Democracy Protection Network

Readiness and Resilience-Building Resources

Cybersecurity, Legal Compliance, Physical Security, and Crisis Communications for Civil Society

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The Democracy Protection Network is a coordinated network of experts who have come together to provide support for civil society organizations and individual leaders who are increasingly facing a variety of threats that drain resources and detract from their core work. Our broad goal is to ensure that those who are targeted are able to stay on the field. The DPN coordinates low- to no-cost crisis-response and resilience-building services — including physical security, cybersecurity, crisis communications, and legal services — for organizations and individuals working to protect and strengthen American democracy.

This guide is a starting point for those who seek to take self-directed preventative and resilience-building measures. Resources included within are solely informational. Inclusion in this guide does not constitute an endorsement or legal advice.

If you find yourself in need of crisis support, or if you want to learn more about the DPN, visit DemocracyProtectionNetwork.org.

This guide will be updated on an ongoing basis. To submit additions or revisions, please contact manager@democracyprotectionnetwork.org.

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Index

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity Basics

[Digital Security Helpline](#)*, AccessNow*
This helpline provides preventative and rapid-response emergency assistance to keep civil society organizations and individuals safe online. The services are available 24/7 in nine languages.

[Cybersecurity Academy Courses](#)*, Ford Foundation*
This site offers free courses about organizational cybersecurity capacity building. The courses cover topics like building a security culture, device management, and incident response planning.

[Defending Digital Campaigns Cybersecurity Overview](#)*, Digital Defense Fund*
This self-guided cybersecurity audit for digital campaigns ranges from assessing risk to safety measures for closing your digital campaigns.

[Cybersecurity Resources for High-Risk Communities](#)*, Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)*
This collection of resources for high-risk communities includes free customized tools to assess and mitigate risk, helplines, and tools to strengthen cyber defenses.

[Digital Safety and Security Course](#)*, Re:Power*
This is a virtual digital safety training available on a sliding scale. Participants will better understand the difference between safety and security, practice making campaigns more secure across devices, and become more confident in online safety.

[2024 Cybersecurity Panel Discussion Video](#)*, Netroots Nation*
In this 60-minute webinar, cybersecurity funders and providers discuss best practices for securing remote work environments, mitigating risks associated with remote access, and ensuring data privacy and compliance.

Diagnostic + Assessment

[Cybersecurity Assessment Tool](#)*, Ford Foundation*
This assessment tool is designed to measure the maturity, resiliency, and strength of an organization's cybersecurity efforts. The assessment covers operational security, device security, account security, and associated risks.

[CyberPeace Builders](#), *CyberPeace Institute*
This program works to stop cyber attacks and disinformation by pairing volunteer cybersecurity experts with nonprofit organizations in need. The services are free and available in multiple countries.

[Security Planner](#), *Consumer Reports*
This interactive tool will assess online security needs and create a personalized checklist to aid in preventing and responding to online harassment.

Data Management

[Data Governance Toolkit](#), *NetHope*
This toolkit covers the basics of assessing how data is accessed, analyzed, and protected within an organization. It also includes recommendations for creating and implementing a data-governance policy.

Digital Security + Resilience

[Managing Your Online Presence](#), Brightlines
This checklist provides instructions for deep-searching personal data and taking preventative measures with unused accounts, alternate phone numbers, and public-facing email addresses.

[Charity Cyber Guide: Your Defence Against Digital Risk](#), *Ecclesiastical*
This is a distilled guide for organizations to understand and prevent ransomware, phishing, malware, password attacks, data breaches, and reputation attacks.

[Digital Exhaust Opt-Out Guide](#), *Federal Bureau of Investigation*
This guide covers how to reduce and manage digital exhaust (information on the internet about a person).

[Activist Digital Security Practices](#), *Blueprints for Change*
This tool captures crowdsourced resources from activist organizers, including a section on "using the right platforms" that notes secure alternatives to more widely used data storage and messaging platforms like Google Suite and Slack.

[User Behavior & Awareness](#), *Democracy Security Project*
This is a quick reference guide to digital user behavior, including phishing, backup practices, protecting personal information, and encryption.

[Device & Network Vulnerabilities](#), *Democracy Security Project*
This is a quick reference guide for securing software, applications, passwords, devices, and data.

Harassment, Spying, and Monitoring

[Online Harassment Field Manual](#), *Pen America*
This is a guide for targets of harassment, witnesses, allies, and employers to prepare for and respond to online abuse. The guide is written with and for those disproportionately impacted by online abuse: writers, journalists, artists, and activists who identify as women, BIPOC, and/or LGBTQIA+.

[Doxxing Prevention Resources](#), *Information Ecology*
This is a high-level guide on doxxing prevention best practices and resources.

[A Guide to Doxxing Yourself on the Internet](#), *NYT Open*
This step-by-step guide will help users manually remove personal information from the internet. It is a free alternative to similar paid services, so users should note and plan for the time-consuming nature of the process.

[Doxxing Curriculum Guide for Facilitators](#), *NYT Open*
This is a 90-minute training curriculum for facilitators to teach others about doxxing. It includes a suggested outline for training slides.

[Anti-Doxxing Guide for Activists](#), *Equality Labs*
This comprehensive anti-doxxing guide exists to support activists around the world who may be targeted for resisting white supremacy, Islamophobia, casteism, antisemitism, anti-LGBTQ+ harassment, or any form of authoritarianism.

[Coalition Against Stalkerware](#)
This website includes global resources for stalking prevention and supporting survivors. The site also has recommendations for tech companies on how to detect and handle stalking instances.

[Zoombombing Self-Defense: A Technical Guide](#), *Palante Technology Cooperative*
This is a technical guide for increasing community safety and security when using Zoom Meetings for public or semipublic events.

[Zoom Bomb Threats](#), *Democracy Security Project*
This is a quick reference guide on reacting to an active Zoom bombing.

Social Media

[Social Media Security & Privacy Checklists](#), *NYT Open*
This checklist covers recommended settings for social media platforms to protect accounts from compromise or unintentional data exposure.

[Social Media Policies: Mis/Disinformation, Threats, and Harassment](#), *States United Democracy Center*
This is a compilation of policies related to election and voting disinformation for some of the most used platforms, including Gab, Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), Reddit, Snapchat, Telegram, TikTok, Truth Social, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube.

Legal Compliance

Governance + Compliance Basics

[Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice](), *Independent Sector*
This is a guide for charitable organizations that covers legal compliance and public disclosure, effective governance, strong financial oversight, and responsible fundraising.

[Ongoing Compliance](), *National Council on Nonprofits*
This resource provides compliance guidance for maintaining nonprofit tax-exempt status.

[Compliant Nonprofit Training Series](), *New Left Accelerator*
This is an event series with ad hoc compliance workshops such as *End of Year Evaluations for Staff: Engaging in Performance Evaluations and Reviews* and *End of Cycle Reporting*.

[Good Governance Policies for Nonprofits](), *National Council on Nonprofits*
This resource provides practices, policies, and templates for nonprofit governance.

[Advocacy Check-Up: Nonprofit Self-Assessment](), *Bolder Advocacy*
This resource is designed to help your 501(c)(3) public charity assess its overall compliance with federal and state advocacy related tracking and reporting requirements and to identify opportunities for you to build your organization's advocacy capacity.

Financial

[Free Financial Tools](), *Fun with Financials*
A collection of resources, including compliance, recordkeeping, board financial policy, reserves/cashflow management, grant tracking, and lobbying tracking.

Government Investigations

[If An Agent Knocks](), *Center for Constitutional Rights*
This guide provides advice to activists likely to be targeted by FBI agents or other federal investigators. It includes sections on best practices, searches, infiltration and human surveillance, grand juries, and special considerations for noncitizens.

[Protecting Civic Space: A Primer](#), *Protect Democracy*
This how-to guide covers how to prepare an organization for politicized government investigations. It includes an overview of investigation types, key investigative tools, case studies from the field, and strategies to prepare.

Records Management

[Keeping Track: A Guide to Recordkeeping for Advocacy Charities](#), *Alliance for Justice*
This recordkeeping guide for nonprofit lobbying compliance includes an overview of lobbying requirements and suggested methods for recordkeeping.

[Annotated Form of Records Management and Retention Policy](#), *Public Counsel*
This is a template with accompanying guidance for nonprofits in need of a records management and retention policy.

Whistleblowing

[Your Rights When Reporting Wrongs](#), *U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC)*
This is a guide to your rights when reporting to OSC as a federal employee or using independent, secure channels for disclosing and resolving wrongdoing in federal agencies.

[Caught Between Conscience & Career: Expose Abuse Without Exposing Your Identity](#), *Government Accountability Project*
This resource advises whistleblowers on retaining anonymity, digital security, monitoring investigations, and navigating media.

[Advocacy Resources for Whistleblowers](#), *Project on Government Oversight*
This is a collection of law firms, advocacy organizations, watchdog organizations, and reading materials relevant to whistleblowers.

[Legal Guide](#), *Techworker Handbook & The Signals Network*
This guide addresses legal questions and issues that may be helpful to workers in tech before, during, and after deciding to speak out about wrongdoing.

[Security Guide](#), *Techworker Handbook & Elite Strategy Global*
This guide addresses physical security concerns that all tech workers should be aware of — whether or not they consider whistleblowing.

Physical Security & Wellness

Physical Security Basics

[Safety & Security Office Checklist](), *Democracy Security Project*
This is a quick reference guide for how to keep physical offices secure.

[Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders and At-Risk Frontline Defenders](), *Frontline Defenders*
This workbook provides tips and templates for assessing risk, analyzing threats, managing wellbeing, and creating security plans.

[Get In Formation Training Series (G.I.F.T.S.)](), *Vision Change Win*
This is a virtual training series for deepening safety and security infrastructure with sessions like: *Introduction to Safety and De-escalation*, *Safety for Direct Actions and Events*, and *Organizational Security Culture*.

[A Guide to Insurance for NGOs Operating in Violent Environments](), *Open Briefing*
This guide aims to support organizations that purchase insurance policies for travel, personal accident, kidnapping, crisis solutions, ransom, and extortion.

[Minimum Operating Travel Security Standards](), *Open Briefing*
This tool provides a set of good practice standards for civil society organizations, humanitarian aid agencies, and independent media groups to apply when staff are traveling.

[Protecting Yourself: Preventing and Responding to Swatting and Bomb Threats](), *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*
This guide provides preventative and reactive resources for swatting and bomb threats.

Events & Direct Actions

[Get in Formation: A Community Safety Toolkit](), *Vision Change Win*
This is a collection of security and safety practices built from learnings from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color movements within the U.S.

[Action Security & De-escalation Training for Facilitators](), *Fight Back Table*
This is a 120-minute training template for action security and de-escalation.

[Physical Security Checklists for Election Offices](), *Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)*
This checklist provides a series of questions designed to help election officials identify areas to enhance physical security at election infrastructure facilities and take action to implement low- or no-cost options in the short term.

[Keep Canvassers Safe](), *Democracy Security Project*
This is a quick reference guide on canvassing safety.

[De-Escalation Directory: Trainers and Trainings Available in Your State](), *Bridging Divides Initiative*
This directory allows users to connect with organizations that provide de-escalation, bystander intervention, community safety, and conflict resolution training.

Mental Health

[Psychological First Aid](), *Open Briefing*
This tool provides guidance on common responses to traumatic events for those supporting activists and advocates at risk.

[Mental Health Care & Direct Services](), *Pen America*
This tool provides general guidance for individuals experiencing emotional distress as a result of their advocacy efforts.

Crisis Communications

General Support

[Communication Resources for Changemakers](#), *Spitfire Strategies*
This resource provides communication and campaign tools for combatting disinformation, crisis communications, and communication campaign development.

Elections Communications Crisis Toolkits

[Elections Crisis Communications Toolkit](#), *Elections Group*
This is a crisis communications starter toolkit primarily for local election officials with strategies and tools for building trust with the public, engaging the media, and responding to crises.

Overarching Resources

General Guidance

Weathering the Storms: Building Social Justice Resilience Against Opposition Attacks
Roadmap Consulting
This report covers types of attacks to watch out for, armoring an organization, and case studies from the field.

Diagnostic + Assessment

Security Risk Assessment Tool, *OpenBriefing*
This assessment tool is a template designed to understand the risks of international travel or program implementation. The template can be tailored to assess risk within an organization, determine risk threshold, and develop risk mitigation plans.