



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
FOUNDATION

2016

ANNUAL REPORT

humanrightshouse.org



PROTECT EMPOWER SUPPORT

Network of Human Rights Houses

Azerbaijan • Belarus (in exile) • Belgrade • Bergen • Chernihiv • London
Moscow • Oslo • Sarajevo • Tbilisi • Voronezh • Warsaw • Yerevan • Zagreb



“Human Rights House Foundation through its various programs, as well as through the Houses in Tbilisi, Vilnius, Belgrade and other places did everything to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers continued to work and feel safe.”

Intigam Aliyev

Lawyer, human rights defender

Intigam Aliyev, pictured on the front cover as he is released from prison, is a prominent and widely respected Azerbaijani human rights lawyer. In April 2015, he was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison on politically motivated charges, before being conditionally released in March 2016. He is an expert within the ILIA programme established by the Human Rights Houses, which provides education in human rights law. We celebrate his release from prison, but regret that he is still restricted by a travel ban.

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More important than ever

Civil society is a key driver for the protection and advancement of human rights at home and abroad. Yet the space for civil society is shrinking, and human rights defenders are increasingly under threat around the world. Repressions – present for many years in countries such as Russia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan – are becoming more frequent and severe, and are spreading to countries such as Poland and Hungary. In this environment, the key principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights are being eroded and attacked.

Authoritarian governments seem to hold on to their political and financial power at all cost. To do so, they seek to silence independent critical voices who promote human rights, document abuses of power and function as watchdogs. The role and legitimacy of civil society is undermined through harassment, attacks, legislation criminalising their work, restrictions on travel, funding and operation of organisations. This pressure creates fear of retaliation, erodes trust among journalists, human rights defenders, and activists, and limits their ability to pursue legitimate human rights work. In addition, the space for independent civil society is increasingly occupied by GONGOs (governmental organised non-governmental organisations).

Against these trends, our values of solidarity and cooperation in networks are more important than ever. The resilience, braveness and creativity we see among our partners is inspiring and offers hope. We can and must adapt to changing and deteriorating

circumstances, and refocus and mobilise resources and partnerships. Combined with greater influence on the human rights agenda, we continue to defend civil society space and the fundamental rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression – and the right to be a human rights defender.

By empowering hundreds of human rights defenders through protection, training, and capacity building, we support their essential work and impact on the fulfilment of human rights in their countries.

We celebrated the release of our Azerbaijani colleagues from prison, a highlight of 2016, while calling for the release of those still behind bars. In November, we came together for the Network Assembly of Human Rights Houses, hosted at Human Rights House Belgrade. Building on our joint successes, we addressed common challenges, including the spread of illiberal democracy and restrictions on foreign funding, and set out plans to further address these challenges in 2017.

Together, we aim to be even more closely connected through joint projects and cooperation. An external evaluation in 2017 of the Human Rights House concept and our advocacy work will inform our new strategies for meeting the present challenges, and will ensure that we and our partners remain dynamic, effective and sustainable.

Maria Dahle
Director

Human Rights House Foundation and Human Rights Houses

What?

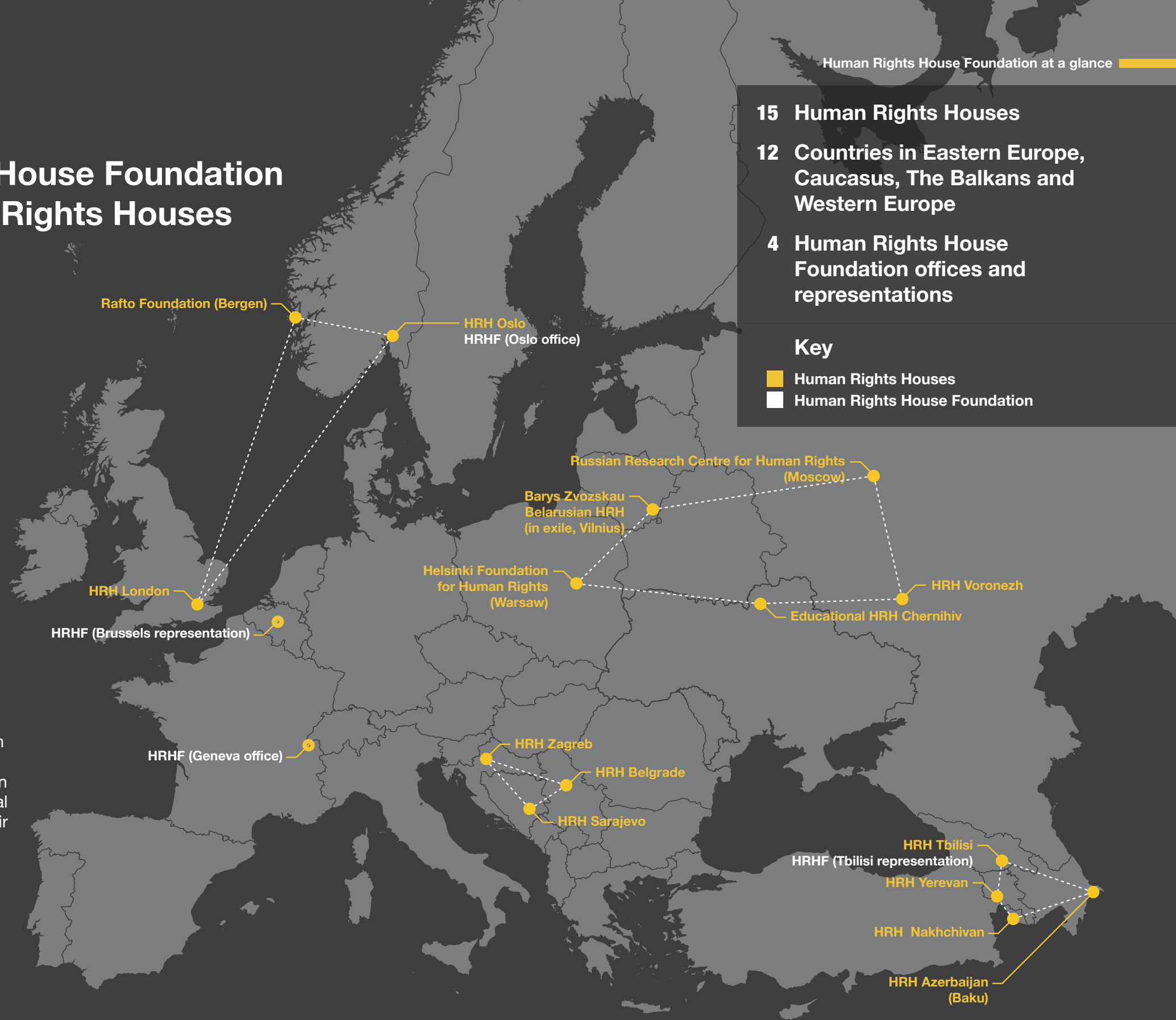
We protect, empower and support human rights defenders and their organisations locally, and unite them in an international network of Human Rights Houses.

Why?

Everyone has the right to freedoms of assembly, association and expression, and to be a human rights defender.

How?

We bring organisations together in Human Rights Houses, and connect them in an international network based on cooperation and solidarity. This enables us to facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building, and to support joint projects. HRHF advocates with and for partner organisations to promote and advance strong human rights standards, which are essential for human rights defenders and their organisations to work freely and openly.



Achieving impact



100

Organisations work in
Human Rights Houses



15

Human Rights Houses
connected



12

Countries with Human
Rights Houses



400

Human rights defenders
under threat supported



157

Human rights defenders
and lawyers trained



179

Policy makers reached
out to

IMPACT

1

Stronger governance and more sustainable Human Rights Houses

IMPACT

2

Increased cooperation with and among Human Rights Houses

IMPACT

3

Greater visibility and political influence on the human rights agenda

IMPACT

4

Better protection for human rights defenders and their organisations

Impact 1: Stronger together

Achieving stronger governance and more sustainable Human Rights Houses

Challenge

The space for independent civil society is shrinking globally.

Restrictive legislation and policies have become more widespread, making it increasingly difficult for independent organisations to access resources, to organise and associate, and to work openly.

Impact

The Human Rights House concept is designed to be flexible, but the overall purpose of every House is to serve the human rights cause, as part of the effort to strengthen civil society as a whole. This is achieved through stimulating collaboration between member NGOs on human rights education, legal aid, networking and advocacy.

Houses help to enhance solidarity, cut administrative costs, further increase member NGOs' visibility, and make member NGOs more accessible to victims and human rights defenders.

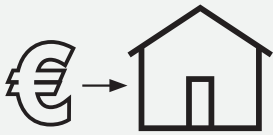
In 2016, all of the Houses raised sufficient funds to cover their running costs. Member organisations in eight of the Houses were active in joint projects and initiatives with other members. With the support of the Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF), Human Rights House Yerevan purchased the premises for a House in 2016 and started preparations for renovation of the building.

In 2016 HRRF, also looked to expand the network of Houses, undertaking feasibility studies for a House in Moldova, and for an Azerbaijani House in exile.



A **Human Rights House** is a collaborative project of non-governmental organisations that work in partnership to promote human rights in their own country and abroad. It is a community of organisations, but also a physical structure – a building or an office that hosts the member organisations. A House is a long-term commitment to civil society.

Together we have impact



100%

of Houses successfully fundraised for office costs



50%

of Houses received HRHF funding for projects



58

House organisations signed letters of concern



8

Houses with joint projects among their member organisations



1

Premises for HRH Yerevan purchased



2

New House locations explored

Impact 2: Increased cooperation

Strengthening the links among Human Rights Houses and HRHF through support, solidarity and expertise

Challenge

Authoritarian States learn from one another and often employ the same repressive tools against civil society. Cooperation, solidarity, and shared resources, knowledge, and expertise – across borders and between organisations – are ways for civil society and human rights defenders to respond to this repression.

Impact

The Houses provide one another with regional and international support and expertise. This, combined with support from HRHF, strengthens their ability to face common challenges.

In 2016, the Houses undertook 10 joint projects – including two or more Houses. They increased their cooperation as part of the network protection programme, and the network's International Law in

Advocacy (ILIA) programme marked 10 years of education in international human rights standards.

In March, HRHF assisted Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv and Human Rights House Tbilisi in holding a seminar on the prevention and treatment of psychological burnout for Ukrainian human rights defenders, who work in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea and are in urgent need of such support.

More generally, the Houses and HRHF increased their cooperation in the area of communication, and saw an increase in external requests for action and expertise.

Gathering for the Network Assembly in November 2016, the Houses elaborated on their achievements and set out future plans.

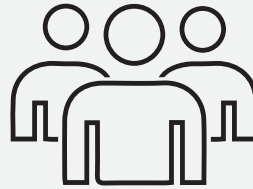


Together we have impact



10

Joint projects that include two or more Houses



15

Houses shared ideas and plans at the Network Assembly



10

Years of education in international human rights standards



90%

of lawyers trained work with Houses or human rights organisations



325

325 People participate in Human Rights Lawyers at Risk online forum



Human rights defenders Zhanna Litvina, Tatsiana Reviaka, and Danuta Przywara at the 2016 Assembly in Belgrade



Lara Aharonian from Human Rights House Yerevan speaks as part of a panel at the 2016 Assembly



Participants from different Houses and HRHF representatives in discussion at the 2016 Assembly

Network Assembly 2016

Looking to the future of the Houses and their work

In November 2016, we gathered in Belgrade, Serbia, for the Network Assembly, hosted and co-organised by Human Rights House Belgrade and HRHF.

Laying the foundations for further House-to-House cooperation, each House presented the situation in their country, their achievements, the challenges they face and the support they can provide to and need from other Houses.

Numerous Houses brought up threats such as shrinking space for civil society, competition from GONGOS, and the problem of human rights being perceived as something for the liberal elite. The Human Rights House model was mentioned as a good platform to find ways to address these threats. Looking to the future, however, the model itself may need to be adapted.

We must: make the most of civil society being better connected than ever; embrace the new generation of activists and better reach out to and engage broader sections of society, with an emphasis on human rights education; use new technologies to enhance research and campaigning, and access new potential sources of funding, such as social enterprises.

On growing restrictions on access to funding, we considered how international donors might adapt their granting methods.

They should match grants with local needs, consider support as an investment, and take a collaborative rather than competitive approach. We will present our recommendations on foreign funding in autumn 2017.

Joined by outside experts, we discussed illiberal democracies and the strategies to respond to them. Clear trends emerged from the country examples given – Croatia, Hungary, Poland, and Serbia, and Azerbaijan – such as the undermining of independent institutions and media, and restrictive laws and policies against civil society.

Our “tool box” to respond to illiberal democracies, to be launched in autumn 2017, takes into account recommendations from the debate, such as: keep exposing abuses; make our work popular, attractive, and more accessible; reach out to young politicians to build their capacity on human rights; and continue international advocacy to raise awareness and put pressure on illiberal democracies.

Celebrating the release from prison of our colleagues in Azerbaijan, we reflected on the strength and impact of our joint campaign, and showed how cross-border solidarity, multiple methods and communication channels can help to protect and support human rights defenders.

Impact 3: Influence on the human rights agenda

Advocating for the rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression, and to be a human rights defender

Challenge

The global decline in freedoms continued in 2016, affecting human rights defenders in all countries in which HRHF works.

HRHF saw human rights crises in more countries than we expected. The year also saw attacks on the legitimacy of human rights mechanisms and efforts to undermine the principles of universality and indivisibility of human rights.

Impact

Greater access to the international system makes national human rights defenders stronger and better protected at home. In 2016, HRHF welcomed and supported the first human rights high-level debate at the UN General Assembly, where we ensured the participation of Milan Antonijevic (YUCOM, HRH Belgrade). HRHF raised the situation in Azerbaijan internationally, including at the review of the country at the UN Human Rights Committee and events at the Council of Europe (CoE). We also supported international mechanisms in their work on Azerbaijan, such as the visit of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and for similar visits by the rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE. We reached a larger audience in 2016 by expanding our distribution channels.

We focused on Belarus, Poland, and Azerbaijan, including the release of political prisoners, and the human rights situation in Crimea. We focused thematically on human rights defenders, and the adoption of a

new Human Rights Council resolution on foreign support to NGOs. Two national advocacy strategies were adopted by partners, developed with HRHF.

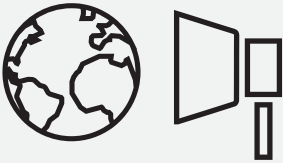
The Belarusian Human Rights House and HRHF contributed to the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus.

HRHF was active in the organisation of an event aside the UN Security Council in relation to the human rights situation in Crimea. After launching the idea of a specific General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Crimea, we were disappointed by the outcome and the weakness of the adopted text. With more success at the European Parliament, HRHF contributed to the adoption of a principled human rights position on Crimea.

Following more than two years of advocacy by HRHF and the Human Rights Houses' ILIA programme, the Special Rapporteur on lawyers and judges put forward a report on standards aimed at protecting lawyers working on human rights related issues and defending human rights defenders.

HRHF was able to respond quickly to the deteriorating situation in Poland, identifying opportunities to raise awareness of the situation in Poland internationally, and developing an advocacy strategy with our Polish partner, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

Together we have impact



3

International campaigns



22

Submissions and oral interventions



179

Policy makers reached out to



163

Articles, videos and posts published



34%

Increase in Twitter followers



15%

Increase in Facebook followers

Political prisoners released in Azerbaijan

Celebrating the campaign for their release

Human Rights House Baku opened in 2007. Four years later, in 2011, the authorities forced the House to cease activities. By 2015, they had imprisoned many of its members and adopted restrictive laws, as part of a crackdown on civil society.

HRHF and the Houses jointly campaigned for their release for years – channelling all programmes toward a single cause. In spring 2016 we saw the impact as 17 political prisoners were released, including Intigam Aliyev, Anar Mammadli, Rasul Jafarov, Arif and Leyla Yunus, and Khadija Ismayilova, who featured strongly in our efforts to raise awareness.

Campaigning with the Houses, coalitions, and strong international partners, HRHF helped to raise awareness of the arrests, and organised and participated in international protests.

HRHF drafted and submitted letters of concern on Azerbaijan endorsed by the Houses – who then advocated at the national level for their governments to address the situation. This campaigning was combined with intense advocacy at the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and EU.

Drawing on expertise in the ILIA programme, lawyers educated in international human rights standards joined members of Human Rights House Tbilisi in monitoring and reporting on the trials of human rights defenders arrested in Azerbaijan. This contributed to the protection for the prisoners and the compilation of facts for advocacy and awareness-raising purposes.

Member organisation Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland), with support from HRHF and Freedom House, acted as the legal counsel for these defenders at the European Court of Human Rights, and won several cases.

The Human Rights Houses in Georgia, Ukraine, and the Belarusian Human Rights House in exile in Lithuania provided shelter and assistance to those fleeing the country, and with HRHF ran a programme to provide protection to human rights defenders under threat in Azerbaijan and the wider region.

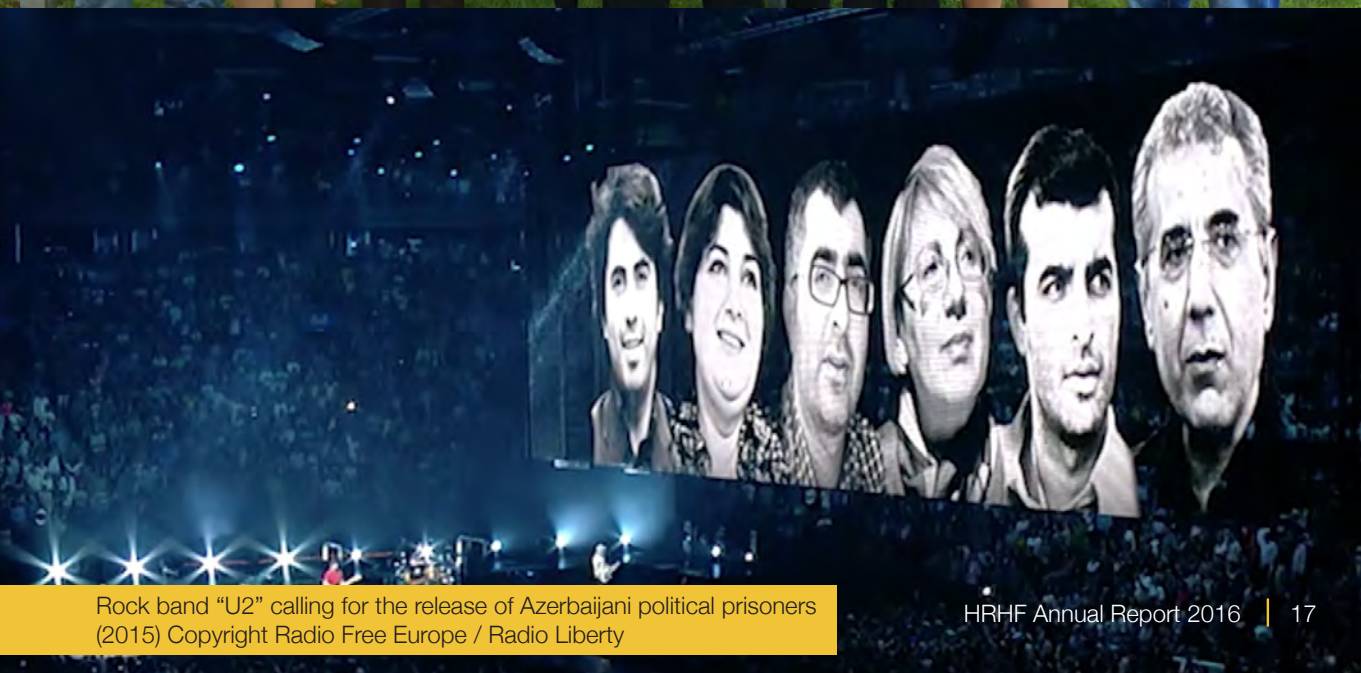
In 2017, HRHF will continue to shed light on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, and campaign for the release of those still behind bars.



Solidarity demonstration in front of the Norwegian parliament in Oslo (2015)



Advocacy at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, in support of Azerbaijani political prisoners. Khadija Ismayilova (centre) was later arrested herself before being released (2014)



Rock band "U2" calling for the release of Azerbaijani political prisoners (2015) Copyright Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty

Impact 4: Better protection

Supporting human rights defenders and their organisations

Challenge

Human rights defenders and civil society provide the best defence against those seeking to erode human rights, but they are also often the primary targets for repressive actions by authoritarian governments.

They face verbal and physical attacks, surveillance, threats, smear campaigns, and repressive policies aimed at silencing them and their organisations.

Impact

Against a backdrop of increasing threats to human rights defenders, the Houses and HRHF supported more than 400 human rights defenders, journalists, and civil activists and their families in

countries where they are most at risk. We were able to positively respond to all requests for protection, providing rapid response, flexibility and good coordination with other protection actors.

We continued to develop common standards and response procedures for protection in 2016.

Through nominating human rights defenders for awards, we raise their profile and ultimately help to protect them. In 2016, Elena Milashyna won the Fritt Ord and ZEIT-Stiftung Free Media Prize for Independent Journalism in Eastern Europe, after a successful nomination co-sponsored by HRHF and members of the Russian Houses.



Trial observer Irine Kasradze (left) from Human Rights House Tbilisi attends an appeal against the disbarment of Azerbaijani human rights lawyer Alaif Hasanov (back 2nd from right) in Baku.

Together we have impact



3

Houses operate the shelter programme with HRHF



7

Nominations by HRHF accepted for human rights awards



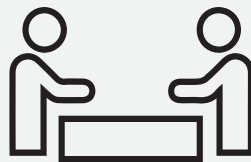
17

Mobile group missions and consultations carried out by the Houses



5

Individual cases alerted to protection mechanisms



869

Protection consultations by HRH Tbilisi



53

Human rights defenders and their families supported by HRHF

Protection of human rights lawyers

Working to establish strong international standards

HRHF and partners in the Houses identified growing intimidation and persecution of human rights lawyers in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and began promoting the establishment of strong international standards for the protection of human rights lawyers and their independence.

Following two years of work from across HRHF's programmes and the Houses, these standards and protections for lawyers were established in 2016 at the UN.

September 2015

HRHF produced the report Human Rights Lawyers at Risk in partnership with lawyers from the ILIA programme, and launched the report at the OSCE Human Dimension Meeting in Warsaw.

In advocacy, we continued to promote the recommendations of the report at international forums, calling for lawyers to be included within the definition of human rights defenders.

We then advocated strongly for a UN resolution on human rights defenders.

This was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2015, and included protections for the legal representatives of human rights defenders.

June 2016

HRHF and Human Rights House Belgrade hosted and organised consultations with the UN Special Rapporteur on judges and lawyers, Mónica Pinto, to enable HRHF and partners to provide recommendations to her mandate ahead of her upcoming report to the UN.

October 2016

The Special Rapporteur's report presented to the UN General Assembly in October advocated protections for lawyers and gave clear recommendations, many of which were suggested to the Special Rapporteur during the consultations in Belgrade.

HRHF will work with these strong international standards, making them known and ensuring that they are implemented at the national level.



2015
SEPTEMBER



2016
JUNE



2016
OCTOBER



The ILIA programme concluded the third cycle of its EHREL online education project with a moot court and conference at the Constitutional Court in Vilnius, hosted by the Belarusian House.



Lawyers and defenders from the Houses, ILIA programme and partners give input to the UN Special Rapporteur on judges and lawyers, hosted by HRH Belgrade.

Common challenges

In Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Western Europe, where Human Rights Houses operate, authoritarian States have learned from one another over the years. Spreading from Belarus to Azerbaijan, States have adopted laws and practices that restrict the operation of civil society and independent media, and threaten the rule of law, and State leaders employ rhetoric undermining the universality of human rights and spreading hate.

In Russia, civil society continued to be targeted with legislation that bans foreign funding, constituting retaliation for their human rights work and signalling a lack of acceptance of the role and work of human rights defenders.

The “foreign agents” legislation became a model for many other States, and Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) partner the Russian Resource Centre for Human Rights has been targeted. This is a challenge for donors to adapt their granting schemes, and for organisations to find alternative ways to fund their work, such as through crowdfunding, as undertaken by Human Rights House Voronezh.

In Azerbaijan, while the authorities released some of HRRF’s partners in 2016, they continue to criminalise other human rights defenders, on trumped-up charges. In Belarus, repression of civil society is systemic, through

what the United Nations Special Rapporteur Miklós Haraszti qualifies as an “authorisation- based system” with regulations that ban the use of public space, participation in the public debate, and the possibility to organise and associate without authorisation.

Authorisations to exercise human rights favour non- governmental organisations organised by governments and supportive of government policies, known as GONGOs, which have become widespread in many countries, as authorities aim at replacing independent civil society with groups loyal to those in power. GONGOs are also eroding international mechanisms as they compete with non-governmental organisations for participation at international forums.

In Ukraine, specifically Crimea, abuses include a crackdown against civil society and the media, hate speech and the clearing of the territory of “undesired people,” and severe limitations on Ukrainian and international access to Crimea. It is a priority for HRRF and its Ukrainian partners to place Crimea high on the international agenda.

In Armenia, in 2016, mass protests were met with police brutality and arbitrary arrests, and constitutional amendments were passed amid allegations of election fraud. For civil society, and Human Rights House Yerevan, this was a major

Need united responses

challenge in terms of documenting and reporting abuses.

In more and more countries, verbal or physical attacks, surveillance, threats, and smear campaigns are increasing, especially against those working on issues seen as sensitive, such as women human rights defenders, minority rights defenders, defenders of the rights of LGBT people, and human rights defenders working on corruption issues and elections. While true domestically, in 2016 we also witnessed it internationally with a death threat made by a Russian diplomat at the Human Rights Council against HRHF's staff.

Although Armenia commits internationally to the protection of human rights defenders, it domestically continues to ignore threats and attacks against those working on rights of LGBT people and women human rights defenders.

In Serbia, and the Balkans in general, hate speech is flourishing, and Human Rights House Belgrade saw such threats realised with unidentified persons smashing the windows of the House in 2016.

While civil society in Georgia was able to operate relatively freely in 2016, with Human Rights House Tbilisi active in assisting civil society from Azerbaijan, human rights defenders still suffered smear campaigns.

Significantly, we have also seen the emergence of self-styled “illiberal democracies” in Europe in recent years, which are in fact democracies turning ill, presenting a threat to human rights and to the rule of law. These voices oppose the precedence of universal human rights law over domestic law, and they are spreading – from Hungary to Poland, as well as in the Western Balkans.

Inspired by Hungary and Poland, the Croatian government pursued a campaign to undermine independent civil society organisations, attacked independent media and media freedom, and created obstacles to slow down the process of education reform. Civil society answered with solidarity and mobilisation of the wider population, ultimately leading to an election and a new government.

In Poland, 2016 saw a previous beacon of human rights witness attacks on media freedom and the rule of law.

To address this, we must include and empower the next generation of human rights defenders and close the increasing gap between the human rights community and the general population. Educational programmes in human rights, such as those run by Human Rights House Chernihiv, are essential in this.

For hope in human rights

Right wing populism and anti-terror laws have also had an impact on human rights in Western Europe. London-based Index on Censorship has taken a strong role in mapping increasing violations of freedom of expression and media freedom in Europe, and identifying trends in these violations.

These trends led to a much harsher environment for civil society, yet, the Human Rights Houses and HRHF continue to play a strong role in protecting, empowering, and supporting human rights defenders.

Hope for human rights

Last year, 2016, was not just a year of a global decline in freedoms. It was also a year of significant innovation, growth, and ongoing activity by and among the Human Rights Houses and wider civil society.

The Human Rights Houses were able to respond to many of the worrying regional and international trends in 2016: to adapt their working methods, and to mobilise and launch initiatives to address and influence the direction of these trends.

The principles of the Human Rights House concept – strong institutions,

support and solidarity, collaboration, long-term commitment, visibility, and protection – were essential in this regard, as were deep expertise and strength in advocacy, which enabled us to influence the human rights agenda in the countries where we work and at the international level. We are energised and inspired by the great initiatives and successes among the Houses. Through these initiatives, the Houses continue to have a positive impact on human rights, both nationally and internationally, and to provide support to other human rights defenders and organisations.

The next section presents the focus and aims of the individual Houses and highlights the successes from which we can draw inspiration.

Through this, we aim to give a taster of the positive work of the Houses, and to amplify the impact of this work, involve others in these initiatives, trigger ideas, and provide a platform to contact the Houses or HRHF in order to benefit from and contribute to these and future successes.

Human Rights House Yerevan

Established 2012 | 7 organisations | Yerevan, Armenia

Accessible House, celebrating diversity

Human Rights House Yerevan completed the purchase of a joint premises for member organisations in 2016.

The House is committed to be a safe, accessible and common space for civil society organisations, movements, civic initiatives, activists and human rights defenders, who are often targeted for the work they do.

The House's daily work is based on the principles of proactivity of all members, the absence of privileges, the reduction of vulnerability, and everyone's equal protection.

Human Rights Day 2016 was an opportunity for the House to address human rights

and the challenges of human rights protection in the context of 2016's events.

Hosting a public discussion, the House focused on the achievements of human rights defenders in Armenia, and the challenges and threats they faced in 2016 – a challenging year for the human rights community.

The discussion was followed by the screening of the documentary "Listen to Me", about the LGBT community in Armenia, created by PINK Armenia, a member of the House. This was part of a series of speeches and discussions hosted by the House in 2016.



"In 2016, HRHY lost its founder Mika Danielyan.

We overcame the difficulty of his loss by our commitment to joint work, by responsibility, care, and principles of egalitarianism toward each other."

Anna Zhamakochyan

Executive Director
Socioscope



LATE CHAIRPERSON
MIKA DANIELYAN (1959-2016)



YEREVAN HOUSE



HUMAN RIGHTS
DAY EVENT

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Human Rights House Azerbaijan

Established 2007, 2013 | Baku and Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

Doors closed, but still active



“One day we will be back to once again create a home for human rights and defenders in Azerbaijan. I really believe in that.”

Malahat Nasibova

Human Rights House Nakhchivan

Forced to cease House activities since 2011,

Human Rights House Azerbaijan was first conceived as an idea for establishment in 2003.

In 2007, the House was registered, and the physical space officially opened in 2009. It grew into an important hub for human rights defenders, journalists and activists. Following an order by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Justice in March 2011, the House was forced to cease its activities. Partner organisations continue their activities

Human Rights House Nakhchivan opened in 2013. It was forced to cease its activities

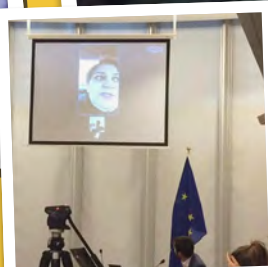
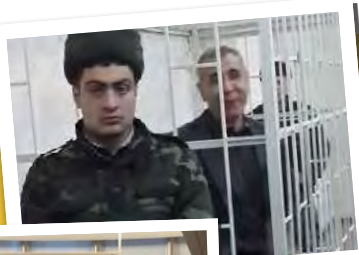
when Malahat and Ilgar Nasibov were forced to flee the country in December 2014. Malahat Nasibova hopes to return home one day to recreate a human rights community.

Continuing to work, the member organisations from the Houses are active and continue to work the best they can in repressive conditions. Many of the group were imprisoned in 2014-2015, but were later released in 2016.

Through international advocacy and submissions to international mechanisms, we continue to have an impact on human rights in Azerbaijan, and to at least hold the government accountable.



WITH SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON JUDGES AND LAWYERS



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SIDE EVENT VIA SKYPE



MEETING EU SPECIAL REP. FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



REUNITED IN OSLO

Human Rights House Tbilisi

Established 2010 | 6 organisations | Tbilisi, Georgia

Protection for the region

As a regional hub for civil society, Human Rights House Tbilisi provides legal and psychological services, conducts advocacy, works to improve legislation, offers human rights education, and works to develop civil society.

Providing protection, the House is able to respond successfully and quickly to human rights defenders when they are under threat in the region, particularly from Azerbaijan. In 2016, the House continued to be a regional focal point for protection, providing 780 legal and 89 psychological consultations to human rights defenders and activists. It provided support to 15 new people and their families (total

25 people), and continued to support another 28 beneficiaries (12 families).

The House plays a significant role in Mobile Groups which provide emergency responses to mass violations of freedom of assembly, and sends observers to the trials of persecuted human rights defenders. House members have travelled to neighbouring countries such as Azerbaijan and Armenia as part of this, and the House has a project to publish the articles of Azerbaijani journalists. The House is also involved in network's shelter programme for human rights defenders at risk.



“We will provide further humanitarian and legal support for Azerbaijani human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers or activists in exile in Georgia. This is the least we can offer people fleeing persecution.”

Nikoloz Legashvili

House Chairperson

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MOBILE HUMAN
RIGHTS GROUPS



CELEBRATING BIRTHDAY OF
KHADIJA ISMAYILOVA

AND HER RELEASE FROM PRISON

Barys Zvozhkau Belarusian Human Rights House

Established 2006 | 10 organisations | Vilnius, Lithuania (in exile)

A home for human rights



“The House is not only a safe place for human rights defenders, but also a coordinator and organiser of common processes important to the human rights community of Belarus.”

Tatsiana Reviaka
House President

Supporting the human rights movement in

Belarus, the Barys Zvozhkau Belarusian Human Rights House focuses on four strategic areas: human rights advocacy; protection of human rights defenders and support to victims of repressions; human rights education; and capacity-building and empowering human rights defenders and their organisations. The House was registered in Lithuania, due to the impossibility of registration in Belarus.

Celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the House has achieved a great deal and is essential to the entire human rights community of Belarus. Initially, the House was set

up as a safe meeting and training space for Belarusian organisations and initiatives. Today, it is an acknowledged actor on human rights and digital security expertise for Belarusian and international organisations.

The House hosts around 61 events for some 1,450 people annually, providing conference rooms and facilities, a library with computers and internet access, and accommodation for up to 25 people. The House is increasingly used by partners and colleagues from Azerbaijan and Russia, where the persecution of defenders and activists is aggravated.

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SUMMER SCHOOL



**ILIA: CONCLUDING CONFERENCE AND
MOOT COURT**



**10 YEARS A HOME FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv

Established 2014 | 7 organisations | Chernihiv, Ukraine

Human rights for youth

A centre for Ukrainian organisations, Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv is a modern and comfortable educational conference and resource centre with accommodation facilities. It was founded by organisations from different regions of Ukraine, and welcomes civil activists and organisations engaged in civil and human rights education. It operates the educational program “We Understand Human Rights.” In 2016, there were as many as 48 educational events held at the House, including seminars, workshops, training sessions, strategy planning sessions, meetings, conferences, and exhibitions attended by 1,116 participants.

A school for youth, held annually by the House, encourages young people to become activists engaged in promoting and defending human rights and combating discrimination.

In 2016, 21 participants from 15 cities across Ukraine and 25 experts took part in the All Ukrainian human rights school for young activists. It consisted of nine days of full-time study and ended with a 24-hour marathon development session for a human rights action against domestic violence.



“Human rights education often lacks visible short term results, but we know that it is vital work along with responding to the demands of the situation in Ukraine.”

Serhiy Burov
Head of the Board

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**ACTION AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**EDUCATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE
CHERNIHIV**

Russian Research Centre for Human Rights

Established 1992 | 9 organisations | Moscow, Russian Federation

Support in a harsh environment



“Anna Politkovskaya did much for the human rights movement in Russia; she did much for ordinary people and for organisations. We will always remember her and will try to follow her example.”

Liubov Vinogradova

Executive Director
Independent Psychiatric
Association of Russia

Providing support, the Russian Research Centre for Human Rights (RRCHR) plays a key role in giving strength to its member organisations to continue their work, and focuses on strengthening civil society. Nowadays, the activity of human rights organisations is often under threat. The members respond by cooperating, supporting and defending one another.

The House projects help some of the most vulnerable people, providing them with access to experts such as lawyers and psychiatrists. The House also hosts various joint events, seminars, conferences and training.

Flash-mob style demonstrations were held by RRCHR on 7 October 2016, in memory of Anna Politkovskaya, the journalist and human rights activist killed 10 years ago at the entrance to her house. She investigated critical materials about the Russian power structure, and the situations in Chechnya and the North Caucasus. The demonstrations showed the resolute desire of human rights activists for the killing to be properly investigated, reminded citizens of the responsibility of the State to protect journalists and human rights activists, and raised awareness of the still relevant problems she focused on.

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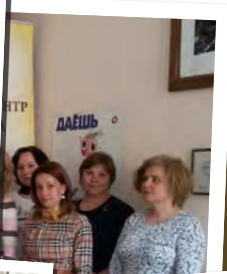
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ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA



DEMONSTRATION



INSIDE RRCHR

Human Rights House Voronezh

Established 2012 | 13 organisations | Voronezh, Russian Federation

Human rights and culture

Enhancing awareness of human rights, Human Rights House Voronezh targets the local community through hosting and organising large public events inside and outside of the city. Its regular operations include providing human rights education for young people, work on public oversight, and offering legal aid to victims of human rights violations. In 2016 the House successfully raised funds through two separate crowdfunding campaigns.

The eight-day Gorod Prav festival (“City of Rights”), now in its third year, was hosted by the House in 2016. The festival was attended by 700 people across 32 different

events, including the first all-Russian photo-contest on human rights “Non-Casual Witness,” and the Voronezh-local “Acting Figures” award. Theatre was one of the most popular events during the Gorod Prav festival in Voronezh.

The play entitled “The Last Party” was written based on interviews with Russian human rights defenders, by the former Director of HRH-Voronezh, Anna Dobrovolskaya. These events brought new audiences to the House and led to partnerships with new colleagues and friends.



“This year we have focused on promoting human rights not only as a struggle, but also as art, philosophy and as a social value.”

Alyona Ob'ezdchikova
Deputy chairperson of the board

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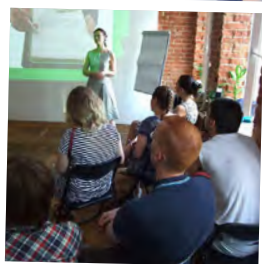
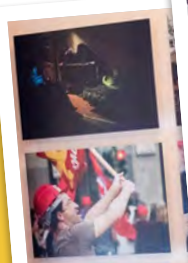
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PRESENTS FOR CROWDFUNDING
CAMPAIGN DONORS



LECTURE ON LABOUR RIGHTS
DURING GOROD PRAV FESTIVAL



"THE LAST PARTY" THEATRE PLAY

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Established 1993 | Warsaw, Poland

Rising to Poland's challenges



“Despite challenges, 2016 brought yet another opportunity for the civil society to unite around the values of human rights protection.”

Danuta Przywara

President of HFHR's board

A long-time actor in human rights protection,

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR) works to develop a culture based on respect for human rights, in Poland and abroad, and is one of the oldest non-governmental organisations acting in the field of human rights protection in Poland.

HFHR's main areas of activity are: international and national education, strategic litigation, and providing legal assistance to Polish citizens, refugees, and members of national minorities. HFHR also carries out research and monitoring projects related to human rights protection.

One of the most challenging years in HFHR's history,

2016, saw the constitutional crisis in the country reach its peak. HFHR conducted strategic litigation related to the crisis, and ensured that judgements of the Constitutional Court were published – a duty of public officials that they were not fulfilling – through appealing the prosecution's decision not to investigate failures to publish them. HFHR continued its work for civil society in former Soviet bloc countries. Especially, it welcomed the the European Court of Human Right's decision confirming that the rights of Azerbaijani human rights defenders Leyla and Arif Yunus were violated.

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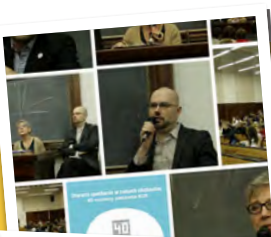
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SUPPORT FOR KHADIJA
ISMAYILOVA



LAWYERS HELP MIGRANTS AT
BORDER GUARD STATION



PRISONS WITH NO FENCE
CONFERENCE, WARSAW 2016

Human Rights House Belgrade

Established 2012 | 5 organisations | Belgrade, Serbia

Growing hub for human rights

Supporting civil society,

Human Rights House Belgrade has a focus on economic and social rights, discrimination, hate crime, minority issues, and access to justice, and it supports human rights defenders, providing free legal aid in the first instance. It is also a leader in Serbia's EU negotiation process, coordinating with the National Convention on the EU – the platform for discussion on Serbian accession – as a genuine civil society movement for reforms and further EU integration.

Growing as a hub for human rights,

the House added and redecorated a large hall for conferences and events in 2016, and increased the

number of citizens it supports. Its premises, including the big hall and library, were used by other human rights organisations free of charge, and for more than 500 events, including conferences, exhibitions, trainings, movie presentations, round-tables, and talks. It was also used by member Belgrade Center for Human Rights to hold schools for human rights, and by member YUCOM for its trial monitoring school. Students and young scholars from different areas of expertise used the House's database, had internships at the House, and benefited from the access to experts. The House hosted the Network Assembly of Human Rights Houses in 2016.



“Human Rights House Belgrade is seen both as a resource center and as a center for support to those in need.”

Milan Antonijevic

Director, YUCOM

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EVENTS IN THE
REFURBISHED LARGE HALL



SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR
CONSULTATIONS



ASSEMBLY OF
HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

Human Rights House Zagreb

Established 2008 | 8 organisations | Zagreb, Croatia

Keeping rights on the agenda



“The Orešković Government attacked press freedoms and media independence, initiated a crackdown on civil society, and infringed on the right to freedom of association... We wanted to put these issues back on the political agenda.”

Ivan Novosel

Director of Programs
HRH Zagreb

A centre for expertise on human rights, Human Rights House Zagreb is recognised as a central organisation for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The House aims for a free, open, pluralistic, democratic, equitable and inclusive society based on respect, protection and promotion of the highest standards and norms of human rights and freedoms.

The House is involved in research, monitoring, public advocacy, and education. It acts as a knowledge centre and watchdog on human rights. The House advocates strongly for human rights to be one of the main pillars of Croatian foreign

policy, especially now that Croatia is a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

Putting rights back on the political agenda, the House co-organised a pre-election debate in September 2016, as part of civil society coalition Platform 112. Representatives of the major political parties discussed the issues of protection of human rights, combating discrimination and violence, and protection of socio-economic rights through protection of public and natural goods, solidarity, and social justice. The House further played its part in addressing illiberal trends in the country in 2016 through solidarity and mobilisation.

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FREE EXPRESSION



FREE EXPRESSION ACTION



WHISTLEBLOWER MURAL
ON THE HOUSE IN ZAGREB

CALLS FOR
TRANSPARENCY

Human Rights House London

Established 2004 | 3 organisations | London, United Kingdom

Media freedom and free expression

Index on Censorship raises awareness about threats to free expression and the value of free speech, publishes work by censored writers and artists, and works to ensure that people are free to express themselves without fear of harm or persecution – no matter what their views.

English PEN is the founding centre of a worldwide writers' association with 145 centres in more than 100 countries. It defends writers and readers whose human right to freedom of expression is at risk, and works to remove inequalities that prevent people's enjoyment and learning from literature.

ARTICLE 19 envisages a world where people are free to speak their opinions, to participate in decision-making and to make informed choices about their life. For this to be possible, people everywhere must be able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and information.

Mapping Media Freedom identifies threats, violations and limitations faced by members of the press (1,387 in 2016). It is a joint undertaking between Index and the European Federation of Journalists. Major themes reported by Index include dangers when reporting on protests and demonstrations, and impunity, with attacks on journalists not properly investigated.



“The data the platform has collected over the last two years confirms that the state of press freedom across Europe is deplorable... We hope that institutions and leaders take note of this information and take action swiftly.”

Hannah Machlin

Project Manager
for Mapping Media Freedom,
Index on Censorship



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE LONDON

Index on Censorship
www.indexoncensorship.org

English PEN
www.englishpen.org

Article 19
www.article19.org

Rafto Foundation

Established 1986 | Bergen, Norway

Awarding support and recognition



“When we hand out an award, we commit to working with our Laureates for a long time, and that’s why having all of them here in one place is inspiring.”

Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt
Director of Rafto

Raising recognition for human rights defenders,

Rafto awards the annual Professor Thorolf Rafto’s Prize for Human Rights work. This helps to bring the names of human rights defenders to an international audience, and to promote human rights globally.

Rafto continues to support the work of Laureates through funding and organisation of projects, and carries out other work such as human rights education, with 5,000 people participating in 2016.

Of the 30 human rights defenders that have received the award, three have later received the Nobel Peace Prize.

To celebrate 30 years of the award,

18 laureates and 1,500 people gathered for the anniversary ceremony in November 2016.

Rafto Laureate Rebiya Kadeer, speaking in November, said: “These awards are a warning to these countries that the world is watching what they are doing, they are protected, someone is watching over me. They give hope to the people that they will be free someday.”

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YANAR MOHAMMED
LAUREATE 2016



30 YEARS!



PHOTO BY
JOHANNES LOVUND

Human Rights House Oslo

Established 1989 | 6 organisations | Oslo, Norway

Human Rights, Human Wrongs

Working on diverse human rights, across many countries, the member organisations of Human Rights House Oslo work together as part of a human rights community, which helps to improve cooperation, share knowledge and expertise, and reduce operating costs. Many of the member organisations have a focus outside of Norway. HRHF is headquartered at the House in Oslo.

The Documentary Film Festival, “Human Rights Human Wrongs” was started in 2008 by the House in collaboration with Oslo Documentary Cinema, to promote documentaries about human rights issues. The film

festival has become a hub for broad discussions on human rights, in which film makers, activists, politicians, journalists and academics debate human rights issues with an engaged audience, such as rights to a safe and dignified life, freedom of speech, and political and civil equality.

In 2016, the festival included 25 documentaries and 30 live events, and 24 international and almost 70 local special guests. Members of the House supported four of the films, and five of the debates.



“The festival is a huge success and highly relevant, and a reminder that human rights is a continuous battle, even within established democracies.”

Audun Aagre
House coordinator



AFRICA.NO



FILM FESTIVAL
2016



HUMAN RIGHTS
HUMAN WRONGS



OSLO

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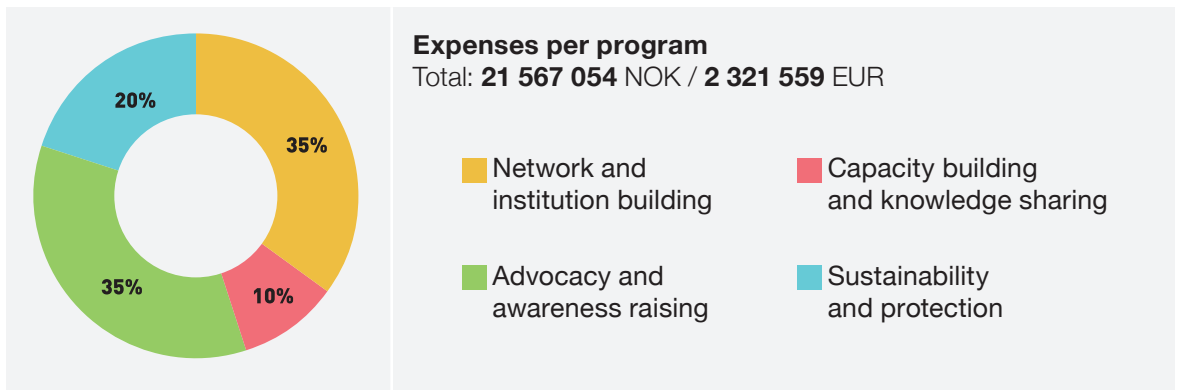
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Financial overview

For fiscal year ending 31 December 2016

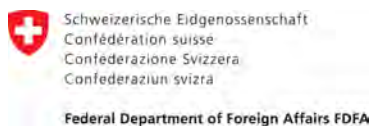
In 2016, Human Rights House Foundation's (HRHF's) expenses totalled 21 567 054 NOK (2 321 559 EUR based on average 2016 exchange rate of 1EUR=9,2899 NOK). HRHF ended the year with a 68 933 NOK (7 420 EUR) surplus.

The financial data has been summarised from the annual accounts of HRHF. A complete copy of the annual accounts and the independent audit report are available on the website www.humanrightshouse.org and can be sent upon request.



With Gratitude to our Donors

We would like to thank all donors and supporters of the Human Rights Houses and their members. HRHF offers our sincere thanks for the generous contributions we receive. Our work to protect, empower and support human rights defenders and their organisations would not be possible without it.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

Thanks for in kind support from Wikborg Rein, HP and DLA Piper.

Governing bodies

HRHF Board

The Board of the Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) monitors the programmes and operations of HRHF.



Cecilie Schjätvet

Chairperson
Attorney,
Law Firm Cecilie Schjätvet



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Associate Professor of Political Science,
University of Oslo



Bernt Hagtvet

Professor of Political Science,
University of Oslo



Mohamed Husein Gaas

PHD Fellow in Development Studies,
Norwegian University of Life Sciences



Gunhild Ørstavik

Advisor,
FOKUS- Forum for Women and
Development



Christopher Hansteen

Partner,
Grette law firm

International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board of the network of Human Rights Houses consists members from the Human Rights Houses. The International Advisory Board advises the network's strategic development.



Cecilie Schjätvet

Attorney,
Law Firm Cecilie Schjätvet
Human Rights House Foundation



Sean Gallagher

Head of Content,
Index on Censorship



Sanja Sarnavka

Member of Program Council,
Human Rights House Zagreb



Liubov Vinogradova

Executive Director,
Independent Psychiatric Association of
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Organisational overview 2017



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balance



8
Nationalities



13
Languages



4
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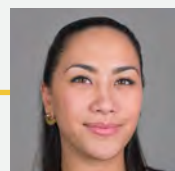
Advocacy Team



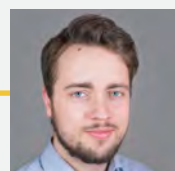
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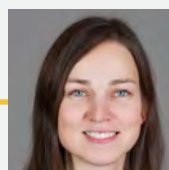


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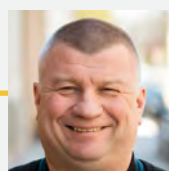


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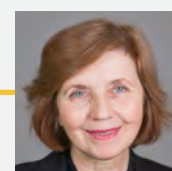
Institutional Development Team



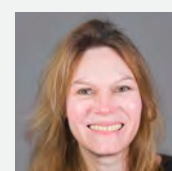
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Thanks to our former colleagues!



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(2013-2016)



Margrete Rian
Financial Accountant
(2014-2017)



Léa Meindre-Chautrand
International Advocacy Fellow
(2016-2017)

Meeting the challenges ahead

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) has now entered the final two years of a five-year strategy, aimed at increasing our impact, profile, and cooperation, and continuing to protect, empower, and support human rights defenders and their organisations.

HRHF will continue to work toward four main objectives – stronger governance, increased cooperation, greater influence and visibility, and better protection – while strengthening its approach and working methods to adapt to the more repressive environment that the Human Rights Houses and HRHF face.

Development and governance

We are assessing the feasibility of new Houses – for Azerbaijan, Crimea, and Moldova – and developing strategies to look into new regions.

In governance, we will continue to support the Houses in strategic planning and team-building processes, and will continue to explore ways to further strengthen their sustainability. An external evaluation of the Human Rights House concept and our advocacy work planned for the second half of 2017 will be an important tool for us in the planning of our next strategies. Only by staying dynamic, effective and sustainable will HRHF and the Human Rights Houses be able to best meet the challenges ahead.

Cooperation

By encouraging and supporting cooperation with and among Houses, HRHF is strengthening networking opportunities for the Houses to discuss challenges, find solutions, share best practices and support one another and other defenders under pressure. We will support this by offering small grants for cooperative projects and activities, and by developing a database of expertise to make the most of the experience and skills within the Houses and among our partners.

The network's International Law in Advocacy (ILIA) programme, with ten years' experience in human rights education, will be launched after a transformation that has secured the most efficient use of the valuable expertise and resources. We will continue our cooperation with partner organisations, on advocacy, in protection, and in other areas.

Greater influence and visibility

Through greater emphasis on communication, we are increasing our visibility. This emphasis includes developing a new website and new communication tools and channels, and improving our visual content.

HRHF will seek to counter the global decline in freedoms, threats to the universality of human rights, and increased curtailment of the rights

to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and the right to be a human rights defender. To counter this narrative, HRHF will work on underlining the great contribution of human rights defenders to society, including through a new United Nations General Assembly resolution. It will also strongly engage with the new Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly, set to replace Maina Kiai in 2017.

A key theme of work will be restrictions on foreign funding for civil society, addressed through our report on how to continue to provide and access international funding in such conditions. We will also focus on civil society work in countries led by self-proclaimed “illiberal democrats,” thanks to cooperation with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland, Human Rights Houses Belgrade and Zagreb, and Hungarian human rights NGOs.

We will also continue to build support for the renewal of the UN Special Rapporteur mandate on Belarus and for high attention of the European Union to the situation in Belarus, albeit with its willingness to increase proximity with Lukashenko’s government. The human rights situation in Crimea will remain a key focus, as will the continued deterioration in Poland, which requires a strong European Union reaction based on

the findings of independent international mechanisms, such as the United Nations Human Rights Committee. HRHF will work with released partners in Azerbaijan to establish a strong advocacy strategy to hold those responsible for the crackdown in the country accountable through raising international attention.

To strengthen our collective ability to counter the threatening narrative against human rights defenders throughout the region we work in, HRHF will launch a working group with all Human Rights Houses and HRHF partners.

Protection

Amid the worsening situation for human rights defenders, it is essential to provide shelter and legal, medical, and material support to those at risk, particularly in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia, where they are most frequently persecuted.

Mobile groups will continue to be an important part of our protection work. These provide emergency responses to mass violations of freedom of assembly, and trial observation of persecuted human rights defenders. We will also continue to support human rights defenders nominating them for human rights awards, and in doing so raising their visibility and protection.



**“The Network of Human Rights Houses
is critical. It is a vehicle for international
solidarity, linking activists and empowering
them to fight back.”**

Maina Kiai

Former UN Special Rapporteur on
the rights to freedom of peaceful
assembly and of association



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