Foreword

In terms of my work as the Program Director at WITNESS (www.witness.org) where we support people to use video for human rights, I can say there has never been a year like 2011. Videos, social network updates, SMS, tweets, and many other forms of technology-enabled communications created by citizens on the ground are shared daily, directly, and "by the people" - from Tahrir Square, after Friday prayers in Homs, in Pearl Square in Bahrain, or the streets of Misurata. Meanwhile, around the world in far less-known and less publicized struggles, the tools of modern communication amplify and power-up existing grassroots activism for change.

For many participants, both near and far, as well as a broader global public, the events of the "Arab Spring" have brought to light the importance of ICTs as a tool for political mobilizing and organizing. This is true at a local level within small communities of activism, but also on a national and even worldwide scale.

Issues around ICTs reverberate at multiple levels of our societies. Policy and legal decisions are made at international and national level that affect the human rights of all to freedom of expression, privacy, and non-discrimination, as well as the ability for human rights defenders to use ICTs to defend and uphold all rights. At the same time, we are in the middle of a flowering in innovation in terms of ICTs being used to enhance and amplify the capacities of both grassroots networks and traditional non-governmental organizations. Innovation and tactical sharing occurs via the coordinated and organic efforts of empowered citizens, individually and collectively. It takes place in ad hoc networks, in organized coalitions, and via non-governmental organizations.

In this valuable book, the contributors provide a roadmap to the questions at a policy and legal level, as well as insights from both academic and practitioner perspectives into specific innovative uses of ICTs. They identify particularly knotty challenges and profile organizations engaged in developing new tools and approaches.

Strong data, well analyzed, is at the heart of most in-depth human rights work. In the activist organizations section, the generally unheralded work of data analysis and documentation utilizing ICTs is highlighted through the work of Benetech, who are pioneers and leaders in this field.

Participation is also integral to emergent human rights practice. In this volume it is explored through the work of Tactical Tech "turning information into action," and the thousands of individuals participating in the crowd-sourcing work of groups like Ushahidi.

Timely case studies illustrate high-profile examples of how ICTs are being used – for example, You-Tube in Egypt and Morocco before the Arab Spring, and close analysis of the use of digital media by the Front to Defend Egyptian Protestors. They also present less well-known initiatives such as the use

of digital media to engage diaspora Liberians in the Truth and Reconciliation process in that country, as well as the contradictions at a policy and individual level of ICT policy in Brazil.

Furthermore, in a year when many people's understanding of human rights has been framed by the violation of civil and political rights in the context of mass protest movements, the attention of this volume to economic and social rights – and how their realization and enjoyment is enhanced or compromised by ICTs – is an unusual and important contribution to understanding ICTs in a broader context, and in contexts that are less immediately dramatic or telegenic.

By understanding how ICTs work in such a range of contexts we can hopefully understand how to best ensure that the courage, commitment, and belief in human dignity that underlie all struggles for rights are not compromised or diminished but rather enhanced and fortified by new ICTs.

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Sam Gregory *helps people use the power of the moving image to create change. He is the Program Director at the human rights organization WITNESS (www.witness.org), where he supervises initiatives that partner on impactful campaigns with grassroots activists using video, and train and support the growing number of video activists to use video safely, effectively, and ethically. Within WITNESS 'Cameras Everywhere' Leadership Initiative, he identifies solutions to the challenges, and ways to capitalize on the opportunities, presented by increasingly ubiquitous video for human rights. Sam has created training tools and programs including the WITNESS Video Advocacy Institute, was lead editor on 'Video for Change' (Pluto Press, 2005) and teaches 'Human Rights Advocacy Using Video, Social Media, and Participatory Media' as an Adjunct Lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School. Sam graduated from the University of Oxford and completed a Masters in Public Policy as a Kennedy Memorial Scholar at Harvard.*