

Human Rights House Foundation

Annual Report 2000

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) was founded 11 May 1992. It is located in Oslo, Norway. Our main purpose is to help establish Human Rights Houses, which have proved to be effective tools for local NGO communities struggling for human rights in their respective countries. The Foundation assists already existing Human Rights Houses as well as their international co-operation through the Human Rights House Network. The Foundation also supports human rights education and independent media.

Activities

Human Rights House Network

The Human Rights House Foundation is the secretariat of the Human Rights House Network, which is an informal forum of co-operation between independent human rights houses. Today, the Network has member Houses in Oslo (1989), Moscow (1992), Warsaw (1993), Sarajevo (1998), Bergen (1999) and Tirana. Our goal is to assist the establishment of human rights houses also in other cities. We seek to promote co-operation between the members, raise funds for projects undertaken by the members, initiate joint projects and facilitate the exchange of information between the members.

Support for the Human Rights House of Sarajevo

The Human Rights House of Sarajevo was opened on 18 September 1998 as a co-operation between eight Sarajevo-based human rights groups and HRH. HRH raised funds for the purchase and refurbishment of a house which is used by our Bosnian partners. 1999 was thus the first full year of operation at the new House.

In 2000 HRH provided support for the administration of the House. In addition, HRH raised funds for two projects carried out by the Human Rights House of Sarajevo: "Media Monitoring", a project which gathered information about the situation of the press and sought to promote free media; and "Elections", in which the Human Rights House co-ordinated a coalition of NGOs that monitored and reported on the conduct of the elections.

Human Rights House

Management of the Norwegian Human Rights House

The Norwegian Human Rights House was established in Oslo in 1989. The House gives room to five Norwegian human rights NGOs. HRH is responsible for the daily running and management of the House.

Kenya

HRH visited Nairobi in March and December in order to plan the establishment of a human rights house in Nairobi in co-operation with 7 Kenyan human rights organisations. The participants are Kenya Human Rights Commission, Federation of Women Lawyers, Center for Law and Research International, Release Political Prisoners, People Against Torture, Centre on Violence against Women and Child Rights Advisory and Legal Center. At the close of the year, the pre-project was being finished and implementation is scheduled to take place in 2001.

Turkey

A group of six Turkish human rights NGOs wish to establish a human rights house in Ankara: Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, Human Rights Association, Contemporary Lawyers' Association, Contemporary Journalists' Association, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and Amnesty International Ankara Branch. HRH visited Ankara in November 2000 in order to discuss the plans and formalise the co-operation and make plans for how to proceed. Norwegian partners in the project are the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression. The establishment of the Human Rights House is scheduled to take place in 2001.

Albania

HRH co-ordinated the pre-project to establish a human rights house for three of the main Albanian human rights NGOs. The participants are the Civil Society Foundation, the Albanian Helsinki Committee and the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes. Implementation of the project will start in 2001.

Kosovo, Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia and Belarus

HRH was throughout the year in contact with human rights organisation in the above countries in order to plan future human rights houses. In connection with a trip to Kosovo and Macedonia in February, HRH met with the main human rights organisations and discussed the idea. Due to the very positive response as well as the urgent need for support human rights groups in these countries, HRH will follow up on this project in 2001. The idea was also discussed with helsinki committees from the mentioned countries at the annual meeting of the International Helsinki Federation in November 2001. The Polish Human Rights House has for several years co-operated with NGOs in western Belarus, and has co-ordinated contacts with human rights groups in Grodno in order to establish a human rights house there.

Independent Media and Human Rights House Education

Voice of Tibet

HRH continued to assist the running and funding of the Voice of Tibet Foundation. The radio station was founded by HRH in partnership with the Norwegian Tibet Committee and Worldview Rights in 1996. Voice of Tibet broadcasts news and cultural programs daily in Tibetan language. The purpose of the station is to relay reliable news and to boost Tibetan culture in the face of Chinese repression. The signals can be picked up in Tibet, Nepal, Northern India, and Bhutan. Studios are found in Dharamsala, Kathmandu and Oslo.

Human Rights Portal on the Internet

In November HRH launched a human rights portal on the internet with links to human rights information and news worldwide. The portal is in Norwegian language and is aimed at human rights activists, students, researchers, journalists and others who are interested in human rights. The URL is <http://menneskerettigheter.no>.

Human Rights Education in Albanian Schools

HRH co-operates with the Albanian Center for Human Rights in a comprehensive Human Rights Education Project initiated by HRH in 1992. The project is targeted at 1st-8th grade pupils in Albanian schools. Pupils' books and teachers' manuals have been developed in Albania. In 1998 HRH helped raise funds for the revision of pupils' books. Also HRH financed and took part in an expert evaluation of the project. The evaluation was used by the Albanian Human Rights Centre to adjust the teaching material and future strategy of the project. The work to revise the pupils' books continued in 2000, and was co-ordinated by the Albanian Center for Human Rights.

Human Rights Education in Kosovo

HRH initiated and co-ordinated a project to introduce human rights education in schools in Kosovo, using the same model as in Albania. International partners are the Albanian Center for Human Rights, Amnesty International and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. Three visits to Kosovo were made in 2000 and an application for funding was submitted to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June. Pending funding, implementation of the project will start in 2001.

Administration

Funding

The HRH Secretariat was once again supported by the contributions of dedicated Norwegian philanthropists. Our projects received generous support from various sources including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The expenses totalled 2 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately 300 thousand US Dollars). The Voice of Tibet expenses totalled Norwegian Kroner 2 million, with funding from HRH, Westminster Foundation, Worldview Rights, and exile Tibetan groups, among others.

The Board

Chairman of the board was Lars A. Christensen, supreme court lawyer and a senior partner of the law firm Wikborg, Rein & co. Vice-Chairman was Hans-Christian Magnus, Sales Director of ResidenSea. The other Board members were Bernt Hagtvet, Professor of political science at the University of Oslo; Knut Kloster jr., Chairman of Navimar Holding; Svein Wilhelmsen, Senior Partner in the investment company Industrifinans; and Stein-Ivar Aarsæther, Senior Vice-President of ABB, President of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Treasurer of the International Helsinki Federation.

The Staff

Executive Director Maria Dahle and Project Manager Magnar Naustdalslid staffed the HRH Secretariat throughout the year. Birger Retterstøl Olaisen worked with accounts and administration from January through September. Dag Erlend Lohne Mohn worked from May until November to establish the Human Rights Internet Portal. Erik Thorstensen joined the secretariat in September to work with accounts, administration and information. Øystein Alme and Chophel Norbu worked in the Oslo office of Voice of Tibet while an additional six employees staffed the Dharamsala and Kathmandu offices.

Secretariat

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Deputy Chairman of the Board

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Member of the Board

Svein Wilhelmsen
Member of the Board

Stein-Ivar Aarsæther
Member of the Board

Bernt Hagtvet
Member of the Board

Maria Dahle
Executive Director