



**HUMAN
RIGHTS
HOUSE**
FOUNDATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

**16 Human Rights Houses connected across Eastern & Western Europe,
the Caucasus and the Balkans:**

Armenia (Yerevan); Azerbaijan (Baku, Nakhchivan); Belarus (located in Vilnius); Croatia (Zagreb)
Georgia (Tbilisi); Norway (Bergen, Oslo); Poland (Warsaw); Russian Federation (Grozny, Moscow,
Voronezh); Serbia (Belgrade); Ukraine (Chernihiv, Crimea in exile in Kyiv); United Kingdom (London)

Cover image

**"ADVANCING FREEDOMS
TOGETHER"**

Arne Nøst, 2018

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Foundation

CONTENTS



Answering to trends affecting rights work	4
HRHF: Empowering independent civil society and defenders for 25 years	4
HRHF five-year strategy for 2019-2023	4
2018: A year for defenders?	6
Bernt Hagtvet: Increase our efforts at international organisations	8
Ivan Novosel: Create an enabling environment for human rights defenders	9
Strengthening defenders and independent civil society	10
A home for human rights	12
A community for change and freedoms	14
Together we have impact	16
House-to-House fund	18
Stronger governance	20
Rights of defenders	22
Increased cooperation	24
Mission to Crimea	26
Greater visibility and influence	28
Protecting defenders in Azerbaijan	30
Better protection	32
Human Rights Houses	34
Financial information	50
HRHF Board	51
HRHF Staff 2019/20	52

ANSWERING TO THE TRENDS AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

HRHF: Empowering independent civil society and defenders for 25 years

Over the last two decades, governments in many parts of the world have increasingly begun to silence independent voices and to narrow and suppress rights that are essential to the work of human rights defenders. Authorities are labelling human rights defenders as enemies of the state, in stark contrast to their true role as champions of free and fair societies. Their legitimate and profoundly important work is being restricted, banned, and criminalised. Many States once friendly to civil society are retreating from previous commitments to human rights. This closing space for civil society is leaving its mark, and in parallel ill democracies and autocratic States have promoted “traditional values”, undermining universal human rights principles by setting so-called local cultural norms above them. For 25 years, in the face of these trends, Human Rights House Foundation, together with the network of Human Rights Houses, have protected and empowered independent civil society and human rights defenders.

In the next five years, HRHF will continue its efforts to establish and support Human Rights Houses, connect them in an international network, and protect human rights defenders and organisations in the network. We will continue to advance the rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression, and the right to be a human rights defender. We will expand to new regions and focus even more on bringing international standards home.

HRHF five-year strategy for 2019-2023

GROW THE NUMBER OF FUNCTIONING HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES ABLE TO ADDRESS THE HUMAN RIGHTS NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

- Increase the number of Houses, including in new regions
- Enhance the institutional capacity of Houses
- Strengthen the capacity of Houses, member NGOs and defenders to advance human rights
- Support Houses to improve public outreach nationally.

STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION WITHIN AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NETWORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

- Support cooperation among Houses through House-to-House project fund
- Organise thematic, regional and functional meetings for the network
- Diversify funding streams.

BETTER PROTECTION

- Focus on systemic gains to improve protection of human rights defenders
- Protect human rights defenders and organisations within the network.

ADVANCE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

- Promote and advance freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and the right to be a human rights defender in cooperation with Houses and other partners
- Improve use of national and international human rights mechanisms within the network of Houses
- Strengthen international human rights mechanisms and standards, improving their use by national actors.



2018: A year for defenders?

“At a time when human rights defenders are being attacked, harassed and stigmatised around the world... we should pay tribute to these thousands of men and women to whom we owe so much... I sincerely hope that 2018 will turn a page on this, and be a real turning point for us all.”

UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michael Forst

In 2018, the human rights community around the world marked 20 years since the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The UN General Assembly passed by consensus a new resolution on human rights defenders in December 2017 highlighting the benefits that human rights defenders bring to the societies where they work. The 2017 resolution created a favourable context for a positive narrative around human rights defenders and their achievements in 2018.

Seizing this opportunity, HRHF focused on promoting and building understanding of international standards that protect and support human rights

defenders. We developed tools and resources for defenders to disseminate standards nationally, engage with authorities and hold them accountable to the commitments they make internationally, and initiate national conversations on the importance of defenders and their work. These 16 principles and standards (shown opposite) are inspired by the strong content of landmark resolutions on human rights defenders and their work, adopted at the United Nations and Council of Europe.

Within the context of these standards and the anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we invited Bernt Hatgvet and Ivan Novosel to comment on the trends and realities affecting human rights defenders, and how defenders and independent civil society can respond.



**Publicly support
human rights
defenders**



**Don't criminalise
defending
human rights**



**End restrictions
on NGO funding**



**Respect NGO
independence**



**Ensure free access
and choice of media**



**Facilitate peaceful
protests**



**Fight against
impunity,
show accountability**



**Uphold
responsibility
of business**



**Avoid registration
and legal
restrictions**



**End all forms
of reprisals**



**End arbitrary
detention
and arrest**



**Accept
dissenting views**



**Protect women
human rights
defenders**



**Protect human
rights lawyers**



**Protect defenders
of minorities**



**Protect family
members
of human rights
defenders**

Bernt Hagtvet: Increase our efforts at international organisations

A constant presence in international organs, public campaigns, deliberate efforts to support reporters and diplomatic work – these are some of tactics we have been using but which we now must intensify. I know this is easier said than done, but I think we have no other choice.



Bernt Hagtvet

Professor Emeritus of political science
Board Chairperson,
Human Rights House Foundation

“Rights of Defenders” is a well-wishers list in an ideal world, agreed upon by States at the United Nations. But there is a paradox here, while international standards have been strengthened, the situation for human rights defenders all over the world has deteriorated, as we have seen more closely in Europe – in several countries within Central and Eastern Europe, and in countries such as Russia and Turkey.

There is of course a relationship here: the more international human rights defenders are attacked, the more the urgent need to formulate standards and principles to their defense. States increasingly adopt these more stringent standards internationally while curtailing the space for work for human rights defenders at home.

For organisations like HRHF, this challenge represents a problem of implementation: bridging the gap between norms and reality. In a world of “fake news”, of fundamentalist politics and religious zealotry, with the gradual dissolution of the liberal order of obligations and treaties, and with an American president who openly

admires authoritarian leaders and pays little respect for human rights values – in such a world the most urgent task for HRHF and other like-minded organisations is shaming.

While we cannot and never will weaken our support for local grassroots defenders, I would like to argue that now we must increase our efforts at international organisations such as the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe and OSCE, even NATO, to try to counteract the increased repression locally. These two strategies supplement each other, but I maintain that today we must work even harder on the international level not only to formulate new rules but also to hold governments accountable for their hypocrisy. A constant presence in international organs, public campaigns, deliberate efforts to support reporters and diplomatic work – these are some of tactics we have been using but which we now must intensify. I know this is easier said than done, but I think we have no other choice.

Ivan Novosel: Create an enabling environment for human rights defenders

Within the human rights community, we have an obligation and the tools to mitigate and reduce the discrepancy between international human rights standards and local realities. Human Rights House Zagreb is committed to this cause, and in addition to the vital work being done at the international level, we strongly believe greater efforts should be made nationally and regionally to bring international standards back home – to the human rights defenders.

In Croatia, the discrepancy between standards and the reality has negatively affected many human rights groups working for marginalised and discriminated groups. State and non-state actors are seeking to publicly discredit, delegitimise, threaten, and intimidate human rights defenders. The most affected are groups who support refugees and asylum seekers, and women rights and LGBTQI activists. Particularly worrying are attempts to criminalise the work of refugee rights and environmental civil society organisations, by bringing unjustified legal actions aimed at intimidating them and silencing their critical voices.

For us, that means strictly observing and reacting to pressures against human rights defenders, as well as systemically monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the standards outlined in the Declaration on Defenders – as we did with our thematic

report “Human Rights Defenders in Croatia – Obstacles and Challenges.”

We have these effective tools at our disposal to hold authorities accountable and strongly remind them of their international obligations. Work at the national level must be accompanied by networking and cooperation with human rights defenders from neighbouring and regional countries. The problems, challenges, and dangers we face are similar. To limit human rights, our politicians collaborate and learn from each other, we must do likewise in our learning, working even closer together in order to push back. We learned the value of this in 2016 when our Hungarian and Polish colleagues shared experiences to help Croatian civil society fight back against illiberal policies, with us later publishing best practices and recommendations in the case study *Resisting Ill Democracies in Europe*, together with HRHF.

Human Rights Houses are uniquely positioned to gather together targeted human rights groups and provide them with a space to share their problems, challenges, and obstacles, and to build coalitions based on solidarity that are a force for positive change. Together, we can generate new ideas, formulate policies and pressure authorities to create a more enabling environment for human rights defenders.

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is a pledge not only to keep safe those who defend human rights but also a commitment to a better world where human rights are at the centre of social, economic and political developments.



IVAN NOVOSEL
Director of Programs
Human Rights House Zagreb

STRENGTHENING DEFENDERS AND INDEPENDENT CIVIL SOCIETY



About Human Rights House Foundation

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) is an international human rights organisation dedicated to advancing human rights through empowering and protecting human rights defenders and strengthening independent civil society.

Through establishing and supporting Human Rights Houses – platforms adapted to local needs – we ensure defenders have a home for human rights. By connecting Human Rights Houses, we build an international network for change and freedoms.

Together, in solidarity and partnership, we hold authorities accountable and advance human rights.

HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

HRHF works to achieve lasting human rights change. We bring human rights actors together to co-operate and reach out to others in society. We offer capacity building, and where oppression is severe, we offer protection and support – locally or from other countries. HRHF helps to establish, empower, and connect Human Rights Houses as safe spaces and enabling environments for civil society, human rights defenders, and others to co-operate nationally, establish links internationally, and advance human rights effectively.

HRHF defends and affirms the rights to freedom of assembly, association, expression, and the right to be a human

rights defender because these rights underpin independent civil society and make it possible to hold individuals and institutions accountable. Through this work HRHF aims to create fair societies in which everyone can safely and freely promote and enjoy all human rights.

HRHF works to coordinate and facilitate the network of Human Rights Houses. The network continues to grow and today some 16 Human Rights Houses are based in 11 countries across Eastern and Western Europe, the Caucasus, and the Balkans.



HRHF connecting and strengthening the network of Human Rights Houses. Pictured: Participants of the 2018 strategic network meeting of the Human Rights Houses in Tbilisi, Georgia. Photo: HRHF.



HRHF advocacy together with Ukrainian partners. Pictured: Olena Ivantsiv (People in Need) and Maria Tomak (Media Initiative for Human Rights and Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union) at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Photo: HRHF.

A HOME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights House concept

The Human Rights House concept strengthens cooperation and coordination between human rights defenders, improves the sharing of information, heightens defenders' visibility and provides them with a cost-efficient framework within which to work.

Hina Jilani

Former Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN on the situation of human rights defenders.

The Human Rights House concept is founded on the enduring values of solidarity and cooperation. Adapted to local needs, the Houses remain as important today as when the first House was established in Oslo in 1989.

Human Rights Houses are created by established human rights organisations that share the values of cooperation and believe in being stronger together. By joining a House, member organisations maintain their autonomy and continue their core human rights work. What they gain is a platform through which their causes are strengthened.

A Human Rights House is often a physical structure – a building or office facility hosting the member organisations, or a space for the organisations to hold events and gatherings. Co-location reduces administration costs and provides essential infrastructure, allowing member organisations to spend more of their resources on projects and activities. This makes them more sustainable and attractive as partners. As a joint platform, organisations can

benefit from increased visibility and greater influence. Common activities generate synergy effects and co-operation, while solidarity and support increase protection from threats and harassment.

Houses and their members are united by the values of the network of Human Rights Houses. They are effective and reliable partners committed to the universality of human rights and to defending and protecting the rights of individuals and peoples. They uphold democratic values, have no political or religious affiliation, and are transparent and accountable.

The purpose of establishing a Human Rights House extends far beyond the needs of each partner organisation. Human Rights Houses enhance the national capacity to uphold and protect human rights and independent civil society. By providing a stable and sustainable base of human rights activities, a Human Rights House benefits the human rights community as a whole.

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES ARE:



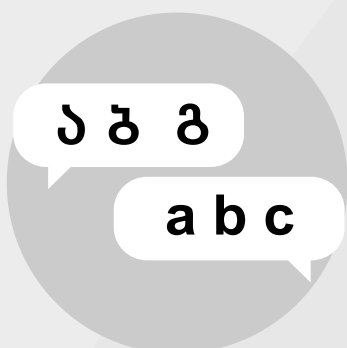
Collaborative

Human rights organisations cooperate under one roof.



Independent

Houses and their members are autonomous.



Relevant

Adapted to local needs, Houses serve the human rights cause in a country.



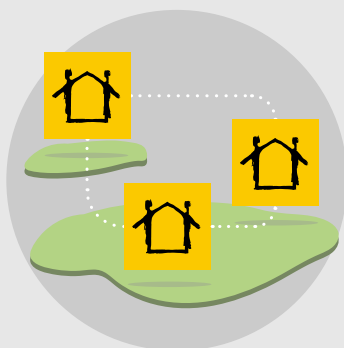
Sustainable

Members benefit from shared space, reduced costs, and increased security.



Effective

Houses provide a platform to increase protection, visibility, and influence.



United

Houses are connected in an international network.

A COMMUNITY FOR CHANGE AND FREEDOMS

The network of Human Rights Houses & HRHF locations.



16

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES



11

COUNTRIES



04

HRHF LOCATIONS

London ●



TOGETHER WE HAVE IMPACT

In 2018, Human Rights House Foundation aimed to achieve impact toward four strategic objectives:

-  **Stronger governance and more sustainable Human Rights Houses**
-  **Increased cooperation with and among Human Rights Houses**
-  **Greater visibility and political influence on the human rights agenda**
-  **Better protection for human rights defenders and their organisations**



16

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES



17

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE
PROJECTS



445

POLICY MAKERS
REACHED OUT TO



2

THEMATIC REPORTS



174

HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
TRAINED



4

CAMPAIGNS

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE FUND

Supporting an active, closer network

“It is difficult to solve serious problems in human rights without solidarity and support from partners. We open the doors to each other, because we are stronger together. Human rights have no borders.” Serhiy Burov, Director of Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv.

The House-to-House project fund has contributed significantly to cultivating solidarity and building a strong, vibrant, and living network. Two years since its launch, HRHF’s House-to-House fund continues to support Houses and member organisations to be creative and innovative, to test new ideas, and to share and benefit from the vast experience in the network of Human Rights Houses.

“Solidarity and cooperation are at the core of the network. Thanks to the fund, we see increased cooperation, learning from each other, and greater strength to address common challenges and human rights needs in the countries of the network.”

Daiva Petkeviciute, Head of House Development and Support at HRHF.

HRHF upholds the principles of sustainability, flexibility, coordination, and independence in its approach as a donor. For the House-to-House fund, this translates into ensuring the projects contribute to the strategic directions of the Houses, meet local needs, promote collaboration instead of competition, and prioritise the independence and security of organisations applying to the fund.

PROJECT: FROM PROCLAIMING VALUES TO MODERN HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Belarusian Human Rights House held an international conference on 14-16 December 2018 at the House in Vilnius. It was attended by 24 representatives of Human Rights Houses and graduates and experts of the ILIA programme from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Norway - to exchange best practices in the protection of human rights and freedoms.

“In many problems in the field of human rights that we face at the national level, sometimes it is international solidarity and the support of colleagues from other countries that is the strongest help... Such meetings help us understand that we are many, and to examine how can we strengthen one another.”

Daria Svyrydova, Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv.

While the agenda was united by the common theme of the Universal Declaration and its values, each participant dug deeper into its implementation by presenting on a specific topic from their work. Topics included temporarily displaced persons, lawyers during armed conflict, torture, and the implementation of international standards by national courts.

PROJECT: INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AS THE BASIS FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE IN UKRAINE

The project ensured juvenile justice reforms in Ukraine were based on international human rights standards, specifically the rights of the child. Mart, member of Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv, worked with Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR, Poland) to prepare recommendations, as part of a joint project with the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice.

The project began with 15 experts attending a study visit to Poland to learn from international standards and the practice of the Polish system of juvenile justice. The partners compared the experience gained in Poland with the state of juvenile justice in Ukraine, and analysed Ukrainian legislation as well as the juvenile justice reform bill, for compliance with international standards.

The partners presented their recommendations to more than 30 representatives of government departments, including at public events in Kyiv. Of the recommendations, 50% have been taken into account in a new bill. The partners also submitted the recommendations as part the Universal Periodic Review of Ukraine.

PROJECT: HAND-IN-HAND FOR VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The project aimed to improve the general conditions for women victims of gender-based violence by improving the systems of support in Croatia and Armenia. The project focused on increasing the advocacy capabilities of organisations B.a.B.e. (HRH Zagreb) and WRC Armenia (HRH Yerevan), particularly strengthening their political influence in relation to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

During study visits to both Zagreb and Yerevan, the partners exchanged knowledge and best practices, analysed key legislative bodies and stakeholders, exchanged advocacy tools, and developed new strategies. Through meeting with institutions and other civil society organisations, the partners accumulated knowledge of different kinds of existing victim support services and gained further insight into the political and institutional frameworks supporting women victims of violence in Croatia and Armenia.



Discussion of juvenile justice reforms in Ukraine, held at the Ministry of Justice.
Photo: Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv.



Representatives of Human Rights Houses and graduates and experts of the ILIA programme discuss the protection of rights and freedoms. Conference held on 14-16 December 2018 at the Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius. Photo: Belarusian Human Rights House.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE

Stronger governance leads to improved sustainability

GOVERNANCE OF HRHF

Last year marked the end of HRHF's five-year strategy 2014-2018, and was subsequently a year for evaluation – of the House concept and HRHF's advocacy, and of planning our future work. We achieved significant progress towards our goals during this period, and have used our experiences to plan the next strategic period. The year was one of both looking back and planning ahead.

In November 2018, external consultants assessed HRHF's administrative capacities and competencies:

"HRHF has adequate administrative capacities and competence in place to undertake financial management... The HRHF organisational culture is one of mutual respect, transparency, accountability and ethical performance. There is a high awareness of financial risk, and the organisation has put important measures in place to prevent financial mismanagement and corruption."

Prior to this, in January 2018, consultants finalised another external evaluation, this time of the House concept and HRHF's advocacy work.

GOVERNANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

In 2018, we saw Houses become more visible and enjoy the benefits of increased collaboration among member organisations.



The results of the January 2018 external evaluation were discussed at the meeting of Human Rights Houses in Tbilisi in February 2018. Some 60 representatives from Human Rights Houses reflected on the evaluation's findings and gave valuable input to HRHF's new five-year strategy. Photo: HRHF

More fundamentally, the Houses remained active and sustainable, despite some facing significant threats – from restrictions on foreign funding and the right to association, to hate speech and intimidation, to detentions and arrests.

All of the Houses with shared offices were successful in fundraising for their running costs in 2018. HRHF financially supported the costs of 10 Human Rights Houses. Institutional support helps Houses to implement longer-term strategies as well as the short-term projects supported by many other donors.

Cooperation and collaboration among members are key to the success of Human Rights Houses. In 2018, nine Houses implemented strategies shared by two or more members and planned their activities in a longer-term perspective – determining the focus of their joint work and establishing projects within this.



77

EVENTS HELD BY EACH
HOUSE ON AVERAGE*



1087

VISITORS ON AVERAGE
TO EACH HOUSE**



63%

OF HOUSES RECEIVE
SUPPORT FROM HRHF
TOWARDS ACTIVITIES



100%

OF HOUSES FUNDRAISE
TO COVER OFFICE
RUNNING COSTS***



1

STRATEGIC NETWORK
MEETING IN TBILISI



1

NEW STRATEGY FOR
HRHF 2019-2023

*Based on figures from seven of the Houses that receive HRHF funding.

**Based on figures from seven of the Houses that receive HRHF funding.

***Based on the 14 Houses that have shared offices.

RIGHTS OF DEFENDERS

International standards that protect and empower defenders

Human rights defenders are agents for positive change and development; they are key in protecting against violations and in advancing universal human rights. However, threats, intimidation, attacks, criminal charges, and restrictions against defenders are increasing. Both State and non-State actors are seeking to shift the narrative on defenders from protector of the people to enemy of the State.

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

To reverse this narrative and to ensure that defenders are celebrated and protected, HRHF and the Human Rights Houses launched the campaign “Rights of Defenders”. The goal was to celebrate defenders, raise their profile, and increase awareness of 16 international standards that protect and empower them.

For implementation of international standards to be effective, it is essential that human rights defenders know and understand their rights. As part of the campaign, HRHF developed the “Rights of Defenders” booklet outlining each standard and providing analysis and insight inspired by the commentary of experts such as UN Special Rapporteurs, as well as the experience of HRHF and Houses. This describes trends affecting each standard and provides recommendations for implementation.

INCREASING VISIBILITY

In November 2018, HRHF organised a briefing of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers to present issues facing human rights defenders and to inspire and empower States to support defenders and civil society space. During the rare engagement between the decision-making body and civil society, defenders and the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted the need to support defenders and raise awareness of their work in society.

The Houses held public events and activities in 2018 to raise awareness of the standards at home, serving as a basis for further engagement on implementation. International Human Rights Defenders Day was celebrated for the first time in Georgia at an event organised by Human

Rights House Tbilisi. The event emphasised the importance of defenders and their work in the country, and was attended by high-profile speakers and members of civil society.

Human Rights House Zagreb organised a public presentation raising awareness of the socially important work of defenders in protecting and promoting human rights, particularly the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. The event was a part of the 16th Human Rights Film Festival in Zagreb.

Human Rights House Yerevan brought together defenders from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine to discuss the role of defenders and civil society during the velvet revolution.



Rights of Defenders materials are available on humanrightshouse.org to help defenders disseminate standards nationally, engage with authorities and hold them accountable to the commitments they make internationally, and initiate national conversations on the importance of defenders and their work. They are available in English Armenian, Crimean Tatar, Croatian, Georgian, Russian, and Ukrainian.



"I remembered how we made the decision to leave the occupied territories of Crimea," recalls Tetyana Bondarenko, attending an exhibition in Kyiv featuring seven suitcases containing the belongings of human rights defenders forced to leave their homes. More than 300 people visited the two exhibitions that brought to life the stories of seven defenders from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Crimea, and the East of Ukraine, and one Roma activist. The exhibitions were held by Human Rights House Crimea and Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv. Photo: Human Rights House Crimea.



"What is missing is not documents or papers; we are missing political will from Member States," comments Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic, at a briefing on human rights defenders at the Committee of Ministers – the second time Human Rights House Foundation has organised such a briefing at the Council of Europe. "It should not be a rare engagement for the Committee of Ministers to hear directly from human rights defenders who work on the ground in Member States – improving societies, contributing to peace and democracy, and protecting against violations, commented HRHF's Maria Dahle, presenting the HRHF campaign Rights of Defenders to diplomats from at least 36 of the 47 CoE Member States. Photo: HRHF

INCREASED COOPERATION

Joint projects and sharing expertise

HRHF supported 17 projects of Houses and member organisations in 2018, 12 of them through the House-to-House small grants fund. The aim of the fund is to enable Houses to benefit from shared knowledge, expertise and partnership. In 2018, we prioritised projects that included a focus on outreach.

CONNECTING NETWORK MEMBERS

In response to requests from Houses to organise more working meetings within the network, be it through thematic, regional, or functional gatherings,

HRHF organised a networking meeting for coordinators and staff of Human Rights Houses. Named “House Treff”, the three-day meeting in Oslo enabled people from different Houses to learn from and inspire each other, and get a sense of community.

It was also an opportunity for HRHF to better understand how we can best support the House staff in their roles to implement decisions of their Boards and support joint initiatives of member NGOs.

EDUCATING HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS

After 10 years of coordinating the network International Law in Advocacy (ILIA) programme on education in international human rights standards, HRHF transferred coordination of the programme to Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv. The House took over responsibility for ILIA Online in September 2018, and started running pilot courses open to participants from the network. HRHF will provide ongoing support as a donor.



Representatives of Human Rights Houses gather to learn from each other and share ideas during the 2018 “House Treff” meeting in Oslo. Photo: HRHF



17

HOUSE-TO-HOUSE
PROJECTS



2

NETWORK MEETINGS



1

JOINT HUMAN RIGHTS
MISSION TO CRIMEA



174

HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS TRAINED



80%

OF DEFENDERS
TRAINED APPLY
KNOWLEDGE GAINED

MISSION TO CRIMEA

Breaking the wall of silence

AUTHORS OF THE REPORT

"Crimea: Breaking the Wall of Silence"



HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER



The Mission and the report were made possible with the support of Human Rights House Foundation and People in Need.

Aiming to explore first-hand and document the human rights situation in Crimea, representatives of three Human Rights Houses visited the occupied peninsula from 14-18 September 2018. The mission included five experienced human rights defenders from Human Rights Houses in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. With a limited amount of information flowing out of Crimea, the report of the Mission, "Crimea: Breaking the Wall of Silence," has proved a powerful tool to directly communicate the human rights concerns of people living on the peninsula.

"The level of political repressions unleashed in Crimea in 2014 has not decreased, though the forms and types of pressure and persecution have changed." Tatsiana Reviaka, member of the mission, expressing shock at the level of repressions even compared to her home country of Belarus.

Mission members met with more than 50 people, including victims of human rights violations, relatives of political prisoners, members of the targeted Crimean Tatar community, lawyers, journalists, and members of civic initiatives. The monitoring focused on problems relating to the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. It was a unique opportunity to gather verified information to assess the

human rights situation on the peninsula. The findings of the report add to the years of monitoring and documentation by member organisations of Human Rights House Crimea. HRHF and the House have advocated for the international community to ensure human rights protections and an end to impunity in Crimea, including at the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

In the months following the Mission, HRHF and Human Rights Houses raised the key issues identified by the Mission regionally and internationally. The report was presented and featured in the press in Kyiv and Oslo, and also launched in Berlin, Vilnius, Tbilisi, Geneva (at the Human Rights Council), and in Strasbourg (at both the European Parliament and Council of Europe). High level diplomatic briefings have been hosted by the Ukrainian embassy in Oslo and the Norwegian embassy in Ukraine.

HRHF and Human Rights Houses will continue to push for access to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Crimea, and for the international community to keep human rights on the peninsula high on the agenda. Ultimately, we aim to tackle impunity for violations and increase human rights protection for people living in Crimea.



Tatsiana Reviaka (Belarusian Human Rights House) interviews Larysa Kytaiska, a member of the Yalta Municipal Council and a Maidan activist. Kytaiska and her family left Crimea for the mainland after the occupation, but Kytaiska returned to Yalta in July 2016 to sell their apartment. A few days after she arrived, her apartment was searched without a warrant. For an alleged anti-Russian Facebook post – which she denies writing – she was banned from leaving Crimea and accused of “inciting hatred”. She was handed a two-year suspended sentence and has been placed on the list of “extremists and terrorists”, which means that she cannot access banking services or sell her apartment. Photo: ZMINA. Human Rights Center.



“A repressive system has been formed that includes many state bodies, including the judiciary, the prosecutor’s office, law enforcement agencies, the emergency service, the educational supervisory authorities,” says Kyrlo Yekymov (Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv) during a press briefing in Kyiv following the mission’s return from Crimea. Photo: ZMINA. Human Rights Center.

GREATER VISIBILITY AND INFLUENCE

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

As a contribution to the 20th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, HRHF held the campaign “Rights of Defenders” with the Human Rights Houses. The aim was to celebrate the role of defenders in society, raise their profile, and increase awareness of 16 international standards that protect and empower them. Also, together with the Houses and partners, HRHF carried out a campaign in support of imprisoned Azerbaijani video blogger Mehman Huseynov, who was released in March 2019.

We met with 445 policy- and decision-makers in close partnership with the network of Human Rights Houses. More than 82% of these advocacy meetings were followed up by action from national and international policy makers, as we outline in the following examples.

We continued to address the human rights situation in Crimea. This included training in Kyiv for defenders, advocacy meetings in the US, and submitting a report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) as part of Russia’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR). On 15 November, the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on Crimea, incorporating specific human rights issues raised by HRHF and our partners. This work was strengthened by the key findings of the Human Rights Houses mission to Crimea.

HRHF was engaged in the appointment of a new UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on association and assembly, sharing oversight and coordination of civil society engagement in this process with the World Movement for Democracy and Solidarity Centre. HRHF assisted the new mandate holder upon his appointment including organising a strategic consultation with the new rapporteur in Washington DC alongside several other NGOs. Also, ahead of a visit by the new mandate holder to Armenia in early November, HRHF facilitated a workshop on UN mechanisms for members of the Yerevan House and other civil society organisations. Given the importance of ensuring positive policy and legislative change in these areas after the democratic revolution in Armenia, the workshop was designed to prepare civil society for the visit and to encourage thinking on how to follow up with the government.

Together with colleagues from HRH Azerbaijan, we engaged in UPR process of Azerbaijan at the HRC. Many States made recommendations suggested by HRHF. In Brussels, HRHF and House representatives updated decision makers on recent developments, including in a closed-door discussion organised with the European Endowment for Democracy targeting diplomats from EU Member States with recommendations, including in the context of negotiations for a future agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan.

On Belarus, HRHF helped to significantly strengthen support for the renewal of the mandate of the UNSR on Belarus, as the only international mechanism monitoring the human rights situation in the country. This included advocacy in both Geneva and Brussels alongside partners from the Belarusian House.

In 2017, HRHF published reports on Funding for Civil Society and Ill Democracies. In the first half of 2018, we launched “Ill Democracies” internationally, including public presentations in Brussels, Hungary, Croatia, Poland and at a side-event at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We advocated the findings in the Funding for Civil Society in particular towards the CoE and Venice Commission, which is mandated by the Secretary General to address restrictions on foreign funding to NGOs.

In November, HRHF submitted a briefing note to the OSCE report on human rights violations in Chechnya, under the Moscow mechanism. This note was based on documentation from our partners, and led to the inclusion of the cases we raised in the report.

In total, we raised the issues that matter to us 260 times across our platforms, and significantly enhanced our online presence with a new visual profile, website, and resources on our positions, work methods, and values.




445

POLICY MAKERS
REACHED OUT TO



82%

OF JOINT ADVOCACY
EFFORTS FOLLOWED
UP BY POLICY- AND
DECISION-MAKERS



260

EXTERNAL
COMMUNICATIONS



2

THEMATIC REPORTS



22

SUBMISSIONS AND
COMMUNICATIONS TO
INTERNATIONAL BODIES



4

CAMPAIGNS

PROTECTING DEFENDERS IN AZERBAIJAN

Visibility, solidarity, recognition, and documentation

Our protection work is at its strongest when it is multi-faceted and includes support and solidarity from the network of Human Rights Houses. While the crackdown in Azerbaijan continues, we experienced how joint efforts and solidarity made a difference in 2018.

FREEDOM FOR MEHMAN HUSEYNOV

Azerbaijani anti-corruption video blogger Mehman Huseynov was released from prison after serving a two-year sentence for trumped up charges of defamation. This followed many years of repression by the authorities aimed at silencing him.

Since Mehman's arrest in January 2017, HRHF and the Houses have raised awareness, engaged decision makers, and urged the Azerbaijani authorities to meet their human rights obligations and release him.

HRHF and Human Rights House Tbilisi have observed the many hearings in Mehman Huseynov's trial and legal appeals. With this, we have delivered statements on his case at international forums such as the UN, Council of Europe, and EU, and have submitted information to international protection mechanisms.

PROTECTION THROUGH RECOGNITION

Following HRHF's nomination, Azerbaijani human rights defender Shahla Ismayil won the Bob Hepple Equality award in 2018. This was for her role as a leading gender equality advocate and the work of her organisation Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD), member of Human Rights House Azerbaijan.

"There is a lot of work still to do, and I will work restlessly until Azerbaijan becomes the country of my dreams." Shahla Ismayil, during her acceptance speech, Ismayil also reflected on the situation for women in Azerbaijan, highlighting early marriage, trafficking of and violence against women, sex-selective abortions and stereotypes.

DOCUMENTING A PATTERN OF REPRESSION

In 2018, the European Court of Human Rights passed important judgements on the cases of defenders from Azerbaijan who were targeted as part of the crackdown from 2014. With our partners the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland and Freedom Now, HRHF delivered third party interventions before the Court in relation to the cases of Intigam Aliyev, Anar Mammadli, and Rasul Jafarov. Our documentation helped to provide

the broader context and demonstrate a pattern of Azerbaijan's consistent violation of its obligations under the European Convention.

"The European Court of Human Rights established that Rasul Jafarov's arrest and pre-trial detention were unlawful; more importantly, it recognised that the actual purpose of his detention was to punish him for his human rights activities. It is the first time that the Court has found a violation of Article 18 based on the repression of human rights defenders as a result of their human rights activity," commented Ramute Remezaite, who represented Jafarov before the court, along with Baku-based lawyer Khalid Bagirov.

In the case of Intigam Aliyev, the Court also referred to systemic human rights violations in Azerbaijan, stating that "government critics, civil society activists, and human rights defenders" face "retaliatory prosecutions and misuse of criminal law". The judgement in the Jafarov case is also significant in that it is the first by the Court to use the term human rights defender, mirroring the text of international standards on human rights defenders submitted by HRHF and partners.



Representatives of Human Rights Houses write postcards to Mehman Huseynov in prison.
Photo: HRHF



"Azerbaijan is in crisis... human rights defenders, political activists, independent journalists and conscious citizens are being harassed daily. There is little space for civil society and media," comments Shahla Ismayil, as she receives the Bob Hepple Equality Award for 2018. Photo: HRHF

BETTER PROTECTION

Supporting defenders at risk

Protection programme

Protection was initially not a main strategic direction of neither HRHF nor Human Rights Houses. Our protection work started as a response to the threats faced by human rights defenders, to protect and support them and their organisations within the network of Human Rights Houses.

Work done by HRHF and the Houses is aimed at supplementing the activities of other organisations that focus mainly on protection and relocation. While avoiding duplication, our protection efforts are first and foremost aimed at filling the gaps and protecting our own members and close partners. Our unique strength is the ability to react and take action immediately, in a matter of hours, and offer flexible support. This is possible due to: the institutional presence of the network of Human Rights Houses across Europe; a large pool of in-country expertise; close connections and a network of people who know and trust one another; and solidarity and pre-existing cooperation among the Houses.

In 2018, HRHF together with Human Rights Houses Chernihiv, Tbilisi, and the Belarusian Human Rights House finalised guidelines for protection work within the network. The guidelines capture years of experience within the network and are now available to all Houses.

RISK FUND

HRHF continued to react promptly to requests for emergency support from human rights defenders and journalists within the network and supported 15 cases in 2018.

TRIAL OBSERVATION

Trial observations are instrumental in our protection work. By observing court proceedings we are able to document violations, raise awareness of

politically motivated cases, and show solidarity with targeted human rights defenders and organisations. Since the December 2013 arrest of Anar Mamadli, who was among the first arrested in a crackdown on civil society, HRHF has organised trial monitoring of up to 80 hearings of leading civil society figures arrested in Azerbaijan.

During these hearings, we have witnessed flagrant violations of rights relating to fair trial, equality of arms between the parties, and the neutrality of the judiciary. In 2018, representatives of Human Rights House Tbilisi attended all four hearings in the case against prominent Azerbaijani photo-journalist, blogger and human rights defender Mehman Huseynov.

AWARDS

Independent human rights awards are one of the tools in our protection work. Recognition in the area of human rights can serve as a protection measure for threatened human rights defenders and organisations. Receiving an award raises the international profile of the winners and increases their protection at home. In 2018, HRHF nominated eight human rights defenders for 10 awards. One of the nominees, HRHF's partner Azerbaijani human rights defender Shahla Ismayil, won the global Bob Hepple Equality Award, which she received in London in October.



100%

OF APPLICABLE CASES
SUPPORTED



10

NOMINATIONS FOR
INDEPENDENT HUMAN
RIGHTS AWARDS



3

CASES ALERTED
TO PROTECTION
MECHANISMS



4

MOBILE GROUP
VISITS FOR TRIAL
OBSERVATIONS



3

HOUSES ENGAGED
IN PROTECTION
PROGRAMME WITH HRHF

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

An overview of Human Rights Houses and partners in the network.



Participants from around the network of Human Rights Houses attending the 2018 House Treff in Oslo.
Photo HRHF

Human Rights House Zagreb

ESTABLISHED:
2008 – Croatia
8 organisations

TEL: +385 15 513 395
WEB: kucaljudskihprava.hr

E-MAIL: kontakt@kucaljudskihprava.hr
ADDRESS: Selska cesta 112c, HR-10000
Zagreb, Hrvatska/Croatia



We are proud that so many CSOs worked together with us on producing our report providing an overview of the human rights situation in Croatia in 2017.

IVAN NOVOSEL
Director of Programs
Human Rights House Zagreb

A WATCDOG FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights House Zagreb was established in 2008 with a goal to contribute to building a democratic, pluralistic and inclusive society based on the values of human rights, social justice and solidarity. Today, the House in Zagreb is renowned as the centre of expertise on human rights in Croatia. The House works on research, monitoring, advocacy and education within three programs: democracy and human rights; justice and human rights; and socio-economic rights.

In 2018, the House released “Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of 2017”, an annual report prepared in cooperation with 46 civil society organisations (CSOs) that provides analysis of human rights problems and violations in 18 different areas. To mark 2018 as a year for human rights defenders, the House published the thematic report “Human Rights Defenders in Croatia – Obstacles and Challenges”. The House participated in drafting a new law on protection for whistleblowers and published a thematic human rights report on their protection in Croatia. Human Rights House Zagreb worked extensively with municipal authorities and local CSOs to develop local public policies to combat discrimination and foster inclusion.

Centre for Peace Studies
cms.hr

B.a.B.e. Be active. Be emancipated
babe.hr

Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past
documenta.hr

Civic Committee for Human Rights – CCHR
goljp.hr

The Association for Promotion of Equal Opportunities – APEO
upim.hr

The Association for Promotion of Mental Health “Svitanje”
udruga-svitanje.hr

The Croatian Youth Network
mmh.hr

CROSOL – Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity
crosol.hr



Photos from top: Annual report on the human rights situation in Croatia; Public debate “Human Rights Defenders” held in December 2018.

Human Rights House Belgrade

ESTABLISHED:

2012 – Serbia
5 organisations

TEL: +381 11 3344425

WEB: kucaljudskihprava.rs

E-MAIL: marija.maljan@yucom.org.rs

ADDRESS: 4 Kneza Milosa Street, 11000
Belgrade, Serbia



Despite intense government and media stigmatisation, working together to protect the rights of citizens of Serbia, the House keeps sending the message that the civil sector is not divided.

KATARINA GOLUBOVIC

Director
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights

UNITING CIVIL SOCIETY

Supporting civil society, Human Rights House Belgrade has a focus on economic and social rights, discrimination, hate crime, minority issues, and access to justice. The House 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.

The House celebrated Human Rights Day 2018 by highlighting the crucial work of journalists, while also warmly saluting the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection for his efforts. In December 2018, the House coordinated an action at Belgrade airport aiming to highlight the issue of media independence and citizens' right to information. In response to the removal of publications critical of the Serbian government by Air Serbia staff, journalists together with defenders from Human Rights House Belgrade gathered at the airport to promote the "banned" publications.

Civic Initiatives

gradjanske.org

Policy Center

policycenter.info

The Lawyers' Committee For Human Rights (YUCOM)

yucom.org.rs

Belgrade Centre for Human Rights

bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

helsinki.org.rs



Photos from top: Highlighting the work of journalists on Human Rights Day; Norwegian and Serbian prime ministers visit the House; Promoting "banned" materials at Belgrade Airport.

Human Rights House Yerevan

ESTABLISHED:
2012 – Armenia
4 organisations

TEL: +374 10 329 032
WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/armenia
E-MAIL: hrhyerevan@gmail.com
ADDRESS: 119/2 Hovsep Emin street, Yerevan 0012, Republic of Armenia



While political parties participating in the parliamentary elections 2018 were unwilling to touch upon sensitive human rights issues, the Yerevan House was there to open and to lead the discussion on the topic.

HOVHANNES MADOYAN
Board Member
Real World, Real People

LESSONS FROM THE VELVET REVOLUTION

Human Rights House Yerevan is committed to a safe, accessible, and common space for activists, civil society organisations, movements, civic initiatives, and human rights defenders, who are often targeted for the work they do. Its mission is to protect, empower, and support human rights defenders and organisations in Armenia. 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.

Reflecting on the recent revolutionary processes in Armenia, Human Rights House Yerevan hosted an international conference on 7 December 2018 which brought together civil society representatives from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine.

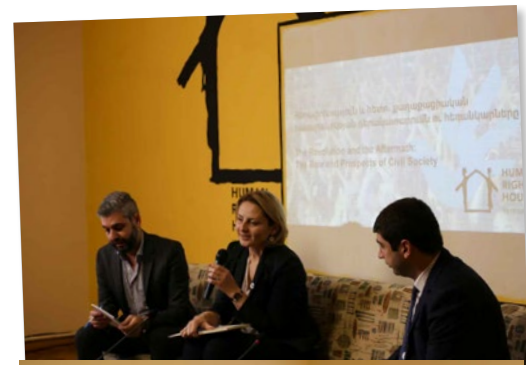
Coinciding with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Conference was a great opportunity to better understand challenges and threats, prospects and priorities for Armenian civil society organisations in post-revolutionary Armenia. Also, it served as a perfect venue to present the House's special report on "Human Rights Defenders during Revolutionary Processes" and to have a productive discussion on it.

PINK
pinkarmenia.org

Real World, Real People
realwrp.com

Women's Resource Centre
womenofarmenia.org

Socioscope
socioscope.am



Photos clockwise from top: Opening statements at the conference on the revolution in Armenia; Participants of the conference; Panel on civil society; Panel on defending human rights.

Human Rights House Azerbaijan

ESTABLISHED:

2007 – Baku, Azerbaijan
3 organisations

WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/azerbaijan



The Roadmap is an excellent opportunity for the government of Azerbaijan to demonstrate openness in re-establishing a favourable operational environment for civil society in the country.

SHAHLA ISMAYIL

Chairperson
WARD

AIMING TO REOPEN IN BAKU

Three independent human rights organisations formed a new core group for Human Rights House Azerbaijan in December 2017. With HRHF, they aim to continue a policy of engaging constructively with the Azerbaijani authorities, and have developed a roadmap with a view to relaunching the activities of the House in Baku.

The roadmap identifies areas of work and activities in which the House can start operating and contribute to Azerbaijan's implementation of international standards and recommendations. These are in line with the self-declared priorities of Azerbaijan and should prove beneficial for the authorities to approve them.

The core group work on, respectively, protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality, engaging in legal education and representing cases at the European court of human rights, and promoting democratic elections and institutions. They face challenges in continuing their human rights work, such as travel bans or restrictions on activities and funding. The organisations are developing plans for activities inside the country, but are reliant on the authorities allowing the House to reopen.

The House provided a vibrant space in central Baku for dialogue, discussion, and education on human rights until March 2011, when Azerbaijan's Ministry of Justice ordered the House to cease all activities. HRHF continued to work with member organisations following this, even increasing its support. The member NGOs remained visible and active, taking over activities over the House until the crackdown in 2014.

Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD)

facebook.com/Womens-Association-for-Rational-Development- WARD-542540899191883
info@ward.az
ward.azerbaijan@gmail.com

Legal Education Society

legal@azeurotel.com

Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS)

smdtaz.org
info@smdtaz.org



Photos from top: Women of Azerbaijan: a 100-year journey" organised by WARD; Anar Mammadli (EMDS) welcomed back to his first meeting of the network of Human Rights Houses following his 2016 release from prison; Azerbaijan advocacy at the United Nations.

Human Rights House Tbilisi

ESTABLISHED:
2010 – Georgia
5 organisations

TEL: +995 32 2 38 20 18
WEB: hrht.ge

E-MAIL: tbilisi@humanrightshouse.org
ADDRESS: 11a Akaki Gakhokidze
0160 Tbilisi, Georgia



As disinformation, smear campaigns and online threats become a serious problem for human rights defenders all over the world, we have to keep up with new challenges and protect those who fight for everyone's rights.

BAIA PATARAIA
Chairperson
Human Rights House Tbilisi

PROMOTING THE ROLE OF DEFENDERS IN SOCIETY

Human Rights House Tbilisi is a membership-based organisation that unites five civil society organisations working in the field of human rights. The member organisations have developed a joint strategy focusing on protecting and strengthening human rights defenders and human rights organisations, and raising awareness on human rights issues.

In a first for Georgia, the House organised a celebration on International Human Rights Defenders Day, promoting the role of defenders in society. The House and IREX Europe also organised the “National Leadership Academy” and held trainings for defenders and lawyers, as part of an ongoing long-term project.

The House held the first human rights fair in Tbilisi in June. International and local NGOs as well as diplomatic corps joined, ensuring the fair was a platform to exchange information and arrange future cooperation.

Recognising Georgia as the first shelter country for many defenders at risk fleeing from neighbouring countries, the House has developed a new strategy for 2019-2023 aiming to extend its protection programme.



Article 42 of the Constitution
article42.ge

Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT)
gcrt.ge

Human Rights Centre (HRIDC)
hridc.org

Media Institute
facebook.com/Instituteofmedia

Union Sapari - Family without Violence
sapari.ge



Photos from top: National Leadership Academy for women defenders; Flash protest against large-scale police crackdown at several clubs in Tbilisi; The first celebration of International Human Rights Defenders Day in Georgia.

Resource Centre Grozny

ESTABLISHED:

2016 – Chechnya, Russian Federation

CONTACT: For security reasons, contact with the resource centre should be made through HRHF.
info@humanrightshouse.org

REHABILITATING CONVICTED WOMEN

Resource Centre Grozny acts as an independent platform for its member organisations, which are individually and jointly involved in protecting and supporting human rights defenders in the North Caucasus. Through their work, they ensure support of independent media, improved public access to independent information, and increased protection and promotion of human rights, especially those of women. Despite an increasingly hostile environment, the members of the centre continue to operate in Chechnya.

“In 2018, we provided psychological and legal assistance to 100 women just released from or in prison. Of the women we have assisted, 70% do not return to prison. In order to reduce aggression in prisons, we worked with 40 members of staff working in detention facilities to reduce stress.” Satzita Haudukaeva, chairperson of LARAM.

LARAM, a women’s rights organisation and member of the Centre, works with women in prison as well as those released and in need of rehabilitation.

Resource Centre Nakhchivan

ESTABLISHED:

2013 – Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

CONTACT: malahat.nasib@gmail.com

DOORS CLOSED, BUT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The Resource Centre in Nakhchivan opened in 2013 as a place where local human rights defenders, journalists and organisations could work on improving the human rights situation in the Azerbaijani exclave, and was unofficially called a “House of Hope” by locals in the region.

It was forced to cease its activities when Malahat Nasibova, head of the centre, and her husband Ilgar Nasibov were forced to flee the country in December 2014. This followed an increasingly violent and dangerous situation for independent media and organisations working on human rights. On 21 August 2014, three men raided the centre and severely beat Nasibov, who was director of the centre. While under House arrest, they were not able to access sufficient medical expertise. “It was a horrible time,” said Nasibova in 2015, “My husband was suffering and I feared for his life.”

The doors of the House of Hope may be closed, but it is still there, and Malahat and Ilgar Nasibov, now living in Norway, dream of one day returning to Nakhchivan and re-opening the centre as a home for the local civil society to thrive.

Barys Zvozkau

Belarusian Human Rights House

ESTABLISHED:
2006 – Vilnius, Lithuania
7 organisations

TEL: +370 5 212 77 03
WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/belarus
E-MAIL: belarus@humanrightshouse.org
ADDRESS: Latako str. 3,
LT-01125 Vilnius, Lithuania



Providing stability and strengthening Belarusian civil society, the House enables us to feel more secure, flexible and efficient. It gives defenders opportunities for self-realisation and development, and brings us closer to the international human rights movement.

ALES BIALIATSKI
Chairperson
Viasna Human Rights Center

SUPPORTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN BELARUS

The Barys Zvozkau 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. Due to the impossibility of operating in Belarus, the House opened in Lithuania.

In 2018, the House contributed to the first review of Belarus by the UN Human Rights Committee in 21 years, being among a coalition submitting a report and responding publicly to the Committee's findings. The House also spoke out publicly on the death penalty, violations of freedom of speech, and prosecution of journalists and trade union leaders, achieving a wide public response. Internationally, the House was among the Human Rights Houses to undertake a human rights mission to Crimea, and held actions in support of imprisoned human rights defenders and journalists, including Oleg Sentsov and Mehman Huseynov. The project Bring International Standards Home remains at the core of the House's education activities.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists
baj.by

Belarusian Helsinki Committee
belhelcom.org

Viasna
spring96.org

Belarusian PEN Centre
pen-centre.by

Lev Sapieha Foundation
sapieha.org

Francišak Skaryna Belarusian Language Society
tbm-mova.by

Legal Initiative
legin.by



Photos clockwise from top: Tatsiana Reviaka in Oslo promoting the findings of the mission to Crimea; The House calls for the release of political prisoners Oleg Sentsov (Ukraine) and Mehman Huseynov (Azerbaijan).

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

ESTABLISHED:

1993 – Warsaw, Poland

TEL: +48 22 556 44 40

WEB: hfhr.pl

E-MAIL: hfhr@hfhr.pl

ADDRESS: Zgoda 11 Street,
00-018, Warsaw Poland



Polish people have once again learned that rights and freedoms are not given to us once and for all. We have to constantly take care of them.

DANUTA PRZYWARA

President of the Board
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

RIISING TO POLAND'S CHALLENGES

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.

It 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; providing legal advice; monitoring the human rights dimension of actions taken by public authorities; and organising WATCH DOCS human rights in film, one of the world's largest human rights film festivals.

Since 2015, Poland has faced an ongoing constitutional crisis which affects the work and position of the judiciary. The numerous legal changes concerning the work of the courts as well as prosecution have been accompanied by smear campaigns and attacks against judges and certain prosecutors. HFHR together with other NGOs played a vital role in building a counter narrative.

In 2018, human rights in Poland received visible support from international institutions, such as the European Court of Justice's ruling that Poland's government should reinstate a number of Supreme Court judges whom it had forced into early retirement.



Photos from right: NGO Day in Warsaw; Young people show their support for HFHR; 18th International Film Festival WATCH DOCS Human Rights in Film.

Human Rights House Voronezh

ESTABLISHED:
2009 – Russian Federation
11 organisations

TEL: +7 (473) 254-55-29

WEB: hrdom.hrworld.ru

E-MAIL: hrdom@hrworld.ru

ADDRESS: Tsyurupy, 34, Voronezh
Voronezhskaya oblast' 394036
Russia



Although the value of the rule of law in Russia is decreasing, we try to protect it, and we are very proud that people continue to contact our House seeking justice and protection.

ANDREY RASHEVSKY
Chairperson
Human Rights House Voronezh

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Enhancing awareness of human rights, Human Rights House Voronezh targets the local community through hosting and organising 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.

Human Rights House Voronezh continues to show its creative and innovative approach to reaching out on human rights. In 2018, the House co-organised the “City of Rights / City is Right” human rights festival in Voronezh and, for the first time, in Kaliningrad, combining its passion for human rights with the passions of environmentalists, creatives, artists, poets, photographers, and filmmakers.

At the festival, now in its seventh year, the House exhibited its annual “Not Passing Witness” photo contest and performed “Justice for the Dictator” with partners – an adaption of the play “The Trial of Mussolini”.

Civic Initiatives Development Center
cidc.vrn-net.org

Memorial
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/voronezhskii-memorial

Olga A. Gnezdilova, independent lawyer
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/advokatskii-kabinet-olgi-gnezdilovoi

Confederation of Free Labor
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/konfederacia-svobodnogo-truda

Youth Human Rights Movement
fond-mpd.ru

Youth Human Rights Group
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/molodeznaa-pravozasitnaa-gruppa

Russian Union of Writers
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/profsouz-literatorov

Interregional Human Rights Group “Voronezh-Chernozemie”
irhrg.ru

Lawyers for Labor Rights
hrdom.hrworld.ru/ru/uristy-za-trudovye-prava

Charitable Foundation “For environmental and social justice”
article20.org

Free University
students.yhrm.org/msps



Photos from the play “Justice for the Dictator” held on International Peace Day. The play was performed by local activists and audience members who participated as jurors in the trial. The play is based on “The Trial of Mussolini” written in 1943 by Michael Foote under the pseudonym Cassius.

Russian Research Center for Human Rights

ESTABLISHED:

1992 – Moscow, Russian Federation
9 organisations

TEL: +7 (495) 625 0667
WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/russian_federation
E-MAIL: HRightscenter@gmail.com
ADDRESS: 101000 Luchnikov Lane
Building 4, Doorway 3, Suite 2
Moscow Russia



In these troubled times in Russia, we value the long-standing cooperation and support among organisations of the RRCHR, and the network of Human Rights Houses. Together, we resist this lawlessness.

VALENTINA MELNIKOVA

Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia

UNITED IN TROUBLED TIMES

The Russian Research Center for Human Rights (RRCHR) is the oldest hub for human rights organisations in Russia. RRCHR plays a key role in supporting its member organisations, which cooperate, support and defend one another amid a climate in which human rights organisations are often under threat. The House also strengthens civil society as a whole and its member organisations work to help some of the most vulnerable people by providing access to experts such as lawyers and psychiatrists.

Members of RRCHR paid tribute to Lyudmila Alexeyeva, co-founder of the Moscow Helsinki Group and active member of RRCHR, who passed away in December 2018. Described by a spokesperson for RRCHR as a role model who “inspires the next generation of human rights defenders,” Alexeyeva was a soviet-era dissident and prominent defender who united the efforts of many human rights organisations.

On 8 October 2018, members of RRCHR hosted “We are going to court”, a Russia-wide conference for soldiers and their relatives aiming to approach the court system relating to issues within the army. Organised by Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, the event presented a manual of recommendations prepared by RRCHR member organisations Independent Psychiatric Association and the Moscow Center for Prison Reform.

Human Rights Network Group
hro.org

Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia
npar.ru

Moscow Center for Prison Reform
prison.org

Moscow Helsinki Group
mhg-main.org

Right of the Child
right-child.ru

Right to Live and Have Civil Dignity

Social Partnership Foundation

Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia
vk.com/ucsmr

Initiative Center for the Caucasus
doshdu.ru



Photos from top: “We are going to court” conference; Dosh magazine featuring an article and tribute to Lyudmila Alexeyeva in its December 2018 edition.

Human Rights House Crimea

TO BE ESTABLISHED:

In exile in Kyiv, Ukraine
4 organisations

TEL: +38 067 4694229
E-MAIL: crimeahrh@gmail.com



Protection of human rights, respect for human dignity, preservation and development of relations of Ukraine with Crimeans is the foundation of the Human Rights House Crimea.

OLGA SKRYPNYK

Chairperson
Crimean Human Rights Group
Photo: Valeriya Mezentseva

SHEDDING LIGHT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CRIMEA

Set to be formally established in exile in Kyiv, Human Rights House Crimea aims to develop, strengthen, and coordinate the capacity of organisations involved in human rights protection in Crimea, ensuring more effective and systematic human rights work. It will focus on promoting and observing the human rights of all citizens on the occupied peninsula.

Representatives of the House organised a joint Human Rights House mission to Crimea in 2018. This rare opportunity to report first-hand on the human rights situation increased awareness of human rights violations in Crimea and was the basis for the landmark report *Crimea: Breaking the Wall of Silence*.

Bringing to life the stories of people at risk, the House created “Suitcases of Crimean Human Rights Defenders”, an exhibition of belongings telling about the lives of people forced to flee their homes. Both report and exhibition continue to gain traction and attention with events across Europe.

Centre of Civil Education “Almenda”
almenda.org

Crimean Human Rights Group
crimeahrh.org

ZMINA. Human Rights Centre
humanrights.org.ua

Regional Centre for Human Rights
rchr.org.ua



Photo from top: A suitcase exhibited during the “Suitcases of Crimean Human Rights Defenders” event; Participants of the exhibition; Briefing for 13 embassies hosted at the Ukrainian Embassy in Oslo.

Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv

ESTABLISHED:

2014 – Chernihiv, Ukraine
11 organisations

TEL: +380 462 610 508

WEB: ehrh.org

E-MAIL: ehrh.che@gmail.com

ADDRESS: Lugoviy lane 1-G Vil. Kolychivka
Chernihiv region 15563 Ukraine



Education can overcome human rights problems. Our House of education, now five years old, was built on many years of partnership and solidarity. Our common aims and values make us stronger.

SERHIY BUROV

Executive Director
Educational Human Rights
House Chernihiv

EDUCATION FOR LONG-TERM CHANGE IN HUMAN RIGHTS

A centre for Ukrainian organisations, Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv is a modern and well-equipped 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.

For nine summer days in 2018 the House was alive with more than 100 participants during the second annual Educational Human Rights Fest. Discussions, cinema shows, master classes, musical evenings, and excursions all added to the free atmosphere in which all who make efforts in human rights education could share experiences, get useful advice, and plan joint initiatives.

The festival is one of the largest human rights events in Ukraine. It is among the many initiatives the House uses to reach out with human rights education, and the showpiece of a House that hosted 48 events and drew in 916 participants during 2018.



Ahalar
ahalar.org

Almenda
almenda.org

Association of Ukrainian human rights monitors on Law Enforcement
umdppl.info

"East-SOS" Charitable Foundation
vostok-sos.org

Chernihiv public committee of human rights protection
protection.org.ua

ZMINA. Human Rights Center
humanrights.org.ua

NGO "Mart"
mart-ngo.org.ua

No Borders Project
noborders.org.ua

Postup
postup.lg.ua

Transcarpathian Public Center
facebook.com/gromcenter

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
helsinki.org.ua



Photos clockwise from top: Discussion takes place at the Festival. Participants gather at the entrance of the House. Participants with portraits of imprisoned human rights defenders.

Index on Censorship

ESTABLISHED:
1972 – London, United Kingdom

TEL: +44 0203 848 9820
WEB: indexoncensorship.org

ADDRESS: 1 Rivington Place
London EC2A 3BA
United Kingdom



The Freedom of Expression Awards and Fellowship are important to the work of Index because they enable us to support individuals and groups who are doing incredible work to fight censorship.

JODIE GINSBERG
Chief Executive
Index on Censorship

DEFENDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Index on Censorship is a non-profit organisation that campaigns for and defends free expression worldwide. It publishes work by censored writers and artists, promotes debate, and monitors threats to free speech. Index's vision is that everyone should be free to express themselves without fear of harm or persecution – no matter what their views.

As part of its mission to strengthen freedom of expression globally, Index awards four fellowships each year to help nurture and expand the skills of human rights activists. Winners in 2018 included Cuban arts collective Museum of Dissidence, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Habari RDC, and journalist Wendy Funes.

Index's annual Freedom of Expression Awards attract a broad spectrum of people who support free speech.

In 2019, Index on Censorship will launch a campaign to promote greater understanding and public support for freedom of expression as a fundamental, universal value in the United States. It will spearhead targeted advocacy efforts to promote protections of online freedom of expression, and continue media monitoring efforts.



Photos from top: Wendy Funes accepting her award/fellowship; Freedom of Expression Awards.

Human Rights House Oslo

ESTABLISHED:

1989 – Oslo, Norway
6 organisations

TEL: +47 468 48 850

WEB: facebook.com/
HumanRightsHouseOslo

E-MAIL: oslo@humanrightshouse.org

ADDRESS: Kirkegata 5, 5th Floor
0153 Oslo, Norway



Fighting shrinking space for civil society locally and globally, the Oslo House is joined around a common cause in all of its diversity.

JOHAN N. HERMSTAD

Director
Norwegian Council for Africa

HUMAN RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

The first Human Rights House was founded in Oslo in 1989, during a time of great change and hope for human rights in Europe. Human Rights House Oslo is today home to six diverse organisations that champion a variety of thematic and geographical human rights issues. These range from women's rights in Norway, to the human rights situations of Burma, Tibet, Eastern Europe, and the entire African continent.

Each year at the HUMAN international film festival in Oslo, Human Rights House Oslo's member organisations raise human rights issues from around the world on the big screen, by supporting films, debates and other events at the festival.

More than 5,300 people attended the week-long festival in 2018, which included 35 documentaries, 35 live events, and 20 international and over 100 local guests.

Health and Human Rights Info
hhri.org

Human Rights House Foundation
humanrightshouse.org

The Women's Front
kvinnefronten.no

The Norwegian Council for Africa
afrika.no/fellesradet

The Norwegian Myanmar Committee
burma.no

Voice of Tibet
vot.org



Photos from top: "When Rape Becomes Genocide" debate co-hosted by Health and Human Rights Info; "The Dark Side of Development" debate co-hosted by the Norwegian Council for Africa (copyright Sébastien Dahl).

Rafto Foundation

ESTABLISHED:
1986 – Bergen, Norway

TEL: +47 55 21 09 30

WEB: rafto.no

E-MAIL: rafto@rafto.no

ADDRESS: Menneskerettighetenes plass 1
5007 Bergen, Norway



The Rafto Prize is primarily a support given from Norwegian civil society to Polish civil society, academia, judges and lawyers who fight for the rule of law, legal independence, diversity and the protection of minorities in Poland.

ADAM BODNAR

Polish Ombudsman and
Rafto Prize recipient 2018
Photo: Hans Jørgen Brun

AWARDING SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

Raising recognition for human rights defenders, Rafto awards the annual Professor Thorolf Rafto's prize for human rights work. This helps to bring the work 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 6,830 people participating in 2018.

Locally, the Bergen city council sent an important signal when, at the request of the Rafto Foundation, they unanimously

passed a resolution that Bergen was to become Norway's first human rights city. Internationally and with Rafto's support, the 2017 prize recipients from Kashmir succeeded in presenting information in Geneva that contributed to the first report on the human rights situation in Kashmir by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report pointed out many of the circumstances that Parveena Ahangar and Parvez Imroz have worked to uncover and put a spotlight on in the world.



Photos from top: Adam Bodnar accepting the 2018 Rafto prize along with his colleague Kamila Dolowska; Torchlight procession through Bergen Adam Bodnar and his wife Magdalena Bodnar alongside the Mayor of Bergen and Rafto representatives. Both photos courtesy of Ingild Festervoll Melien/Raftostiftelsen.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

With thanks to our donors

We offer our sincere thanks for the generous financial support that we received from donors such as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, and People in Need.

We continue to seek new partnerships to strengthen our capacity advance human rights through empowering human rights defenders and strengthening independent civil society.

Accounts 2018

For the fiscal year ending 31 December 2018, Human Rights House Foundation's revenues totalled 23 747 380 NOK (2 473 557 EUR).

TOTAL EXPENSES

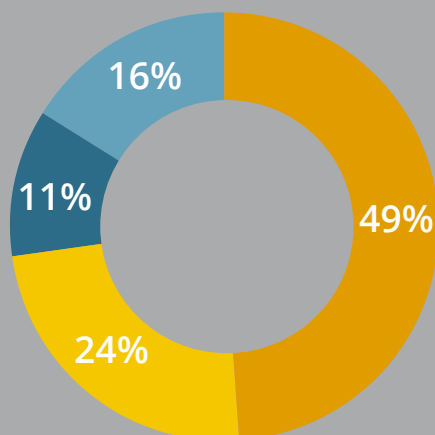
23 578 665 NOK

(2 455 983 EUR)

Average exchange rate 2018 1 EUR= 9.6005 NOK

BREAKDOWN PER PROGRAMME

- Establish, support and connect Human Rights Houses
- Advocate with and for Human Rights Houses
- Communication
- Sustainability



This financial data has been summarised from HRHF's annual accounts. For a complete copy of the annual accounts and the accompanying independent audit report, please visit humanrightshouse.org

HRHF BOARD

2018 Board members

The Board of the Human Rights House Foundation meets four times a year. It oversees the work of Human Rights House Foundation, guides its strategy and direction, and approves its budgets. The Board is comprised of academics, lawyers, civil society representatives and experts.



BERNT HAGTVET (CHAIRPERSON)

Professor,
Department of Political Science, University of
Oslo / Bjørknes University College, Oslo



CHRISTOPHER HANSTEEN (DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON)

Partner,
Grette law firm



MOHAMED HUSEIN GAAS

PHD fellow in development studies,
Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)



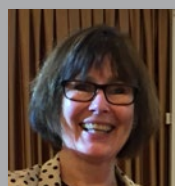
MINDA HOLM

Research fellow with the research group on
foreign policy and diplomacy,
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
(NUPI)



PÅL LIEUNGH

Partner,
Thommessen law firm



HILDE LUNDEBY

Psychologist, Senior Advisor,
Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service



ANE TUSVIK BONDE

Staff-elected Board member / Senior Advisor,
Human Rights House Foundation

HRHF STAFF 2019/20

15

MEMBERS
OF STAFF



Maria Dahle (Oslo)

Director

maria.dahle@humanrightshouse.org



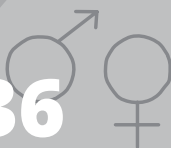
Birgitte Brekke (Oslo)

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64/36

GENDER
BALANCE (% F/M)



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13

LANGUAGES
SPOKEN



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Prisca Jaobelison (Geneva)

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09

NATIONALITIES
REPRESENTED



New in 2019 (Brussels)

European Advocacy Officer



Liudmila Ulyashyna (Oslo)

Human Rights Officer

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04

LOCATIONS





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Thanks to our former colleagues!

Florian Irminger

Head of Advocacy

Kaja Haldorsen

Communication Manager

Iryna Pavlovska

Project Controller

Alexander Sjödin

European Advocacy Officer



2018 IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Memories from around the network of Human Rights Houses





Since its establishment more than 20 years ago, Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) has been striving toward its vision for a world where individuals and organisations can freely and openly work to protect and advance human rights at home and abroad.

HRRF protects, empowers and supports human rights defenders and their organisations. To accomplish this, HRRF brings organisations together in Human Rights Houses, and unites the Houses in an international network.

HRRF advocates with partner organisations to promote the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, and the right to be a human rights defender at home and abroad, utilising its consultative status at the United Nations (UN) and participatory status at the Council of Europe (CoE).

Today, independent human rights organisations work together in 16 Human Rights Houses in 11 countries. The Houses are located in Eastern & Western Europe, the Caucasus and the Balkans.

HRRF is based in Oslo, with an office in Geneva and representation in Brussels and Tbilisi.

Human Rights House Foundation
Org. no. 976 055 365

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Kirkegata 5
0153 Oslo, Norway
info@humanrightshouse.org

Geneva
Rue de Varembé 1, PO Box 35
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
advocacy@humanrightshouse.org



humanrightshouse.org