



# Call for Consultants: Freedom of Expression Research on Outreach and Network Engagement in the Middle East and North Africa

## *Terms of Reference*

### **1. Purpose of the consultancy contract**

The purpose of the consultancy contract is to conduct research on freedom of expression and media freedom in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with special focus on outreach and network engagement.

### **2. Background**

Media Defence's vision is a world where journalists no longer face legal challenges that threaten their ability to report freely and independently on issues of public interest, allowing citizens to be better informed, able to hold those in power to account.

Media Defence's mission is to ensure legal protection of journalists and media workers under threat for reporting on issues of public interest, in the belief that freedom of expression is essential.

Our organisation is dedicated to promoting freedom of expression globally. Media Defence's main activities include legal emergency support to journalists, citizen journalists and independent media across the world, strategic litigation to challenge unjust laws used to silence journalists and capacity building activities through partnerships and litigation trainings. We have strong networks in different geographical regions which we have built through the different strands of our work. In this context, we are looking to enhance our outreach and engagement in the Middle East and North Africa, focusing on establishing strong, trustworthy networks of lawyers and journalists.

### **3. Purpose and Objectives**

As freedom of expression is increasingly under threat in the MENA region, Media Defence would like to improve its work and outreach in the region, so that journalists who are under threat can access legal support quickly.

Media Defence is looking to hire a consultant to conduct research and provide expert advice on improving our outreach and engagement strategies in the MENA region. The consultant will address key questions regarding trust-building, security concerns in different countries, cultural sensitivities, partnership development, and strategic planning in the context of freedom of expression and media freedom work.

The consultant will

- Summarise the main concerns around freedom of the press in the region;
- Provide recommendations on how to build and manage relationships with potential partner organisations, individual lawyers, and journalists in the region;

- Identify secure and culturally sensitive methods for conducting outreach and capacity building activities;
- Evaluate the potential for focusing on minority groups and women lawyers within the region and identify safe ways to conduct outreach;
- Explore alternative tools and strategies beyond litigation that could be beneficial for lawyers in the MENA region and that fit within Media Defence's mandate;
- Recommend countries and organisations where MD partnerships would be most impactful;
- Advise on best approaches to promote calls for applications for funding and trainings, including appropriate terminology and platforms for dissemination;
- Assess the feasibility and security of organising in-person events in the region, including regional convenings and litigation surgeries.

#### **4. Deliverables**

The consultant is expected to present a comprehensive assessment report, in English, which is based on outreach to organisations and experts from the region and addresses the following:

- A detailed report on the current landscape of freedom of expression in the MENA region, highlighting key challenges, trends, and opportunities. This report should provide insights into the legal, political, and social dynamics affecting freedom of expression;
- Strategic recommendations for Media Defence to build and manage relationships with partner organisations, individual lawyers, and journalists. This should include specific strategies for trust-building, managing security concerns, and addressing cultural sensitivities;
- A practical plan for conducting outreach and capacity-building activities in the MENA region. This plan should detail secure and culturally sensitive methods for engagement, with a particular focus on minority groups and women lawyers;
- A summary of all key findings from the consultancy.

#### **5. Expected timeline**

- 7 October 2024: Deadline for submission of proposal
- 21 October 2024: Successful proposal will begin
- 6 December 2024: Submission of First Draft and Review by Media Defence
- 20 December 2024: Final submission

#### **6. Expected profile**

- At least 5 years' experience working in or with organisations in the MENA region, with an understanding of the region's cultural, political, and legal landscape. Experience working with journalists, lawyers, and civil society organisations in the region is highly desirable.
- Demonstrated knowledge of international/comparative law on the right to freedom of expression, digital rights, and internet freedom, with a particular focus on MENA.
- Fluency in English is required. Proficiency in Arabic and/or French would be a strong asset.
- Availability to provide the deliverables within the expected timeline.

#### **7. How to apply**

Please submit the following documents to [training@mediadefence.org](mailto:training@mediadefence.org)

- A one-page proposal including key dates and timelines for the project.
- CV of those working on the project.
- Quotation/itemised budget in GBP (£).
- Example of relevant previous work undertaken.

If you have any questions regarding the Terms of Reference, please contact [training@mediadefence.org](mailto:training@mediadefence.org).