



HUMAN
RIGHTS
HOUSE
NETWORK

Annual Report
2002

OSLO MOSCOW WARSAW SARAJEVO BERGEN
ZAGREB NAIROBI MINSK ISTANBUL TIRANA

Map of the Human Rights House Network

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Soldiers' Mothers Committee

Human Rights Network Group

Non-violence International

Moscow Center for Prison Reform

Kiselev League for Protection of Disabled

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Mother's Right Foundation

Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia

Movement Without Frontiers Group

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The Egil Rafto House Foundation



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1 Introduction

At the annual network meeting 2002 in Moscow, the international network of Human Rights Houses presented a joint statement on Chechnya supported by human rights organisations in Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Kenya, Norway, Poland and Russia. The statement expressed our deep concern about the ongoing mass violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Chechnya.

In Chechnya today, civilians continue to perish and disappear, and torture, violence and theft have become part of everyday life. These blatant violations of human rights take place primarily in the course of so-called “zachiski” – mop-up operations by federal forces. Civilians also die as a result of subversive acts by Chechen combatants aimed at federal forces. However, one crime does not justify another.

We condemn the campaign conducted in the 2nd half of 2002 with the aim of driving the internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently residing in Ingushetia back to Chechnya. We are certain that the IDPs’ return to Chechnya is possible only on a voluntary basis and provided that their safety is effectually ensured and adequate social infrastructure is in place.

We are concerned not only with the situation of civilians in Chechnya. According to the estimates of the Union of Soldier Mothers’ Committees of Russia, over 20 thousand federal servicemen have been killed or are missing in the

armed conflict. 85% of the federal forces’ losses are conscripts. In our opinion, it is impermissible to use conscripts in Chechnya. 18-year old boys are sent to the conflict zone to be killed or become killers. The veterans, especially police officers, bring the unlawful practices they were taught in Chechnya back with them when they return to Russia. Most of them need psychological rehabilitation and medical aid, but the state does little to provide such services.

A call for change must come from within. To obtain that, people must have access to information – they must gain knowledge. The federal authorities’ information policies in Russia are expressed in the strict control of information coming from Chechnya and massive propaganda support of the federal policy, especially in the state media. This is absolutely unacceptable. The Russian public and the international community have a right to receive reliable information regarding the situation in the Republic and on that of the Chechen refugees.

"18-year old boys are sent to the conflict zone to be killed or become killers."

Developing an international network for human rights defenders to facilitate dialogue and information sharing, The Human Rights House Foundation seeks to encourage and coordinate joint human rights actions in the future. Human rights defenders need international support, solidarity and awareness in their daily work for human rights.

Maria Dahle
Executive Director
The Human Rights House Foundation



2 Human Rights House

Challenge

In their efforts to fight discrimination and injustice, human rights defenders worldwide face a number of challenges. Many are harassed and persecuted by governments or others that consider them to be a nuisance. Further, the activists often lack adequate funding and working facilities. A Human Rights House can provide a solution to such problems.

Concept

A Human Rights House is a working community of human rights defenders. The purpose is to:

- **strengthen cooperation** and coordination between human rights defenders by bringing them together in one location
- **improve security** of human rights defenders
- make the member organisations **more visible and accessible**
- **reduce costs** by sharing facilities such as seminar rooms and libraries (and reducing rent to about a half)
- create a **meeting place** for human rights activities, seminars and other events.

Joint activities

Moving into one location creates synergy effects. One such effect is the increase of joint activities at the Human Rights Houses, such as:

- **Free legal aid**

Legal aid centers have been established in Sarajevo, Moscow, and Warsaw, where thousands of victims of human rights abuse receive free legal aid annually.

- **Human rights education**

Human rights education – both on local, national and regional levels – is a central activity at the Human Rights Houses in the network. For example, in Albania, 2/3 of all pupils in primary schools today learn about human rights



Girls in Drammen learn about their rights.

Photo: Lillian Hjorth, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee

as a result of a Human Rights House cooperation. Similarly, organisations in Warsaw regularly train human rights defenders, decision makers, and journalists from the former Soviet Union.

- **Monitoring**

Human rights monitoring is an important activity at the Houses. For example, in relation to the Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2002, NGO's trained election observers, monitored media and held open public meetings to raise awareness of democratisation and elections.

- **Coalitions and networking**

The Human Rights Houses have formed networks, such as NGO forums and coalitions for human rights, working both on local, national and international levels. The Norwegian NGO forum has made recommendations to the Norwegian government and position documents prior to UN meetings. Similarly, the Human Rights House in Moscow has participated in making shadow reports to UN Committees.



3 Network Secretariat: The Human Rights House Foundation

Activities

Establishing Human Rights Houses

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) in Oslo, Norway, works to promote human rights worldwide. Our main instrument is the strengthening of human rights organisations through the establishment of Human Rights Houses together with local partners. HRH also facilitates support to joint programs at the established Houses, and work to develop an international network between the Houses.

Since 1989, Human Rights Houses have been established in Oslo (Norway), Moscow (Russia), Warsaw (Poland), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Bergen (Norway). HRH currently works to establish houses in Nairobi (Kenya), Minsk (Belarus), Istanbul (Turkey), Zagreb (Croatia), and HRH has discussions with organisations in London (England), and Kampala (Uganda).

HRH seeks to provide both **consultative and financial**

assistance to NGOs that wish to establish a Human Rights House. If the Foundation finds a project interesting, it seeks funds from private and public sponsors, both in Norway and other countries. It does not have its own funds to finance large-scale projects.

A **detailed manual** on how to establish a human rights house has been developed by HRH, with advice to local partners on how to proceed. It is available on the joint website of the Human Rights House Network: <http://www.humanrightshouse.org>.

Developing an international network

The Human Rights Houses form part of the Human Rights House Network. Around 50 human rights organisations are part of the Network. The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) is the secretariat of the Network, but exercises no control over the member Houses. Each Human Rights House is independent and free to set its own priorities, just like the NGOs of each house are independent.



*Aaron Rhodes, Executive Director of the International Helsinki Federation, supported the statement on Chechnya from the Human Rights House Network, and announced he would visit Ingushetia the following week. Here interviewed by Radio Free Europe at the press conference in Moscow.
Photo: Borghild Krokan*



Human Rights House Network representatives in Moscow (from left): Tin Gazivoda, Croatian Helsinki Committee; Srdjan Dizdarevic, the Human Rights House in Sarajevo; Bjørn Engesland, Norwegian Helsinki Committee; Natalia Taubina, Russian Research Center for Human Rights; Maria Dahle, the Human Rights House Foundation in Oslo, Norway. Photo: Borghild Krokan



Each year, representatives of the Houses attend the Human Rights House Network Meeting, which is hosted by one of the member Houses. A press conference was held in relation to the Human Rights House Network's last meeting that took place in Moscow, where a statement on the human rights situation in Chechnya was presented. The participants of the meeting expressed their concern about the human rights violations in Chechnya, and protested against the decision to close the OSCE mission in Chechnya.

There is also **bilateral contacts** between the different Houses.

HRH works to facilitate information transfer within – and spread information about – the Human Rights House Network, and to assist in capacity building on the local level.

Information and education

Spreading and facilitating education and information (on human rights in general and the Human Rights House Network in particular) is one of the tasks of the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH). This includes:

Developing websites

The secretariat (HRH) has developed and designed two websites on human rights:

- **menneskerettigheter.no** – Norwegian human rights portal containing searchable news and background information. Updated daily. In 2002, HRH continued to make the portal user-friendlier and adapt it to a younger audience.
- **humanrightshouse.org** – the joint website of the Human Rights House Network. In 2002, the new website was further developed and information transferred from the local Human Rights Houses.

Cooperation with the Norwegian Board of Education

To know ones own rights and to respect the rights of others, human rights education is important. Throughout the 1990s, HRH supported human rights education in several countries, most notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. The HRH is also member of the national committee for human rights education, a sub-group of the human rights committee of the

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The last years, HRH has increasingly focused on facilitating human rights education on the Internet. In 2002, HRH continued its cooperation with the Norwegian Board of Education (which is the National center of competence within the educational sector, responsible for evaluation, development and information). This resulted in the following projects:

- a **Christmas Calendar** on human rights, formed as a rebus where pupils had to learn about human rights in order to win.



- HRH facilitated information to Norwegian pupils in relation to **Operation Daily Work (OD)**, on our human rights portal menneskerettigheter.no. Around 120 000 Norwegian pupils gave a day's work for the benefit of children and youth in war-torn Sierra Leone.

- **Editor of the human rights pages of skolenettet.no**, which is the website of the Norwegian Board of Education. Skolenettet.no (the School Net) provides learning resources, content, information and documentation services of relevance to the school system.

Supporting free media: Voice of Tibet

HRH supports the free media in a number of countries, including media monitoring in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2002, the Human Rights House Foundation continued to give assistance to the independent radio station **Voice of Tibet (VOT)**. VOT was founded by HRH in partnership with the Norwegian Tibet Committee and Worldview Rights in 1996. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has stated: "Voice of Tibet is highly appreciated by Tibetans in Tibet as well as those in the free world".

It broadcasts news and cultural programs daily in Tibetan and Mandarin language. The signals can be picked up in Tibet, Nepal, Northern India, and Bhutan. Studios are found in Dharamsala, Kathmandu and Oslo.



Administration



WORLD'S YOUNGEST POLITICAL PRISONER: In 1995, the six year-old boy identified by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, disappeared. Suspicions that he had been kidnapped were confirmed in 1996, when the Chinese government admitted to holding the boy and his family in "protective custody."

Arts and images: Documenting human rights

In September 2002, **Photographer Jarle Ree's** much appraised book "**Heartlines**" was published.

HRH supported Mr Jarle Ree who has documented human rights violations in prisons and psychiatric institutions in Albania and Russia, and among internally displaced in Azerbaijan and in townships in South Africa: human beings whose freedom, safety and dignity is in the custody of others. Mr Ree wanted to make the international public aware that these people do exist, because they are not much helped by their own authorities and receive little attention from the international community. The Human Rights Houses in Russia and Albania helped Mr Ree gain access to institutions.



*Internally displaced persons in Baku, Azerbaijan.
From Jarle Ree's book "Heartlines".*

Funding

The activities of the Human Rights House Foundation was also in 2002 supported by the contributions of dedicated Norwegian individuals. The total private funding was 1.2 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately 160 000 USD).

Our projects also received generous support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 3.8 million Norwegian Kroner, or approximately 510 000 USD.

Board Members

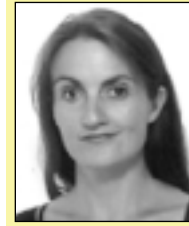
- **Lars A. Christensen** (Chairperson), Supreme Court Lawyer and Senior Partner of the law firm Wikborg, Rein & co.
- **Mette Newth**, Author, Illustrator and Translator. Former Administrator of the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression. Project Manager and Chair of the International Steering Committee for an International bibliographic database on censorship and freedom of expression for the new library in Alexandria.
- **Bernt Hagtvet**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Oslo. Visiting Professor at Yale University. Has written extensively on human rights and democracy. Research interests: Arendt on Eichmann; sociology of fascism; civil society and collapse of the Weimar republic; right-wing extremism.
- **Knut U. Kloster Jr.**, Chairman of Navimar Holding.
- **Svein Wilhelmsen**, CEO Basecamp Explorer.
- **Stein Ivar Aarsæther**, Senior Vice-President of ABB, President of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Treasurer of the International Helsinki Federation.
- **Hans Christian Magnus**, Sales Director of ResidenSea.



Staff

Maria Dahle, Executive Director

Maria has been the Executive Director at the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) since 1994. She is currently Chairperson at the Board of the Radio station Voice of Tibet. Maria holds a Post-graduate degree from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen, Norway, and specialized in strategy, organisation and management. She has previously worked as a Journalist, and helped establish the Norwegian newspaper Finansavisen. Maria has also worked as a Theatre Instructor.



Borghild Krokan, Project Manager

Borghild has worked at the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) since May 2001 with the establishment of Human Rights Houses worldwide, and also coordinates information activities. She holds two Masters Degrees: One in Political Science from the University of Oslo, and one in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Both dissertations were on human rights. She has previously worked as a Journalist and as Information Director. Borghild is on maternity leave from April 2003.



Sigurd Kraft Gulbrandsen, Administrative Consultant

Sigurd has worked part-time at the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) since January 2002. Secretary at the International Society for Health and Human Rights (ISHHR) since 1999. He holds a Bachelor's Degree with a major in Political Science and minors in Law and History.



Øistein Schmidt Galaaen, Civilian Worker

Øistein started working at HRH in January 2001, mainly with Internet activities, as a Civilian Worker (conscientious objector who is assigned civilian work in place of military service). Studies in Ancient Cultures at the University of Tromsø, and Mathematics and Philosophy (cand.philol) at the University of Oslo. Now studies Informatics at the University of Oslo.



Support staff:

Marit Hernæs assisted in adapting the portal www.menneskerettigheter.no to a younger audience in 2002. She is a teacher and has worked with human rights and refugee issues for several years in Norway, Kenya, and Sudan.

Magnar Naustdalslid has previously worked full-time at HRH and in 2002 assisted in documentation projects. He is a Political Scientist with focus on East Africa, and has also taken part in election observation.



4 Building civil societies

The purpose of Human Rights Houses in conflict-ridden societies is to

- i) protect the human rights activists, thereby laying the groundwork for a permanent presence of human rights monitors, and
- ii) strengthening the respect for human rights by providing a concrete outlet for human rights complaints for ordinary people.

The ultimate aim of the Human Rights House Network is to institutionalise human rights monitoring, i.e. providing the structural preconditions for creating a human rights culture. Human rights are best protected when their values and strictures become automated as a reflex among the police, in the judiciary, in political parties and movements and in the public at large. This requires long-term work and planning in surroundings where often-vulnerable activists can seek each other's company, learn from each other, present to the authorities a voice for human rights concerns and provide links to the international civil society of human rights activists and non-governmental organisations (NGO's). Human Rights Houses should become clearing houses for human rights

cases and should serve as centres, in conjunction with the legal and academic professions, for human rights competence and research, offering legal advice, library resources and experience.

Experience has taught us that people spend an inordinate amount of time finding practical solutions for offices, phones, Internet links and the like. By assisting to provide houses where these infrastructural needs are taken care of, we will unleash energies that can better be devoted to active work for the promotion of human rights. The fact that these houses are often owned by a foreign foundation will often serve to pacify local conflicts and in itself be a contribution towards peaceful cooperation in the human rights

community in societies plagued by conflicts. The mere presence of a vocal community of this kind can in and by itself serve as a reminder to the larger public of the obligations undertaken by the government to respect human rights.

"The mere presence of a vocal community of this kind can in and by itself serve as a reminder to the larger public of the obligations undertaken by the government to respect human rights."



Professor Bernt Hagtvat
Board Member
The Human Rights House Foundation



5 Established Human Rights Houses

The official opening of the first Human Rights House in the Network – the Norwegian Human Rights House (1989) – coincided with historic events in Eastern Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, organisations at the house focused on what they considered to be the main challenge ahead: Supporting fragile, emerging democracies. Key words were the establishment of democratic institutions, respect for the freedom of the media, and the rule of law. Among the instruments were election observation, media monitoring, human rights education and information, networking (both nationally and internationally), advocacy, and support to civil society organisations.

OSLO

The Norwegian Human Rights House

The Norwegian Human Rights House in Oslo was established in 1989. It currently houses five member organisations that work with various forms of human rights monitoring, reporting and advocacy, both nationally and internationally:



- **The Norwegian Helsinki Committee**

Monitors compliance with the human rights provisions of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) within all OSCE signatory states and supports initiatives to strengthen democracy and civil society.

- **The Norwegian Tibet Committee**

One of the largest and most active Tibet support groups in Europe with more than 1500 members. Works to spread

information about the situation in Tibet, and encourage Norwegian politicians and the Norwegian government to support the right of self-determination of the Tibetan people.

- **The International Society for Health and Human Rights (ISHHR)**

A membership organisation for health workers engaged in work with survivors of human rights violations. Focus on the effects of human rights violations on health, treatment methods, medical and psychological care and psychosocial interventions both on individual and community level.

- **Norwegian P.E.N**

Member of the International P.E.N. - the worldwide association of writers. It exists to promote friendship and intellectual co-operation among writers everywhere, regardless of their political or other views; to fight for freedom of expression and to defend vigorously writers suffering from oppressive regimes.

- **The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH)**

Works to establish Human Rights Houses worldwide and develop a network between these. Secretariat of the Human Rights House Network.



Human rights in Norway

Compared to many other countries, the respect for human rights is strong in Norway. Nonetheless, human rights violations occur in Norway too. These include discrimination and racism, Sami political issues, national minorities, asylum and immigration law, remand in custody and the time required to deal with criminal cases, social and health care, the rights of women, children, discrimination of homosexuals and lesbians, freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression. Some of these violations are brought before Norwegian courts or ombudsmen and resolved in these fora, while others are not settled until they have been brought before international bodies.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a sub-committee on human rights in Norway. Since 2002, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee has been the secretariat of the committee, consisting of representatives from the government, NGOs and researchers.

Norwegian NGO's also support international human rights work. About 1/3 of the Norwegian development aid is channelled through Norwegian NGO's.

Joint activities at the Norwegian Human Rights House in 2002

Organisations at the Norwegian Human Rights House had a number of joint projects and activities in 2002. Among these were:

- **support to human rights defenders in Belarus.** The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, and the Human Rights House Foundation continued to cooperate with human rights defenders in Belarus in 2002. As a result of the increased attention from these organisations, the Norwegian government now supports human rights work in Belarus.

- **conference addressing human rights after 11 September.** In the wake of the attacks, a broad coalition of nations

pledged to take united action to bring those responsible to justice. But in many respects, the campaign against terrorism has seen the erosion of international law, rather than its enforcement. Human rights have been undermined. A conference arranged by the organisations at the Norwegian Human Rights House in March 2002 focused on how democratic states can fight terrorism without violating human rights and democratic principles.

- **recommendations to the Norwegian government** on its human rights policy priorities. This was mainly through the Norwegian NGO forum on human rights, where some twenty NGOs participate. The organizations make combined efforts in order to influence the Norwegian government, international organizations like the OSCE, the UN and the Council of Europe. The most important work of the NGO forum is thus the production of position documents that are given to Norwegian authorities prior to meetings in the UN Human Rights Commission and the UN General Assembly. In these documents the organizations state their positions and recommendations. In addition, joint letters were sent to the Norwegian government addressing a number of human rights issues.



Maria Dahle from the Norwegian Human Rights House at a Chechnya demonstration in relation to President Putins visit to Oslo in 2002. Photo: Lillian Hjorth.



MOSCOW

The Russian Research Center for Human Rights

The Russian Research Center for Human Rights (RRCHR) was established in 1992 by an initiative of a number of internationally recognised human rights activists who had struggled for freedom in the Soviet Union since the 1960s, in particular Elena Bonner, Sergey Kovalyov, Vyacheslav Bakhmin, Anatoly Pristavkin, Larisa Bogoraz and Alexey Smirnov.

Organisations

- Human Rights Network Group
- Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia
- Kiselev League for the Protection of Disabled
- Moscow Center for Prison Reform
- Moscow Helsinki Group
- Mother's Right Foundation
- Movement Without Frontiers Group
- Non-violence International
- Right of Child
- Right to Life and Human Dignity
- Soldiers' Mothers Committee

Results:

Since 1992, more than 100 people have given help to about 20,000 people every year, through the work of Public Reception Centers run in the RRCHR and its member organisations. This has helped people defend their rights before courts as well as different state institutions. Before 1992, these people had no possibility to receive free of charge legal consultations of professional jurists with working experience in human rights organisations.

The RRCHR has also worked to disseminate its experience among human rights organizations in different regions of Russia, to create and develop coalitions of human rights NGOs, to influence state policy through participation in drafting laws as well as negotiations with state authorities on different levels in order to increase a respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The member organizations of the RRCHR work on national and international levels, and information in their shadow reports to UN Committees have been included in the general comments of these committees.

Being part of a human rights house has made the NGO's in Moscow more sustainable and professionally equipped.

Activities in 2002:

- Monitoring observation of human rights throughout the country and the Northern Caucasus
- Law-making activity – e.g. proposals on military reform and prison reform; legal work to strengthen children's rights; preparing changes and supplements to the Law on Psychiatric Care to prevent widening of use of involuntary measures.
- Cooperation with state structures – e.g. towards the Ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission, participation in Civil Forum.
- Legal defense and citizens' control under the activity of state structures – e.g. juvenile delinquents, mental hospitals, legal aid to relatives of the perished in the army (in particular during the Chechen war and at the nuclear submarine "Kursk")
- Participation in NGO's coalitions – e.g. regarding children's rights, Chechnya.
- Holding conferences and seminars – e.g. on military reform, Chechnya, gender equality (addressing the UN General Secretary), and training regional human rights defenders.
- Charitable actions – giving more than 15 000 Christmas presents to children and to convicts under age; summer camp for 300 orphans; fighting tuberculosis in prisons.
- information and publications – includes issuing annual reports on observation of human rights in Russian regions; special reports on xenophobia and conditions in penitentiary facilities; monthly bulletins, newsletters and quarterly chronicles; weekly broadcasts for inmates; "Human Rights Online" (Internet); media appearances and regular press conferences.



In Russia, many servicemen die during military service under criminal circumstances. The Mother's Right Foundation gives their families legal assistance.





*Torture, violence and theft has become part of everyday life in Grozny, the capital city of the Chechen Republic.
Photo: Iva Zimova.*

Human Rights in Russia

The present human rights situation in Russia must be described as serious or even hopeless, as the social, economic and political crisis results in mass violations of human rights.

For the majority of the population, the main task is to preserve the right to live, to save one's own dignity, and to survive. Gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Chechnya continue. The violation of human rights (especially the rights of draftees and servicemen, prisoners and former prisoners, children, old people, refugees and forced migrants, socio vulnerable groups) still occurs throughout Russia. Sharp strengthening of power of militarized departments and special services is evident. Under the slogan of "fighting terrorism" systematic offensive against democratic achievements of former years is under way. Step by step the state power has been strengthening state regulation of activities of non-governmental organizations and has been opposing public control.

In such a situation the role of human rights organisations has become extremely important. They combine their efforts to oppose violence, double standards, closeness and authoritarian style in civil life. They promote the introduction of the idea of human rights to everyday consciences, involve citizens in protection of their rights and contribute to the building of civil society.

Gulag yesterday

In the twentieth century there was no single country in the world where as many citizens have been sent to prison as Russia. Ninety-two and a half million people had been exterminated in the USSR from 1917 to 1987; 40 million of them died in the GULAG.

About the scope and consequences of this continuous slaughter one can judge by such a demographic indicator as the gap in the average life expectancy of men and women: it made up not less than 10 years even long after the end of the World War II...

Gulag today

One in every four adult men in Russia is a former prisoner. The prison population has reached the size of the Stalin's GULAG, more than one million people are held in prisons in inhumane conditions, suffering from hunger, disease, and unemployment. Three percent of Russian families have lost their provider. The overwhelming majority of prisoners are not professional criminals, but people who found themselves in prison because of misery, unemployment, or homelessness.

Thousands of Russian prisoners die every year from hunger, tuberculosis, or suffocation from the lack of oxygen in overcrowded cells in pre-trial detention centers. Now the average man does live over the pension age: he dies at 57 years old, 14 years younger than the average woman.

Source: Moscow Center for Prison Reform



The prison population in Russia today has reached the size of Stalin's Gulag, according to Moscow Center for Prison Reform.



WARSAW

The Human Rights House in Warsaw: The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

The Human Rights House in Warsaw was set up in 1993 by The Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. The House is mainly devoted to human rights research, education and monitoring, with a focus on civil and political rights in Poland and other countries. The House today hosts the following organisations:

- Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
- Helsinki Committee in Poland
- Association of the Young Journalists "POLIS"
- Polish-Tibetan Friendship Association
- Polish Section of the International Commission of Jurists
- Association of the Graduates of Human Rights School

The organisations are mainly devoted to human rights research, education, and monitoring. The focus is on civil and political rights in Poland and other countries.

Joint activities in 2002 include:

• Human rights workshops for students

This is a joint program of HFHR, POLIS and "Open Republic" – An Association against anti-Semitism and Xenophobia. The project's aim is to engage a group of young people in the human rights activity, either in one of the patronal organisations or on participants' own project. During a one-year course participants gather theoretical knowledge on human rights as well as learn practical skills necessary in a human rights activist's work.

• Join activities with Polish - Tibetan Friendship Association

On 6th of July, the Polish - Tibetan Friendship Association together with Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights celebrated Dalai Lama's 67th birthday. The birthday party took place on the Castle Square in the center of Warsaw. It was organised to show support to Dalai Lama's policy and efforts and to protest against violation of human rights in Tibet.

About the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)

The Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR) was established in 1990 by members of the Helsinki Committee in Poland. Today, they are a nationally and internationally known organization dealing with human rights education and public interest actions. The Foundation cooperates with the country's top lawyers, who advise members of parliamentary committees as representatives of HFHR. They also prepare expert opinions used by prosecutor's offices and courts.

The Foundation's six months' postgraduate **Human Rights School**, established in 1991, now has the total of over 500 graduates, who continue to propagate thus acquired knowledge in their individual communities. The same goes for several thousand persons from Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and also from the West, who have so far graduated from our various courses. The courses are offered in a variety of forms: two weeks' lectures and workshops within the Summer and Winter Schools on Human Rights, as well as seminars of at least one weeks, held in Poland or abroad. The annual summer courses are conducted on different academic levels for various professional groups such as lawyers, journalists and police officers.

Since 1997, the Helsinki Foundation has been implementing a programme called the **International Human Rights Training Center**. The Center seeks to promote knowledge



The Polish Helsinki Foundation supports and trains human rights defenders in Eastern Europe and countries of the former Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan.

Photo: Gunnar M Karlsen.

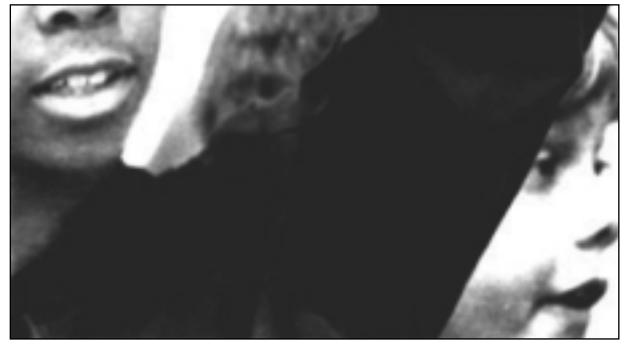


of the possibilities of effective human rights and public interest action through specialised training of NGO leaders.

The activities of the Helsinki Foundation include the production of TV-programmes on human rights, national radio broadcasts and human rights schools.

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights also has a project entitled "Access to legal aid in Poland".

In the year 2002 the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR) introduced new programs on monitoring of freedom of religion, right to health care and to education.



In December 2002, HFHR organised for the second time the International Human Rights in Film Festival.

Human Rights Challenges in Poland in 2002

- State policy towards Chechen refugees – currently there are about 4000 Chechens living in Poland. They escaped war in their country. Most of them are refugees who wait for considering of their motions for granting refugee status. Changing state policy towards Chechen refugees was and still is the most important challenge on the field of migration policy in Poland.
- The draft proposition of the law on taxes with provisions on tax abolition and property declaration violated human rights. The Polish Helsinki Committee made a statement suggesting that the draft should be changed as it violates human rights. Finally the draft was recognised by the Polish Constitutional Tribunal as contradictory to the Polish Constitution.
- Inefficiency of the Polish judicial system, which results in protractedness of proceedings. Excessive length of proceedings can also be found in numerous civil law cases.
- Cases of battery by functionaries of the Police. From our observations it follows that in most such cases, proceedings are instituted against the victims of such battery, the persons being charged with violation of the functionary's personal inviolability, insult, or active assault. In such cases, the victims may file an application

with the European Court of Human Rights against violation of Article 3 of the Convention.

- Extremely overcrowded penitentiary institutions (with even a very low area per inmate standard of 3m², prison capacity is 51 thousand; the officially stated one is 64 thousand, and the actual prison population is as high as 82 thousand), complaints submitted by inmates against prison administration concern first of all the living conditions. Equally big is the proportion of complaints against medical care in prisons. Both types of cases may involve violation of Article 3 ECHR.
- Dramatically extended powers of security services with practically no judicial or parliamentary review whatsoever. Both forms of the review exist but formally and are fictitious in practice. According to information we get, both the police and the security services intercept communication without any judicial approval whatsoever. In itself, this fact is a violation of Article 8 ECHR.
- Very low quality of parliamentary legislation, which reduces the people's confidence in law and nurtures their conviction that the economically and/or politically stronger may go unpunished even if they evade or disrespect that law.
- Access to justice – access to free and qualified legal representation and access to legal profession for young lawyers who graduated from legal studies.



SARAJEVO

The Human Rights House of Sarajevo

The Human Rights House of Sarajevo was established in September 1998.



The House has become a place where the representatives of non-governmental organisations meet and work together, a place where new ideas and projects are born – all aimed at strengthening the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its democratisation. Seven NGOs have their offices at the House:

- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)
- The Bureau for Human Rights of the Serb Civic Council
- Independent Union of professional Journalists
- Coalition of NGO's in BH "IZLAZ"
- Zene Zenama (Women to Women)
- Youth Against AIDS
- Renesansa

The establishment of the Human Rights House of Sarajevo made possible that non-governmental organisations engaged in the issue of human rights be located in one place, which also enabled easier and more efficient mutual cooperation in the issues from this field. Several projects were realised by the organisations at the Human Rights House of Sarajevo, such as:

- Involvement in work towards the International Commission for Missing Persons in the former Yugoslavia

- Establishment of a dialogue between NGOs from different ethnic groups in BiH
- Monitoring of the media in BiH
- Coalition of NGO's in BiH Elections
- Truth as a vehicle to reconciliation and confidence

From its establishment in 1998 until the beginning of 2002, 25 000 persons addressed the Human Rights House of Sarajevo to protect their human rights. The most frequent cases of violations of human rights were the following:

- the right to return the property (apartments, houses, land, etc.)
- the right to labour and social protection
- the rights of the war disabled veterans as well as of their families
- the rights from the field of pension and disability insurance
- rights relating to the process of privatisation
- rights from the field of restitution.

The Helsinki Committee and the Bureau for Human rights continued to provide free legal aid in 2002, mainly for the refugees and internally displaced persons. More than 4000 citizens visited the lawyers working in the House for that purpose.

Apart from enabling normal work to the organisations located in the House, the House also welcome other non-governmental organisations by providing facilities for seminars, round tables, workshops, promotion of books, press conferences of books, and press conferences.



Roma refugees from Kosovo in Montenegro.

Photo: Montenegrin Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.



Election monitoring in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The year 2002 in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a year with active social and political life, a year in which preparation and realization of elections were undertaken. The authorities and all the protagonists of the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the first time after the war, were responsible for the realization of the elections under the local Election Law.

In addition, the Alliance for Changes, that led the country during the last two years, has been checking with the voting body all already started processes of reforms. The basic aim was the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe.

Therefore, the member organizations of the Human Rights House in Sarajevo felt obliged and responsible to take active part in all segments of the electoral process. They initiated the creation of the NGO Coalition «Elections 2002» whose head office was in the Human Rights House of Sarajevo.

The Coalition, that gathered 119 NGO's from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, launched the project of non-partisan campaign for free and fair elections. In addition, it was working on the voter education, on motivating citizens to participate in the electoral process. The Coalition was also monitoring the campaigns of political parties, the elections as well as the behaviour of media in that period.

Finally, the Coalition is still monitoring the implementation of electoral results.



*Coordinated by the Human Rights House of Sarajevo, over 100 Bosnian human rights organisations launched a campaign for free and fair elections in 2002
(Photos: The Norwegian Helsinki Committee).*



BERGEN

The Rafto Human Rights House

The Rafto Human Rights House (the Human Rights House in Bergen, Norway) is a vital nexus and a working community for human rights NGOs in Bergen. Founded in 1997 in memory of the journalist Egil Rafto, it was officially opened in 1999.



Among the users are local branches of national and international organisations. The organisations have few employees and limited sources but draw upon active volunteers and work towards a more extensive and comprehensive collaboration in the human rights community. Several joint projects have been carried out, among them educational activities, campaigns and meetings with politicians and human rights researchers.

Organisations:

• Amnesty International Western Norway

Works to raise public awareness through activities and human rights education. In 2002, Amnesty focused in particular on the situation in Afghanistan, and on torture through the campaign "Take a step to stamp out torture".

• NORDPAS - Norwegian Organization for Research and Development in Palestine and the Arab Society

In 2002, NORDPAS arranged lectures, meetings, cultural events, demonstrations and campaigns focusing on the human rights violations towards the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

• Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)

Goals: Support the Afghan people in their struggle for achieving control over their own country, re-building their infrastructure, giving emergency aid, trying to give developmental aid and to inform about Afghanistan in Norway. NAC moved into Raftohuset in June 2002 in order to get into closer contact and cooperation with the other organizations there. In Bergen the work is done on a voluntary basis.

• Fredskorpset

Fredskorpset (the Norwegian Peace Corps) moved into the House in 2002. Fredskorpset shall contribute to permanent improvements in economic, social and political conditions for the people of developing countries, with special emphasis on aid benefiting the poorest of the poor. It contributes to the creation of contact and cooperation between individuals, organisations and institutions in Norway and in the developing countries, based on solidarity, equality and reciprocity.

• The Egil Rafto House Foundation

Human rights education is one of the main projects: A human rights program for schools at all basic levels, as well as a Master's course on human rights, has been developed, and an educational project on children's rights is under way. Further, it is in the process of investigating whether Bergen, as the first Norwegian city, should sign the 'European Charter for Human Rights in the City. Also, it is involved in a project aiming at increasing the recruitment of workers from migrant backgrounds.

• The Rafto Foundation

- Awarded the Rafto Prize 2002 to Sidi Mohammed Daddach, Western Sahara.

- Visited Turkey in 2002 to evaluate recent human rights developments with regard to the country's Kurdish population and to assess the prospects for Rafto-sponsored reconciliation and dialogue activities.

- In 2002, President Kim Dae-Jung invited the chairman of the Rafto Foundation together with a group of scholars, academics and journalists from abroad. The President hosted a meeting where Inter-Korean relations dominated the discussions.



The Rafto Prize

The charter of The Professor Thorolf Rafto Foundation for Human Rights is to present a human rights award annually, the Rafto Prize. The Rafto Foundation seeks to support groups and individuals who are persecuted in their struggle for human dignity and human rights. The foundation executes its mission through the annual human rights prize, publications, articles, media contact, study missions and workshops. The prize is annually awarded on the anniversary of Professor Rafto's death, November 4th.

In 2002 the Board of the Rafto Foundation awarded the Professor Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize to Sidi Mohammed Daddach, Western Sahara. The Rafto Foundation supports the Saharawi people's just struggle for human rights and self-determination. Sidi Mohammed Daddach is a strong symbol for the suffering of the Saharawi people and their struggle for independence. In spite of having spent more than half his life as a prisoner of conscience, Daddach has never given up the struggle for human rights and dignity.



Sidi Mohammed Daddach from Western Sahara was awarded the Rafto Prize in 2002.

Associated member:

TIRANA

The Albanian Center for Human Rights (ACHR) is a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit organization, and an associated member of the Human Rights House Network.

The Human Rights House Foundation has cooperated with ACHR since 1991, mainly on human rights education. As a consequence, two thirds of Albanian school children learn about human rights. More than 7000 teachers from more than 40 schools have received training till the end of 2001.



Photo: Jarle Ree.



6 Emerging Human Rights Houses

ZAGREB

The Human Rights House Foundation in Norway is cooperating with the following Croatian human rights organisations to establish a human rights house in Croatia:

- B.a.B.e (Be active, Be emancipated – Women’s Human Rights Group)
- Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
- Croatian Law Centre

In 2001, the three Croatian NGO’s signed a letter of intent demonstrating their commitment to establishing a human rights house in Zagreb. They also want to include other NGO’s in the Human Rights House. The City of Zagreb has generously offered to provide a location to a symbolic rent. Donors from several countries have expressed an interest in supporting the establishment.

Among the human rights concerns in Croatia are the return of refugees, war criminals and the Hague Tribunal, and reforms within the judiciary and the education system.



THE SLAP: In November and December, B.a.B.e. commemorated the international campaign "16 days of activism against gender violence". Over 3000 men signed a statement against violence against women. A video and CD with "The Slap", a song by the rock band Hladno pivo, was also produced.



NAIROBI

The Human Rights House Foundation assists the establishment of a Human Rights House in Nairobi, Kenya, in co-operation with seven Kenyan human rights organisations:

- Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)
- Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)
- Center for Law and Research International (CLARION)
- Release Political Prisoners (RPP)
- People Against Torture (PAT)
- Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW)
- Child Rights Advisory and Legal Center (CRADLE)

The plan is to construct or refurbish a house of approximately 1500 square metres in central Nairobi, which will host the participating organisations and also provide facilities that can be used by other human rights groups in Kenya. The participating organisations will move their entire secretariats to the Human Rights House, but will remain as independent organisations. In addition, external human rights organisations will benefit (both materially and immaterially) from using conference and seminar rooms at the House for their meetings.

Kenya’s human rights record has been stained by repression and lack of accountability. There are numerous violations of human rights in Kenya both in the public and in the private spheres.



Hilda Mawanda from COVAW is Coordinator of the Interim Board of the seven Kenyan organisations working to set up a Human Rights House in Nairobi. Photo: Borghild Krokan



The year saw relatively peaceful presidential elections, and the election of the leader of the official opposition as Kenya's third President. Kenyans are now filled with hope that the economy will improve and the new government will heighten the respect for the rule of law. However, healthy democracy depends on a vibrant, strong and coordinated civil society to survive. The Human Rights House in Nairobi will be important both for victims of abuse and for human rights defenders. Situated in a conflict-ridden region, it is believed that the House will play an important role in promoting a peaceful development based on respect for human rights and democracy both on a local, national and regional basis.



A supporter of NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) holds a newspaper with the headline announcing NARC leader Mwai Kibaki had won Kenya's presidential elections December 2002, ending nearly 40 years of rule by President Moi's KANU party. Photo: SCANPIX.



MINSK

The Human Rights House Foundation in Norway is discussing the establishment of a Human Rights House in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, with several human rights groups in Belarus:

- Belarusian Association of Journalists
- The Human Rights Center VIASNA
- Law initiative
- Belarusian PEN-Center
- Lev Sapega Foundation
- Supolnast Center
- The F. Skaryna Partnership for the Belarusian Language

Often referred to as "Europe's last dictatorship", Belarus continues to face grave human rights violations. A prominent journalist and several oppositional politicians have "disappeared", Presidential Elections in September 2001 were far from free and fair, and journalists and human rights defenders continue to be harassed. Human rights activists work under difficult conditions. If registration is accepted, the establishment of a Human Rights House would be a way to meet some of their challenges.



Demonstration in Minsk to celebrate Independence Day on 25 March. When Alexandr Lukachenko was elected President in 1994, celebrating this day became illegal, hence the police interfered. (Photo: Tomasz Wacko, Norwegian Helsinki Committee)



ISTANBUL

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) has an ongoing dialogue with Turkish human rights organisations on the possible establishment of a Human Rights House in Istanbul. In 2002, HRH had discussions with a number of human rights organisations. These include:

- Amnesty International Turkey
- Human Rights Association
- Helsinki Citizens' Assembly
- Mazlum der

In March 2002, Turkey outlined a national program of steps to be taken to start negotiations to join the European Union. Turkey decided to give priority to a review of the 1982 Constitution, adopted under military rule. Although some restrictions on fundamental human rights were lifted, new restrictions were introduced. The amendment did not include significant safeguards against torture, and the death penalty was abolished for some offences only. A number of promised legal reforms were initiated. New governmental human rights bodies were established. However, there was no major improvement in the human rights record. The pressure on human rights defenders increased in 2002: they faced harassment, death threats, arrests and prosecution, and branches were closed. Organisations in Turkey have cooperated for years, and now want to step up the effort to join forces for a broader, more inclusive and visible human rights movement.



A local election observer, Serdar Kilicarslan, was beaten up during the elections in Turkey 2002. Photo: Vedat Kursun

KAMPALA

In 2002, the Human Rights House Foundation started discussing the establishment of a Human Rights House in Kampala together with Ugandan human rights organisations, including **The Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)** and **HURINET**.

Despite considerable improvements since president Museveni and his National Resistance Army took over the reigns of power in 1986, human rights abuses are still widespread. Many Ugandan laws contravene the provisions of the international human rights treaties to which the country is a party, and have been used by the authorities to restrict fundamental freedoms. Other laws and constitutional provisions that do protect human rights are in practice ignored.

The government's fight against insurgents has resulted in the extra judicial execution of scores of people. The armed opposition groups, such as the Christian extremist Lords Resistance Army, have been guilty of gross abuses against civilians, especially women and children.

LONDON

Inspired by the Human Rights House model, three organisations are cooperating to establish a Centre for International Free Expression in London: **Article 19**, **Index on Censorship**, and **English PEN**.

Plans are that the Centre will become a physical reality in 2003. The Centre will monitor, record and oppose censorship, promote freedom of expression, openness, democracy, and the right of access to information, and will be in the vanguard of action to enshrine freedom of expression as a globally protected legal standard.





A human rights house is a working community of human rights defenders.
The purpose is to:

- **enhance cooperation** by bringing human rights defenders together in one location. Such activities include the provision of free legal aid to victims of human rights violations, human rights education, monitoring, and training
- **improve security** of human rights defenders
- make the member organisations **more visible and accessible** both at the local, national and international level
- **reduce costs** by sharing facilities such as conference rooms and documentation centres
- **host** meetings, seminars and other events

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