HotSpot Exclusive: The Natalia Project

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Back in 2009, human rights activist, Natalia Estemirova, was found murdered as she was working on "extremely sensitive" cases of human rights abuses in Chechnya during armed conflicts in the republic and the North Caucasus region.

After her death, the Civil Rights Defenders -- an independent expert organization in Stockholm that aims to defend people's civil and political rights -- launched the Natalia Project in the spring of 2013: A wireless assault alarm system for human rights defenders who are at risk.

Observe, React, Engage

Based off of three principles, observe, react, and engage, the Natalia Project sends notifications of distress signals sent by human rights defenders wearing a bracelet via social networks. When an alarm is triggered it alerts local partners and the headquarters of the Civil Rights Defenders, providing the exact time and location of the assault.

Volunteers are able to get involved and react once the signal reaches their social networks. Depending on the situation, different suggestions for taking action will be presented by the Civil Rights Defenders. What makes the Natalia Project unique is it enables the distress signal to reach everyone simultaneously, increasing the chance to save lives.

A Lifeline Bracelet

The Natalia bracelet is made from polycarbonate, rubber, and steel so it can survive the violence and brutality of an assault. The bracelet also contains an alarm trigger sensor and a patented alarm activation and locking mechanism. The sensor activates the alarm if the bracelet is removed by force. A human rights defender can also trigger an alarm manually, which causes the bracelet to lock itself on their arm.

Once a distress signal is activated, a signal is sent via GPRS to the servers in Stockholm, where Civil Rights Defenders verify the alarm, and then decide what information should be shared and posted on different platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

A Worldwide Connection

The Natalia Project helps create a worldwide connection by integrating a mobile app, PFO Shield, which can be downloaded for free on iTunes and Google Play.

The knowledge that the world could know about such incidents is very powerful and it will contribute to a reduced level of threats. The Natalia Project will also contribute to an increased knowledge on some of the regions and countries where human rights activists work, and shed some light on the serious violations that occur within them.

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