



HUMAN
RIGHTS
HOUSE
NETWORK

Annual Report
2004

OSLO MOSCOW WARSAW SARAJEVO BERGEN LONDON
ZAGREB NAIROBI KAMPALA MINSK BAKU ISTANBUL BOGOTA

The Human Rights House Network

Established Houses

OSLO	International Society for Human Rights	Novogian Helsinki Committee	Norwegian P.E.N.	Norwegian Tibet Committee	The Norwegian Burma Committee	The Norwegian Council for the Rights of Kurdish People	Nansen Dialog Project	Human Rights House Foundation	Network Secretariat
WARSAW	Graduates of Human Rights School	Helsinki Committee in Poland	Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights	Polish Section of the International Commission of Jurists	Polish-Tibetan Friendship Association	Young Journalists' Association "POLIS"			
MOSCOW	Human Rights Network Group	Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia	Moscow Center for Prison Reform	Moscow Helsinki Group	Mother's Rights Foundation	Movement Without Frontiers Group	Non-violence International	Right of Child	Right to Life and Human Dignity
SARAJEVO	Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zene Zenama (Women to Women)	Renesansa	Serbs Civil Council					Soldiers' Mothers
BERGEN	Fredskorpset (Norwegian Peace Corps)	Norwegian Afghanistan Committee	Egip Ratio House Foundation	AFS Norway Intercultural Learning	War and Children Identity Project	Kurdish Human Rights Project	Kurdish Cultural Forum	The Thorolf Ratto Foundation for Human Rights	
LONDON	Article 19	English PEN	Index on Censorship						

Emerging Houses

ZAGREB	B.a.B.e Women's Human Rights Group	Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights	Croatian Law Center						
MINSK	Belarusian Committee of Journalists	Belarusian PEN-Center	F. Skaryna Partnership for the Belarusian Language	Human Rights Center VASNA	Law Initiative	Lev Sapozha Foundation	Supohmat Center		
NAIROBI	Center for Law and Research International	Child Rights Advisory Legal Center	Coalition on Violence against Women	Federation of Women Lawyers	Kenya Human Rights Commission	People Against Torture	Release Political Prisoners		
KAMPALA	Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET)	Refugee Law Project (RLP)	Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)	Hope After Rape (HAR)	International Women's Cross-Cultural Exchange	Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)	Greenwatch	African Center for the Rehabilitation and Treatment of Torture Victims (ACTV)	Legal Aid Project (LAP)
BAKU	Citizen's Labor Rights Protection League (CLRPL)	International Society Human Rights - Azerbaijan (ISHR)	Azerbaijani Young Lawyers Union (AYLU)	Human Rights Centre "Against Violence" (AVHRC)	Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD)	Center for "E.L." Development Program	Azerbaijani Human Rights Center (AHRCC)	Society for Human Rights Research (SHR)	Association for Association for Women's Rights (APWR)



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Article 1:

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act
towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*



Introduction

Human rights activists are under attack. In many countries it is becoming increasingly dangerous to defend the rights of others and to speak up against oppressive regimes and political opponents. The work puts them in positions of great personal and professional risk, including risk to their colleagues, family members and friends. In many parts of the world, there is an increased use of the law, the courts and local public platforms as a means to deter human rights defenders from carrying out their activities and to restrain their work. This development worries us, and we have a responsibility as human rights activists to address the problem.

Hence, the Human Rights House Network marked its 10th Anniversary in 2004 with an international conference entitled *Activists Under Attack – Defending the Right to be a Human Rights Defender*. Our hope was that the conference would be a small contribution to putting the protection of human rights defenders higher on the agenda. By gathering human rights defenders from all over the world, as well as intellectuals, artists, politicians, researchers, and others who share a common goal of strengthening the work for human rights, we wanted to manifest the right to be a human rights defender and discuss how to protect the right to be a human rights defender.

The conference adopted a statement, with recommendations to governments on how to support and protect human rights activists. Experience has shown that the most effective protection measures are those that have collective implications and are driven by political will. Durable solutions rest on the political will of stakeholders and competent authorities at all levels. The international community and donor community must uphold high human rights standards in all human development efforts and use the level of national protection afforded to those defending human rights as some development indicators. We want the governments to adopt transparent, comprehensive, and verifiable policies to protect human rights defenders, both in their own countries and abroad. One of the recom-

mendations was to provide immediate protection to human rights defenders in urgent situations, by granting temporary visas to human rights defenders at grave risk or facilitating asylum procedures and temporary admission programmes.

The statement adopted at the conference is an important strategic tool for the future work in the Human Rights House Network.

Since the beginning in 1994, the main aim of the Human Rights House Network has been to improve the work for human rights. Human Rights Houses enhance co-operation and collaboration among organisations and strengthen solidarity among

them. They make organisations more visible and put human rights on the agenda.

But most of all, a Human Rights House increases the security of human rights defenders and activists and provides a base from where they can pursue their goals more efficiently and at less risk.

One person in Norway has played a major role in the Human Rights House project from the beginning. It was his idea to establish the first Human Rights House in Oslo, and it was his initiative to establish the Human Rights House Network. He has provided funding and let us use the house in Urtegata 50 free of charge until we had to move to larger offices in 2004, and he has invested time and effort as a board member of the Human Rights House Foundation. Therefore, we would like to thank Knut Kloster jr for nurturing the Human Rights House idea and providing the human rights community in Norway with generous support for more than a decade.

“We want governments to adopt transparent, comprehensive, and verifiable policies to protect human rights defenders, both in their own countries and abroad.”



Maria Dahle
Executive Director
Human Rights House Foundation



Photo: Bård B. Lovvig



The Human Rights House Network Secretariat, Oslo

Activities

Human Rights Houses

A Human Rights House is a collaborative project of NGOs working together to promote human rights at home and abroad. A Human Rights House is also a physical structure that houses a community of member organizations. The purpose is to:

- Enhance cooperation and joint activities by bringing human rights groups together in one location (such activities include the provision of free legal aid to victims of human rights abuses, human rights schools and training.
- Save costs by sharing facilities, such as conference rooms and a human rights documentation center
- Make the member organizations more visible and accessible at both national and international levels
- Improve security of human rights defenders
- Host meetings, seminars and other events.

Since 1989, Human Rights Houses have been established in Oslo and Bergen (Norway), Moscow (Russia), Warsaw (Poland), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and London (England). More Houses are under establishment in Zagreb (Croatia), Nairobi (Kenya), Minsk (Belarus), Istanbul (Turkey), Baku (Azerbaijan), and Kampala (Uganda). In



PANCHEN LAMA OF TIBET IS THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST POLITICAL PRISONER. HERE, TIBETAN MONKS IN A PEACE MARCH IN DHARAMSALA ASK CHINA FOR HIS RELEASE. Photo: Maria Dahle

addition, the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH), has had discussions with human rights defenders from a number of countries in 2004, including Colombia and Iran.

Network

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) is located in Oslo, Norway, and is the Secretariat of the Human Rights House Network. The Human Rights House Network is a forum of co-operation between independent Human Rights Houses and its independent organisations. The network's shared ambition is to promote, protect and enhance human rights. This is done through

- establishing more Human Rights Houses
- sharing of knowledge and experience within and between these Houses
- carrying out joint projects in and between the Houses
- distributing information about human rights violations and -activities

The number of member organisations in each House varies, but in total, the network currently consists of more than seventy organisations.

Manual on establishing a Human Rights House

HRH's recently revised (English language) manual guiding local partners through the whole establishment process, is available in print and on the network's joint website www.humanrightshouse.org. The manual has been translated into Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Azeri.

Fundraising

The Secretariat's role is to provide both consultative and financial assistance to NGOs wishing to establish a Human Rights House. If an initiative to establish a new Human Rights House is found viable, the secretariat seeks funds from private and public sponsors.

HRH does not have its own funds to support large-scale projects, but fundraises, mostly towards the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the basis of project proposals developed in other Houses in the network. In 2004, the Network continued the efforts to provide a broader international base for further establishments.



Voice of Tibet

HRH helped establish the independent radio station Voice of Tibet, and continued to assist it in 2004. 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.

Network Meeting

Representatives from each Human Rights House, established and emerging, meet annually to determine strategies and priorities for the coming year. The meeting in 2004 was hosted by the Human Rights House Foundation in Oslo, and coincided with the HRH 10-year Anniversary Conference "Activists under attack. Defending the right to be a human rights defender" (see next page). The conference adopted a statement on the deteriorating situation for human rights defenders, which was followed up in meetings with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The network representatives also met the Norwegian Film-Maker Erling Borgen who plans to make a documentary on human rights defenders. There were also presentations by Geir Lundestad, Director of the Nobel Institute, and Art Kaufman, Project Manager of the World Movement for Democracy. In 2005 the network meeting will take place in Baku.

Internet Activities

In 2004, the HRH Secretariat continued to develop and update its two websites; www.menneskerettigheter.no and www.humanrightshouse.org. The former was further adjusted to suit one of its main target groups; primary school pupils in Norway. The latter is the joint website of the HRH Network.



HRH NETWORK DELEGATES FROM BAKU AND BOGOTA ADMIRE WANGARI MAATHAI, WHO RECEIVED THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IN 2004.

Photo: Bård B. Løvrig

Training of Information Co-ordinators

Human Rights House Network Information Co-ordinators were employed in part-time positions at ten established and emerging Human Rights Houses to facilitate and publish information on the joint website and to other joint material, about activities at the local Human Rights Houses.



Photo: Borghild T. Krokan, HRH

They were equipped with web manuals and guidelines produced by HRH. During a three-day workshop at the Human Rights House of Sarajevo, Information Co-ordinators from ten countries received training by HRH staff in Oslo in editing and publishing texts and images on the Internet. During the HRH Network Meeting in Oslo, the Information Co-ordinators received further training. This boosted the activity at www.humanrightshouse.org.

Moscow: Anastasia Evseeva

New Co-ordinator in 2005: marie.paramonova@gmail.com

Warsaw: Karolina Oponowicz

New Co-ordinator in 2005: M.lempicka@hfhpol.waw.pl

Sarajevo: Mirsad Panzic, m.panzic@bh-hchr.org

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Zagreb: Goran Milakovic, gmilakov@ffzg.hr

Nairobi: Martin Oluoch, clarion@swiftkenya.com

Minsk: Anonymous for security reasons

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Baku: Vugar Gojayev,

house2004az@yahoo.com

Newsletter

From September 2004, a weekly electronic newsletter from the Human Rights House Network was distributed to around 500 recipients worldwide, mainly other NGOs, decision makers, donors, media, and academic institutions. The newsletter is based on a selection of stories from the Human Rights House Network Information Co-ordinators and the Secretariat, published at www.humanrightshouse.org



10-year Anniversary Conference: Activists under attack

In many countries, the security and working conditions of human rights defenders have worsened. This was highlighted at an international conference titled "Activists under Attack. Defending the Right to be a Human Rights Defender". Hosted by the Human Rights House Foundation, it was held at the new Norwegian Human Rights House 13-14 October 2004.

The conference marked the 10th Anniversary of the Human Rights House Network. More than 100 delegates from over 20 countries participated. Among the participants were Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, representatives of governments including the Norwegian Minister of Justice, a Norwegian Parliamentarian, the Dutch Ambassador, international experts, and human rights defenders from within and outside the Human Rights House Network.

Statement

A statement was presented and adopted, with recommendations to governments on how to support and protect human rights activists (see page 12-13). Drafted by HRH in Oslo and developed together with other conference delegates, mainly the Office of the UN Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, the Office for the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, and the Human Rights Defenders Office in Geneva, the statement was translated into several languages and distributed worldwide.

Media coverage

An international press conference was held the day before the conference. The conference was widely covered by the national and foreign press. In the Norwegian media, more than 40 articles in relation to the conference were registered. HRH had a constructive co-operation with the media agency Kulturmejerne.

Students from Westerdahls School of Communication made film documentaries from the conference. Speeches, press releases and other information from the conference was made available on www.humanrightshouse.org (go to *Network* (left menu) and choose *Activities under attack*)



PER ROAR CHOREOGRAPHED A DANCE TRIBUTE TO SHIRIN EBADI.

Photo: Bård B. Løvrig



SOLO CISSOKHO, SINGER AND KORA PLAYER.

Photo: Bård B. Løvrig





- THE EU GUIDELINES WILL NOT BE YET ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER IN A FILING CABINET, PROMISED THE NETHERLANDS AMBASSADOR ERIK ADER.



- HAVEN'T WE DONE SO, WE SHOULD DO IT, SAID NORWEGIAN MINISTER OF JUSTICE ODD EINAR DØRUM, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE FACT THAT NORWAY - UNLIKE THE EU - HAS YET TO DEVELOP A TRANSPARENT POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THAT CAN BE EVALUATED BY INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS.

- AFTER 9/11 MY OWN GOVERNMENT HAS FALLEN FAR SHORT OF ITS OWN BEST TRADITIONS AND IN CONTRAVENTION, BORDERING ON CONTEMPT, OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, SAID GARA LAMARCHE, VICE-PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF U.S. PROGRAMS, OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE.



ACTIVISTS WERE ATTACKED AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN AZERBAIJAN IN OCTOBER 2003. A HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE CAN STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS WORK ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SAID NOVELLA JAFAROGLU APPELBAUM FROM THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS.



- HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS WORKING ON THE FRONT LINE ARE THE ONES WHO BRING ABOUT CHANGE. IT IS OUR JOB TO TRY TO KEEP THEM ALIVE, SAID MARY LAWLOR FROM FRONT LINE DEFENDERS.



VEMUND OLSEN FROM PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL ESCORTS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN DANGEROUS AREAS.

- FROM ALBERT LUTHULI TO ANDREJ SAKHAROV, FROM VACLAV HAVEL TO MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR, FROM A. PEREZ ESQUIVEL TO MAHATMA GHANDI - THE CAUSE OF FIGHTING OPPRESSION AND PROMOTING FREEDOM AND DIGNITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN SYMBOLIZED BY INDIVIDUALS, SAID PROFESSOR AND HRH BOARD MEMBER BERNT HAGTVET.



Photos by Bård B. Løvrig





- THE UN IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION, BUT DOESN'T ALWAYS TAKE A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH, SAID BEN MAJEKODUNMI, ASSISTANT TO HINA JILANI, THE UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS.



ALEXA LeBLANC FROM FIDH SAID TEMPORARY VISAS SHOULD BE GRANTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT GRAVE RISKS.

- THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS OPERATE IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE HOSTILE, SAID MUSA GASSAMA, MANAGER OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS OFFICE IN GENEVA.



- USE OF VIOLENCE IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS WAS A HIGHLY DISPUTED ISSUE IN THE DRAFTING OF THE UN DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN 1998, SAID JAN HELGESEN, FROM THE NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, WHO WAS ONE OF THE KEY PERSONS IN THIS PROCESS.



- THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SUPPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, BUT ONLY ON A CASE-TO-CASE BASIS, SAID MARKUS JAEGER FROM THE OFFICE FOR THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, COUNCIL OF EUROPE.



- HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES CAN FACILITATE PROTECTION, SAID NORWEGIAN MP THORBJØRN JAGLAND.





- THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE COULD BE THE FUNDAMENT FOR ESTABLISHING A HUMAN RIGHTS UNION IN IRAN, SAID SHIRIN EBADI AT THE OPENING OF THE "ACTIVISTS UNDER ATTACK" CONFERENCE. Photo: Bård B. Løvrig.

Ebadi wants a Human Rights House in Iran

- Human rights defenders are central in the dialogue between civilizations, said Shirin Ebadi at the opening of the "Activists under attack" conference 13 October. The Iranian Nobel Laureate expressed the need for a Human Rights House in Iran where defenders can come together.

The Iranian Lawyer and human rights defender Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 and the Rafto Prize in 2001. She spoke in Oslo at the 10-year Anniversary Conference of the Human Rights House Network titled "Activists under attack. Defending the right to be a human rights defender".

Come together

A Muslim herself, Ebadi has frequently been attacked by conservatives in Iran. She was one of the first female judges in her country. After the revolution in 1979 she was forced to resign. She still faces restrictions in her work, but she believes in dialogue:

- The program of dialogue between civilisations that was presented by President Khatami has unfortunately failed because of conservative narrow-mindedness. Today the writers, the artists, the philosophers and the human rights defenders in Iran must take care of the dialogue between the civilisations. It is obvious that they need a building where they can come together and arrange meetings. Establishing a Human Rights House in Teheran will be a great step towards achieving this goal, Ebadi said.

Wants a Human Rights House

- One of the problems of human rights associations in Iran is to find an office where they can work for human rights.

The price of apartments in Iran and especially in Tehran is very high, and as the state does not provide any financial help, having an office is like a dream for many human rights defenders. I hope that this dream can come true with the establishment of a Human Rights House in Teheran, - a House where one room could be dedicated to each group working with different issues of human rights, said Ebadi.

Cooperation

- The Human Rights House could be the fundament for establishing a human rights union in Iran. The cooperation of societies and groups that work for freedom of speech, freedom of expression, defending political prisoners, the rights of the minorities, rights of children, women's rights and rights of refugees, will strengthen the human rights in Iran. Such cooperation would be possible in a House where all of them could settle together, Ebadi said.

Networking

When asked by the audience how such a House could improve the human rights situation in Iran, she answered:

- Doors and walls cannot speak or defend human rights.

Those who protect human rights are people, Ebadi said, underlining the need for cooperation and networking.

- Twenty three years ago, when a human rights defender was put in prison, nobody heard about it. But today, because of the networks, everybody knows.



Photo exhibition



ALBANIA, BERAT, HOSPITAL FOR MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN, 1992. Photo: Jarle Ree



RUSSIA, ORJOL HIGH SECURITY "HOSPITAL"/ PRISON, 1999. Photo: Jarle Ree

Marking the 10-year Anniversary of the Human Rights House Network, an exhibition was also held in October, with photos by the Norwegian Photographer Jarle Ree and by members of the Human Rights House Network. HRH received financial support for the exhibition and the conference from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Freedom of Expression Foundation. HRH has supported Mr Jarle Ree, who in his much appraised book "Heartlines" has documented human rights violations in prisons and psychiatric institu-

tions in Albania and Russia, and among internally displaced in Azerbaijan and in townships in South Africa: Human beings whose freedom and safety 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.



ALBANIA, MIRDITA, PRIMARY SCHOOL, 1998. HRH SUPPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ALBANIA IN THE 1990s. AS A RESULT OF THIS, 2/3 OF ALL PUPILS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ALBANIA LEARN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS. Photo: Jarle Ree



Statement from the Human Rights House Network: Human rights defenders need stronger international support and protection

Adopted 14 October 2004 in Oslo, by the Human Rights House Network and the Conference Participants of the Human Rights House Network Anniversary Conference, titled “Activists under Attack. Defending the Right to be a Human Rights Defender”, held 13-14 October 2004.

The deteriorating security and working conditions of human rights defenders are a threat to democracy. The Human Rights House Network and the conference participants urge governments worldwide to develop and follow comprehensive policies to enhance their support to and protection of human rights defenders, nationally and internationally.

Respect for universal human rights depends on a vibrant civil society. Worldwide, human rights defenders protect individuals from human rights violations and thus promote democracy and the rule of law. Through peaceful means, such as education, advocacy, free legal aid, dialogue, and monitoring, they strive to ensure that human rights are known, implemented and respected. In doing so, many human rights defenders face a number of obstacles and acute personal risks.

In 1998, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the “Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”. It emphasizes the duty of states to protect human rights defenders. The appointment of the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Ms Hina Jilani, in August 2000, and the extension of her mandate until 2006, enhance the declaration’s implementation.

According to the Special Representative, many human rights defenders, in every region of the world, have been subject to violations of their human rights. They have been the target of executions, torture, beatings, arbitrary arrest and detention, death threats, harassment and defamation, and have suffered restrictions on their freedoms of movement, expression, association and assembly. Defenders have been the victims of false accusations and unfair trial and conviction.

The Special Representative observes that violations most commonly target either human rights defenders themselves or the organizations and mechanisms through which they work. As a means of applying pressure to the defender, perpetrators occasionally target members of defenders’ families.

In most cases, acts committed against human rights defenders are in violation of both international and national law. In some countries, however, domestic legislation which itself contravenes international human rights law is used against defenders.

The enforcement of security legislation and special measures for countering terrorism have in many places served to deteriorate the security and working conditions of human rights defenders. Playing an important role in monitoring the use of such legislation, human rights defenders have been targeted as a result. Under the pretext of national security, activities protected by the Declaration have been criminalized.

In short, those who defend the rights of others frequently become victims of human rights violations themselves. Defending them is defending human rights. Further, when defenders are silenced, there is a risk that human rights violations will be left unexposed and unopposed.

To prevent the perpetration of violations against defenders and the consequent worsening of human rights situations, the Human Rights House Network and the participants at the conference address national governments, regional bodies (such as the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), etc.), and international organisations including the United Nations, with a number of urgent recommendations.



The recommendations are:

- 1) Ensure that the UN Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (1998) is known and implemented by governments at all levels, including the local, across the world
- 2) Support the Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders and other Special Procedures of the UN Commission on Human Rights, through:
 - allocation of adequate resources
 - ensuring standing invitations are issued to the Special Representative and the Special Procedures
- 3) Develop clear guidelines and reporting procedures, at home and abroad through Embassies and Delegations, on how to support human rights defenders, including both proactive and reactive measures. For example:
 - during state visits and in the context of bilateral relations, establish and maintain suitable contacts with human rights defenders (receiving them, visiting them, etc.)
 - appoint permanent contact persons to support human rights defenders
 - share information and provide recognition
 - attend and observe trials of human rights defenders
 - promote the development and strengthening of mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders
 - issue statements and demarches and ask relevant questions to the appropriate authorities regarding the safety of the human rights defenders concerned, and
 - in the context of development activities, include practical support and an appreciation of the role and situation for human rights defenders
- 4) In urgent situations, offer immediate protection to human rights defenders, such as:
 - granting of temporary (emergency) visas to human rights defenders at grave risk or facilitation of asylum procedures and temporary admission programmes
 - provide sanctuaries, for example within Embassies
- 5) Ensure that national, regional and international programmes to combat terrorism do not impinge on or threaten the security or working conditions of human rights defenders
- 6) Ensure a clear distinction between military and humanitarian personnel in areas of war and conflict, in order to avoid putting humanitarian workers and human rights defenders at risk
- 7) Support, in the fight against impunity, the establishment of independent judicial systems and call for, and actively support, independent investigations of human rights violations
- 8) Facilitate the strengthening of human rights defenders' working conditions, safety, cooperation, networking, and capacity building through policy measures and funding, including of infrastructure, and ensure the contextual space in which defenders operate
- 9) Support human rights education to stimulate a culture of human rights and strengthen public awareness

In accordance with the "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms", we pledge to follow up the statement of this conference, including through monitoring and reporting on governments and regional and international organisations.

Further, we urge human rights defenders and relevant NGOs to strengthen their networking on all levels, to improve the coordination of human rights activities including the active support to human rights defenders in danger, to provide reliable documentation, and to nurture credibility, accuracy, transparency, and accountability.



Administration

Funding

HRH received generous support from a number of sources, including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also the Freedom of Expression Foundation which supported the Anniversary Conference.

Annual Account, 2004	NOK	EURO
Private Donors	200 000	24 169
The Freedom of Expression Foundation	200 000	24 169
Donations to Voice of Tibet	2 009 419	242 830
Donations from the Norwegian MFA	4 413 605	533 366
Total income	6 823 024	824 535
<hr/>		
Joint projects at local Human Rights Houses	360 000	43 505
Feasibility study, Azerbaijan	470 000	56 798
Development of the Network	2 783 605	336 387
Anniversary Conference and Network Meeting	1 200 000	145 015
Voice of Tibet	2 009 419	242 830
Total expenses	6 823 024	824 535

Board Members

- **Lars A.Christensen** (Chairperson), Supreme Court Lawyer and Senior Partner of the law firm Wikborg, Rein & co
- **Bernt Hagtvet**, Professor in Political Science at the University of Oslo. Visiting Professor at Yale University
- **Knut U.Kloster Jr.**, Chairman of Navimar Holding
- **Hans Christian Magnus**, Sales Director of ResidenSea
- **Mette Newth**, Author, Illustrator, Translator and Lecturer. Chair of the International Project Steering Committee of Beacon for Freedom of Expression

- **Stein Ivar Aarsæther**, Senior Vice-President of ABB, President of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Treasurer of the International Helsinki Federation

International Advisory Team

An International Advisory Team was set up in 2003, consisting of two representatives from the formal decision making structure at each established Human Rights House:

Oslo: Nora Sveaass and Mette Newth
Moscow: Natalia Taubina and Tatiana Lokshina
Warsaw: Elzbieta Czyz and Zbigniew Holda
Sarajevo: Senka Nowica and Mirjana Malic
Bergen: Therese Jebsen

The team is to participate in representation, fundraising and discussions on strategic development of the Human Rights House Network.

Support staff

HRH wish to thank the following persons associated with the HRH Secretariat in 2004:

- **Harald Askestad**, IT Consultant, Assistant Conference Co-ordinator
- **Anne Berentsen**, Media Adviser, Kulturmeqlerne, Press Co-ordinator for the 'Activists under Attack' conference
- **Camilla Chaussé**, Assistant Conference Co-ordinator
- **Caroline Aarsæther Garcia**, Assistant Conference Co-ordinator, Translator
- **Øistein S. Galaaen**, IT Consultant, Design/technical support www.humanrightshouse.org
- **Bård Brinchmann Løvvig**, Photographer, Designer, Assistant Conference Co-ordinator
- **Liv Kjølseth**, Assistant Conference Co-ordinator
- **Magnar Naustdalslid**, Consultant, Translator, Project Assistant
- **Alfredo Zamudio**, Colombia Advisor (voluntary), Translator



Staff



Maria Dahle, Executive Director

Executive Director of HRH since 1994, also Director of the Norwegian Human Rights House until June 2004. Masters Degree from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen, specializing in strategy, organization and management. Co-ordinator of Dugnad '98 involving some 50 NGOs. Promoted human rights education to become part of the curriculum in Albania and Turkey. Co-initiator and Chair of the Board of Voice of Tibet. Has worked as a journalist, and a theatre instructor.



Borghild Tønnessen-Krokan, Project Manager

Has worked at HRH since May 2001, now manages information, network development and HRHs most recent project in Colombia. Two Masters Degrees: One in Political Science from the University of Oslo, and one in Media and Communications from London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Dissertations were on US-Cuban human rights rhetorics, and on the media coverage of the Rushdie affair. Has previously worked as a journalist and as information director. Maternity leave until May 2004.



Niels Jacob Harbitz, Project Manager

Started working for HRH in June 2003, filling in for Borghild, and has managed HRH's East Africa projects since. With twenty years as a freelance journalist, and a diploma in web journalism, he is also involved in HRH's information activities. Educated in media, the arts and literature from the Universities of Oslo and Bergen, and political theory from New York University and University of Westminster. Has also taught media theory. Voluntary work for the NGO Youth for Nuclear Disarmament.



Berit Lindeman, Project Manager

Worked as a Project Manager at HRH from June 2003 to June 2004, with main responsibility for the projects in Eastern Europe, including Azerbaijan and Belarus. Berit is a Jurist, has additional education in Russian and French and has worked for several years on democratization projects with different international organizations in CIS countries.



Ane Tusvik Bonde, Project Manager

Employed in October 2004 to work with the establishment of Human Rights Houses in Belarus and Azerbaijan. Masters degree in Political Science from the University of Oslo (March 2005) with a dissertation investigating recent reforms of the Criminal Procedural Code in Russia. Speaks Russian and has been Amnesty's Russia Co-ordinator since 2001 and Co-ordinator of its Human Rights Education Programme in Murmansk since 2003. Two spells as Sub-Editor of Nordic Journal of Human Rights.



Sigurd Kraft Gulbrandsen, Administrative Consultant

Has worked part-time at HRH since January 2002, with accounts, reporting, and with updating of www.menneskerettigheter.no. Since 1999 Secretary and Webmaster for the organization International Society for Health and Human Rights (ISHHR) and the Project Co-ordinator for its web project Health and Human Rights Info (HHRI). Previously worked at the Norwegian Human Rights House and also for the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. BA with majors in Political Science and minors in Law and History.



Established Human Rights Houses

OSLO

MOSCOW

WARSAW

SARAJEVO

BERGEN

LONDON

OSLO

New Norwegian Human Rights House

The Norwegian Human Rights House was the first to be established, at the East End of Oslo, in 1989. In 2004, the five NGOs at the House moved to new locations together with three new NGOs. The purpose was to create a broader and stronger human rights community and provide a better meeting place for human rights activities. The new Norwegian Human Rights House in Oslo, co-located with Amnesty International, Norway, opened in August 2004.

• The Norwegian Burma Committee

Established in 1992, it works to support the Burmese democratic movement in exile and in Burma, and spread information about the human rights situation in Burma. Supports Aung San Suu Kyi and the political mandate of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

• 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 NEW NORWEGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE IN
TORDENSKIOLDGATE 6B, OSLO, HOSTS EIGHT NGOs.

Photo: Bård B. Løvrig.

• 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.

• Human Rights House Foundation (HRH)

Secretariat of the Human Rights House Network. Works to establish Human Rights Houses worldwide in cooperation with local NGOs and to develop a network between the Human Rights Houses.

• Nansen Dialog Project

Involved in peace-building and dialogue at the Balkans. Dialog Centres have been established in the Balkans, focusing on peace education through seminars, workshops and similar activities in the field.

• The Norwegian Council for the Rights of the Kurds

Spreads information about the Kurdish issue and complements the work to secure their human rights. Supports initiatives towards constructive dialogue between conflicting Kurdish parties. Through such a dialogue the organization hopes to stimulate a pluralist Kurdish community in Norway and abroad.

• The International Society for Health and Human Rights

A membership organisation for health workers engaged in work with survivors of human rights violations. Focuses on the effects of human rights violations on health, treatment methods, medical and psychological care and psychosocial interventions both on individual and community level. Has made the Internet database "Health and Human Rights Info".

• The Norwegian P.E.N.

Member of the International P.E.N. - the worldwide association of writers. Promotes friendship and intellectual co-operation among writers everywhere, regardless of their political or other views, advocates freedom of expression and defends writers suffering from oppressive regimes.



Recommendations to the Norwegian government

Once again, seventeen organizations in the “Norwegian NGO Forum for human rights”, including several organisations at the Norwegian Human Rights House (where the meetings took place), made joint recommendations on human rights issues the Norwegian Government should focus on in the UN.

Norwegian and EU policy on human rights defenders

Both nationally and internationally, Norwegian authorities continued to support human rights defenders in 2004. Norway played a key role in the drafting and lobbying of the 1998 UN Declaration on human rights defenders, and in supporting the mandate of UN Special Representative on human rights defenders, Ms Hina Jilani as well as sponsoring UN Resolutions on human rights defenders.

However, unlike the European Union, Norway has yet to develop a policy on human rights defenders that can be tried and evaluated by independent institutions. HRH has encouraged Norwegian authorities to do so, both in meetings and in articles and press releases.

In June, the European Union adopted Guidelines on human rights defenders. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide practical suggestions for enhancing EU action in relation to this issue. In December, embassies, NGOs and experts were gathered in the Hague to discuss implementation of the Guidelines at the 6th EU Annual Human Rights Discussion Forum. It was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The outcome will be a handbook for EU Missions, containing the concrete steps and instruments identified during the Forum as well as ways for monitoring whether the implementation of the guidelines is in fact successful.

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) participated at the Forum in the Hague, and welcomes the EU Guidelines and handbooks as important tools for a stronger protection of and support to activists.



UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, LOUISE ARBOUR, SAID TO ACTIVISTS AT THE NORWEGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE IN DECEMBER THAT SHE RECOMMEND UNIVERSAL MEMBERSHIP TO THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. Photo: Bård B. Løvvig

Human rights in Norway

The respect for human rights is strong in Norway, compared to many other countries. Nonetheless, human rights violations occur in Norway too. These include racism, Sami political issues, asylum and immigration law, social and health care, the rights of women, children, homosexuals and lesbians, freedom of religion or belief and of expression, remand in custody and the time required to deal with criminal cases.

Opening in Oslo

The Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik attended the official opening of the new Norwegian Human Rights House in August 2004. - I appreciate the cooperation we have with organisations at this House. Such a co-location helps strengthen an already vital and competent human rights environment, the Prime Minister said. - It strengthens your work. This is important, because what unites you is the defense of human dignity. This is a high priority for our Government, he added.



15-year anniversary

Executive Director Maria Dahle of the Human Rights House Foundation thanked the Prime Minister for his Government's support. She said the realization of the humanity of 'the other' is the key to preventing violations. Maria Dahle has run the Norwegian Human Rights House for the past ten years, and will continue as the Executive Director of the Human Rights House Foundation. Secretary General Bjørn Engesland of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee took over as new leader of the Norwegian Human Rights House in June 2004.

- Obvious advantages

- For a small organisation like ours, being part of a larger community has obvious advantages. Both the material and the human resources will help strengthen our work. Being part of the Norwegian Human Rights House also helps us become more visible, said Åse Sand from the Norwegian Burma Committee, one of the new member organisations.



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 recognized 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 Aleksey 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

discussion of the growing authoritative non-democratic authority position and possible methods of civil community influence on the state structures.

Chechnya: Cooperation with human rights organizations speaking against the war and searching a peaceful solution. Financial help to wounded soldiers. Peace initiative by the Soldiers' Mothers Committees.

Information and media: Annual reports on human rights in Russian regions, thematic reports on xenophobia and prisoners; monthly bulletin «Chronicle of the Helsinki group»; monthly newspaper «Mother's Rights» with the information on the rights of victims among army parents; the quarterly «Independent psychiatric journal»; weekly broadcast for prisoners (the "Cloud"); maintenance of Russia's largest human rights Internet portal (www.hro.org), daily electronic dispatch; press conferences, press releases and participation in tv and radio.

PUTIN USED THE BESLAN TRAGEDY TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POWER, SAID IDA KUKLINA FROM THE SOLDIERS MOTHERS COMMITTEE IN RUSSIA, AT THE "ACTIVISTS UNDER ATTACK" CONFERENCE. THE SOLDIERS MOTHERS INITIATED PEACE TALKS WITH CHECHEN REBELS.



Activities

Monitoring: Monitoring of human rights observance in regions of Russia and Northern Caucasus, in cooperation with regional NGOs. Includes monitoring of the army and relatives of victims, children, psychiatric institutions, disabled, refugees, people with HIV/AIDS, and minorities.

Judicial protection and public control: Includes regular visits to orphanages and psychiatric institutions, and continued struggle against the Ministry of Justice's attempt to forbid independent psychiatric evaluation.

Legislative activity: Includes promotion of the public control idea in prisons and other closed institutions, and lobbying legislation amendments about the terms delay directed on reduction of military service.

NGO coalitions: Cooperation with all human rights organizations. Organizing and participating in the All-Russia Civic Congress "Russia for Democracy and Against Dictatorship"-

Shadow reporting, Social and Economic Rights: The project "Promotion and Protection of Social and Economic Rights Using International Instruments" was supported by HRH. A book in Russian and in English language was published, including the following:

Procedures and Rules of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Russian fourth state periodic report on the observance of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the Russian Federation; the answers of the Russian Government on the list of issues developed by the Committee's experts within the framework of preparation to consideration of the Russian fourth state periodic report; Russian NGO Alternative report on the observance of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the Russian Federation including NGO recommendations and evaluation of the state; Summary records of the consideration of the Russian fourth periodic report by the experts of the CESCR; and Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on consideration of the Russian 4th periodic report.





RUSSIA, ORJOL HIGH SECURITY "HOSPITAL" / PRISON. Photo: Jarle Ree

This will contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and strengthening of the human rights movement in Russia by sharing the experience and providing methodologies developed by NGOs (including members of the Center) on effective use of international instruments for human rights protection.

Human rights in Russia

The internal situation in Russia in 2004 was characterized by several antidemocratic changes: Elections were manipulated by authorities and were not fair. Elections of governors and one-mandatory deputies to the State Duma were cancelled. Freedom of speech and information were sharply limited. The court system reform has failed and the court is under total control of the state. Xenophobia, intolerance and neo-fascist tendencies increased. In Chechnya, violations of human rights from both the federal authority, rebels and local authorities continued.

The situation for human rights defenders

Under the pretext of fighting against terrorism, the state has strengthened control with activities of NGOs, religious organizations and other pluralistic elements of Russian society. In his speech to the upper chamber of the Duma in May, President Putin stated that the "main objective of some of these organisations is to receive funds from influential foreign foundations, while for others the aim is to serve dubious groups and commercial interests.

Changes of tax legislation to restrict independent NGO financing sources from inside and outside the country, and the authorities' attacks on the "Yukos" company

-- the NGOs' main donor -- as well as the general pressure by the state upon the business community have led to decreasing financial resources and stability of NGOs.

Independent NGOs and activists are increasingly persecuted by the state. This concerns first of all NGOs working with "delicate" issues involving the state (torture, arbitrary law enforcement, corruption, violations in the army, psychiatry, ethnic discrimination, etc.).

Two member organizations of the RRCHR were under attack. In a three year long case, "Independent Psychiatric Association versus Ministry of Justice" authorities attempted to restrict or even terminate human rights protection activities of the organization. Just after representatives of the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees of Russia held a constitutive congress for a new party and initiated peaceful negotiations with Chechen military commanders, the General Prosecution Office accused it of obtaining unlawful finance from abroad. Although nothing unlawful was found, the office continues to interfere with the activity of the organization.

The security for human rights defenders in Chechnya has deteriorated in 2003 and 2004, according to the International Helsinki Federation. State agents were responsible for most of the attacks on human rights defenders. There were a number of high profile abduction cases and killings involving humanitarian workers and journalists in the inter-war period (1996-1999). However, persecution of defenders appears to have intensified with the start of the second Chechen war in 1999. Local activists have become the main targets.



WARSAW

In 1993, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights set up a Human Rights House in Poland. The activities of its four organisations in 2004 included:

Helsinki Committee in Poland:

Submitted two open letters: one to the weekly Newsweek on the issue of restricting the possessions of Jewish communes, and the other to the Minister of Justice on the issue of violations against freedom of speech, as well as statements: in defence of the freedom of assembly and against the restriction of the death penalty.

Association of Young Journalists „POLIS”:

Carried out journalist workshops for students and in July it organised a journalist camp for the youth in Milenkowce. During the 4th International Festival „Human Rights in Film”, the Association’s members, together with the Jugendpresse Deutschland, drew up and published the festival newspaper – a special edition of the international magazine Orange.

The Association Initiative 33:

Established in 2004, it organised a panel discussion concerning the civil society and corruption in Poland.

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights:

Educational and intervention-monitoring activities (more below).

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights’ *educational activities* in 2004 included:

The 23rd Human Rights School, Winter Human Rights School, Summer Human Rights School; effective activism; training judges and journalists; workshops and seminars for students; public education involving production of films (including lectures of professor Wiktor Osiatynski and Marek Nowicki); publication of reports (Efficient Court. Collection of Good Practices, Rights of aliens placed in deportation arrests and detention centre) and expert opinions, various media performances; publication of the books “Tibet: In the memory of incomparable warriors” and “North Korea behind the curtain”; organization of the Travelling Festival e.g. in Czestochowa, Kielce, Mragowo, Gdansk, Suwalki and the 4th International Film Festival “Human Rights in Film”.

Activities in the realm of human rights protection in 2004 included:

Legislative monitoring of parliamentary work concerning constitutionality and international human rights standards – opinion for the Senate Legislative and Legality Commission on the law on national and ethnic minorities and regional language, participation in the work of the Sejm’s Special Committee on matters of the lobbying law and in the work of the Sejm Commission on codification of criminal law.

Strategic litigation through assistance in litigating selected cases before domestic courts (15 cases).



NORTH KOREA’S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS AMONG THE WORST IN THE WORLD. THE POLISH HELSINKI FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (HFHR) CO-HOSTED AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NORTH KOREAN AND DEMONSTRATED IN FRONT OF THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN WARSAW, URGING CHINA TO RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES AND STOP RETURNING THEM TO NORTH KOREA. Photo: Lukasz Kraszynski



Legal assistance for Polish citizens whose rights have been violated, such as the right to life, right to personal liberty, freedom from torture, right to a fair trial, right to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, right to protection of property, freedom from discrimination – in court proceedings as an observer or community representative (2768 cases); legal assistance for foreigners primarily concerning refugee status and legalization of their stay in Poland (800 cases).

Monitorings internationally (Ingushetia, Ukraine) and nationally (Courtwatch, with 20 reports; RAXEN).

Human rights in Poland

In 2004 the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights observed the violation of the following rights and liberties: freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly, right to a fair trial, the right to life, children’s rights, freedom from torture and inhuman treatment, the right to respect of private and family life, and the right to freedom and personal safety. Corruption remains a serious problem. Apart from the so-called Rywin Scandal, the scandal associated with the Polish Oil Concern PKN Orlen broke out in 2004. After considering the Polish government’s periodical report in November 2004, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern about, among other things, overcrowding of prisons, restrictive abortion laws, regulations concerning family planning and the lack of equal rights for women and men within the public administration.



FABRIZIO LAZZARETTI RECEIVED THE FESTIVAL PRIZE OF THE HELSINKI FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS IN SHOWING HUMAN RIGHTS IN FILM. THE FESTIVAL PROGRAM INCLUDED TWO OF HIS FILMS: “JUNG (WAR) IN THE LAND OF THE MUJAHEDDIN” AND “JUSTICE – IN TIME OF WAR.”

Film Festival

The 4th International Film Festival “Human Rights in Film” showcased nearly 70 films. These were documentaries and reports, though one short feature and one educational film were presented. The main themes of the 4th Festival were the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, faces of terrorism, Latin America, incarceration institutions, discrimination against sexual minorities, refugees, Tibet, Palestine – Israel and the Holocaust.

The most popular films were about North Korea and Tibet, as well as Farheen Umar’s “Women of Islam”. Arthur Dong’s documentaries about discrimination of sexual minorities in the USA also received significant interest.

Approximately 15 thousand viewers enjoyed the Film Festival. Nearly one hundred volunteers assisted in festival preparations and realization.



SARAJEVO

The Human Rights House of Sarajevo

The Human Rights House of Sarajevo was established in 1998. The House has become a place for non-governmental organisations to work together, a place where new ideas and projects are born – all aimed at strengthening democracy and civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH). It houses four organisations:

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Continued to monitor the human rights situation in BH and to react to the cases of violation of these rights. On 27 occasions, the Helsinki Committee addressed the public and domestic and international bodies, through reports, and public releases, and also gave a number of interviews.

The Serb Civic Council – Canton Sarajevo Movement for Equality

One of the major projects was the implementation of the Constitutional Amendments on the Constituent Peoples throughout the territory of BH. Another important project was the survey of the social situation. They also provided assistance to the returnees in the Canton of Sarajevo in terms of information and legal aid, and support in the rehabilitation of the housing units of these returnees, all to make their return safe and sustainable.

Women to Women

Implemented 16 projects with 2848 participants in 2004: Women and Women Groups – Gender, Development and Peace in BH, Communication and Emotional Investment, or Search for Common Foundations, Promotion of and



BURIED BODIES WERE FOUND WHEN THE RENOVATION OF WHAT WAS LATER TO BECOME THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE OF SARAJEVO BEGAN IN 1997. PREVIOUSLY, IT HAD SERVED AS AN INTERROGATION AND TORTURE CENTRE. TODAY IT IS A MULTI-ETHNIC WORK COMMUNITY WHERE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE RECEIVE FREE LEGAL AID EVERY YEAR.

Workshop on the UN Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) – Women, Peace and Security; Women in action for Social Rights and Systemic Improvement of the Quality of life; Gender/Sex Equality and the Young; Sensitisation for Gender Perspective; To Be More Visible And Loud; Women Can Do It; Advancing the health and social status of women; Domestic Violence in the Public Health Care System; Political Empowerment of Women in BH; Women Activists Crossing the Borders – a network; Support to Women’s Rights in the Western Balkans.

Renesansa

Implemented a campaign of advocacy for amendments to the legislation and regulations on the procurement of orthopaedic aids to women after breast cancer surgeries. The campaign resulted in the adoption of the Decree by the Canton Sarajevo Government. Throughout the year, they have had a number of meetings and workshops, with the aim support to those who had surgeries performed.

During the year, the joint Conference Hall was used in full capacity –about 180 workshops, round tables, press conferences, meetings, and other similar activities took place. About 1,900 persons used the capacities and human resources of the Human Rights House in relation to human rights and human rights claims on various grounds.

Human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2004, the authorities confined themselves to rhetoric concerning the commitment to get BH closer to integration with Euro-Atlantic structures. One of the tasks were activities to comply with the criteria set by the Council of Europe in 16 areas, particularly in the field of democracy and human rights. The Republika Srpska’s lack of cooperation with The Hague Tribunal led the High Representative in BH to remove a number of officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RS from their position. The US Government banned the leaders of the PDP and SDS parties from entering the US. The Council of Ministers of BH does not have regular sessions.

The unemployment rate is 60%. Even those employed do not receive their salaries on a regular basis, and are not covered by health and social insurance. In the field of democracy and human rights, BH has satisfied some of the expectations of the European Commission: the Law on BH Fund for Return of Refugees was passed, and some of the human rights bodies were transferred under the jurisdiction of BH. The Human Rights Chamber and its competences were transferred to the Constitutional Court of BH; the Of-



Office of the Ombudsmen of BH was established, and there are amendments being made to the Law on Ombudsmen. The Human Rights Chamber ceased to operate in 2003, so citizens are not provided with an appropriate and effective judicial protection in cases of violation of their human rights and freedoms. The Ombudsmen of BH are self-involved, the institution is on the verge of disintegration, and serves more to protect certain particular interests, not universal human rights.

Children's rights neglected in Bosnia

Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina make up one third of the total population. Of that number, every second child does not have health insurance, while 60% of the children belong to the categories entitled to some form of social protection. 5-6% of the children are not receiving even the compulsory primary education, while 18% of children have hard physical jobs. Every fourth child is a victim of some form of violence; at the same time, children are also the most frequent victims of mines that pose a threat in almost all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Photo: The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

This was documented through a project implemented by the Helsinki Committee in partnership with the Human Rights House of Sarajevo, titled „Rights of the Child – Practice and Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina“. Fifteen round tables were organised in Velika Kladusa, Sanski Most, Drvar, Livno, Stolac, Trebinje, Foca/Srbinje, Zvornik, Srebrenica, Brcko, Prijedor, Jajce, Doboj and Sarajevo. Through this project, knowledge, experiences and information were shared with headmasters, pedagogues, and teachers in primary schools, social workers, ombudsmen, representatives or NGO sector, Councils of Students and Parents, and competent ministries. There were 470 participants in these 15 round tables, and the expert team of lecturers comprised 12 persons.



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE NETWORK INFORMATION COORDINATORS FROM TEN COUNTRIES WERE TRAINED IN SARAJEVO IN JULY.

Photo: Øistein S. Galaaen

The situation for human rights defenders

In 2004, a number of NGO sector activists, intellectuals and journalists were exposed to various provocations, harassment, threats, pressures, and often also to physical attacks and verbal assaults. This was frequently condemned by the Human Rights House of Sarajevo.

Of particular concern were the frequent public appearances of the representatives of the government authorities, party and religious leaders, in which we could discern not only the desire to control what is said in public, but also open invitations to physically settle the accounts with those media and their representatives who were not ready to obey.

In September, the Human Rights House of Sarajevo was broken into. Only computers which contained the complete documentation and archives of the Helsinki Committee were stolen, along with two cameras. Other, more modern and more expensive equipment was not touched by the burglars. It was suspected that it was not a simple burglary with material gain as the motive, but rather a break-in to intimidate and to get information about recent investigations the Helsinki Committee had made.



SRĐJAN DIZDAREVIĆ, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE OF SARAJEVO, FEARED THAT THE BREAK-IN WAS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.

Photo: Bård B. Løvvig



BERGEN

The Rafto Human Rights House

The Rafto Human Rights House was founded in 1997 in memory of the journalist Egil Rafto and officially opened in 1999. It has become a vital nexus and working community of human rights NGOs in Bergen, Norway. The 2004 activities of its seven organisations included:

Norwegian Afghanistan Committee – Bergen

The local branch of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) is engaged in spreading information and fundraising for relief projects in Afghanistan. One of the main activities is a co-operation with the local theatre in Bergen, contributing to the rebuilding of The National Theatre in Kabul. In September 2004, NAC participated in different activities during the International Week in Bergen, in co-operation with the theatre in Bergen and UN Association of Western Norway. In October NAC arranged a successful seminar on the presidential election in Afghanistan.

War and children identity project (WCIP)

During 2004 WCIP expanded its international network. In March, WCIP participated at the first International War Children Conference in Canada, named “Gender, Ethnicity

and Children’s Human Rights”, where it presented data on the numbers of war children conceived as a consequence of conflicts, and children born into conflicts since World War 2, and documented their problems related to various kinds of stigmatisation and discrimination. “The War Children of the World, Report 3” was published.

Fredskorpset (FK, the Norwegian Peace Corps)

An organisation under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. FK is facilitating and funding personnel exchange between organisations, institutions, and corporations in Norway and countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. During 2004 the Bergen office of FK arranged four preparatory courses for exchange of personnel, and was involved in five different open seminars held at the Rafto House on development and human rights.

AFS International

AFS works for peace through youth exchange. In Bergen, AFS has a very active local chapter, as well as staff working on volunteering and web publishing. The chapter organizes camps and different activities for the AFS students and returnees. In addition they cover day to day chores like screening participants and providing counselling.

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

During 2004 the NCA office in Bergen was involved in networking and information work for NCA, in particular as a fol-



THEATRE WAS OUTLAWED IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE TALIBAN. THE LOCAL BRANCH OF THE NORWEGIAN AFGHANISTAN COMMITTEE CO-OPERATES WITH THE LOCAL THEATRE IN BERGEN IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE REBUILDING OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE IN KABUL.

Photo: Martin Hadlow/UNESCO.



low up to the big project from 2003 on Water and Sanitation. The NCA representative visited local organisations that are supporting NCA, e.g. youth groups in the Norwegian Church.



THE RAFTO
HUMAN RIGHTS
HOUSE IN
BERGEN.

The Egil Rafto House Foundation (ERHF)

Two main objectives: To manage the Rafto Human Rights House and to engage in educational and informational activities. School classes visit the Rafto House for activity based educational programmes. Special topics in the year 2004 have been "the right to education and "Freedom of expression". Seminars and workshops have been held for important target groups like journalists, students, pupils, politicians, teachers and business people.

An important activity in 2004 has been preparatory work for the production of a series of documentaries in cooperation with the Rafto Foundation, in order to follow up the human rights work of the Rafto Prize Laureates from Burma, Korea, Belarus and Xinjiang (Kina).

The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights

In November 2004 the Rafto Foundation, the Kurdish Human Rights Project and Medico International organized a conference in the EU parliament in Brussels with the aim of highlighting the relationship between Turkey and the Kurds. The conference presented reports with recommendations on areas such as judicial reform, democratic and parliamentary reform, cultural rights, language rights, freedom of expression, compensation for internally displaced persons, rights for displaced persons to return to their villages etc. The conference's findings will be published and presented to the European Commission for its consideration and comments, and a European Civic Commission to monitor EU and Turkish compliance with the accession criteria, is in the process of being established. Both Turkish and Kurdish experts participated at the conference, which was open to all Kurdish and Turkish political parties, in addition to EU officials and diplomats.

Rafto Prize to Rebiya Kadeer

In 2004, Rebiya Kadeer, an Uyghur prisoner of conscience from China, was awarded the Rafto Prize for Human Rights. The Rafto award to Mrs. Kadeer had a double purpose: To honour the actions of a brave woman who has distinguished herself as a proponent for Uyghur human rights and bring to the world's attention the abuse of human rights by the Chinese government against Uyghurs and other minorities.

On November 7, 2004 400 people were gathered in The National Theatre in Bergen for the Rafto Award Ceremony in Rebiya Kadeer's honor. Among them were almost 100 Uyghurs from Scandinavia and Germany.

The board of the Rafto Foundation invited Mr. Sidik Haji Rouzi and Ms. Akida Rouzi, Kadeer's husband and a former prisoner in China, and their daughter, Akida Rouzi, to come to Norway to receive the Rafto Prize Diploma and the prize money on her behalf, but they did not receive valid travel documents in time.

Instead, the Rafto Foundation, the Uyghur American Association and the National Endowment for Democracy in conjunction with the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, organized a second award ceremony and reception on January 26, 2005, at Capitol Hill in Washington, in which Kadeer was honored in absentia with Norway's Rafto Prize. Sidik Rouzi and Akida Rouzi accepted the Rafto Prize on her behalf.

The Rafto Foundation seeks to support and recognise persecuted individuals or groups who struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights, and thereby for human dignity. Among former Rafto laureates are Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, José Ramos-Horta of East-Timor, Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea and Shirin Ebadi of Iran, who all received worldwide recognition when they were subsequently awarded The Nobel Peace Prize.



THE LEADING UYGHUR POLITICAL
PRISONER REBIYA KADEER RE-
CEIVED THE RAFTO PRIZE.



LONDON

Open Word Network/ London Human Rights House

The Open Word Network was established in 2004. It consists of the following organisations:

- Index on Censorship
- English PEN
- Article 19

The organisations involved are committed to promoting and protecting freedom of expression and the free flow of information worldwide. The network works to promote free expression globally via print and digital networks, events and through joint projects. They identify threats to free expression and raise public awareness of these threats. The organisations are increasingly working together on joint projects and towards shared objectives.

Activities

Index on Censorship

In 2004, Index on Censorship's quarterly magazine featured topics as diverse as Aids, Russia, religion and democracy, and publishing in the Arab world. The website underwent major development, featuring analytical writing as well as a country-by-country chronicle of free expression violations around the globe.

Media projects supporting local journalists and helping to build capacity in transitional and post conflict Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were an important part of Index's work. These multi-media, multi-disciplinary projects include media needs assessment, training, network building, advocacy and recommendations for national media law reforms and structures.

Following on from the success of 2002's diaspora issue, Index developed an education programme focusing on refugees and asylum seekers. The project was developed in response to feedback from educators about the most effective way of addressing young people's questions about

refugees, and initiated in response to the lack of resources for work in this particular area.

In March 2004, Index held its fourth annual Freedom of Expression Awards, honouring Mordechai Vanunu, Indian whistleblower Satyendra Dubey, and Iranian photojournalist Kaveh Golestan. The awards commend those who are fighting for freedom of expression, drawing attention to their work.

English PEN

In late 2004, English PEN initiated the 'No Offence' campaign. The campaign opposes the offence of incitement of religious hatred in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill. An open letter was presented to the UK's home secretary, signed by nearly 300 members, including many of Britain's most eminent writers.

The Writers in Prison Committee continued their work on behalf of imprisoned and persecuted writers. In 2004 the committee adopted nineteen new honorary members from Cuba, the Maldives, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, Syria and Tibet. Seven honorary members were released in 2004, including Ali Lmrabet (Morocco) and Marwan Osman (Syria). Towards the end of 2004, WiPC launched a petition on behalf of Yury Bandazhevsky (Belarus).

The committee organized several missions in 2004, including travelling to Uzbekistan to meet jailed journalist Ruslan Sharipov, British Ambassador Craig Murray, and human rights organizations; attendance at Turkish publisher Ragip Zarakolu's trial; and travelling to Belarus to meet Mikola Markovic and Pavel Mozheiko, who have continued to pub-



INTERNATIONAL PEN'S WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE VISITED RUSLAN SHARIPOV, A JOURNALIST SERVING A FOUR-YEAR PRISON TERM FOR "HOMOSEXUALITY" CHARGES WIDELY SEEN AS A PENALTY FOR HIS CRITICISM OF UZBEKISTAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. A DEMONSTRATION WAS HELD OUTSIDE THE UZBEK EMBASSY IN LONDON. Photo: English PEN.



lish under constant threat of censorship and imprisonment since 2001.

In October the WiPC organized a demonstration outside the Uzbek embassy in London, calling for the release of honorary members in Uzbekistan.

PEN 2004 Literary Prizes included the J. R Ackerley Prize for Autobiography (Bryan Magee's *Clouds of Glory: A Hoxton Childhood*); the S T Dupont Golden Pen Award for a Lifetime's Contribution to Literature (Nina Bawden); and the Hessel-Tiltman Prize for History (Tom Holland's *Rubicon*). The Writers in Translation awards supported Anna Politkovskaya's book *Putin's Russia*.

Article 19

In October 2004, ARTICLE 19 appointed a new Executive Director, Dr Agnès Callamard, who has enjoyed a distinguished career in human rights and humanitarian work.

The organization continued their work providing advocacy, policy recommendations and legal expertise. They facilitated conferences, meetings and workshops, and assessed media laws. ARTICLE 19 works closely with partner organizations in relevant regions.

Projects included media law in Kazakhstan; free expression and conflict in South Asia; human rights investigations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East; legal analysis in Paraguay; free expression in Guatemala; access to information and reproductive/sexual health in Peru. After a successful campaign for the adoption of freedom of information laws in Croatia and Kosovo, Article 19 advised on the adoption of these laws in 2004.

ARTICLE 19's refugee report was launched at the World Communications Rights Forum, and the Africa programme played an important role during the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), acting as a liaison between their Law Programme and other communication rights groups.



MORDECHAI VANUNU COMPLETED HIS ENTIRE 18-YEAR SENTENCE IN ISRAEL'S ASHKELON PRISON ON APRIL 21, 2004, FOR BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON HIS GOVERNMENT'S SECRET NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. HE WAS AWARDED BY INDEX ON CENSORSHIP IN MARCH. Photo: The Campaign to Free Vanunu and for a Nuclear Free Middle-East

Publications focus on analyses of country situations, regional overviews and thematic reports. Many publications are available in translation. In 2004 the Africa programme published a campaign pack on defamation and insult laws in both English and Portuguese.

All three organisations commanded significant media presence in 2004, concerning a range of free expression issues.

Human rights in the United Kingdom

While citizens of the United Kingdom enjoy a relatively high standard of human rights, over the course of 2004, the Open Word Network/London Human Rights House expressed serious concerns about the erosion of some of these rights, especially with regard to civil liberties. Since December 2001, twelve men have been detained without trial in the high-security Belmarsh prison suspected of terrorism. In December 2004, The House of Lords ruled the detention of nine of the men was in breach of Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The government's plans to introduce 'control orders', under which suspects will face house arrest, have not received a positive reaction within the human rights community. Legislation introduced since the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 has fuelled debate about the general approach to law and order in the country, and brought under scrutiny its legislation to criminalize and target certain communities.

The situation for human rights defenders

For the most part, human rights defenders in the United Kingdom are free to work without constraint. The threat to privacy, among the most debated topics in the British human rights community, is a potential danger for those working in human rights. Over the last 20 years, there has been a gradual and persistent encroachment on the individual's right to privacy, including recent legislation to make identification cards mandatory, increased data sharing between private and public organizations, and the increased use of surveillance as a tactic for crime prevention. Funding is an ongoing problem. Anxiety about money and resources occupies too much of human rights organizations' time.



Emerging Human Rights Houses

ZAGREB NAIROBI KAMPALA MINSK BAKU ISTANBUL BOGOTA

ZAGREB

Aiming to rationalize expenses, initiate joint programs and open up for those who stand united under the universal idea of human rights, three prominent NGOs have worked together since 2001 to establish a Human Rights House in Zagreb:

- Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (CHC)
- Women Rights Group B.a.B.e.
- Croatian Law Centre (CLC)

Despite strong and immediate support from almost all respective state bodies (President of the Republic of Croatia, Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and National Minorities, Croatian Government and the Mayor of the City of Zagreb) the HRH in Zagreb was not established within the pre-determined deadline. Being the official body in charge, Office for management of the City Property at the

City of Zagreb demonstrated high level of co-operation. Nevertheless, during that period (2002-2003), an unresolved legal situation with the desired premises for the Human Rights House remained a major obstacle. Namely, the ownership structure of the only suitable building for the HRH in Zagreb was not clarified.

Development of the situation in 2004

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) in Oslo visited Croatian partners in June 2004. During meetings with state officials, Vice Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor gave once again her full support to the establishment of the HRH in Zagreb, describing it as a high priority for the government.

During that period the State Prosecutor's Office released its legal opinion stating that none of the previous owners made a request for return of the property, stressing that there are no legal obstacles for the free use of the premises. However, the Administrative Court, having the jurisdiction over this dispute, received a request for the return of the property, according to the law on denationalization. In the period leading up to a final judgment, the premises in question are expected to become ex lege the property of the Republic of Croatia, therefore available for NGOs to move in. Although the court process is still going on, NGOs were granted entry to the building in January 2005 along with an architect engaged to estimate the total budget needed for the reconstruction of the building.

Activities

Despite the fact that no physical Human Rights House exists, co-operation among CHC, B.a.B.e. and CLC has intensified. This was demonstrated in the joint project „Improvement of the position of the Roma population in Croatia“. The organisations familiarized relevant state bodies and Roma representatives with the project. Furthermore, three Offices for Free Legal Aid (Zagreb, Cakovec and Sisak) and a



RETURN OF REFUGEES AND PROPERTY RESTITUTION ARE PRIORITIES TO THE CROATIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. Photo: Alessandro Fracassetti/OSCE





Photo: Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

free telephone line for the Roma population were opened in December 2004.

Croatian Law Centre

Activities in 2004 included free legal aid for asylum seekers in Croatia, including advocacy and sensitizing the general public for the needs of this population; fight against trafficking in the Republic of Croatia by providing legal information and free legal aid in specific cases, including monitoring of the judicial proceedings initiated for crimes of trafficking; and protection of rights of the Roma population in Croatia by providing free legal aid through Office for Legal Counseling in Zagreb and field work aiming to help them regulate their status (for example citizenship), in order to fulfil basic preconditions for solving other important issues (health and social care, employment, etc.).

Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

Apart from representing NGO's involved in the emergence of the HRH in Zagreb the CHC conducted numerous activities in 2004 including:

Direct protection of human rights: Received 742 requests for help in the period from July 1 until December 31, 2004. Activities are related to children's rights, refugees, displaced persons and returnees, citizenship papers and other documents, social and economic rights, courts, police treatment, discrimination, missing and killed persons, prisons and correctional institutions, violence, monitoring the proceedings before the state prosecutor office, war veterans, ecological problems, media and public, as well as a great number of complaints regarding the state. Many problems are related to the reconstruction of houses and other property destroyed or damaged in the war. Appropriate conditions for the return of a number of citizens have not been achieved.

Media, freedom of expression and human rights: Including the establishment of self-regulatory body composed of journalists and media owners in order to facilitate the emergence of an independent ombudsperson for the media. Initiated and monitored legislation changes regulating the freedom of

information.

Education on human rights: Organized three human rights schools and several seminars for judges and prosecutors.

Women Rights Group B.a.B.e.

B.a.B.e. (Be active – Be emancipated) continued working on affirmation and implementation of women's human rights through several long term projects:

- *Legaline* – Legal Advice Hotline: Started in 1995. Free legal aid to 120 women in 2004
- *Monitorine* – Monitoring and analysing laws: Outside professionals (women lawyers, sociologists, economists etc.) cooperate with B.a.B.e. on analysis of discriminatory laws. Lobbied for the Alimony Fund to help single-parent children.
- *Edukatorine* and *Lokaline* – Education on women's human rights: Popularized seminars and workshops. Ten case studies published in the book „She is the one to be blamed anyway, isn't she?“, a collection of true stories on violence against women, including legal comments.

Human rights in Croatia

Despite Croatia's EU candidacy and -negotiations, several human rights issues remained unsolved. 12.478 persons that returned to Croatia in 2004, but only 2.312 abandoned houses were returned to their rightful owners. Minorities, mostly Serbs and Roma population, were discriminated by state bodies. Although the freedom of the media increased in 2004, there were still numerous attempts from state officials to exercise power over the media, including through threats and blackmailing.

The situation for human rights defenders

Although the overall atmosphere concerning the security and working conditions of human rights defenders has improved, some official government decisions in 2004 undermined the existence of human rights NGOs, including the decision on pay VAT on all donations coming from abroad. NGO representatives refused the offer coming from the Ministry of Finances to refund the VAT from budget reserves for fifty NGOs, finding it to be partial and unjust.



NAIROBI

Seven Kenyan human rights NGOs are cooperating to establish a Human Rights House in Nairobi, and enhance cooperation through joint activities. The purpose is to strengthen human rights work. The day to day running of the project is done by the Coordinator Martin Oluoch who has been hired on full time basis, supported by HRH in Oslo through the Norwegian MFA, and the Irish charity Trocaire (East African Regional Office). The overall management of the project is done by an Interim Board (IB) consisting of representatives of the seven organisations. Current members of the interim board are:

NAME	ORGANISATION
• Beatrice Kuria	KHRC
• Faith Kasiva	COVAW –K
• Jane Onyango	FIDA
• Moire O'Sullivan	THE CRADLE
• Morris Odhiambo	CLARION
• Njuguna Mutahi	PAT
• Kang'ethe Mungai	RPP

Activities

Fundraising: The HRH main activity in the year 2004 was the fundraising campaign for the construction of the Human Rights House. Efforts were made to have more willing donors to commit funds for the construction of the House. Funding commitment had been secured from the Norwegian and Danish embassies and from the Ford Foundation.

There was a growing "notion" within the donor community that with the election of a "democratic regime" in Kenya in 2002, the need for the Human Rights House in Nairobi had diminished. The seven Kenyan NGOs submit that this was and is still a misconceived notion that needs to be corrected. Human rights issues are wide and encompassing and some have nothing to do with the regimes. In any case regimes come and go.

The seven NGOs further submitted that the people of Kenya will only be guaranteed their fundamental human rights if there exists; strong, coordinated and well networked HRO's capable of sensitizing the public, monitoring the human rights situation, lobbying and advocacy for human rights

standards, and taking actions where violations occur. By supporting the House, a lasting and memorable contribution to the human rights struggles by the people of Kenya will be made.

Joint Activities Proposal: Due to lack of funds, the HRH did not implement any joint human rights activities or programmes. The HRH, however, prepared a proposal for financing by Danida for a series of joint activities to be implemented hopefully by the beginning of 2005. Some of the proposed activities include:

- Hosting regular human rights public forums:
- Initiative streamlining and formalisation of K-HURINET:
- Implementation of Pilot Joint Programme activities in the following areas; Human rights education and awareness creation, monitoring e.g. prison visits etc, legal aid, research, lobbying and advocacy.
- Joint Response / Statement to Human Right Issues.
- Development and Distribution of IEC Brochures on Human Rights Issues.

The seven NGOs are in the process of preparing a proposal aimed at detailed documentation of the post-Moi human rights situation in Kenya.

Human rights in Kenya

Although improvements were made in certain areas, the hope Kenyans had in regard to human rights with the coming to power of the National Rainbow Coalition government in 2002 continued to fade away in 2004. The conduct of Government in matters of governance, economic management, and basic rights has disillusioned Kenyans. Kenyans realized that it will take more than a change of personalities

in Government to have a regime committed to respecting human rights and the rule of law. The year was characterised by continued repression and lack of accountability. Human rights were violated in a number of areas: Torture and extrajudicial killings by police; mob justice, constitutional reforms; corruption; domestic violence rape and murders; and violence against children.



MARTIN OLUOCH COORDINATES THE WORK OF THE SEVEN KENYAN NGOS.





FREE LEGAL COUNSELLING HELD IN A DETENTION CAMP FOR MEN IN NAIROBI. DESPITE THE AUTHORITIES' DECLARED AMBITION TO IMPROVE PRISON CONDITIONS, REPORTS DOCUMENT OVER-CROWDING, UNACCEPTABLE HYGIENIC STANDARDS, CHILDREN DETAINED IN ADULT PRISONS, CONTINUED USE OF TORTURE AND LIMITED ACCESS TO JUSTICE. Photo: Maria Dahle

The situation for human rights defenders

Harassment and intimidation: Although the first year of new Governments rule witnessed the dawn of greater tolerance for criticism and free expression of divergent opinions, human rights defenders and government critics continued to be viewed with suspicion and harassed. Peaceful demonstrations were violently disrupted by police, human rights defenders arrested and arraigned in court.

Dwindling Resources: Increasing numbers of human rights NGOs continued to work with reduced budget allocations, mainly from the donors, which reduced effectiveness in work of these organizations.

The four selected cases below illustrates the types of harassment and intimidations human rights defenders underwent in 2004,

License Revoked: In March 2004, a local NGO – Friends of Taiwan and Tibet International (FOTTI) had its registration license revoked by the Government. A local Foreign Embassy is alleged to have influenced the Government decision on the ground that the organization was splitting its home country.

Public Rally Dispersed: On July 3rd 2004 the police deployed teargas to stop a group of civil society advocates of a new constitution from holding a public rally at Uhuru gardens in Nairobi citing public security concerns. The regime allowed the use of anti-riot gear acquired by former President Moi from South Africa during the dying days of his regime. In Kisumu, on the same day, the police shot dead two of the demonstrators.

Arrested and Charged: On 10 October 2004, a group of human rights activists representing organisations associated with the Human Rights House project in Nairobi, were arrested and charged in court after peacefully reminding the Government of its promise to set up a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, modelled on the South African TRC process.

Activist beaten up by police: On the 20th November 2004, Ruth Atieno, a human rights defender working with Kenya Human Rights Commission was brutally attacked and beaten up by a police officer from Huruma Police Station. She was leading a lawful, peaceful demonstration of residents from a densely populated slum estate, protesting against the high prevalent of insecurity, rape and defilement perpetrated against them – amid police inability and unwillingness to restore law and order by effecting arrests.

Threatened with death: On 31st December, 2004, a member of staff of Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU) was viciously attacked and brutally injured by persons believed to have felt threatened by the work of this officer and are out to intimidate him. Mr. Evans Wafula, IMLU's Advocacy Officer was lured by people who told him that they wanted some assistance from him. But when he went to talk to them, seven other people emerged and assaulted him. They threatened to come back for his life if he did not "behave".



KAMPALA

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) is working to establish a Human Rights House together with Ugandan human rights organisations. The following independent Ugandan non-governmental organisations have set up an Interim Board (IB) to prepare the establishment:

- Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET)
- Legal Aid Project (LAP)
- Public Defender Association – Uganda
- African Center for the Rehabilitation and Treatment of Torture Victims (ACTV)
- Refugee Law Project (RLP)
- Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)
- International Women's Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE)
- Hope After Rape (HAR)
- Greenwatch
- Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)
- Legal Aid Clinic

Currently HURINET is providing coordination support to the proposed Human Rights House. Since 2002 HRH has also had consultations with Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) regarding the project. FHRI has established a human rights center in Kampala where their organization has its offices.

Human Rights House project

The initial research / fact-finding phase for the possible future establishment of a Ugandan Human Rights House ended late 2003 with a positive conclusion, regarding the viability and the need to strengthen the support for independent human rights NGOs. Legally and politically, financially and administratively, HRH believes it will be possible to raise and run a Human Rights House in Uganda. Hence, a proposal to pursue this goal further was filed with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) early 2004, and was conditionally granted, at an amount close to its full budget, in December 2004. HRH is confident the conditions can be met.

The IB met regularly throughout 2004 to discuss and develop further the vision for a Ugandan Human Rights House. This vision currently includes joint premises with sufficient office space for all, preferably in multipurpose rooms, so as

to make possible both personal, legal and medical consultations, all in full confidentiality, and according to fluctuating needs. In addition, the House should include workshop / seminar / conference facilities, for both the in-house organisations and others to use, the latter for a small fee, meant to meet some of the running costs of the House. The IB organisations also envision a joint archive / library / documentation centre, open to the public, and a shelter, for clients and witnesses to use while having their cases brought to court by lawyers working within the House. This facility will also be of good use to refugees whose status in Uganda remains uncertain, but whose claims for the human rights violations they have suffered to be recognised and resolved are no less valid. For maximum visibility, optimal client access and general user-friendliness, the IB representatives wish for a future Uganda Human Rights House to be located close to the city centre, but also, for the sake of further cooperation, in the vicinity of other human rights NGOs. Finally, a dual process, with a satellite House to be established in the north, where the need to support human rights organisations is more acute than anywhere else in the country, has also been discussed.



MARTIN MASIGA FROM HURINET COORDINATES THE INTERIM BOARD OF THE UGANDAN NGOS. Photo: Bård B. Løwig.

Joint project

In addition to pursuing the Human Rights House project, the IB has also developed a joint documentation project on the shortcomings of the enforcement of civil liberties in Uganda. The proposal for this project was first submitted in December 2003, and then again late 2004, on both occasions to the Norwegian MFA, where it is still under consideration. If granted, it will compliment and be co-edited with a similar project under development in Kenya, where the focus will be on the post-Moi human rights situation.

Human rights in Uganda

The human rights situation in Uganda remains severe, with gross violations continuing to take place in several areas.

Access to justice is still unevenly distributed, and clearly in



accordance with income and level of education.

As of today, the President can only stand for re-election once, an opportunity he already took in 2001. Prior to next year's elections, however, the issue has become hotly contested, with a Bill to amend the Constitution on this and numerous other issues pending in Parliament. Already, the internationally agreed freedoms of opinion, assembly and expression are constantly being violated with rallies, meetings and demonstrations staged by opposition parties and groups frequently being interrupted or violently stopped by police and other security / army units. Individual oppositionals also report of being brought to so-called 'safe houses,' usually for violent interrogations. Ugandan authorities deny such claims.

Despite recent attempts to agree on a ceasefire and facilitate talks to end the war in the north between the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF), the violence continues with more abductions and atrocities being reported almost every week. To core segments of the LRA, these developments, and particularly the widespread wish to bring key commanders to justice before the ICC, have proved a disincentive to bring the conflict to an end.

Domestic violence also continues to affect thousands of Ugandans every year. The legal system still comes sadly short of combating this. Another category of human rights violations particularly harmful to women and children is the arbitrary exercise patterns and blatant abuses of land rights, vastly exaggerated, not only by the continuing HIV/Aids

epidemic, but also by the still growing IDP and refugee problem.

Serving conditions in many Ugandan prisons have yet to meet internationally agreed standards, with overcrowding, sanitary conditions and insufficient medical care, leading, among other things, to the spread of diseases including tuberculosis and HIV/Aids as the main problems. Many prisoners are still kept for far too long without having their cases brought before a court and numerous reports conclude that violence, not only among inmates, but also carried out by prison staff, continues and occasionally leads to severe injuries.

The situation for human rights defenders

Individual human rights defenders and their organisations suffer various kinds of control and interruptions on behalf of the authorities, including phone threats. Human rights defenders also report varying degrees of self-censorship and a tendency to avoid controversial issues regarding cultural, social and economic rights. Given the long-standing tradition of censorship and various kinds of persecution of human rights defenders in Uganda, the country's authorities should facilitate an atmosphere in which freedom of speech and opinion, assembly and expression can be enjoyed. However, domestic human rights defenders and international observers alike do not see this as a likely development, particularly not in the build-up to the forthcoming Presidential elections, scheduled for March 2006.

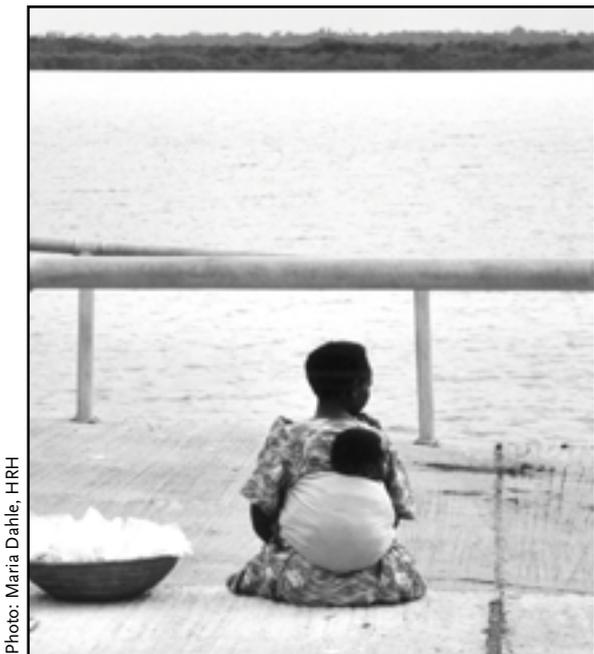


Photo: Maria Dahle, HRH

EVERY DAY AT DUSK, THOUSANDS OF TERRIFIED CHILDREN IN NORTHERN UGANDA TRAVEL TO CITIES TO AVOID BEING KIDNAPPED BY THE BRUTAL REBEL FORCE THAT USE THEM AS SOLDIERS AND SEX SLAVES. Photo: International Rescue Committee



MINSK

The Human Rights House Foundation in Oslo is discussing the establishment of a Human Rights House in Belarus with several human rights groups:

Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) - a non-governmental non-profit organisation aiming to ensure freedom of speech and the right to receive and distribute information, and to promote professional standards of journalism. Has members in over 160 independent media institutions, and offices in all six regions of the country.

Viasna - a non-governmental organization that gives juridical support. Established in 1996 during mass protest actions by the democratic opposition in Belarus. It has regional organizations in most Belarusian cities, and 200 members across the country. Viasna was closed down by the Belarusian Court in 2003 and operates underground.

Law initiative - a nation-wide non-commercial non-partisan organization that promotes democracy and legal culture. It is founded in 1996.

Belarusian PEN Centre - a non-governmental, non-political, and non-commercial organization. It was adopted by International P.E.N. - a worldwide association of writers - in 1990.

Center Supolnasc - founded in Minsk in 1995. It initiated the creation of the National Assembly of Democratic NGOs – the country's biggest democratic coalition. Collects databases about NGOs (non-registered inclusive) and the independent press.

Lev Sapieha Foundation - a non-governmental, non-political, non-commercial organization. Founded in 1992 to assist the development of the civic society in Belarus, democratic reforms, and popularization of democratic ideas.

F. Skaryna Belarusian Language Society - created in 1989. The aim of the organization is the support of the state status of the Belarusian language and the protection of the linguistic rights. Members of the governing body "Respublicanskaya Rada" include outstanding scientists and writers.

Activities

The present political situation makes the establishment of a physical Human Rights House in Belarus very difficult. However, throughout 2004 the human rights NGOs involved continued their co-operation.

Nationwide human rights forum: In January 2004 all the organizations that are members of the emerging Belarusian Human Rights House organized the nationwide human rights forum. About 150 human rights activists participated. About 40 of them represented foreign human rights organizations. Recommendations for human rights activists, Belarusian government and the international community were developed and distributed. In July 2004 a joint seminar with Lithuanian human rights activists was held in Lithuania. About 30 members of the organizations that are members of the Human Rights House project took part in it. The leaders of the organizations that are members of the Human Rights House project meet every week to discuss their joint work. Among the issues are: support to political prisoners in Belarus, support to NGOs that are persecuted by the Ministry of Justice for their activities, support to independent mass media and journalists.

Joint programs: The Human Rights Center "Viasna", Belarusian Association of Journalist and Legal Initiative provide joint support to victims of political repression. They take part in seminars for civil society activists, meetings with foreign delegations that are interested in the human rights, and form the general view of the situation of human rights in Belarus.

Information, education and monitoring: Belarusian human rights organizations publish articles and give interviews to newspapers, distribute human rights information in Belarus and abroad, meet with foreign human rights activists,



- UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF ALAKSANDR LUKASHENKA, BELARUSIAN GOVERNMENT LIMITED POLITICAL AND CULTURAL LIBERTIES AND ESTABLISHED CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE WORLD'S MOST REPRESSIVE REGIMES IN ORDER TO CREATE A KIND OF WORLD-WIDE ANTIDEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL, SAID VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BELARUSIAN PEN CENTER, ANDREJ DYNKO, AT THE ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE NETWORK.



monitors human rights in Belarus, organize human rights seminars, and participate in human rights meetings and pickets. They constantly criticize Belarusian authorities for mass violations of human rights.

Human rights in Belarus

In 2004 the public and political situation in Belarus worsened. In the run-up to the referendum to give Aleksander Lukashenka the possibility to run for presidency for more than two terms, repression of political opponents increased. New discriminative legislative acts were adopted. Freedom of expression was further limited, and violations of the freedom of peaceful associations and assemblies continued. The Elections that were held in 2004 were non-democratic. The processes of the electoral campaign and the voting didn't correspond to Belarusian legislation or international standards.

The resolutions on Belarus adopted by the UN Commission on Human rights in 2003 and 2004 were disregarded.

In 2004, about 2 000 persons were administratively punished (fined or imprisoned) according to the Code of Administrative Violations. About 40 politically motivated cases were brought against public and political activists. As a result, activists like Mikhail Marynich, Valery Levanewski and Aleksander Vasilyew were sentenced to several years of imprisonment. About 30 NGOs were closed during the year. The Labor Party, a member of the democratic coalition "5+",

was also closed. Issues of about 30 non-state democratic newspapers were suspended.

The situation for human rights defenders

Several Belarusian human rights activists are persecuted. Criminal cases were brought against the head of Belarusian Helsinki Committee Tatsiana Protska. She could be sentenced to up to five years of jail, only the threat of economical sanctions of the EU stopped Belarusian authorities.

Human rights activists were often detained while monitoring mass actions and pickets (for instance, Aliaksandr Bialiatski, Head of HRC "Viasna" (spring 2004), Valiantsin Stefanovich, lawyer of HRC "Viasna", (summer 2004). Tatsiana Raviaka, member of the Board of HRC "Viasna" and Hary Pahaniayla, vice-head of Belarusian Helsinki Committee, were detained in the autumn of 2004 for distributing human rights information.

A criminal case for defamation of the president was brought against Hary Pahaniayla, also in autumn of 2004. Police and persons in plain clothes often burst into the offices of human rights organizations (for instance, offices of HRC "Viasna" branches in the cities of Brest and Navapolatsk).

Human rights literature was confiscated from human rights activists in Minsk, Homel and Brest. Despite the repressions, the human rights movement in Belarus is united and stated that it is not going to surrender.



IN OCTOBER, BELARUS HELD FLAWED PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND A REFERENDUM ALLOWING LUKASHENKA UNLIMITED TERMS AS PRESIDENT. UNDER DEMONSTRATIONS THAT FOLLOWED IN MINSK, BELARUSIAN RIOT POLICE CARRIED OUT VIOLENT ATTACKS ON A NUMBER OF LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURES AND JOURNALISTS. Photo: Viasna



BAKU

HRH visited Baku twice in 2004 to analyze the capacities, needs, opportunities and problems of NGO sector in Azerbaijan and consider the establishment of a Human Rights House in Baku. After meeting more than 40 national and international organisations, nine NGOs were finally invited to take part in the Core Group at the end of the year. The content of the group might still change. The group consists of both experienced and newly established NGOs that have demonstrated an eagerness and ability to cooperate in order to realize the project together:

Name of the organization	Director
• Citizen's Labor Rights Protection League (CLRPL)	Sahib Mamedov
• International Society Human Rights–Azerbaijan (ISHR)	Saadat Bananyarli
• Azerbaijan Young Lawyers Union (AYLU)	Nadir Adilov
• Human Rights Centre “Against Violence (AVHRC)	Fuad Hasanov
• Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD)	Shahla Ismailova
• Center for “EL” Development Program	Elmira Alekberova
• Azerbaijan Human Rights Center (AHRC)	Eldar Zeynalov
• Society for Humanitarian Research (SHR)	Avaz Hasanov
• Association for Protection of Women's Rights (APWR) (after D. Aliyeva)	Novella Jafaroglu Appelbaum

In March 2004, Vugar Gojayev was appointed as a local coordinator, in charge of the correspondence with the HRH in Oslo, project coordination on behalf of the Azeri NGOs, and of updating the Baku pages of the website.

Activities

The NGOs are involved in various human rights issues; violations of the rights of women and children, elections, situation with prisons, torture, legal enlightenment, labour rights, monitoring and protection of human rights, gender issues, conflict resolution etc.

Letter to the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs: The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Chairman of the Council of Europe's (CE) Ministerial Committee Jan Petersen met with a group of Azeri human rights defenders in October 2004. The activists delivered an open letter encouraging the establishment of a Human Rights House in Baku, stating that the House will make the human rights movement more visible, accessible and improve the security for human rights defenders in Azerbaijan.

Elections in Belarus and Ukraine: Azeri human rights activists jointly issued a statement concerning the fraudulent parliamentary elections in Belarus. Moreover, a large group of Azeri NGO's monitored the second round and re-run presidential elections in Ukraine as international observers.

Human rights in Azerbaijan

The Government's human rights record remained poor in 2004. Police tortured and beat persons in custody, including several opposition members, and used excessive force to extract confessions. Those guilty of frauds during the October 15, 2003 presidential elections and municipality elections of December 17, 2004 have not been prosecuted or convicted; it was the same for most of the law-enforcement officers responsible for instances of torture, inhuman treatment, threats and intimidation in respect of members of the opposition, members of their families, supporters, journalists and human rights activists.

Violence and imprisonments: Following the rigged presidential elections of October 2003, the government launched a



FORCED EVICTION IS ONE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN AZERBAIJAN. THE WOMAN TO THE RIGHT WAS THROWN OUT OF HER HOME AND WENT TO THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN BAKU FOR HELP. HERE IN CONSULTATION WITH VUGAR GOJAYEV AND MARIA DAHLE FROM HRH.

Photo: Ane Tusvik Bonde, HRH.





BETWEEN 600,000 TO 800,000 AZERI REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS LEFT OR WERE FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH AND ARMENIA.

Photo: Jarle Ree.

wave of arrests and more than a thousand opposition supporters were detained, while 40 of them were still in jail in 2004, including seven opposition party leaders. In October, the Court of Grave Crimes in Baku sentenced the seven opposition leaders to prison terms ranging from two and a half to five years of imprisonment on charges of organizing or participating in mass disturbances and resisting or committing violence against a state representative. In a letter to President Ilham Aliyev 29 October the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) expressed serious concern about the Court of Grave Crime's decisions and called for the Azeri Government to obey the CoE resolution and to release the arrested opposition leaders.

Electoral fraud: The transparency of the entire electoral process has still not been satisfactorily ensured, in particular by means of improvements in the performance of the election administration, and there has still been no official recognition of the serious fraud that marred the presidential election in October 2003 and municipal elections of December 2004. The municipality elections failed to meet international standards.

The Annual Meeting of the Human Rights House Network will take place in Baku in September 2005, with representatives from 12 countries observing the run-up to the November elections.

Prison conditions: Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. Seven people died of torture committed by law-enforcement bodies of Azerbaijan in 2004. Some political prisoners and presumed political prisoners are still in jail and there is still a risk of being arrested and imprisoned for purely political reasons. Arbitrary arrest and detention and lengthy pre-trial detention continued. Overcrowding and poor medical care resulted in the spread of infectious diseases, and

tuberculosis (TB) continued to be the primary cause of death.

The situation for human rights defenders

The Government continued to restrict freedom of speech and of the press, and police used excessive force and continued to harass journalists during the year. The Government restricted freedom of assembly and forcibly dispersed several demonstrations held without a permit, and law enforcement officers beat protestors at several demonstrations. The Government conducted TV campaigns of denunciation and harassment against political parties, NGOs and critics. The opposition and independent media were under constant pressure, through limited access to printing presses and distribution networks, imposition of crippling fines from government-initiated defamation cases, and harassment of journalists. The "Yeni Musavat" newspaper was closed down due to financial constraints twice. The bank account of another opposition newspaper "Baku-Xeber" was frozen by the government.

The Government continued to restrict freedom of association by refusing to register some NGOs and political parties and harassing domestic human rights activists. Numerous suits by the NGOs to the courts concerning refusal of the Ministry of Justice in registration were ignored. Among other problems of NGOs are lack of offices, no state funding for implementation of relevant projects, high taxes and duties, and police interference. A great number of NGOs failed to gain access to provinces outside the capital Baku to monitor human rights or hold seminars.

Imam of the Juma Mosque Ilgar Ibrahimoglu, who was arrested during the demonstrations following the rigged elections on October 2003, was released in 2004 but faced various impediments by the government. The Juma mosque was closed down.



ISTANBUL

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) has an ongoing dialogue with Turkish human rights organizations on the possible establishment of a Human Rights House in Istanbul. These include:

- **Amnesty International Turkey**
The Turkish branch of Amnesty International, a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights.
- **Human Rights Association**
Established by 98 human rights defenders on 17 July 1986, to “carry out efforts in the field of human rights and liberties.” It has 33 local branches across Turkey.
- **Helsinki Citizens' Assembly**
Started its activities in 1990 as the country-level affiliate organisation of the international network of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, in Turkey.
- **IPS Communication Foundation**
A non-profit foundation, IPS was founded in 1993 in Istanbul with the aim of supporting and implementing programs in the fields of communication and development.
- **Street Children Foundation**
(Umut Çocukları Derneği)

Joint project: Training of teachers

Since late 2003, HRH in Oslo has supported a joint project between several organisations on human rights education, led by History Foundation. Funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish primary school teachers were trained in human rights. Teacher training sessions with over 200 participants took place in several cities.

The project includes training of teachers in groups of 15 by means of workshops about human rights issues in school textbooks and in school context. The aim was to show how human rights issues are interlinked with everyday life issues and that they are not mere documents. Another aim was to make teachers find out the human rights violations in textbooks and to make them come up with precautions, as well as to form consciousness among teachers to create human rights respectful environments in schools.

The project will be finalized in March 2005.

The situation for human rights defenders

- In Turkey, judicial harassment continues, although some of the laws to harass human rights defenders have been suspended, Özlem Dalkiran, Media Officer in Amnesty International, Turkey, said at the Anniversary Conference “Activists under attack. Defending the right to be a human rights defender” in Oslo in October. Dalkiran co-ordinates the Human Rights House project in Istanbul.

- When the new law on association was brought to the parliament, human rights NGOs were not consulted, Dalkiran continued.

There were many changes in the legislation on freedom of association in 2004. Two particularly restrictive circulars were issued at the beginning of the year, despite the fact the draft legislation on associations were discussed in the Turkish Parliament.

The new law no 2953 that came into force in November 2004 was a major step forward for associations and foundations in Turkey. Among other things it acknowledges the right of all persons to found an organization, open branches abroad, receive funds from abroad, and become affiliated with a foreign organization or meet with foreigners without prior authorisation, according to the Annual Report of the Observatory for the protection of human rights defenders, by FIDH and OMCT. Further, local authorities no longer have to be informed of general assemblies. Governors have to issue warnings before starting legal proceedings against organisations, and criminal sanctions for “breaching” their statutes have been lowered. Moreover, local law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter the premises of organisations without prior authorization from the courts.

Despite recent legal and constitutional reforms in Turkey, human rights defenders continued to be targeted for harassment and intimidation by state officials, and their activities are still restricted. According to a report from Amnesty International in February 2004, those used against human rights activists include Anti-Terror laws, public order legislation, laws on associations and foundations and press laws, with the result that the rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression cannot be exercised fully and freely.

ÖZLEM DALKIRAN FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TURKEY COORDINATES THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE PROJECT IN ISTANBUL.



BOGOTA

In 2004, HRH had a constructive dialogue with Colombian peace- and human rights NGOs, most notably the peace network REDEPAZ, interested in establishing a Human Rights House in Bogota, to help strengthen the security and cooperation of Colombian human rights and peace activists, share resources and knowledge and provide a meeting place.

In 2004, HRH invited Carlos Ivan Lopera from REDEPAZ to Oslo to participate at the Anniversary Conference “Activists under attack. Defending the right to be a human rights defender.” Lopera gave a strong testimony regarding the situation for human rights defenders in Colombia, and confirmed his organization’s interest in the Peace and Human Rights House project.

HRH’s manual on how to establish a Human Rights House was translated into Spanish in 2004. Representatives of various NGOs, decision makers and other relevant actors in Colombia, Norway and elsewhere were consulted.

REDEPAZ has invited HRH to visit Colombia in 2005 to consider whether it is desirable and possible to establish a Human Rights House there or by other means help facilitate an improvement of the security and cooperation of defenders. A funding proposal for a fact-finding mission/feasibility study was prepared.

Human rights in Colombia

According to the Colombian government, the so-called “democratic security measures” it has embarked on since 2002 have led to a decrease in homicides, abductions and acts of terror. However, instances of torture and “disappearances”, committed by all sides to the conflict, have increased, as have reports of extra judicial executions attributed directly to the security forces. This has served to draw even more civilians into the conflict. The establishment of a “militia” of one million civilian informants that will be expected to provide intelligence information to the armed forces is of concern, as well as the establishment of a “peas-

ant army” comprised of civilians that will receive weapons and training from the armed forces. The establishment of “Consolidation and rehabilitation zones”, where military rule has been introduced, is also of concern.

The situation for the civilian population is deteriorating, in particular for the internally displaced (IDPs) and the increasing number of civilians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Since 1985, more than three million Colombians have been displaced. The IDP crisis has become one of the world’s worst, disproportionately affecting Afro-Colombians and indigenous people making up some of the country’s poorest people. Displacement still continues in the border areas. As many IDPs avoid to officially registering themselves for fear of reprisal attacks by armed groups, they are often denied even the limited welfare services that the state offers. The fact that humanitarian organisations are often denied access to populations in need compounds the problem.

The situation for human rights defenders

The deliberate targeting of local and international human rights organisations and activists makes Colombia one of the most dangerous places in the world to human rights defenders. Those who defend the rights of others are frequently victims of a number of violations, including widespread death threats, assassination attempts, intimidations, harassments, “disappearances”, lawsuits, arbitrary detentions, torture and murder, as well as the gender specific risks faced by women human rights defenders in Colombian society.

The Colombian government has run a campaign aimed at deligitimizing the work of human rights defenders. This gave rise to political persecutions. The main actors of persecution and repression were state and armed forces, paramilitary groups, insurgent groups, and economic groups (stockbreeders, agricultural businesses, multinational companies) with specific interests in some regions, in alliance with paramilitary groups.

Access is often denied to domestic and international human rights NGOs.

- IN TWO YEARS, 46 TRADE UNIONISTS, 6 JOURNALISTS AND 33 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HAVE BEEN MURDERED IN COLOMBIA, SAID CARLOS IVAN LOPERA FROM REDEPAZ PEACE NETWORK, SPEAKING AT THE HRH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 13 OCTOBER.





A Human Rights House is a working community where human rights organisations share office facilities, co-operate and provide joint services for their clients. Normally, a Human Rights House also include seminar rooms and other technical facilities. The main advantages of a Human Rights House are:

- More co-operation at all levels, also throughout the international network of Human Rights Houses
- Clearer division of labour between the member organisations
- Added weight to authority approaches
- Higher profile, enhanced visibility in the public debate and human rights discourse
- Mutual protection and improved security, both nationally and internationally
- Better access, better services to more clients, users and other visitors
- Increased cost-efficiency, higher value for money for donors.
- Improved outreach at all levels, locally, nationally and internationally

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