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20th December 2010, OpenLeaks goes public

Today, on the 20th of December 2010, OpenLeaks presents itself to the public at www.openleaks.org. This new initiative seeks to enable decentralized whistleblowing platforms. It was created by enthusiasts from various countries and backgrounds, who believe in the power of transparency.

Community and Service Provider

OpenLeaks considers itself a non-profit community and service provider for whistleblowers and for all organizations, media, and individuals who engage in promoting transparency. It makes leaking at a local, grassroot level possible and allows for scalability.

OpenLeaks will not accept or publish documents on its own platform, but rather create many "digital dropboxes" for its community members, each adapted to the specific needs of our members such that they can provide a safe and trusted leaking option for whistleblowers.

We are concentrating on making the process of submitting leaks safe and easy, thus we do not focus on review or publishing (the other parts of the leaking process). That will be done by members of our community: NGOs, media, independent organizations, and more. These participants will be diverse in nature and in regionality, coming from all over the globe in later phases.

The split between submission and publication of leaked documents makes the whole process safer for all who

participate in it, and at the same time makes scaling so much easier.

Watch our video, which explains this concept visually.

Whistleblowing Knowledge Base

Besides developing and building the technical platform, we want to encourage leaking all over the world while minimizing risks for whistleblowers. With this goal in mind we are creating a Knowledge Base that covers as many countries as possible, giving answers to questions with regard to local legislation, source and whistleblower protection, precedence cases and more.

We will need the help of the global community to fill this database with high-quality content and to keep it up to date. If you believe you can aid us in this substantial task, please Contact us.

Finances and Transparency

We also want to be true to our name - OpenLeaks - and become a transparent organization. We believe that we cannot, with integrity, promote transparency everywhere else if we are not so ourselves. For example, we will provide as much clarity as is feasible about our finances, including our needs and expenditures. We will update such information on our website at regular intervals.

Concerning finances, there have been rumors that we will commercialize whistleblowing and sell content. This is not true. We are not creating a profit-oriented organization, and our services will generally be free of charge, for both our partners as well as sources. Our Knowledge Base will also be free for all.

However, we do need to build and secure the infrastructure (servers, bandwidth, and other capacities) and therefore will need the means to take care of this and other necessary processes. Firstly, we are seeking to encourage those of our partners that can afford it to help us expand our infrastructure by adding resources to it; thus making free access for others possible. Secondly, we provide means for donations from the general public wishing to support our project (these can also be non-monetary, e.g., server space).

Our Roadmap

As of today, OpenLeaks is not yet operational with regard to actually having members that accept documents, since we are only in the alpha phase of the project. For now we are further developing our concept, processes and infrastructure, with the help of our development partners.

The alpha phase will go live in January 2011, when we will start testing with a small group of media organizations and NGOs. Our partners for this phase have already been selected and we shall describe our progression with them in the coming weeks.

We plan to start the beta phase around April 2011, when we shall open the door for more initiatives (ranging from media, to NGOs and unions; anyone who requires the service) chosen both by ourselves, and the public.

More Information and Contact

Please refer to our FAQ page for more answers to questions you may still have, and if there are some left open, see our Contact page to find out how to reach us.

Visit our Concept page for details on how OpenLeaks is structured and how we will work. Be sure to visit it again later though, as this section will see some updates during the alpha phase.

Help us bring whistleblowing to a new level, and to make it successful! Spread the word, and visit our [Support](#) page.

- press contact: press@openleaks.org
- follow us on identi.ca: [identi.ca/openleaks](#)

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Welcome to OpenLeaks

OpenLeaks is a platform that aims at making whistleblowing safer and more scalable. This will be done by providing dedicated and generally free services to whistleblowers and organizations interested in transparency. We will also create a Knowledge Base aiming to provide a comprehensive reference to all areas surrounding whistleblowing.

OpenLeaks, though powered by a team of enthusiasts, also strives to facilitate the growth of a broader, global OpenLeaks community which will be comprised of NGOs, media, independent organizations, and individuals who have a strong interest in making the world a better place by encouraging transparency (especially in places where it is sadly lacking).

Watch our video to see how we will work and how this is different from existing whistleblowing platforms.

Read our founding statement in our News page for more details.

Help us become better!
Please direct constructive criticism and ideas to feedback@openleaks.org .

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General Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, the World Wide Web has grown enormously. Along with becoming the most popular method of communication, it has inevitably also become a convenient place for monitoring the actions and behaviors of the public and of individuals.

When you bring this into the context of whistleblowing - and in particular, high-profile whistleblowing cases - one can understand why people may get nervous about disseminating any information through this medium. However, assuming one employs the correct methods, these new communications technologies become a boon for whistleblowing instead of a minefield. It is crucial to get the method right, and that is where we come in.

To understand our niche, one must first have knowledge of the process involved in digital leaking, which consists of two parts that are required in order to function properly. First the recipient has to securely receive the documents, and second, she or he needs to be able to publish them in a robust, uncensorable, and effective manner. OpenLeaks specifically focuses on the reception of data. Enabling whistleblowers to get a document to where they believe it can do some good, without fear of any kind of punishment, is the essence of what we are trying to accomplish.

Watch our video for a short description of the leaking process and how OpenLeaks works differently in comparison to existing whistleblowing projects.

Leaking and receiving leaks is especially precarious if one feels oneself to be in unknown territory. We not only intend to provide a secure infrastructure for leaking, but also to help discover and analyze the best ways to

provide a sound legal base for whistleblowers and OpenLeaks community members in their respective jurisdictions. This should enable them to receive and process source material. This information, along with the purely technical advice, will be documented in our openly accessible Knowledge Base; though every whistleblower has to be aware that information can be incomplete or outdated and that they should therefore verify locally to avoid legal problems.

Leaking even the most profound document may not have any impact if it is never seen by someone who is fully able to do something about it. OpenLeaks actively seeks to connect whistleblowers with established institutions that are more likely to make full use of this specifically leaked material. These include NGOs that focus on, e.g. environmental protection, human rights, or transparency issues; along with more traditional media outlets, unions and similar groups, as well as other organizations that have a good reason to promote transparency.

The process of leaking with OpenLeaks

From the whistleblower's point of view, there is no difference between the submission of valid material that is not released, and censorship. Whether and how something is released depends on the policy of the party to whom the data is given.

We do our best to protect the identities of all parties participating in the process of leaking.

Within our community however, it is up to the source to decide where and how data is leaked. We give them the control to either allow the entire OpenLeaks community access to the data, ensuring that it is analyzed and possibly published, or to leak to a specific participant within the community. OpenLeaks does not interfere with this decision. We envision and anticipate that this fundamental structural change will make leaking far more opportune and successful.

At the end of the process of leaking is the public, and although we do not publish leaked material ourselves, we do encourage the publication of full document releases by our users through the available resources and impact multipliers that are already out there. In fact, the community itself is intended to foster an open relationship among our participants whereby, should any leaked material be misrepresented or censored upon publication, it would be relatively easy to locate the cause. Furthermore, it is likely that another member within the OpenLeaks community would bring the material to full publication.

Our goal is to increase direct leaking for socially localized, and not just global, issues and to balance the availability and security of the data that is of potential interest to the public. We want to explore all that is possible, and share the lessons we learn along the way with the rest of the world.

Watch this space for more details about how the OpenLeaks community will function, the types of databases (spools) it is built upon, and a clear description of our future user models.

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Knowledge is power

We are working on compiling an in-depth Knowledge Base that aspires to index a broad spectrum of topics relevant to leaking, such as laws on a per-country basis, existing projects around the world, best common practices, and guidelines for all parties participating in leaking. This collection of knowledge will enable you to research laws related to source and press protection, specific to your location. Among the information we want to document are legal precedents as they happen, historical cases, and areas of law that have not yet been put to the test.

As part of fostering an even larger community, we will document the requirements and knowledge that we have gained from the integration process of our users, into the Knowledge Base to facilitate the setup of similar projects. Furthermore, we will document other known leaking websites, groups, and organizations to inform you of what they specialize in, how they work and their history for each of them.

All of this, in effect, will make us a one-stop shop for anyone interested in learning about or helping with the worldwide whistleblowing community. We do not provide authoritative legal advice, but provide you with enough information to feel more confident in your position, whatever it may be. Furthermore we hope that by documenting the knowledge surrounding leaking it will become easier for sources to find leak outlets and that more projects will be spawned related to whistleblowing.

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1. What is OpenLeaks?

OpenLeaks is a technical framework and Knowledge Base aimed at enabling whistleblowers to disseminate data to third parties, such as NGOs, labor unions, the general public, and the media. We do not aim to publish documents directly, but rather to enable third parties to safely receive and work on documents themselves.

Our main focus is on getting submissions safely into the right hands, ultimately leaving the job of publication to the recipient. There are many institutions that need to receive and publish leaks which are regarded as trusted by the public. Our idea is to enable them with the technology and knowledge to receive digital data. Our resources are limited and unfortunately we cannot work with everybody. Therefore our members will be chosen from

many countries and various sections of society, with the intention of diversity. Our goal is to increase the chances of analysis and full publication by providing a wider range of choices for a source to submit their material to where it can be used for something good.

It should be noted that OpenLeaks does not decide to whom the material is leaked; this choice is in the hands of the sources. A potential misconception is that source material given to other projects will definitely get published. No one single project, including our own, can speak all languages and verify all leaks by putting them into context. Therefore OpenLeaks concentrates its efforts on the specific problems that surround the reception of leaks. If you would like to know more, have a look at our video which begins to explain visually, what we do and how or visit the Concept page.

2. Who are OpenLeaks?

This question has various answers. The OpenLeaks basis and infrastructure is operated by a group of enthusiasts with various backgrounds, from a range of countries. Beyond that, the full picture is that OpenLeaks will be a community, comprised of the networks' members and promoters of transparency, which will be independent organizations, media outlets, unions, NGOs or other initiatives.

3. Why should people trust OpenLeaks with sensitive information?

Because they are not just trusting us alone, but the OpenLeaks community. More specifically, though, the question of trust in someone whom you supply with confidential material has two major aspects: 1) trust in the integrity of those receiving the material and handling it, 2) trust in those supplying and operating the technical infrastructure.

The issue of trust in the recipient is addressed by allowing a whistleblower to leak material to a specific entity. A whistleblower can therefore choose, for example, a member of the media, special-interest NGOs, or labor union that is suitable in her eyes - any reputable organization with a potential interest in the material, and that is part of the OpenLeaks community.

Regarding the second point, our technological infrastructure can be independently reviewed, ensuring that the services offered to sources and members alike receive independent analysis and scrutiny. We feel that a transparent approach is much better than cloak-and-dagger tactics, and believe that trust in us should be based on critical scrutiny - just as it should be for everyone else.

4. What are the legal implications?

Countries with an independent press generally have laws in place protecting the necessary activities of journalists so that, for example, receiving information from confidential sources and publishing stories based on that information are legal activities. In some cases, submitters exposing corruption or wrongdoing are also covered under whistleblower protection laws. But often the situation is not very clear. Specific legal issues concerning the handling of leaked digital material are unknown and need to be cataloged. This and other information will be documented in the OpenLeaks Knowledge Base.

However, every whistleblower should be aware that we cannot give authoritative legal advice since we are not legal professionals, and that all content within our Knowledge Base should be checked locally and/or verified by themselves in order to avoid trouble.

Besides providing better insight into legal implications by region, using our service can actually help to shield our members from both judicial and extra-judicial prosecution. It is hard to compel a member to reveal the name

of a source whose identity is unknown. It has to be taken into account, however, that the protection journalists do enjoy in many democracies are not always granted to other initiatives like NGOs or unions that fight for our freedom too.

We want to make leaking safer - not only for whistleblowers and those who publish their material but also for us, as intermediary and provider of a whistleblowing platform. Therefore OpenLeaks neither receives or publishes any leaks. We believe, that the existence of a growing community with all sorts of backgrounds (human rights, investigative journalism, etc), will hopefully defend the OpenLeaks system against any censoring attacks anywhere in the world, thus making the system sustainable.

5. What is your roadmap?

OpenLeaks is entering an alpha phase, with fairly limited participation (starting January 2011, you will find the latest list of participants, please check at our Members page). This will last until April 2011, by which time we expect to move into beta and integrate more members. During the current period, we are concentrating on building a proper base for the future development of the project.

6. How and why is OpenLeaks different from WikiLeaks?

OpenLeaks is based on a more decentralized concept. We do not seek to publish information ourselves, but rather to enable third parties to do so. The public already trusts them, with their existing capabilities and experience to analyze and work on submitted material. We, in effect, simply enable them to receive information that they otherwise might not get access to in their local jurisdictional environment.

OpenLeaks is not involved in the direct editing and release of documents. Our intention is to function, as much as possible, as a mere conduit (akin to the telephone exchange and the post) between the whistleblower and an organization of their choice. This means that OpenLeaks does not accept submissions or publish leaked material directly.

There are two major parts to the process of leaking: submission of material and publication of it. By concentrating on the submission part we attain two desirable goals: 1) increasing the security for all parties involved, 2) improving scalability by minimizing bottlenecks and reducing complexity in our organization. To better understand this process and its difference to how other whistleblowing platforms work, watch our video.

OpenLeaks is, therefore, not an enhancement of, or a replacement for, WikiLeaks, nor is it a competitor. Rather, it is a complementary project providing capabilities other than those that WikiLeaks does, or can, provide.

7. What is your relation to WikiLeaks?

A number of us were previously involved with WikiLeaks. None of us has any remaining association with WikiLeaks, and all of us had left by the end of September 2010 (despite other claims). While we fully support the stated goals of WikiLeaks, and wish them success, OpenLeaks is an independent project.

8. Can members of the OpenLeaks community censor the documents they receive?

Data submitted to the OpenLeaks community can become increasingly available to all members (see Concept section for a full explanation of this process). Upon submission, whistleblowers have the possibility to specify whether or not the information they provide should also be made available to the community at large. Keeping

the majority of leaks open within the community will, ideally, foster a general attitude of publishing only full releases of original documents, since if this does not occur, it will be easy for the community to trace the cause of any censorship.

9. How can I support OpenLeaks?

There are many ways in which you can support the OpenLeaks community. You can for instance, donate money or hosting space to help us keep our services free for our members. You can also contribute to our Knowledge Base. Find out more details at our Support section.

You did not find the answer you were looking for? Give us feedback; it will help us to keep these FAQ relevant and up to date.

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OpenLeaks Members

We wish to build an active community that shares the need to receive sensitive data. Half of the community members will be chosen by us, whereas the other half will be chosen through a public application process. Our primary focus here is to provide the system to a wide range of users from different parts of society, in many countries.

Members can be media (of all kinds) but also unions, human rights or environmental initiatives, NGOs or other independent organizations with an interest in transparency as a means to make this world a better place. Currently we are not accepting new members, as we are in the alpha stage of development, constructing a solid foundation from which to work.

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About OpenLeaks

OpenLeaks is, to put it in a nutshell, a well-intentioned bunch of people with an idea. We met through varying circumstances, as is often the case, and like most web-based groups, we live here, there, everywhere, and nowhere.

History

The basic ideas behind OpenLeaks originated as a set of ideas for extending WikiLeaks. The focus was originally technical, and its main aspects were presented in an application to the Knight Foundation, which raised considerable interest, but was ultimately denied. WikiLeaks however, does not provide an environment that allows us to follow our ideas, which prompted us to found the OpenLeaks project in September of 2010.

Our idea

We are using our collective experience in an attempt to support, and help others to support whistleblowers; thus making the leaking of information more widespread, while simultaneously reducing the personal risk to those who fight corruption. Along the way, we shall also gather and document knowledge about leaking and make it accessible through our Knowledge Base.

OpenLeaks is unique in that we do not receive or release documents ourselves. Instead, we provide the technology and experience from our past to enable more entities, institutions and others, to process information

that may be vital to our society.

This constitutes the OpenLeaks Community: something much more effective than any single whistleblowing entity. We are not atop some hierarchy, distantly guiding the flow of data, but more in between it, providing the soil for the creation of a new form of social network by adapting our systems to the needs of our users and bringing them together. We encourage our users to communicate securely between themselves, tackle problems together and exchange information about data journalism. We think that providing our technology and experience to a balanced mix of members from all around the world that share the same need is another effective way to make progress happen.

Roadmap

This is a gradual process, and will be achieved over the coming months. We are beginning an alpha stage now, during which we will integrate some users that match our requirements for this active development phase. This should end around April next year, at which time we plan to enter the beta phase and open the system to more users which fit a wider range of profiles.

OpenLeaks team members

OpenLeaks currently has a dozen staff coming from various backgrounds. The two public contacts for press inquiries are the following:

Daniel Domscheit-Berg

... is a German journalist and transparency advocate. He has spoken on numerous occasions about whistleblowing and transparency, as well as its implications on democracy. Daniel worked with WikiLeaks for three years, acting as spokesperson and editor. In his life before WikiLeaks, he worked in the IT industry specializing in network design and security.

Herbert Snorrason

... is an Icelandic historian who originally got involved with this whole field by accident. After a chance contact with WikiLeaks, he was increasingly entangled in that organization, until winding up as a chat moderator for a couple of months in 2010. Disagreeing with the direction that project seemed to be headed in, he left and found himself helping get OpenLeaks started.

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Get in touch

Press inquiries

Please send press inquiries via email to press@openleaks.org.

General

For general inquiries please contact us through one of the following means:

- +49 30 57706454 0
- +49 30 57706454 9
- contact@openleaks.org, here is our GPG key for sensitive inquiries
- OpenLeaks on Skype: openleaks@skype.com

Special addresses

The following addresses can be used to contact the responsible staff members directly:

- General feedback, questions, and comments can be sent to feedback@openleaks.org
- For Knowledge Base inquiries please use knowledgebase@openleaks.org
- Legal questions, notices and offers can be sent to lawyers@openleaks.org

Follow us

Only the accounts mentioned on this page are officially used by us. If you own an account at a social network site of your choice in our name that you think should be listed here mail us please.

- OpenLeaks on identi.ca
- While we would like to use the twitter account we registered (openleaks), we can not because something is wrong with the account. We tried to recover it through the official process of working together with twitter but were turned down.

Legalese

Data retention

We do not have logs containing user identifiable information.

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There are no web bugs on our pages; we do not track your browsing habits and/or tell others about them. The use of external resources has been minimized. Please be aware that leaving pages through links on our pages generally leaves a hint where you came from for the visited website.

SSL fingerprints

The SSL certificate we use for this website has the following fingerprints:

- **SHA-1:** 2F:A8:72:54:8F:CB:06:F1:02:39:D2:8C:1F:6B:FF:0A:22:1F:EB:36
- **SHA-256:** 5B:DE:F3:19:70:E7:D7:68:41:AE:75:20:C2:20:CB:78:1D:DE:81:A7:FE:8D:7D:0F:64:BD:69:E6:3E:AC:FE:47

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How is OpenLeaks funded?

The financial foundation of OpenLeaks rest on several pillars. We are not a commercial project and do not, nor intend to, make a profit from whistleblowing. However, to keep the system running and extend our network, it would neither be sufficient nor sustainable to rely only on our personal resources. We also depend upon private donations from you. Lastly, we hope for and in some cases require contributions from the members of OpenLeaks who can afford it, in order to keep access free of charge for all others. These contributions can be financial or donations in kind. Read further below for details of these options.

Why should I help OpenLeaks financially?

While we are currently volunteering any time we can to the building of this community, there are infrastructure costs that need to be covered. For finance OpenLeaks relies upon contributions from institutional members (according to their ability) as well as from the community at large. Your donations directly enable a more rapid development of this community and keep access to our services free of charge for all those members who are not

able to to contribute financially or are lacking technical resources.

To be true to our name, we will be transparent about your donations. Once we start receiving donations, we will provide a counter at this page to make current contributions transparent. At regular intervals, we will provide a rough break down within our news feed of how donations have been used to cover our various incurred costs such as hosting, hardware, and travel.

How can I support OpenLeaks financially?

You can support us by making one time contribution or open a subscription to our flattr account. We will not accept donations via PayPal directly since they have repeatedly proven that they cannot be trusted with your money. Those of you sending packetz to PayPal and friends consider to join flattr or other community projects -- lost customers hurt more than lost uptime.

You can also use paysafecard, ukash, or WebMoney to support us financially. They all allow for anonymous donations should you not like to be tracked by curious governments. These vouchers are usually available at gas stations, kiosk booths or other locations where you can also get prepaid credits for your mobile. Make sure to pay in cash to leave no paper trails. To send us a voucher please click on the corresponding logo.

Can I provide hosting for OpenLeaks?

Supporting OpenLeaks by hosting us is key to the success and safety of the overall whistleblowing process. The more diverse and decentralized the network, the more it will function as intended, with no one location drawing too much attention to itself, or taking on too large a workload. Unless explicitly authorized by you, we do not publicly expose or advertise the resources you donate.

If you would like to provide hosting resources, or other means of technical infrastructure, please visit this page again as it will soon link to our hardware donations page that will guide you through the process. *Please do not send hosting details via email*.

How else can I help?

One primary goal of OpenLeaks is to establish a solid base for whistleblowing, and we need help to do it. We would love nothing more than to see a range of diverse whistleblowing-related projects appear all over the world.

One of the major ongoing tasks we are facing is the construction and population of our Knowledge Base. With it we aim to disseminate relevant knowledge to those who can use it. We are constantly searching for historic or recent information that can be used to build a better picture of the legality of whistleblowing worldwide. If you have any expertise or experience in those areas, we would love to hear from you.

If you are a lawyer who specializes in these matters, get in touch with us so that we might be able to document your actions within this uncharted, newly unfolding process.

If you know of, or have articles and/or references to cases surrounding whistleblowing, let us know.

Other than that, we would love to hear about any ideas or improvements we can make to the project. Please write

to feedback@openleaks.org .

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