

Maintaining Verifiable Media During an Internet Shutdown

This post is part of a series on [Documenting During Internet Shutdowns](#).

Last reviewed: 31 January 2020

[Human rights defenders](#), [investigators](#), [researchers](#), and [journalists](#) often rely on first-hand documentation filmed by witnesses to monitor, report, and address human rights violations. To ensure that they are acting on correct information, these users take steps to authenticate and verify the documentation they receive, a process that can be painstaking and time-consuming.

As a documenter, there are simple things you can do to make it easier for others to verify and corroborate your documentation, so that it can be used in timely and effective ways. These few extra steps are even more valuable during an internet shutdown, considering that:

- If you can't upload right away, the publication date and location info provided by social media is not as helpful for showing that your video was filmed on or prior to a certain date or in a certain location.
- If others can't upload either, there may be less documentation available overall that can be used to corroborate your video.
- If you need to pass your video through many hands offline to get it to its destination, it may be harder for others to trace the source of the video.
- If you need to delete the original video from your phone because of heightened security or limited storage capacity with no cloud backup, or if you have to get rid of the phone, it may be harder to confirm the authenticity of the video.
- If you forget the details about a particular video and the app you're using doesn't capture / record metadata without internet access, others may not be able to identify it later.

The following tips can help you maintain your video during an internet shutdown to maximize its verifiability and usability as documentation later on.

Film or provide identifying details in the video

Try to include details in your video that make it easier for an investigator or journalist to later identify the time and place, like unique landmarks, the skyline, street signs, storefronts, license plates, flags, clocks, newspaper front pages, etc. You can also narrate basic information such as your name and contact information (if safe to do so), the time, date, and location/GPS coordinates (or write down on a piece of paper and film the paper). The more details you include, the easier it will be for someone else to research and verify the video later, even if they don't know you or where the video came from. Check out our tips on [Basic Practices for Capturing, Storing, and Sharing](#) for more.

Add description / metadata

Take advantage of one of the many specialized documentation apps that pull enhanced metadata or technical information from your phone, and allow you to manually input additional

descriptive information. Keep in mind that, during a shutdown, you need an app that does not rely on internet access to record or store this metadata. Check out [“Should I Use This Documentation App?”](#) for more on how to choose an appropriate app.

Even if you’re not using a specialized documentation app, you can still create supplementary information in the form of notes, maps, or photos on your phone. You can organize your video with this additional information using your favorite file manager app. The key supplementary information to include is time, date, location of the recorded incident, as well as the source of the recording (i.e. your name and contact information) if safe to include. Export the metadata and include it with the video (you can put it all in a folder and zip it) when you share it.

Keep a backup

Back up media from your phone regularly, ideally to 2 separate storage devices. You can, for example, connect On-the-Go (OTG) or wireless thumb drives to your phone, even without a computer. Check out our tips on [“Backing up phone media without internet or a computer”](#) for more details. Backing up will ensure you retain a copy of your video in case you lose or break your phone, or you need to delete videos from your phone. Having a secure copy of your original video also enables an investigator or journalist who sees your video through some other means to get the video directly from you later (as long as they are able to trace it back to you), creating a shorter and more complete chain of custody.

Check out the next post in this series, [“Backing Up Phone Media Without Internet or a Computer.”](#)