

SIGNAL

How Amnesty International uses Signal monitor to verify eyewitness reports of human rights violations

“The long octopus arms of Signal extend to previously unknown news sources across the world.” - Sam Dubberley

Sam Dubberley is the manager of the Digital Verification Corps at Amnesty International. We spoke to Sam about his experience using Signal monitor.

The challenge

The Digital Verification Corps (DVC) was established in September 2016 to help researchers at Amnesty International corroborate eyewitness accounts of human rights violations depicted on social media. This verification work is increasingly an integral stage in the research process and is often the first step in the identification of crimes. Verified content becomes evidence used in Amnesty International’s campaigning for justice.

The DVC employ a team of specialists who enlist and train volunteers to review video footage, images and mentions to authenticate claims of human rights abuse. Their work is challenging because of the quantity and the varying degrees of quality of the content as well as the obvious distressing nature of what it contains.

The workload of the DVC team has exponentially increased as events are more frequently reported on social media first. The team needs to act quickly but also be thorough in its efforts to cross-reference and fact-check details with official statements and news reports from reputable sources. Before using Signal monitor, the DVC were using Tweetdeck Lists to organise tweets by Twitter accounts, but this was inefficient and required a lot of sifting of content.

“We had to do a lot of pruning of TweetDeck Lists to get the right results.” - Sam

The solution

Sam and his team use Signal monitor as part of their verification process workflow. Using the metadata associated with the social media post, the team use Signal monitor to quickly find reports of an event occurring at a given location within a specified date range.

The simple-to-use interface enables them to swiftly surface news stories from local, sometimes obscure, sources and provides a rough translation for non-English language content. These articles are then cross-referenced within the Signal platform against better-known, more reputable news sources as required.

A file detailing the relevant articles with links to each is exported from the Signal platform and sent to the researcher working on the case.

Sam can easily set-up real-time email alerts based on certain search terms to keep ahead of relevant breaking news and on top of stories that continue to roll and evolve.

“Signal monitor is super-easy to use.” - Sam

The results

The amount of time and effort it takes for the DVC team to verify content has substantially decreased since they started using Signal monitor. The team no longer needs to wade through tweets and can glean all the information and locate all the stories they need within the platform and export the results at the touch of a button.

Within the first few weeks of using Signal monitor, the team were able to quickly and successfully corroborate an eyewitness video of an extrajudicial execution in Mexico by locating a local Spanish language news story. From this starting point, Amnesty International researchers went on to compile sufficient evidence to call upon the authorities to perform an impartial, independent investigation. The news story can be read [here](#). An [open letter](#) to Enrique Peña Nieto, the President of Mexico, was issued on 25 May 2017 requesting this investigation.

“We were able to discover relevant news from sources we didn’t know existed.” - Sam



About Amnesty International

[Amnesty International](#) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation that campaigns against human rights abuses. Their mission is to expose facts through research to educate and mobilise people and lobby governments and businesses. The movement has over 7 million members and supporters globally.



About Sam Dubberley

[Sam Dubberley](#) heads up the Digital Verification Corps at Amnesty International. Sam is the co-founder of Eyewitness Media Hub, and his career in broadcast news spans more than ten years’.