Situation Monitoring and Analysis

We will begin this process with the broadest kind of analysis of our context: observing the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental developments in society which are relevant to our work, and may impact our security situation.

In the course of our activism in general, it is likely that we engage either informally or formally with some situational monitoring and analysis: that is to say, analysing whatever sources of information are available to us regarding the **political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental developments** in our society. We may do this by simply reading the newspaper every morning or talking to trusted friends or colleagues about their observations. It can also comprise more complicated or sensitive tasks like carrying out our own investigations and research. Through this process, the information we obtain naturally informs the decisions we make and the strategies, plans and actions we take as activists.

However, in carrying out and sustaining an ongoing situational monitoring, it is important to consider the **sources** of our information: is the media a reliable source of objective information, or do we have to diversify our sources? Colleagues, friends and partner organisations, as well as academics, experts, friendly authorities and embassies, security-related email lists, travel agents among others, can also be rich sources of contextual information which may be relevant to our strategy and our security.

Carrying out a more in-depth and deliberate monitoring and analysis of our situation on a regular basis is also a great way to reflect upon our security situation. It helps us to situate our work and our strategies within ongoing local, regional, national and global developments, and identify those which may point to a potential change in our security situation.

Situational monitoring and analysis can be thought of as the 'engine' of our security planning, from which we can identify the **key developments** which will impact our strategy. Examples of key developments include:
- the appearance of new actors (such as newly elected politicians)
- the emergence of new forms of electronic surveillance or ways to avoid it
- a change in the discourse of key actors regarding how they view our work.

Regularly analysing developments such as the above with trusted partners is a key security practice, and also helps us to **check our perceptions** so that we are less likely to suffer from **unfounded fears** or **unrecognised threats**.

There are a number of frameworks which can be used for situational analysis. Two common types of situation analysis which are often undertaken in the context of strategic planning are a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis, or a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. In the next exercise, we will carry out a brief PESTLE analysis and attempt to identify key developments from the last year of which we should be aware.

2.2 Exercise

Situational monitoring: quick PESTLE analysis

Purpose & Output	This exercise helps us consider the ways in which we already carry out a situational analysis, and briefly consider some of the dominant trends and developments in the last 12 months which may impact our security.
Input & Materials	Writing materials
Format & Steps	Alone or in a group, consider and take notes of your answers to the following questions:

1. How do you currently carry out situational monitoring and analysis? What spaces do you have for discussing ongoing developments in society?

2. What are your sources of information for this?
   Make a list of these, and for each one, take notes on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the quality of information they offer. Are they objective or biased?

3. Consider what has happened locally, regionally and internationally in the last 12 months and make a list of 5 to 10 developments you consider important. You may not need to categorise them, but be sure to consider:
   - political developments
   - economic developments
   - social developments
   - technological developments
   - legal developments
   - environmental developments.

Note: If you can't think of new developments in the last 12 months, consider generally salient characteristics.

4. Could any of these developments impact your security, directly or indirectly? If so, how? Did you suffer any attacks or accidents in the last year? How did they relate to these developments?