

**President's Message:
A Celebration of Ongoing Work**

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President's Message

A Celebration of Ongoing Work

Thirty years ago George Soros began supporting efforts to promote open society. Five years later he established a foundation in Hungary which signaled the start of the distinctive network that now operates in all parts of the globe.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KAREN ROBINSON
Community police officer, Leicester, United Kingdom

Looking back over those 30 years, certain accomplishments stand out. Aside from successes in helping to promote, through an array of activities, the emergence of more open societies in particular countries, the accomplishments include global leadership in promoting freedom of information, budget transparency, and accountability for the revenues from the exploitation of natural resources; efforts to develop and make effective such institutions as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the International Criminal Court, all of which contribute to global governance on crucial issues that must be addressed transnationally; increased access

also on the discriminatory treatment of immigrants.

In Central and Eastern Europe, including the Balkans, a major part of our work has been to address both the immediate harms and the long-term consequences of discrimination against the Roma minority. We have also addressed problems particular to certain countries, such as discrimination against ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia; against Albanians in Macedonia; and against Serbs in Kosovo.

In Russia, and also in Western European countries, we have worked to end ethnic profiling and initiated efforts to secure legal remedies against it. In recent years, we have also monitored the problem of discrimination

Problems associated with discrimination against minorities do not

to justice both for criminal defendants and, in civil matters, for those not able to afford legal representation; and mitigation of the devastating consequences of armed conflict.

Discrimination Against Minorities

Another area where we have been deeply engaged—and where we have had some successes, though the challenges that continue to confront us are very great—is the effort to mitigate the effects of discrimination against minorities. This aim is central to our work in many places. It has been a dominant theme of the Open Society Institute’s programs in the United States where, from the start, we have focused on the particular harm done to minorities by the criminal justice system and

against Muslims in some Western European countries and we now have underway a major research and advocacy project concerned with the situation of Muslim minorities in 11 European Union cities.

In African states, denial of citizenship or nationality to certain ethnic groups is one of our important concerns. In other parts of the world, we have focused efforts on discrimination against other minority communities such as the Palestinians in Israel, Dominicans of Haitian ancestry, and the Burmese in Thailand.

Discrimination in Open Societies

This year’s annual report highlights some of the activities the network has undertaken to address discrimination against minorities

in a number of countries. The issue plays such a large role in our work because the problems associated with discrimination against minorities do not necessarily diminish when countries make transitions from repressive regimes to more open societies. On the contrary, it is sometimes the case—as with respect to the Roma in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe—that there are actually more opportunities in relatively open societies for demagogues to exploit hostility against minorities for their own political purposes.

Another common aspect of discrimination against minorities is also a significant concern at this time: discriminatory practices tend to increase during periods of financial crisis. Resentment against migrants may be particularly acute in such a crisis because they are seen as competitors for scarce jobs.

by minorities in the United States, and supported programs that assist migrants in the process of becoming citizens. We have directly engaged in precedent-setting litigation to challenge discriminatory practices and created legal programs to support this work; conducted training programs for local officials on governance of multiethnic communities; sponsored arts programs to promote cultural expression by minorities; supported minority media; and sponsored economic development programs focused on minorities—to name only a few efforts.

Underlying these activities, of course, is a belief that an essential characteristic of an open society is that all people count equally and that all should enjoy equal opportunities. Virtually every component of the network has been engaged in these efforts. In some areas, progress is frustratingly difficult; in

necessarily diminish when countries make transitions from repressive regimes to more open societies.

Also, minorities who have suffered from discrimination and marginalization may be stereotyped as disproportionate consumers of social services.

Efforts to Mitigate Discrimination

The Open Society Institute has engaged in a wide range of activities to mitigate discrimination. We have supported education programs for Roma ranging from early childhood to postgraduate training in professional disciplines, and launched programs to ensure that the Roma obtain access to health services. We have established debate programs at urban schools attended

others, we have made substantial headway. That progress is possible was, of course, affirmed in a spectacular way when a black man with the name Barack Hussein Obama was elected as president of the United States. Speaking personally as someone who was involved in the civil rights struggle in the United States half a century ago, I did not believe then that such a thing was possible in my lifetime and still find myself amazed by this achievement.

ARYEH NEIER
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