbabwe, Philippines, Thailand and Sudan - was not a bid to generalise but an attempt to understand varying expressions of student activism in various contexts.

We found that students have been operating on a unique terrain where student activist movements grow. While the stimulating academic environment heightens awareness of oppression and rights; the neoliberal university also produces many reasons to challenge dominant, inequitable processes. Within universities, student activists navigate a hugely imbalanced power relationship with a variety of education actors – fellow students, academics, parents and management staff. Students may begin their activist movements by responding to their shared struggle within the university -

may that be tuition fee hikes or unresponsiveness towards racism. However, their work does not end there. Rather, these experiences provide impetus for broader forms of activism to happen whereby the struggles become less about the students and more about others who are oppressed.

Technological tools, social media and other digital spaces are double edged swords. On the one hand, they offer new spaces and tools that student activists use for their protests, but these are also being weaponized by states and institutions for surveillance and oppression. We have seen how the process of public ‘naming’ and ‘labelling’ is a powerful tool not only to demonise student activists, framing them as ‘enemies’ rather than partners, but also delegitimize their struggles. As such, activist movements seem to be part of a series of attempts for student activities not only to claim their space in the society but also ‘re-author’ their identities as individuals and as collectives.

When seen through the lens of human rights, student activist movements must be framed as spaces and opportunities for young people to claim their rights for free speech and expression. Violent responses, stringent governance, and criminalisation is a direct threat to students’ human rights and must not be tolerated by states and institutions that are supposed to be protecting them. While many social movements may be characterised as

forms of dissent and discords against governments and dominant political structures, we have also seen that many motivations for student activist movements root from desires to collaborate. Young people are willing to work with institutions to offer solutions to problems and could work together with the government as it implements its policies. While a recognition of student's agency and legitimacy are important, this should also not create a smoke-screen that will cover the myriad of issues and challenges that students are facing and that are threatening their human rights. Confronted with poor employment prospects, student debts and unequal university access, students seem to be taking the brunt of the effects of

many social and political issues.

Against this backdrop, questions remain: how can student activists be better supported? How can solidarity be best expressed? It is impossible to provide blanket recommendations that will be applicable to various countries and a diversity of stakeholders. Therefore, we frame the following not as a rigid set of next steps, rather as points of further conversation towards implementable action. We do not attempt to give a final word on the topic but to stimulate discussions at the organisational, local, national and international levels on this urgent and important issue. ■

Recommendations

1. Recognise student rights as human rights.

For governments, NGOs and other international bodies, there must be a **recognition of the legitimacy and power of students to fight for and bring about social justice and defend universal human rights**. Institutions and stakeholders need to acknowledge students as agile actors of change (rather than passive observers) and vanguards of principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (rather than 'stubborn disruptors'). As human rights defenders, they must be protected, and States must fulfil their commitment to respecting peaceful protests as enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders. Our interviews have shown how student activist movements are both grounded on the realities and struggles they experience and those of the grassroots communities at the grassroots level. Within policies and programmes, this means a departure from the pervasive 'youth deficit' model towards a framing of students as having agency and influence - in developing strategies for student and youth engagement. We concur with Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye's recent recommendations that *"...human rights mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council, should ensure that the universal periodic review and other reviews of State compliance with human rights law include consideration of academic freedom."* (A/75/150, page 20). Recognising students' rights to speak and mobilise freely may be seen as part of the wider agenda to uphold academic freedom.

2. Allow youth participation in government and decision-making processes.

Protests, rallies and occupations have been powerful forces to bring about social change. However, our research reveals that there are many forms of student activism. Therefore, there seems to be a need to **diversify spaces for young people's participation in key decision-making processes and governance structures**. This can be done, for example, through student representation in university boards, supporting the formation of student governments and engaging youth councils and inter-university student councils. As explained earlier, student activist movements are not only to 'complain' but also to offer solutions to social issues. However, state and non-state actors must also take into account the quality and microprocesses of youth participation and democratic spaces models. During interagency dialogue, their participation can lead to policy change and students must be included in these processes.

3. See student activism as part of the academic environment.

Universities and educational institutions must see student activism as part (or even a hallmark) of a lively academic environment and not a problematic disruption of university life. We have seen across the case studies that participating in student activist movements are learning spaces where students increase their awareness of social issues, share in the struggles of the oppressed and have a looking glass into political governance at the local, national and international levels. When possible, university staff and lecturers should find opportunities for 'deepening' this learning, for example through shared reflections in the classroom and including student activism studies in their curriculum.

4. Support the continuing education of student activists.

Our interviews point to how criminalisation affects students' university experience negatively, particularly not being able to finish their studies because of sanctions. As a response, higher education institutions and NGOs in other countries should **offer international scholarships for students who have been persecuted and have not been allowed to continue their studies in their own countries**. One specific model is the Students at Risk (StAR) programme that "gives students, who have experienced persecution, threats or expulsion from their higher education institution because of their peaceful activism and fight for human rights and democratic change, a chance to finish their education abroad."

5. Give financial support.

Many organisations do not have enough funds to respond rapidly to arrests. **We recommend financial support for student activists especially for swift response when activists are harassed and imprisoned.** This can be used to pay for bail, food, clothing and provide a safe space for those facing persecution, especially those jailed for a longer time. **We also recommend financial support to help student activists in their campaigns.** This financial assistance can also help investing more in student human rights defenders work to mobilise, educate, and fight for reforms.

6. International organisations must provide allyship and support.

International organisations must provide a space to amplify student voices and recognise the specificity of their struggles and challenges. Student activists in our interviews note the important role of international groups to put global spotlight on some of the local/national issues they are fighting for. In line with this, we also **urge the international community – including regional cooperation (e.g. African Union, European Union, ASEAN) – to put pressure on national governments to repeal draconian laws used to regulate the internet and surveil and criminalise student activists.** Governments must be made accountable to adhere to instruments that respect the right to expression, right to assembly, and right to education. When these concerns are pitched to a global stage, however, a very thin line must be tread as there might be a danger of co-opting young people’s agenda or diminishing their voices.

7. Provide digital training for online safety.

With states using the Internet for surveillance, student activists need more **digital training on how to protect themselves online.** While our interviewees have so far outdone governments and military in using the Internet, there is no doubt that states are quickly adapting to the changing face of technology. **Student activists must therefore be armed with knowledge and skills in digital security and manage their online identities for their own safety.**

8. Create a network of student activists.

There must be a recognition of the multiple impacts of criminalisation to student activists, not only towards their safety and security, but also their emotional and financial well-being. **It has to be acknowledged that students are not a homogenous group and various segments are affected differently – for instance, in terms of race, age, socioeconomic status and gender.** Many organisations do not have enough funds to respond rapidly to arrests. While many student activist movements respond to local issues, this report has also pointed to similarities in the challenges and violence faced by student activists. Several of the student activists we spoke with admit that feeling a sense of ‘burn-out’ is part of activist work. To this end, we urge the **creation of a network of student activists where student activists from different countries are able to support each other.** “At the moment, we only fight our own battles,” said Zira from Zimbabwe - but this does not have to be the case. Within student activist organisations, perhaps a closer attention must be paid to periodically checking members’ well-being through group sharing, reflection and other well-being activities.

References

- Altbach, P.G. (1989) 'Perspectives on Student Political Activism', *Comparative Education*, 25(1), pp.97–110.
- Altbach, P.G. (2006) 'Student politics: activism and culture', in Forrest, J. J. F. and Altbach, P.G. (eds) *International Handbook of Higher Education*. The Netherlands, pp. 329–346. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4020-4012-2_25.
- Altbach, P.G. (1992). "Politics of Students and Faculty," In Clark, B.R. and Neave, G. (eds) *The Encyclopaedia of Higher Education*. New York: Pergamon
- Alsema, A. (2020) The systematic criminalization of Colombia's youth. *Colombia Reports*. Available Online: <https://colombiareports.com/colombias-systematic-criminalization-of-youth/> [Accessed February 1 2021]
- BBC. (2019) Has an Internet Blackout killed Sudan's Revolution?. *BBC*. Available Online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-48706342> (Date last accessed: January 15 2021)
- Bégin-caouette, O. and Jones, G. a (2014) 'Studies in Higher Education Student organizations in Canada and Quebec's "Maple Spring"', *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(3), pp.412–425.
- Bellei, C., Cabalin, C. and Orellana, V. (2014) 'The 2011 Chilean student movement: neoliberal education and media', *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(3), pp. 426–440.
- Bessant, J. and Grasso, M. (2018) 'Governing Youth Politics in the Age of Surveillance', in *Governing youth politics in the age of surveillance*. New York: Routledge.
- Bessant, J., Farthing, R. and Watts, R. (2017) *The precarious generation: A political economy of young people*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bessant, J. and Grasso, M. (2019) Security and the liberal-democratic state: criminalizing young people's politics. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 77(4).
- Calvo, E. (2013) *Political communication 2.0 and good government. Look at the screens in your pocket*. Madrid: Camilo José Cela University, pp. 70–80.
- Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación. (2020) Criminalisation and Violation of Students' Human Rights in Latin America and The Caribbean. Available Online: https://redclade.org/wp-content/uploads/CLADE_Criminalisation_Eng_v4.pdf (Date last accessed: Jan 30 2020)
- Carlstrom, G. (2013). Shooting galvanises Egypt student protesters [Online]. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/12/3/shooting-galvanises-egypt-student-protesters> (Date last accessed: 9: Feb 2021)
- Daniels, J. (2020) Colombian death squads exploiting coronavirus lockdown to kill activists. *The Guardian*. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/23/colombian-groups-exploiting-coronavirus-lockdown-to-kill-activists> (Date last accessed: Feb 4 2021)
- della Porta, D. (2019a) 'Deconstructing Generations: Concluding Remarks', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(11), pp. 1578–1596.
- della Porta, D. (2019b) 'Deconstructing Generations in Movements: Introduction', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(10), pp. 1407–1426.
- Diamond, L. (2010) Liberation technology. *Journal of Democracy*, 21(3), pp.69–83.
- Dunne, M. and Bentivoglio, K. (2014). Egypt's Student Protests: The Beginning or the End of Youth Dissent? [Online]. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/56984?lang=en/> (Date last accessed: 9 Feb 2021)
- Earl, J., Maher, T.V. and Elliott, T. (2017) 'Youth, activism, and social movements', *Sociology Compass*, 11(4), pp. 1–14.
- Elmleik, A. (2018) What prompted the protests in Sudan?. *Aljazeera*. Available Online: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/26/what-prompted-the-protests-in-sudan> (Date last accessed: January 15 2021)
- Emont, J. (2019) 'Facebook Protesters' Helped Sudan Drive Out Bashir. *Wall Street Journal*. Available Online: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/social-media-movements-helped-drive-out-african-leaders-11555085194> (Accessed January 15 2021)
- Escobar, A. (1995) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. West Sussex: Princeton University Press.
- Faupel, A. and Wojtanik, A. (2020) What the rest of the world can learn from Africa's protest movements. *African Arguments*. Available Online: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/12/what-the-rest-of-the-world-can-learn-from-africas-protest-movements/> (Date last accessed: December 30 2020)
- Gainous, J., Abbott, J.P. and Wagner, K.M. (2020) Active vs. Passive Social Media Engagement with Critical Information: Protest Behavior in Two Asian Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, p.1940161220963606.
- Gebhart, G. and Kohno, T. (2017) Internet censorship in Thailand: User practices and potential threats. In 2017 IEEE European symposium on security and privacy (EuroS&P) (pp. 417–432). IEEE.
- Gill, J. and DeFronzo, J. (2009) 'A Comparative Framework for the Analysis of International Student Movements', *Social Movement Studies*, 8(3), pp. 203–224.
- Gismondi, A. and Osteen, L. (2017) Student activism in the technology age. *New directions for student leadership*, 2017(153), pp.63–74.
- González-Sánchez, I. and Maroto-Calatayud, M. (2018) The penalization of protest under neoliberalism: managing resistance through punishment. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 70(4), pp.443–460.
- Graceffo, L. (2020) To Maintain social distancing, immigrant rights groups use creative 'drive-by' protest. *Waging Non Violence*. Available Online: <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/04/maintain-social-distancing-immigrant-rights-use-creative-drive-by-protests/> (Date last accessed: February 4 2021)
- Gukurume, S., 2019. Surveillance, spying and disciplining the university: Deployment of state security agents on campus in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(5), pp.763–779.
- Hamzawy, A. (2017). Egypt Campus: The Students Versus the Regime. [Online] <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/06/egypt-campus-students-versus-regime-pub-68207> (Date last accessed: 9 Feb 2021)
- Howard, P.N. and Hussain, M.M. (2011) The upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The role of digital media. *Journal of democracy*, 22(3), pp.35–48.
- Human Rights Watch. 2019. Nicaragua, Events of 2018. Available Online: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/nicaragua#> [Date last accessed: 30 January 2021]
- Jaraisy, R. and Feldman, T. (2013) 'Protesting for human rights in the occupied palestinian territory: Assessing the challenges and revisiting the human rights defender framework', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 5(3), pp. 421–434.
- Jha, C.K. and Kodila-Tedika, O. (2020) Does social media promote democracy? Some empirical evidence. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 42(2), pp.271–290.
- Juris, J.S. (2005) The new digital media and activist networking within anti-corporate globalization movements. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597(1), pp.189–208.
- Kadoda, G. and Hale, S. (2015) Contemporary youth movements and the role of social media in Sudan. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 49(1), pp.215–236.
- Kemp, S. (2020) Digital 2020: Thailand. *Data Reportal*. Available Online: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-thailand> [Accessed Dec 22 2020]
- Klemenčič, M. (2014) 'Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising', *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(3), pp. 396–411. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2014.896177.
- Kohstall, F. (2015) 'From reform to resistance: Universities and student mobilisation in Egypt and morocco before and after the arab uprisings', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Taylor & Francis, pp. 59–73.
- Laungaramsri, P. (2016) Mass surveillance and the militarization of cyberspace in post-coup Thailand. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 9(2),

Leung, M. 2020. New Online Conference Rules Raise Academic Freedom Fears. *University World News*. Available Online: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200901210803801> (Date last accessed: February 2 2021)

Maragkou, E. (2019). "Dadfindboy": How activists in Hong Kong are hijacking state tools of surveillance. *University of Amsterdam*. Available online: <http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2019/09/23/dadfindboy-how-activists-in-hong-kong-are-hijacking-state-tools-of-surveillance/> (Date last accessed: January 15 2021)

Margetts, H. and Dunleavy, P. (2013) The second wave of digital-era governance: a quasi-paradigm for government on the Web. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 371(1987), p. 20120382.

Mashinga, K. (2020) Student leaders, activists are living in fear - Union. *University World News*. Available online: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200923081928880> (Date last accessed: Dec 20 2020)

Mitchell, J. C. (1984) 'Case Studies', in Ellen, R. F. (ed.) *Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct*. California: Academic Press, pp. 237-241.

Mongabay. (2020) Deaths, arrests, and protests and Philippines re-emerges from lockdown.

Mongabay. Available online: <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/05/deaths-arrests-and-protests-as-philippines-re-emerges-from-lockdown/> [Accessed February 4 2021]

Muswede, T. (2017) 'Colonial legacies and the decolonisation discourse in post-apartheid South Africa: a reflective analysis of student activism in Higher Education', *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 9(5), pp. 200-210. Available at: <https://journals.co.za/content/journal/10520/EJC-6a114147f?crawler=true&mimetype=application/pdf>

Nagy, M., Atta, W. and Abdelhamid (2017) Besieged Universities: A report on the rights and freedoms of students in Egyptian Universities from the Academic Years 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. Norway: SAIH and AFTE. Available at: <https://saih.no/assets/docs/Besieged-Universities-SAIH-report-2017.pdf>

Nah, A. M. et al. (2013) 'A research agenda for the protection of human rights defenders', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 5(3), pp. 401-420. doi: 10.1093/jhuman/hut026.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2018) 'Rhodes Must Fall', in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (ed.) *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: deprovincialization and decolonization*. New York: Routledge, pp. 221-242.

O'Brien, K., Selboe, E. and Hayward, B. M. (2018) 'Exploring youth activism on climate change: Dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous dissent', *Ecology and Society*, 23(3). doi: 10.5751/ES-10287-230342.

continue violent repression of students. *People's Dispatch*. Available Online: <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2019/09/28/columbian-riot-police-continue-violent-repression-of-students/> (Date last accessed: February 2 2021]

Pifer, M. (2020) *Dissent and the Dynamics of Cultural Change: Lessons from the Underground Presses of the Late Sixties*. New York: Routledge.

Phoborisut, P. (2019) East Asia in Action | Contesting Big Brother: Joshua Wong, Protests, and the Student Network of Resistance in Thailand. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, p. 23.

Power, N. (2012) 'Dangerous subjects: UK students and the criminalization of protest', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 111(2), pp. 412-420.

Reporters Without Borders. (2019) Sudan. Reporters Without Borders. Available Online: <https://rsf.org/en/sudan> (Date last accessed: Jan 15 2021]

Ruwoko, E. (2020) Series of student arrests 'points to erosion of progressive rights'. *University World News*. Available online: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200901064928971> (Date last accessed: 30 January 2021]

Saleh, N. (2012) Egypt's digital activism and the Dictator's Dilemma: An evaluation. *Telecommunications Policy*, 36(6), pp. 476-483.

Selenica, E. (2018). Between the state and the market: development policy, commercialization & liberalization of higher education. Norway: SAIH. Available at: <https://saih.no/assets/docs/Universities-between-the-state-and-the-market.pdf>

Serhan, Y. (2019) The Common Element Uniting Worldwide Protests. *The Atlantic*. Available Online: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/11/leaderless-protests-around-world/602194/> (Date last accessed: December 22 2020)

Shao, G. (2019) Social Media has become the battleground in Hong Kong's protests. *CNBC*. Available online: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/16/social-media-has-become-a-battleground-in-hong-kong-s-protests.html> (Date last accessed: Dec 22 2020]

Shin, J. C., Kim, H. H. and Choi, H. S. (2014) 'The evolution of student activism and its influence on tuition fees in South Korean universities', *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(3), pp. 441-454.

Tanakasempipat, P. (2020) K-pop's social media power spurs Thailand's youth protests. Reuters.

Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-thailand-protests-k-pop/k-pops-social-media-power-spurs-thailands-youth-protests-idUKKBN271245?edition-redirect=uk> (Date last accessed: February 1 2021)

Taylor, C. (1992) *The Politics of Recognition*. In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Paris, Flammarion, pp. 25-73.

Thanthong-Knight, R. (2020) How Thai protesters are using emoticons to stay ahead of police. *Japan Times*. Available online: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/10/21/asia-pacific/thailand-protests-social-media/> (Date last accessed Dec 22 2020)

Ting, T. Yuet (2017) 'Struggling for tomorrow: the future orientations of youth activism in a democratic crisis', *Contemporary Social Science*, 12(3-4), pp. 242-257.

TRT World. (2018) Sudan Protesters Use Social Media to Mobilise Crowds. *TRT World*. Available Online: <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/sudan-protesters-use-social-media-to-mobilise-crowds-22710> (Date last accessed: Dec 22 2020)

Tsutsui, K. (2006) 'Redressing past human rights violations: global dimensions of contemporary social movements', *Social Forces*, 85(1), pp. 331-354.

University College Union. (2009) *Academic Freedom International Study*. Available Online: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/media/3426/Academic-Freedom-International-Study-Zimbabwe-chapter/pdf/academic_freedom_zimbabwe.pdf (Date last accessed: January 29 2021)

People's Dispatch. (2019) Colombian riot police

“ The interference of students in national political and collective changes has been and will continue to be of great value in our fight for the change of a better country”.

Jorge, Student activist, Colombia.

SAIH | Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund



National Union of Students in Norway

