



With the support of the
UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund (GMDF)

International Standards on the Right to Information, and Freedom of Expression and National Security

Open Webinar

13 May 2025

9:00 Eastern Time/15:00 Central European Time

It is now well-established that the right to access information by public authorities (the right to information or RTI) is a fundamental human right. Globally, 140 countries have adopted national right to information laws but these range in terms of their strength and proper implementation is often lacking. One area that remains a particular challenge is claims of secrecy on grounds of protecting national security. Some information can legitimately be withheld on national security grounds but, at the same time, this is frequently abused as a reason for denying access to information. Similarly, freedom of expression can sometimes legitimately be restricted to protect national security, but this is also frequently abused to limit expression unduly.

This workshop will be divided into three main areas. The first will provide a general overview of international standards on the right to information. The second will drill down more deeply into restrictions to this right on national security grounds. The last will focus on international standards for restrictions on freedom of expression based on and national security.

This workshop is intended for lawyers who work at the national level and who wish to enhance their understanding of international law standards in these areas, including with a view to bringing national rules more fully into line with international human rights or for purposes of litigation.

The workshop is held as part of the project *Supporting the Establishment of Networks of Media Lawyers Globally*, run by the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) and funded by the Global Media Defence Fund, managed by UNESCO. The project seeks to encourage the creation of and provide support for national networks of lawyers working to advance media freedom and freedom of expression. For more information on this project, please visit <https://www.law-democracy.org/projects/media-lawyers-networks>.

You can register for this webinar at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/or95umGbR1GNHa2ZGHUfiQ>

Agenda

[Times are Eastern Time]

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| 09:00 – 09:10 | Introductions and Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toby Mendel, Executive Director, CLD• Macarena Rivera, Project Officer, Global Media Defence Fund, UNESCO |
| 09:10 – 09:30 | Introduction to the Right to Information <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raphael Vagliano, Legal Officer, CLD |
| 09:30 – 09:45 | Questions/Discussion |
| 09:45 – 10:15 | Part I: National Security Restrictions on the Right to Information
Part II: National Security and Freedom of Expression <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Toby Mendel, Executive Director, CLD |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | Questions/Discussion |