

The GI-TOC's Resilience Fund selects 10 Fellows to foster resilience to extortion and organized crime

Vienna, 11 February 2021

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) is pleased to announce the selection of 10 successful applicants for the 2021 Resilience Fellowship, the theme of which is extortion and organized crime. The annual Fellowship builds a platform for cross-sectoral, global and interdisciplinary collaboration between civil society actors, human rights activists, journalists, artists, scholars, policymakers, grassroots community leaders and others working to counter the effects of organized crime.

The 2021 group of Fellows is diverse in background, geography and approaches, and includes individuals from Latin America, francophone African countries, East Africa, south-eastern Europe and South East Asia. The group includes journalists, community organizers and counter-crime activists.

The Fellowship builds a truly global group of leaders who work together to understand and better respond to specific manifestations of organized crime. They enhance their ability to make a difference in their communities, but also to contribute to improved global responses to organized crime. This year's cohort is full of committed individuals from diverse backgrounds, and I cannot wait to get to know them, and more importantly for them to get to know each other.

– Siria Gastélum Félix, Resilience Fund director.

Meet the 2021 Resilience Fellows:

Name	Country	Short bio
DK	Guatemala	DK is a photojournalist whose photos show the effects of extortion in Guatemala. His project will help to shed light on the problem.
Milos Katic	Serbia	Milos is a journalist specializing in the financial aspects of organized crime. He will raise awareness in his community and throughout law enforcement agencies about the problem of extortion.
Nukila Evanty	Indonesia	Nukila is a socio-environmental activist. With her leadership, she aims to inform her community of extortion linked to plantations and the natural resources sector.
Ponelo Kalonga	Malawi	Ponelo is an advocate for women's rights. She will work for the adoption and implementation of legislation that regulates sexual exploitation linked with extortion.
Riana Raymonde Randrianarisoa	Madagascar	Randrianarisoa is an investigative journalist. She is committed to helping her community understand and develop tools to counter the effects of extortion.
JuvénaI Twaibu Bilongwe	Democratic Republic of Congo	Twaibu is an activist. His work will help build a platform for advocacy and action against extortion, as well as give his

		community the tools to help respond to extortion.
Lucía Marín	Peru	Lucía works as a researcher. By using her knowledge in urban planning and data science, she is committed to finding technological solutions to extortion in her community.
Vandalark R Patricks	Liberia	Vandalark is a human rights defender. His primary goal is to raise awareness and address the issue of extortion by offering sound policy solutions to policymakers to counter these crimes in communities.
Vania Pigeonutt	Mexico	Vania is a journalist from Guerrero, who works with local businesses to find solutions to extortion.
Zia-ur-Rehman	Pakistan	Zia is an investigative journalist. With his work, he aims to help uncover the impact of extortion in his community.

About the Resilience Fellowship:

The Fellowship is part of the GI-TOC's flagship Resilience Fund, which provides grants and support to civil society individuals and organizations working to counter the impacts of criminal governance and violence across the world. The Resilience Fund is funded by the governments of Norway and Germany and works in partnership with international organizations and NGOs worldwide.

The first edition of the Resilience Fellowship in 2020 provided support and opportunities to a cohort of 10 individuals from around the world on the chosen theme: disappearances related to organized crime. During the course of the year, these Fellows collaborated on this global issue in their communities. The virtual exchanges we held resulted in new projects, new narratives and new knowledge about disappearances related to organized crime around the world.

The Resilience Fellowship is based on a three-pronged approach:

- **Sponsorship:** Providing financial support so that Fellows will have the time and resources for their individual work and a collaborative project during the fellowship year. Grants of US\$15 000 per Fellow will be awarded for one year.
- **Networking:** Offering mentorship opportunities with experts from the GI-TOC, as well as bringing Fellows together to begin a collaborative project to be undertaken during their fellowship year.
- **Dissemination:** Creating a platform for Fellows to publicly share their work and ideas – via venues such as conferences, civil society forums and national and international publications –, which will widen public discourse, deepen engagement with society and invite the support and participation from the general public and, ultimately, policymakers.

The Resilience Fellowship is not designed to be a stand-alone grant application procedure to develop individual projects, but a support mechanism for collaborative processes with other committed individuals who are already developing creative perspectives on community resilience and organized crime through dialogue, commitment and action. Thus, the Fund will give preference to those applicants with the incentives and means to collaborate on sustainable projects.

About the Fellowship theme for 2021: Extortion and organized crime

The theme for 2021 was selected because it is a long-standing core strategy and business model of organized criminal groups, but it is also an urgent and salient issue today, as it continues to violate human rights and fundamental freedoms. Extortion is frequently used as a strategy to spread terror within society. It is a motor of migration and displacement in many communities. For organized crime groups, it is a tool of control and fear.

Here are some examples of projects that we seek to develop:

- Telling the story of people and communities affected by extortion.

- Identifying community resilience to extortion.
- State-focused advocacy encouraging recognition of the issue, official responses and provision of services.
- Advocacy for inter-institutional coordination (national, regional or global) to respond effectively to extortion.
- Capacity building to improve the response to the crime (for example, training, assessing data quality, or creating handbooks or guidelines).
- Creations of networks against extortion.