

Human Rights House Foundation Annual Report 1999

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH) was founded 11 May 1992. It is located in Oslo, Norway.

Our main purpose is to help establish Human Rights Houses, which have proved to be effective tools for local NGO communities struggling for human rights in their respective countries. The Foundation assists already existing Human Rights Houses as well as their international co-operation through the Human Rights House Network.

The Foundation also supports human rights education and independent media.

Activities

Human Rights House Network

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

Human Rights House Network Seminar

The 1999 Network Seminar of Human Rights Houses was hosted by the Human Rights House of Sarajevo. The Seminar was attended by members of all the six Human Rights Houses. The topic of the seminar was the *Stability Pact of the Balkans and the Role of NGOs*. Key-note speakers included representatives of OSCE, independent media and Bosnian NGOs. HRH provided financial support for the seminar.

Support for the Human Rights House of Sarajevo

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

In 1999 HRH provided support for the administration of the House. In addition, HRH raised funds for three projects undertaken by the Human Rights House of Sarajevo: "Media Monitoring", a project which gathered information about the situation of the press and sought to promote free media; "NGO-dialogue", a project to establish dialogue between civic organisations from both Bosnian entities; and "Missing Persons", a project to assist relatives of people who disappeared during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Support for the Russian Center for Human Rights

HRH raised funds for the NGO training programme of the Russian Center for Human Rights. The seminar gathered 22 representatives of human rights NGOs from throughout the Russian Federation. The educational programme was entitled "NGO management", and gave the participants training in strategic planning, project administration, leadership, fund-raising, and other relevant topics.

Human Rights Houses

Management of the Norwegian Human Rights House

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

Kenya

HRH visited Nairobi in March to discuss with Kenyan human rights NGOs the possibility of establishing a human rights house in Nairobi. This was a follow-up trip to a feasibility study that we carried out in November 1998. There is strong interest among some of the key Kenyan NGOs to establish a human rights house. The work is co-ordinated by the Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA), which is one of the main human rights NGOs and especially involved in providing legal aid for women and documenting the human rights situation of women in Kenya. FIDA has prepared a project proposal which is currently being reviewed by potential donors in Norway.

Turkey

A group of six Turkish human rights NGOs wish to establish a human rights house in Ankara: Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, Human Rights Association, Contemporary Lawyers' Association, Contemporary Journalists' Association, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly and Amnesty International Ankara Branch. HRH visited Ankara in June and in November 1999 in order to discuss the plans with the Turkish NGOs and to formalise the co-operation and make plans for how to proceed. Norwegian partners in the project are the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression.

Albania

The Albanian Center for Human Rights is currently affiliated member of the Human Rights House Network. It is currently co-ordinating the work in Albania in order to create a joint centre of four of the main Albanian human rights NGOs.

Manual on Establishing a Human Rights House

In order to facilitate the effort to establish new human rights houses, HRH developed a Manual that explains the main principles of a human rights house and explains how a human rights house can be established. The Manual is available at the HRH secretariat and on our internet page.

Independent Media and Human Rights House Education

Voice of Tibet

In 1999 HRH continued to assist the running and funding of the Voice of Tibet Foundation. The radio station was founded by HRH in partnership with the Norwegian Tibet Committee and Worldview Rights in 1996. Voice of Tibet broadcasts news and cultural programs daily in Tibetan language. The purpose of the station is to relay reliable news and to boost Tibetan culture in the face of Chinese repression. The signals can be picked up in Tibet, Nepal, Northern India, and Bhutan. Studios are found in Dharamsala, Kathmandu and Oslo.

In 1999 reports indicated a significant increase in listening inside Tibet. Also the introduction of the station to Real Audio on the Internet made the station available to many Tibetans in exile around the world.

Human Rights Education in Albanian Schools

HRH has been a partner to the Albanian Center for Human Rights in a comprehensive Human Rights Education Project initiated by HRH in 1992. The project is carried out in Albanian schools and is directed towards pupils in 1st-8th grade. Pupils' books and teachers' manuals have been developed in Albania. In 1998 HRH helped raise funds for the revision of pupils' books. Also HRH financed and took part in an expert evaluation of the project. The evaluation was used by the Albanian Human Rights Centre to adjust the teaching material and future strategy of the project. The work to revise the pupils' books continued in 1999, and was co-ordinated by the Albanian Center for Human Rights.

Other Activities

In addition to the work to enhance and expand the Human Rights House Network, Human Rights House Foundation is involved in various human rights activities in Norway, including seminars, workshops.

"Dugnad '98" - Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

More than fifty Norwegian NGOs co-operated in a Human Rights Festival on 10-13 December 1998 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The festival included children's parades; a film festival; a film production on war crimes in Srebrenica; an art exhibition made exclusively for the festival by art students from Norway, Sweden and England; a nation-wide advertising campaign; numerous seminars and hearings; a theatre performance; concerts; and human rights education in schools. The project was finished and narrative and financial reports were prepared in 1999.

Administration

Funding

The HRH Secretariat was once again supported by the contributions of dedicated Norwegian philanthropists to whom we are much obliged. Our projects received generous support from various sources including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 1999 expenses totalled 2 million Norwegian Kroner (approximately 300 thousand US Dollars). The Voice of Tibet expenses totalled

Norwegian Kroner 2 million, with funding from HRH, Westminster Foundation, Worldview Rights, and exile Tibetan groups, among others.

The Board

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

The Staff

Director Maria Dahle and Project Manager Magnar Naustdalslid staffed the HRH Secretariat throughout the year. Ole Benny Lilleås worked as Project Manager from January to June. Sigurd Kraft Guldbrandsen worked with accounting from May to September, during Maria Dahle's maternity leave. Birger Retterstøl Olaisen joined the secretariat in August to work with accounts and administration. Øystein Alme and Chophel Norbu worked in the Oslo office of Voice of Tibet while an additional six employees staffed the Dharamsala and Kathmandu offices. Working conditions were considered satisfactory, and no measures were taken to modify the working environment. HRH produced no goods or pollution that affected the external environment.

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Chairman of the Board

Hans Christian Magnus
Deputy Chairman of the Board

Knut U. Kloster jr.
Member of the Board

Svein Wilhelmsen
Member of the Board

Stein-Ivar Aarsæther
Member of the Board

Bernt Hagtvet
Member of the Board

Maria Dahle
Executive Director