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Methodology

October 2026

How our origin informs our work

Launched as Syrian Archive in 2014, the Mnemonic team was among the first groups within the international justice field to conduct investigations and documentation based on open source information utilising a clear, rigorous methodology. From the outset, Mnemonic cultivated robust technical expertise and developed tools to secure the content often shared by documenters at great personal risk. These tools and methods have allowed Mnemonic to comply with international standards for documenting human rights violations and international crimes, thereby honouring the efforts of those who document and bear witness. At the same time, through its regionally embedded teams and strong network of partners, Mnemonic ensures its archiving and investigative work meaningfully supports affected communities in their efforts to use the archived records in the pursuit of accountability and justice.

Since 2014, this field – and Mnemonic with it – has evolved substantially. [Social media documentation](#) of human rights violations and international crimes has dramatically expanded. Shared understandings of how open source information might be used as credible evidence have significantly [advanced](#). Actual use in legal and accountability processes has also progressed: open source information submitted by Syrian Archive contributed to the issuance of a [historic arrest warrant](#) against then-President of Syria Bashar Al Assad in connection to the 21 August 2013 sarin gas attack on the outskirts of Damascus, and the [landmark filing to the Human Rights Committee](#) alleging Russian responsibility for a deliberate attack on Kafr Nabl Surgical Hospital in May 2019. The relevance and use of open source information in the human rights, transitional justice, and accountability sectors are now widely recognised.

M N E M O N I C

Today, Mnemonic programmes secure and analyse open source information to advance accountability for and memorialisation of human rights violations, international crimes, and other grave injustices.

Mnemonic hosts and manages the following research programmes: [Syrian Archive](#), [Yemeni Archive](#), [Sudanese Archive](#), and [Ukrainian Archive](#). Our [Rapid Response](#) programme has had a recent focus on Iran and Palestine, launching significant archival and investigative efforts. Mnemonic's methodological and technical infrastructure empowers its programmes and enables partners to collect, preserve and organise open source information in such a way that safeguards its reliability and its evidentiary potential. Mnemonic's records and research are used by international accountability mechanisms, domestic prosecution authorities, human rights litigation and advocacy organisations, investigative journalists, academic and memorial institutions, and policy and regulatory bodies.

All Mnemonic research is conducted in line with its *Research Handbook*: an internal resource created to document and communicate organisation-wide research guidance, policies and practices. Below we provide a general overview of Mnemonic's methodological and technical infrastructure. Should you have any questions about our tools, methods, workflows or research policies: please contact us at info@mnemonic.org.

Our research principles

All Mnemonic teams work in line with four core research principles: Do No Harm, Integrity, Humanity, and Inclusivity.

Do No Harm: Having chosen to work in high risk environments, we also choose to prioritise safety above all else. We commit to reflecting carefully on the possible impacts of our work and taking action to minimise harm so that whenever possible we “do no harm.”

Integrity: We recognise the duties and responsibilities inherent to our choice to take up this work. In undertaking Mnemonic’s mission, we demand from ourselves principled decisions, high ethical standards, and methodological rigour.

Humanity: We see and respect the humanity of all people contributing to, impacted by, or otherwise involved in our work. We commit to treating the subjects of our investigations with dignity and respect as human beings. In recognising the humanity of others, we also recognise the humanity in ourselves; in doing so, we commit to working with compassion and humility.

Inclusivity: We recognise the absolute imperative of diverse perspectives and voices in this work. We seek opportunities to challenge status quo practices that accept exclusion as a matter of convenience, habit, or prioritisation of selected characteristics. For every new door that we open, we commit to ensuring that it stays open for others to join in building more diverse and welcoming spaces.

Our roles and positionality

How the Archives relate to their working contexts differs team-by-team, reflecting the needs and dynamics of those contexts. However, the following characteristics generally apply to all:

- Mnemonic programmes are flexible and tailored, taking lead from and working in solidarity with local actors.
- Mnemonic maintains open source information archives with personal, cultural, community, and emotional value.
- Mnemonic maintains open source information archives containing records that could potentially be used as evidence for justice and accountability.
- Mnemonic engages with and advocates to decision-makers about open source research methods and evidence, including governments and tech companies.

Our research tasks

While specific practices vary among teams, all Mnemonic programmes endeavor to accomplish three core research tasks: 1) securing relevant open source information by ensuring successful and reliable **collection and preservation** of materials; 2) **tagging and organisation** of the preserved materials – the Archives – so that they are as useful and usable as possible; and 3) producing reliable, research-based projects with **additional analysis** of the preserved materials.

1. Collection and preservation

Researchers identify and collect online material by monitoring platforms and websites, and searching for material following specific requests by partners or to advance their team's own strategic research projects. At least one person per programme is responsible for maintaining an updated, written record of specific sites that are being monitored and any other specific activities

undertaken during monitoring. Upon identification of potentially relevant information, a researcher conducts a preliminary assessment of its relevance and any risks associated with the preservation of the online material. Individual hyperlinks are then submitted for preservation.

Additionally, each programme maintains a vetted list of sources that produce online material consistently relevant to their working context and objectives. These sources can include legal practitioners, human rights activists, journalists, governments of all levels, bloggers, religious organisations, scholars, propagandists, members of security forces, and alleged violators of human rights. Sources on this vetted list may be considered impartial or may have a history of biased statements: a source may produce consistently relevant material even if not impartial. Generally, consistently relevant sources are notable contributors to the digital information landscape of the working context. Online materials from these consistently relevant sources are regularly archived as part of automated preservation activities.

Mnemonic programmes may also collect and preserve material as part of research projects carried out in partnership with or at the request of external groups or individuals.

2. Tagging and organisation

Mnemonic Archives safeguard an immense amount of data pertaining to the documentation of human rights violations and other crimes. Using manual tags and automatically collected metadata the Archives become searchable resources, and research teams have the ability to conduct data analysis, potentially uncovering larger trends and patterns in the collected information.

When developing manual tags, programmes create general or dataset-specific tagging schemas. General schemas are applied archive-wide and help ensure that key information, such as eyewitness or munitions remnant documentation, is more easily found. Dataset projects involve systematically tagging material for key information, according to a thematic and project-specific tagging schema.

A well-tagged archive or dataset can support data analysis that speaks to:

- Victim identification and mapping,
- Record-making, memorialisation and other truth-seeking or truth-telling efforts,
- Perpetrator identification, mapping, strategies and command structures, or mode of liability analysis (e.g., incitement, business complicity),
- Incident or base crime patterns, patterns illustrative of criminal intent, indications of proportionality, and indicia of less-documented harms/crimes (e.g., SGBV),
- And more.

3. Additional analysis

Mnemonic researchers approach verification as a process of “reality-testing” the collected information and materials in order to determine what about them is reliable. Consistent with the international standards articulated by the [*Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations*](#), Mnemonic teams generally consider three categories of analysis as part of their verification work: source, content and technical analysis. Researchers verify online material holistically – considering all types of analysis and information together – to get an impression of the reliability of the information collected.

Investigative analysis then involves piecing together the reliable information to reach reasonable conclusions or findings of fact. Generally, researchers seek to identify: locations (Where?); timing (When?); events (What happened?); and implicated people (Who? And how?). Further analysis may build on these investigative points and seek to understand patterns of events or structures of stakeholders.

For any given project, proper verification and investigative analysis necessarily involves an innovative combination of multiple analytical techniques tailored to that particular set of facts and materials.

Commonly used analytical techniques include:

- Visually comparing content to mapping imagery (e.g., satellite imagery, street view imagery, or 3D and terrain maps) to identify – “[geolocate](#)” – a depicted filming location;
- Conducting shadow analysis on near-aftermath or eyewitness footage to estimate – “[chronolocate](#)” – the time of day that an event occurred; and
- [Reverse-searching images](#) through online image libraries, to help track a visual’s online provenance and lifespan (including back to the earliest findable post).

Our research outcomes

To see how Mnemonic’s research methodology and technology are put into practice, explore the projects and impacts shared on our programmes’ websites: [Syrian Archive](#), [Yemeni Archive](#), [Sudanese Archive](#), and [Ukrainian Archive](#).

At the centre of this work is **Archive-building**: the systematic preservation, verification, and organisation of digital records documenting human rights violations.

Mnemonic teams carry out four main types of research projects that shape how the archives are used and shared. These four activities – public investigations, dataset creation, strategic legal accountability work, and responses to information requests – form the backbone of our research and engagement.

Public investigations are online, open source, fact-finding investigations into a team’s working context. Carried out independently or jointly with partners, these investigations are strategic and public-facing interventions, usually designed to shed light on under-reported phenomena or incidents of harm.

Mnemonic programmes produce organised **Datasets** as large-scale investigations into particularly prominent phenomena or well-documented sets of events in their working context, such as attacks on [medical facilities](#) or [media workers](#). Each dataset project includes hundreds of meticulously tagged materials and is designed to enable systematic analysis, evidence-based

reporting, and accountability processes. These projects often serve as a resource for journalists, investigators, and CSOs.

Together with our partners, Mnemonic programmes participate in **Strategic litigation projects**, advancing criminal case-building and other litigation efforts. This includes sharing evidentiary materials, contextual research, and technical expertise, always in alignment with international legal standards.

Requests for information are how our archives field and respond to external groups' needs for access to our preserved records and research support from our teams. Through these requests, our teams are able to safely facilitate external access to the archives. Teams receive requests from a wide range of stakeholders, including: major news media outlets, family and victims associations, other civil society groups, investigating offices at international accountability mechanisms, documentary filmmakers, and national-level prosecutors and war crimes units. Fielding and responding to requests for information requires highly confidential and often time-sensitive research and constitutes a significant portion of our teams' work.

If you would like to send a request to one of Mnemonic teams, please contact us at info@mnemonic.org.