



**HUMAN
RIGHTS
HOUSE**
FOUNDATION

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**17 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, Kazan,
Moscow, Voronezh); Serbia (Belgrade); Ukraine (Chernihiv, Crimea in exile in Kyiv); United Kingdom
(London)

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Cover photo

WOMEN'S RIGHTS STRIKE IN POLAND

10 November 2020: A protester is confronted by law enforcement as thousands of people march in Poland demonstrating against the decision of 22 October regarding the tightening of abortion laws.

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DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

In May, we authored an [op-ed](#) in which we challenged readers to consider the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic would have on democratic rights as governments scrambled to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. This scramble, we warned, could exacerbate a growing trend towards authoritarianism across our region and potentially the wider world.

How governments responded to the public health crisis has ultimately been a litmus test of their commitment to human rights. Authorities used unprecedented measures including states of emergency to crack down hard on critical and dissenting voices. Journalists, whistle-blowers, lawyers and other human rights defenders as well as health care professionals and political opposition have all faced persecution for sounding the alarm on COVID-19 and the responsive measures installed by governments under the guise of protecting public health. Authorities used the crisis to significantly curtail transparency, pluralism, and democratic processes as they used a pandemic response narrative to push through new politics and laws. [III democracies](#) advanced their agendas to strengthen “traditional values”, weaken fundamental freedoms, attack minorities, and neglect vulnerable people in need of protection.

The global pandemic laid bare the inadequacies of the so-called strongman leader. These leaders promoted the use of saunas, vodka, dancing in fields, herbal tea, and incense as cures for the virus. However, as the pandemic unfolded, their tough-talking and action-ready charade faded under the sobering reality of their failure to competently manage the crisis. These leaders denied the health threat, avoided implementing appropriate measures to combat the crisis and instead focused on further [consolidating](#) their power.

Human rights defenders and civil society organisations mobilised in [Belarus](#), [Azerbaijan](#), and Russia to exercise freedoms of assembly and expression and protest fraudulent elections and

attacks of dissenting and opposition views. In [Poland](#), people took to the streets to protest attacks on judicial independence and women’s rights. Activists in Armenia and Azerbaijan called on the authorities in both countries to respect human rights as armed conflict erupted again over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. With hate speech on the rise against human rights defenders in [Serbia](#) and [Georgia](#), civil society deployed digital means to raise awareness about their legitimate role in preserving democracy and protecting human rights. In Oslo, Geneva, and

Brussels, we lobbied governments and rallied partners to support peaceful protesters across the region.

It is inspiring and impressive to see how rapidly, creatively and bravely the network of

Human Rights Houses and wider civil society adapted its work. Thousands of people continue taking to the streets to peacefully protest abuse of power and in support of fundamental freedoms. Human Rights House Foundation supported – and continues to support – independent civil society advocating for the core freedoms that protect and empower human rights defenders. As we look forward to 2021, we thank those institutions, partners, donors, and other supporters with whom we have worked, from whom we have received support, and with whom we will continue to work to promote, protect, and defend human rights.

“ Over the last year, independent civil society has been a light shining through the darkness.



Maria Dahle
Director

Maria Dahle

Left: Human Rights House Foundation joined several events in Oslo showing solidarity with the people of Belarus.

Photo: stasevicius.no

THE RESILIENCY OF CIVIL SOCIETY



A strong and vibrant civil society is essential for the protection and promotion of human rights. This principle drives our work and sets our agenda for promoting the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression – key freedoms which underpin independent civil society and protect and empower human rights defenders (HRDs). In 2020, civil society across the region proved resilient to situations ranging from inadequate government response to efforts to take advantage of the global public health crisis to clamp down on human rights.

The network of [Human Rights Houses](#) (“the network”) rose to meet new challenges in 2020. Members of the network adapted to a variety of local challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in order to serve their local communities. In many cases, Human Rights Houses made necessary changes in order to fill in the gaps left by local authorities who proved unable to meet the challenges of the pandemic. For many, this adaption meant shifting working methods, building new alliances and reorienting their activities to address the needs of the people and those most vulnerable.

Human Rights Houses in Georgia and Armenia partnered with Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF), Equal Rights & Independent Media (ERIM), and the Transatlantic Foundation and launched a project to mitigate the immediate and longer term impact of the pandemic and pandemic measures on civil society and independent media. Under this EU-funded project, the Houses support civil society actors so that they can continue providing access to protection and assistance to local communities, especially those most vulnerable.

In Russia, Houses reoriented their work in order to provide essential services, including hotlines for victims of domestic violence, and assistance to victims of attacks on freedom of movement and speech and law enforcement abuse. Human Rights Houses in Poland and Serbia continued to serve as government watchdogs and highlight attempts by the authorities to clamp down further on fundamental freedoms under the guise of pandemic response.

Over the course of the year, HRRF supported the network in building and maintaining resiliency. In one example, as national lockdowns limited opportunities to physically meet, HRRF hosted regular virtual conferences for network members. The meetings began as an effort to prevent isolation and feelings of helplessness caused by lockdowns and uncertainty. As the year unfolded, these meetings became an important space for cooperation, ideas and solidarity as Houses shared information about local human rights situations, discussed common struggles, and brainstormed potential strategies to address existing and emerging human rights challenges.

The unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic and growing authoritarianism across the region challenged civil society in ways largely unmatched in recent memory. However, as civil society adapted and demonstrated its resiliency, it continued contributing to making stronger, more equal, and more just societies.



Human Rights Defenders are the bravest people I know. They deserve our acknowledgment, respect and support, ever more during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they face new difficulties and threats while doing their job. Children at risk, such as those living in conditions of abuse and poverty, as well as victims of domestic violence, and LGBTQI people, are living through particularly hard times. My warmest thanks go to everyone in civil society working for their rights, often at risk to themselves.

HELENE SAND ANDRESEN

AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY TO GEORGIA



Photo: Georgian Foreign Ministry press office.

SEIZING INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS

Strengthening human rights standards at the international level can form the basis for real change on the domestic level. Governments look to international frameworks to inform their legislation and practices and civil society uses standards and mechanisms as a resource for monitoring and documenting violations and to pressure governments to reverse course when human rights are under attack. On the global stage, authoritarian rhetoric - such as justifying attacks on sexual minorities through the language of “traditional values” - risks rolling back human rights progress, as well as preventing consolidated international action to promote and protect human rights. To counter this, the [network of Human Rights Houses](#) (“the network”) and Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) have long advocated internationally for [strong mechanisms](#) to hold governments to their human rights obligations, independently document human rights violations, and raise awareness of human rights issues among the international community. In 2020, we worked with partners to advance international priorities, using expertise and a network of relationships built over decades.

The international infrastructure created to protect and promote human rights values and principles requires close and sustained engagement by civil society to ensure its on-going development and success. HRHF and the network rose to the task in 2020, a year of unprecedented challenges where the COVID-19 response limited such opportunities. At the United Nations, we advocated for 11 resolutions at the Human Rights Council and [General Assembly](#) to strengthen standards related to the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly and deepen protections for, and recognition of, human right defenders. We engaged with international mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, [UN Special Procedures](#), [OSCE Moscow Mechanism](#), and [Council of Europe’s Committee of](#)

[Ministers](#) to address human rights challenges in [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), Croatia, [Georgia](#), [Russia](#), and [Ukraine](#). HRHF facilitated and participated in more than 100 virtual [briefings](#) by human rights defenders from the network for diplomatic missions and international mechanisms to directly share information about human rights challenges and push friendly states to take action to address them. At the same time, we contributed to and supported the release of a number of new resources to support international advocacy by human rights defenders: the [Rights of Human Rights Defenders Advocacy Toolkit](#); reports on Human Rights Defenders in [Serbia](#), and Georgia; [toolkit](#) on civil society-government cooperation around Human Rights



Civil society’s call to states: we are in this together, don’t violate human rights while responding to COVID-19.

Joint NGO [statement](#) on civil & political rights, 9 April 2020

Council membership; and, the [Lawyers at Risk Toolkit](#), in partnership with the International Bar Association, Lawyers for Lawyers, and Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada.

International mechanisms and standards are one critical component for stopping the spread of authoritarianism. HRHF and the network will continue to partner with civil society organisations and like-minded states to actively stand against authoritarianism and authoritarian tactics and support, defend and strengthen these standards.

Belarus

Since the 9 August 2020 presidential election in Belarus, tens of thousands of people who have taken to the streets in peaceful protests have been met with mass repression by the Belarusian authorities.

The crisis is on-going as of the publication of this report. Belarusians bravely continue their fight for a free and fair society.

Copyright: humanrightshouse.org / Daria Sapranetskaya

TOGETHER WE HAVE IMPACT

Key numbers from our work defending human rights through four key objectives in 2020:



1. Establish and support Human Rights Houses

25

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IMPROVED THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN A 3-MONTH COURSE

150+

HOURS OF DIGITAL ADVOCACY TRAINING PROVIDED TO 14 TRAINEES FROM THE NETWORK

7

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES STRENGTHENED THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



2. Connect Human Rights Houses

17

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES UNITED IN AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

12

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES AND THEIR MEMBER NGOS RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR THEIR JOINT PROJECTS THROUGH HOUSE-TO-HOUSE FUND

482%

INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT FOLLOWING SHIFT TO DIGITAL ADVOCACY AS A RESULT OF COVID RESTRICTIONS



3. Protect human rights defenders

1

NEW HRD, SERVER MUSTAFAYEV, NAMED IN A UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION (A/RES/75/29) FOLLOWING ADVOCACY BY HRHF AND UKRAINIAN PARTNERS

340+

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS BENEFITED DIRECTLY FROM HRHF AND HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES' PROTECTION EFFORTS

24

COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS LAUNCHED ADDRESSING 24 SPECIFIC CASES OF REPRISAL AGAINST HRDS



4. Advance four rights core to human rights work

8

PUBLIC WEBINARS HOSTED ON FOUR CORE RIGHTS & KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION

100+

VIRTUAL MEETINGS HELD WITH KEY ADVOCACY TARGETS IN SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PRIORITIES

20

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND MECHANISMS STRENGTHENED AT THE UN, COUNCIL OF EUROPE, AND OSCE FOLLOWING ADVOCACY EFFORTS BY HRHF AND THE NETWORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

ADAPTING TO CHANGING LANDSCAPES


Access to domestic and international funding without hindrance is a right and essential for civil society to carry out its work. In our 2017 [report](#) on civil society funding, we shed light on the importance of sustainable funding in an increasingly restrictive environment. Flexible long-term funding allows human rights organisations to strategically and effectively address community challenges while maintaining the ability to adjust and adapt when crises and events dictate. In 2020, institutional funding and donor flexibility proved critical for civil society organisations which struggled to achieve their core missions while adapting to the environment vastly affected by the pandemic response, and facing reduced support as funding were diverted from human rights to health response.

[Human Rights House Tbilisi](#) became unable to provide face-to-face consultations for their beneficiaries virtually overnight. [Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv](#) (EHRHC) faced a similar challenge when the House was no longer able to be used as the location for educational activities. In Croatia, physical meetings with policymakers and events with the public became impossible for [Human Rights House Zagreb](#). Following the armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, [Human Rights House Yerevan](#) faced important and existential questions about its focus and priorities.

In these periods of struggle for Human Rights Houses, institutional funding emerged as a critical element in allowing them to continue to meet the human rights needs of their communities. Institutional funding from Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) and other donors gave Houses the flexibility to adjust to rapidly changing landscapes within their communities. As the pandemic continued and other human rights crises arose, HRHF engaged with the [network of Human Rights Houses](#) (“the network”) to support them in meeting human rights needs.

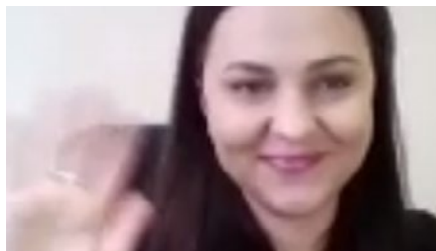
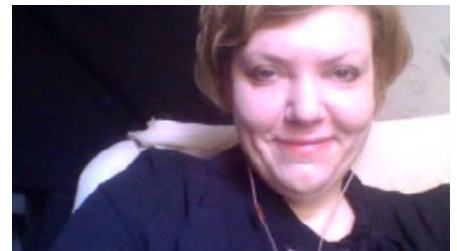
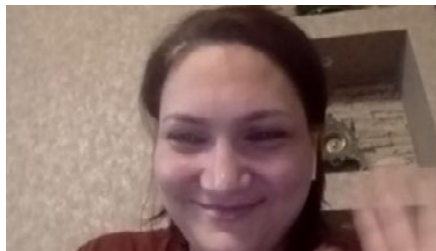
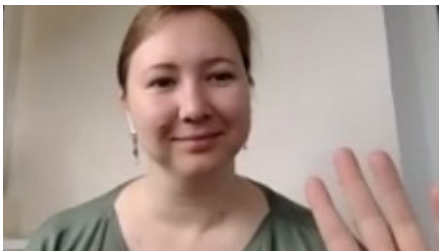
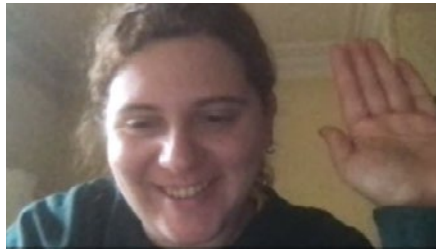
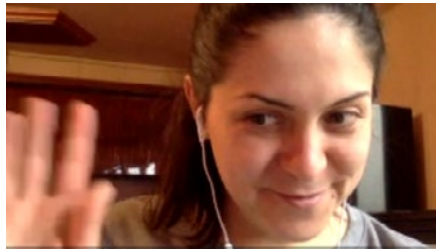
EHRHC responded to the political and human rights crisis in Belarus by increasing the provision of protection services to Belarusian human rights defenders (HRDs), including sheltering HRDs in its premises. The House also shifted much of its annual Human Rights Festival online and attracted more than 160 people on and offline. In Armenia, Belarus, Poland, Serbia, Russia, and Ukraine, Human Rights Houses launched a digital international human rights school for 250 young activists from six countries.

As the ramifications of the pandemic continue, and new challenges come up, it is evident that long-term support and

 *Human rights work rarely brings instant results. It is rather a long-lasting struggle. Human rights defenders can do more and better if they have sufficient operational capacity and are enabled to plan thoroughly and work systematically. Thus, the availability and sustainability of institutional funding is essential for their work on protecting and promoting human rights, especially rights of marginalised, deprived and minority groups.*

*Ivan Novosel,
Director, Human Rights House Zagreb.*

flexibility allowing civil society organisations to correct course and adapt to the changing environment will remain as essential as ever for their sustainability. By focusing on long-term partnerships and strategic development, HRHF and the network stand ready to rise to meet these challenges and call on donors to maintain funding levels.



Apart, together

The global health crisis in 2020 meant that meeting colleagues in person was no longer an option for the network of Human Rights Houses. Throughout the challenges of 2020, the network stayed in regular contact through online platforms.

ADVOCATING IN THE DIGITAL SPACE

“The digital advocacy programme was very useful and we were able to expand our online presence as a result.”

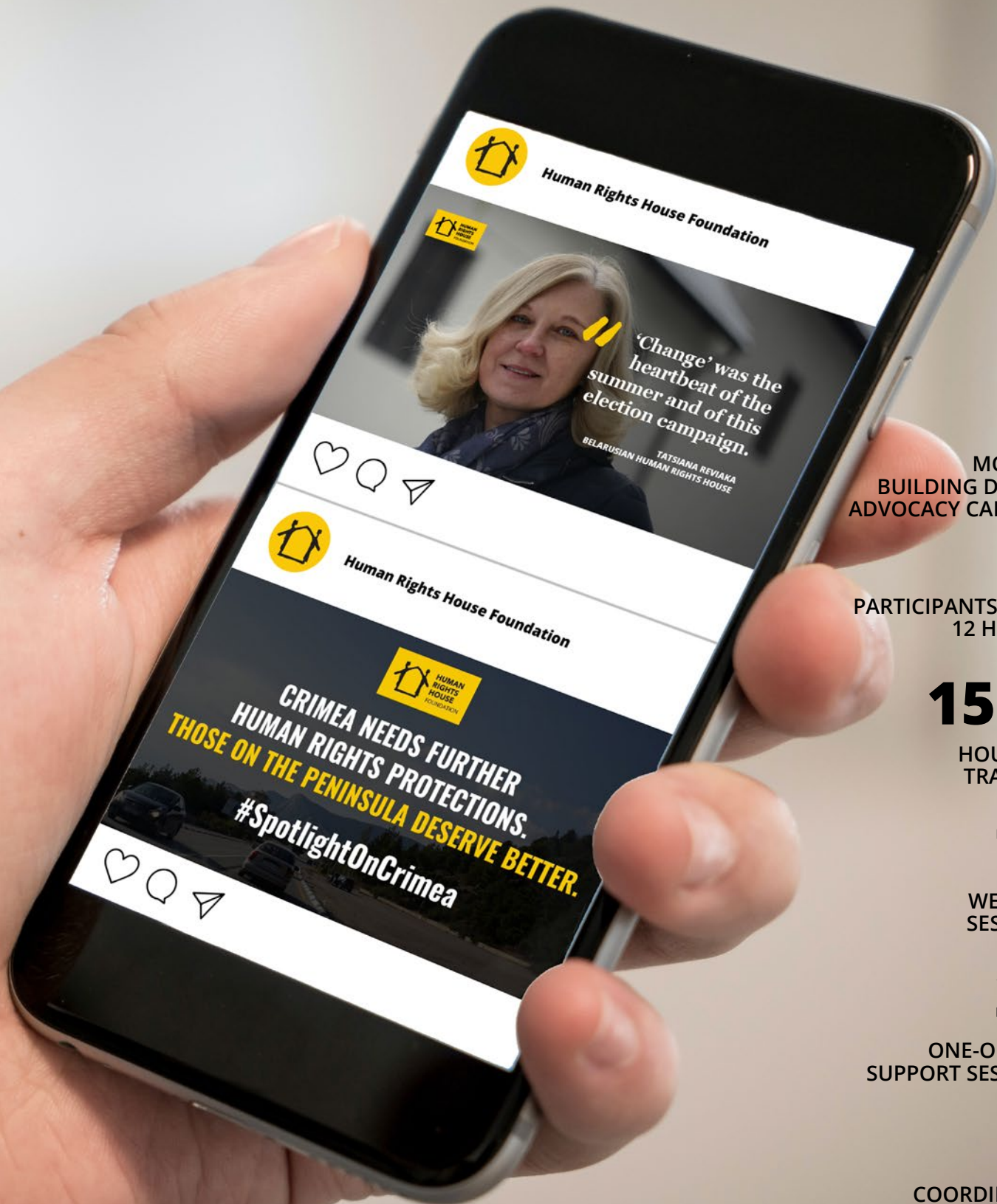
*Victoria Federova,
programme participant from
Legal Initiative, member organi-
sation of Barys Zvozhkau Belar-
usian Human Rights House*

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) unites Human Rights Houses - coalitions of local civil society organisations working together to advance human rights at home and abroad - in an [international network](#) (“the network”). We build relationships, share knowledge and experience, and create and jointly advocate for human rights on the domestic and international levels. As the world shrank in the wake of COVID-19 and traditional avenues for protecting and promoting human rights disappeared, HRHF shifted as many of the network’s joint activities to the digital space as possible. Network meetings and joint advocacy events went virtual and strategy discussions moved online. In addition, HRHF piloted a project to build on the experience and expertise of the network and harness opportunities to strengthen its work in the digital space.

Human Rights Houses and their member organisations have utilised social media platforms for years to build domestic and international awareness, share information about their work, and, in some cases, to mobilise their communities. In 2020, expanding on existing digital approaches and tools provided human rights defenders with a means to adapt and thrive under new challenges and travel limitations. For example, our advocacy became fully virtual and we took advantage of digital platforms to host more than 100 meetings with key advocacy targets. HRHF also designed a project to further build capacity of the network members in digital advocacy in order to address a need to continue to influence policy makers and human rights agendas.

Working with Global Wave Digital, a digital advocacy firm with experience supporting civil society in the region, HRHF launched the Digital Advocacy Capacity Building Programme within weeks of the start of government-imposed lockdowns across the region. The six-month pilot project focused on digital strategic planning, digital channels overview, digital content curation and development, social media advertising, and how to launch impactful digital advocacy campaigns. During the project, participants joined live webinars, met virtually one-on-one with instructors, completed assignments, and their organisation’s received microgrants to implement small digital advocacy activities and utilise paid social media advertising. In the end, the majority of the 19 participants from 12 Human Rights Houses demonstrated an increased understanding of how to harness digital platforms for advocacy. Project participants also supported network-wide digital advocacy campaigns in August and December focused on [Belarus](#) and the [UN Human Rights Day](#), respectively.

In a region struggling with increasing authoritarianism, solidarity between and among Human Rights Houses will continue to be key within the network in order to protect human rights defenders and organisations and advance human rights. Identifying ways to leverage digital opportunities to further strengthen and advance human rights will likely be key in the post-pandemic world.



6
MONTHS
BUILDING DIGITAL
ADVOCACY CAPACITY

19
PARTICIPANTS FROM
12 HOUSES

150+
HOURS OF
TRAINING

77
WEBINAR
SESSIONS

30
ONE-ON-ONE
SUPPORT SESSIONS

2
COORDINATED
DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

Photo by Terje Sollie from Pexels.

TRUST AND SOLIDARITY IN PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The protection and promotion of human rights defenders (HRDs) has been core to the work of Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) since its establishment. HRRF and the network of [Human Rights Houses](#) (“the network”) work together to remove HRDs from potential danger and support their efforts to continue human rights work. Our protection programme is a critical response to the targeting of and [attempts to silence](#) human rights defenders across the region.

In this year of unprecedented challenges, our protection programme benefited from the trust and solidarity built within the network of Human Rights Houses over many years as well as long-term institutional support from the Norwegian government. This trust and solidarity allowed us to support targeted defenders during extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Based on previous crack-downs by the Belarusian authorities and experience and lessons learned from the broader region, HRRF, [Barys Zvovskau Belarusian Human Rights House](#) (BHRH), [Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv](#) (EHRHC), and [Human Rights House Tbilisi](#) (HRHT) set up a network emergency response programme for Belarus in anticipation of a crisis for HRDs surrounding the August 2020 president election. It built on a decade’s worth of existing infrastructure and experience gained from the network-wide protection programme and allowed work to begin immediately. In the course of 7 months, the programme helped over 200 people, including human rights defenders, students, activists, bloggers, journalists, artists and their family members. The support ranged from medical, psychological, and legal assistance to rest and respite and temporary relocation to other

countries. In addition, the network and HRRF successfully advocated for new policies in Ukraine to extend the period of stay in the country for Belarusians from 90 days to 6 months.

HRRF’s protection programme also mobilised resources to support Azerbaijani blogger and human rights defender [Mehman Huseynov](#). Following a two-year imprisonment, years of repression, and police beatings all designed to silence him for his legitimate human rights work, Mehman received protection programme support through Human Rights House Tbilisi, including temporary relocation to Tbilisi and much-needed medical care, unavailable to him in Azerbaijan.

Following a cancer diagnosis through that medical care, HRRF contributed to a broad international effort for him to receive cancer treatment in Switzerland. Thanks to crowdfunding in Azerbaijan as well as

international donations, Mehman received treatment, recovered, and returned to Azerbaijan in September 2020 to continue his work as an anti-corruption blogger.

In 2020, our network protection programme met unprecedented challenges presented by the need to scale-up due to a number of factors. Continuous work was only possible because of the trust and cooperation of network members which aligned with a decade of experience in supporting human rights defenders at risk. Local presence, ability to adapt quickly to the changing situations and the sense of solidarity will remain essential in the protection of human rights defenders moving forward. HRRF and the network are ready.

“I want to thank all of you for the support and action taken. Without you, it could have gone so much worse.”

Konstantin Reutski, Director of Vostok SOS and Chairperson of EHRH Chernihiv, [upon his return to Ukraine](#) after a two-day detention in Belarus.



Following the detention of Konstantin Reutsky (r) and Yevhenii Vasyliev (l) in Belarus, HRHF and EHRH Chernihiv alerted Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and demanded their release.



HRHF contributed to a broad international effort for Mehman Huseynov to receive cancer treatment in Switzerland. Thanks to crowdfunding in Azerbaijan and international donations, Mehman has recovered.



HRHF and the network of Human Rights Houses launched a digital campaign to show solidarity with our Belarusian civil society colleagues.

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO ADDRESS A HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

The aftermath of the August 2020 presidential election in Belarus plunged the country into a deep human rights crisis. By the end of 2020, Belarusian authorities had detained more than 33,000 activists and launched relentless attacks against human rights organisations, journalists, lawyers, and other human rights defenders. [Baryz Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House](#) (BHRH) and its member organisations found themselves at the forefront of documenting unprecedented human rights violations, helping thousands of victims, and relying on international solidarity and help. Internationally, Human Rights House Foundation (HRRH) has played a leading role in keeping Belarus on the agenda of human right bodies and in 2020 we focused on accountability and documentation related to the growing crisis in the country.

At the United Nations, HRRH played a key role, alongside our partners at BHRH, in the establishment of the Special Rapporteur on Belarus in 2012 and subsequent renewals of the mandate, including in [2020](#). At the same time, mounting human rights violations required the Council to complement this mechanism with an additional reporting mechanism and we advocated heavily for it with our partners. In particular, HRRH and Belarusian and international civil society partners held dozens of closed meetings with Council member States and hosted two public events to call for the complementary mechanism. Our cooperation provided opportunities for HRRH to use its relationships with diplomatic missions in Geneva and engage our Belarusian partners to hear directly from those on the ground. We did this direct advocacy in coordination with a media campaign to raise public awareness and support for more international action on Belarus. In September, following months of advocacy by HRRH and Belarusian and international civil society partners, the Council convened an urgent debate - only the sixth in its history - and [mandated](#) the High Commissioner to monitor and report on human rights violations in the country.

Amidst the unprecedented attacks against civil society, several of our colleagues faced political persecution. HRRH launched a number of campaigns calling for the release of human rights defenders and volunteers from Viasna, a member of BHRH: [Marfa Rabkova](#), [Andrei Chapiuk](#), [Leanid Sudalenka](#), [Tatsiana Lasitsa](#) as well as other [political prisoners](#) targeted for their legitimate human rights work. We raised their cases in closed meetings with key diplomatic missions in Minsk and in western capitals. Working with the [network of Human Rights Houses](#)



The people of Belarus are calling for new, free, and fair elections and respect of their rights. The international community has a responsibility to heed the calls of the Belarusian people.

Network [statement](#) on 18 August 2020 calling for coordinated European action to address the human right situation in Belarus

(“the network”), we held a number of closed and [public events](#) to raise awareness about the repression taking place across the country. The network also joined the advocacy and protection efforts of other international NGOs and partnerships in calling for release of HRDs.

The human rights crisis in Belarus provides a stark illustration of the need for strengthened international mechanisms and systems. To achieve these, HRRH will continue to work closely with our Belarusian and international partners in international advocacy.



The network of Human Rights Houses and Human Rights House Foundation advocate internationally for strong mechanisms to hold governments to their human rights obligations, independently document human rights violations, and raise awareness of human rights issues among the international community. Photo: Matthew Jones (HRHF) at the UN Human Rights Council.

33K+

INDIVIDUALS DETAINED IN BELARUS IN 2020*

10K+

TESTIMONIES OF TORTURE IN BELARUS IN 2020*

481

JOURNALISTS DETAINED IN BELARUS IN 2020**

* AS REPORTED BY VIASNA HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER, MEMBER ORGANISATION OF THE BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE

** AS REPORTED BY BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS, MEMBER ORGANISATION OF THE BELARUSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE

THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE CONCEPT

A home for human rights

Human Rights Houses are coalitions of civil society organisations working together to advance human rights at home and abroad.

Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) works with civil society organisations to establish and support Human Rights Houses as bases for human rights activities.

The structure and focus of each House reflect local needs and local contexts. This empowers Houses to help strengthen the local human rights community as a whole, enhancing the national capacity to uphold and protect human rights and independent civil society.

We connect Human Rights Houses, building an international network for change and freedoms, and today, the network extends across 11 countries with 17 Houses.

Membership in Human Rights House provides solidarity as well as opportunities for collaboration and networking. Working together, member organisations have a greater opportunity to influence the human rights agenda. House members are also able to more effectively pool resources and benefit from reduced administrative costs. Finally, in a time of closing space for civil society and attacks against human rights defenders, House membership offers a level of security and protection from increased threats and harassment.

HRRF's Human Rights House concept is built around the enduring values of solidarity and partnership. It remains as important today as when the first House opened its doors in Oslo in 1989.

While each Human Rights House is unique, all houses are collaborative, independent, relevant, sustainable, effective, and united.



04



HRHF LOCATIONS

17



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

11



COUNTRIES



HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

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



Human Rights Houses are coalitions of civil society organisations working together to advance human rights at home and abroad. Photo: Lara Aharonian, Women's Resource Center Armenia, Human Rights House Yerevan.

Balkans

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

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.

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

Human Rights House Belgrade

ESTABLISHED:
2012 – Serbia
5 organisations

TEL: +381 11 3344425
WEB: kucaljudskihprava.rs

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ADDRESS: 4 Kneza Milosa Street, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

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 civil society 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.

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

Caucasus

Human Rights House Yerevan

ESTABLISHED:
2012 – Armenia
5 organisations

TEL: +374 10 329 032
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ADDRESS: 119/2 Hovsep Emin street, Yerevan 0012, Republic of Armenia

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.

Pink
pinkarmenia.org

Real World, Real People
realwrp.com

Women's Resource Centre
womenofarmenia.org

Socioscope
socioscope.am

PEN International Armenian Centre
pen-international.org/centres/armenian-centre

Human Rights House Azerbaijan

ESTABLISHED:
2007 – Baku, Azerbaijan
3 organisations

WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/azerbaijan

First established in 2007, Human Rights House Azerbaijan was forced to close its doors due to the crackdown on civil society in the country in 2014. In December 2017, three independent human rights organisations formed a new core group for Human Rights House Azerbaijan. With HRHF, they aim to continue a policy of engaging constructively with the Azerbaijani authorities and have developed a road-map with a view to relaunching the activities of the House in Baku.

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

Resource Centre Nakhchivan

ESTABLISHED:

2013 – Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

CONTACT: malahat.nasib@gmail.com

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 its director, Ilgar Nasibov. 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, now living in Norway, dreams of one day returning to Nakhchivan and re-opening the centre as a home for the local civil society to thrive.

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

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.

Rights Georgia
rights.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

Eastern Europe

Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House

ESTABLISHED:
2006 – Vilnius, Lithuania
9 organisations

TEL: +370 5 212 77 03
WEB: humanrightshouse.org/members/belarus
E-MAIL: belarus@humanrightshouse.org
ADDRESS: Olimpičių str. 1-45,
Vilnius, LT-09235.

The Barys Zvozkau Human Rights House (BHRH) was registered in 2006 in Lithuania due to impossibility to register in Belarus. Today the members of BHRH are the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Human Rights Center Viasna, Legal Initiative, Belarusian PEN Center, Belarusian Language Society, the Leu Sapieha Foundation, Supolnasc Center and Human Rights House Foundation (Norway).

The Belarusian Association of Journalists
baj.by

Belarusian Helsinki Committee
belhelcom.org

Belarusian PEN Centre
pen-centre.by

Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)

Lev Sapieha Foundation
sapieha.org

Francišak Skaryna Belarusian Language Society
tbm-mova.by

Legal Initiative
legin.by

Viasna
spring96.org

Supolnasc Center

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

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.

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

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 the North Caucasus.

Human Rights House Kazan

JOINED NETWORK:

2019 – Kazan, Russian Federation
3 organisations

TEL: +791 787 03157
WEB: humanrightshouse.org/human-rights-houses/kazan/
E-MAIL: accent.pravo@gmail.com
ADDRESS: 420097 Russia, Kazan,
Staro-Pugachevskaya street, 22,
office 1

With member organisations that have worked together since 2009, Human Rights House Kazan was already a well-established human rights centre in Russia when it joined the network of Human Rights Houses in 2019.

The member organisations of the House work on a range of issues including prison conditions; police abuse; access to medical treatment; violence in the army; domestic violence and the conditions for children in institutional care. The House members have a thematic focus on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Kazan Human Rights Centre
investigation.ru

Zona Prava
zonaprava.com

The Association of Attorneys "Law Firm of the Republic of Tatarstan", "Akhmetgaliyev, Khrunova and partners"
buro-advocat@yandex.ru

Eastern Europe

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, Voronez
Voronezhskaya oblast' 394036
Russia

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.

Russian Research Center for Human Rights

ESTABLISHED:

1992 – Moscow, Russian Federation
8 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

The Russian Research Center for Human Rights (RRCHR) is the oldest hub for human rights organisations in Russia. It 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. Its member organisations work to help some of the most vulnerable people by providing access to experts such as lawyers and psychiatrists.

Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia
npar.ru

Moscow Center for Prison Reform
prison.org

Moscow Helsinki Group
mhg-main.org

Regional civic initiative - the right to life and civil dignity

Right of the Child
right-child.ru

Social Partnership Foundation

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

Centre d'Initiative du Caucase
doshdu.ru

Educational Human Rights House Chernihiv

ESTABLISHED:

2014 – Chernihiv, Ukraine
13 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

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. Its mission is protecting and promoting human rights through the development of a consolidating educational space.

Ahalar
ahalar.org

Centre of Civil Education “Almenda”
almenda.org

Association UMDPL
umdpl.info

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

“East-SOS” Charitable Foundation
vostok-sos.org

Human Rights Vector NGO
hrvector.org

ZMINA. Human Rights Center
humanrights.org.ua

NGO “Mart”
mart-ngo.org.ua

Moloda Prosvita Prykarpattia
facebook.com/molodaprosvita.if

No Borders Project
noborders.org.ua

Postup
postup.lg.ua

Transcarpathian Public Center
facebook.com/gromcenter

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
helsinki.org.ua

Human Rights House Crimea

JOINED THE NETWORK:

2019 - In exile in Kyiv, Ukraine
4 organisations

TEL: +38 067 4694229

WEB: hrhcrimea.org.ua

E-MAIL: crimeahrh@gmail.com

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. The House focuses on promoting and observing the human rights of all citizens on the occupied peninsula.

Centre of Civil Education “Almenda”
almenda.org

Crimean Human Rights Group
crimeahrg.org

ZMINA. Human Rights Centre
humanrights.org.ua

Regional Centre for Human Rights
rchr.org.ua

Western Europe

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

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.

Human Rights House Oslo

ESTABLISHED:

1989 – Oslo, Norway
5 organisations

WEB: [facebook.com/
HumanRightsHouseOslo](https://facebook.com/HumanRightsHouseOslo)

E-MAIL: oslo@humanrightshouse.org

ADDRESS: Mariboegate 13,
0183 Oslo, Norway

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 five 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 Tibet, Eastern Europe, and the entire African continent.

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

Voice of Tibet
vot.org

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

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

HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE FOUNDATION

Empowering defenders, strengthening civil society

Human Rights House Foundation (HRRF) envisions a world in which everyone can freely and safely promote and enjoy all human rights. Empowered human rights defenders and strong and independent civil society are key to this vision.

Human Rights House Foundation establishes, supports, and connects Human Rights Houses – coalitions of civil society organisations working together to advance human rights at home and abroad. Today, 17 Houses in 11 countries are united in an international network of Human Rights Houses.

Together, we advocate for the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression and the right to be a human rights defender. These four rights underpin a strong and independent civil society and protect and empower human rights defenders.

How we make a difference

Human Rights House Foundation works closely with Human Rights Houses and partner organisations to advocate for and fulfil rights that underpin independent civil society and make it possible to hold institutions and individuals accountable.

We establish and support Human Rights Houses. The Houses and the Human Rights House concept are core to everything Human Rights House Foundation does: from advocacy and awareness raising, to capacity building and protection, all of our work is rooted in and linked to the Human Rights Houses.

The Human Rights House concept is built around the enduring values of solidarity and partnership. While each Human Rights House is unique, all houses are collaborative, independent, relevant, sustainable, effective, and united.

We connect Human Rights Houses, building an international network for change and freedoms. Alongside Human Rights Houses and partner organisations, we advocate for the fundamental freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, and the right to be a human rights defender. We support the passage, and effective implementation, of national policies and legislation, by robust and independent state institutions, based on strong international standards and mechanisms.

HRRF is an international organisation headquartered in Oslo with an office in Geneva and representation in Brussels and Tbilisi. HRRF holds consultative status at the United Nations and participatory status at the Council of Europe.

HRHF, in its 2019 - 2023 strategy, advances its vision and mission through four key objectives:



Establish and support Human Rights Houses

HRHF engages with and builds the capacity of Human Rights Houses, empowering Houses and their members to effectively address the human rights needs of their societies.



Connect Human Rights Houses

HRHF supports the development of strong local coalitions with access to international partnerships, continuously strengthening the network of Human Rights Houses.



Protect human rights defenders

HRHF and Human Rights Houses respond to and advocate against reprisals, ensuring that network members and associated human rights defenders and organisations are better protected and systematic gains are achieved.



Advance four rights core to human rights work

HRHF and Human Rights Houses promote the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression and the right to be a human rights defender, advocating together for strong international mechanisms and standards and joining with partners on national advocacy campaigns.

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 the Czech Republic, the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, the Office for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, the European Union, and Fritt Ord.

We continue to seek new partnerships in order to expand our ability to advance human rights through empowering human rights defenders and strengthening independent civil society.

Accounts 2020

For the fiscal year ending 31 December 2020, Human Rights House Foundation's income totalled 25 768 713 NOK (2 401 558 EUR):

Financial Contributions	25 420 747	NOK
Other Income	208 571	NOK
Financial Income	139 395	NOK

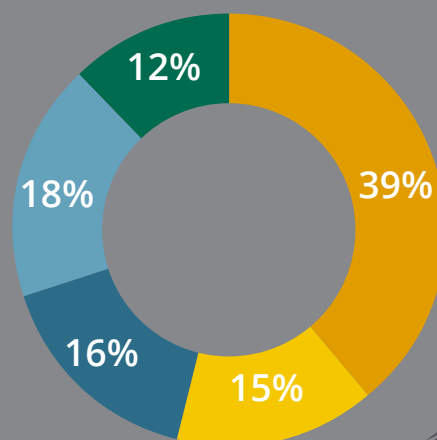
TOTAL EXPENSES

25 752 354 NOK
(2 400 972 EUR)

Average exchange rate 2020 1 EUR = 10.73 NOK

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM

- Establish and support Human Rights Houses
- Connect Human Rights Houses in an international network
- Protect human rights defenders and organisations
- Advance four freedoms
- Build and maintain organisational capacity

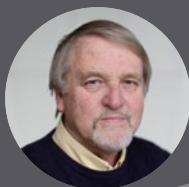


This financial data has been summarised from HRHF's annual accounts. For a complete copy of the annual accounts and the accompanying independent audit report, please visit humanrightshouse.org.

HRHF BOARD

2020 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 chair)

Partner,
Hjort law firm



Laila Bokhari

Kistefos fellow,
Harvard Kennedy School of Government



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, former Senior Advisor
Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Services



Ane Tusvik Bonde

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

HRHF STAFF

14

MEMBERS
OF STAFF



Maria Dahle (Oslo)

Director

maria.dahle@humanrightshouse.org



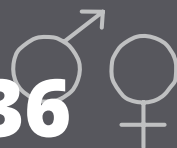
Dave Elseroad (Geneva)

Head of Advocacy and Geneva Office

dave.elseroad@humanrightshouse.org

64/36

GENDER
BALANCE (% F/M)



Kety Abashidze (Tbilisi)

Senior Human Rights Officer

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Ane Tusvik Bonde (Oslo)

Senior Advisor

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14

LANGUAGES
SPOKEN



Craig Jackson (Oslo)

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Administrative Assistant

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13

NATIONALITIES
REPRESENTED



Elaine Sabourin (Oslo, remote staff)

Senior Grants Officer

elaine.sabourin@humanrightshouse.org



Alexander Sjödin (Brussels)

Senior Human Rights Officer

alexander.sjodin@humanrightshouse.org

04

HRHF OFFICE
LOCATIONS



14 home offices across eight countries!



Daiva Petkeviciute (Oslo)

Head of House Development and Support

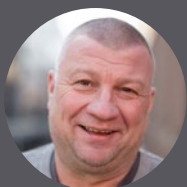
daiva.petkeviciute@humanrightshouse.org



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Acting Head of Administration and Finance

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Administrative Assistant

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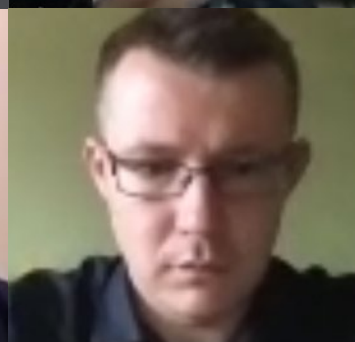
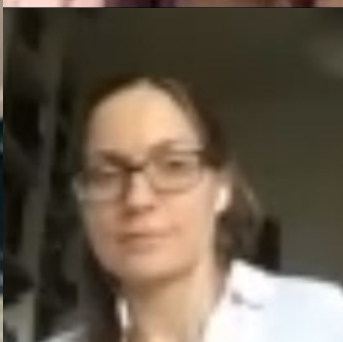
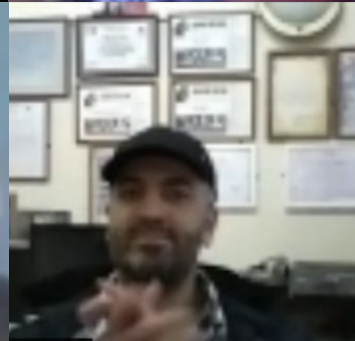


Nora Wehofsits (Brussels)

International Advocacy Officer

nora.wehofsits@humanrightshouse.org





2020

IN PICTURES

*Memories from around the network of
Human Rights Houses.*

TEATR DRAMATYCZNY





Poland

WOMEN STRIKE

10 November 2020: Protesters run through the centre of Warsaw as thousands of people march in Poland demonstrating against the decision of 22 October regarding the tightening of abortion laws.

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Org. no. 976 055 365

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humanrightshouse.org