

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

HRW SWEDEN IMPACT REPORT
(EFFEKTRAPPORT)

SEPTEMBER 2018



ABOUT THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Name: Insamlingsstiftelsen The Swedish Foundation in Support of Human Rights Watch

Organisation number: 802478-1885

Legal Number status: Insamlingsstiftelse

Human Rights Watch Inc. is one of the world's leading independent organisations dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. In September 2015, it established insamlingsstiftelsen The Swedish Foundation in Support of Human Rights Watch (hereinafter "HRW Sweden") in Stockholm. HRW Sweden aims to bring Human Rights Watch's work to the attention of the Swedish public, the private sector and the government, and intensify advocacy to these stakeholders on key human rights issues both in Sweden and around the world, and to continue and expand high-level research on human rights in areas of critical interest to Sweden.

The establishment of a sister charity in Sweden has enabled the first formal presence of Human Rights Watch in Scandinavia—a critical step in enlisting Sweden's strong human rights culture to effect lasting improvements for victims of abuses worldwide. HRW Sweden collaborates closely with Human Rights Watch, and shares its mission and purpose.

To accomplish its aims, HRW Sweden organises several larger public and smaller private events throughout the year, assists in publicizing Human Rights Watch research through Sweden's media, supports a Swedish-language website (<https://www.hrw.org/sverige>), and engages with Swedish decision-makers in government and other sectors regularly as part of the organisation's advocacy work.

HRW SWEDEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH'S WORK

Human Rights Watch Inc. is a nonprofit, nongovernmental human rights organization first established in 1978 and headquartered in New York that closely coordinates with a network of 12 independent sister charities that share its name (hereinafter "Human Rights Watch"), including HRW Sweden. This network encompasses roughly 430 human rights professionals, including country experts, lawyers, journalists, and academics of diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

Human Rights Watch is known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of media, and targeted advocacy, often in partnership with local civil society groups. Each year, Human Rights Watch publishes more than 100 reports and briefings on human rights conditions in some 90 countries, generating extensive coverage in local and international media. With the leverage this brings, Human Rights Watch meets with governments, the United Nations, regional groups like the African Union and the European Union, financial institutions, and corporations to press for changes in policy and practice that promote human rights and justice around the world. HRW Sweden participates in these activities whenever effective strategy calls for its involvement. For additional information about Human Rights Watch research on Sweden, please go to the Sweden country research page at <https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/sweden>.

On the cover: A screenshot from our video, "[Widespread Rape in the Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya in Burma](#)." Burmese security forces committed widespread rape of women and girls as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Rakhine State. © 2017 Human Rights Watch

HOW HRW SWEDEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH WORK

1. *We investigate.* HRW Sweden, and Human Rights Watch are committed to systematically researching and analysing human rights conditions worldwide to uncover abuses. Researchers interview leaders, victims and witnesses so that they can form an accurate picture of what happened. They also review media and academic reports, and domestic and international law and policy papers to gain a further understanding of the situation.
2. *We expose.* All researchers in the Human Rights Watch network, including those serving HRW Sweden, publish their findings in the form of reports and articles. These are then made accessible to the public as well as local authorities to raise awareness of the abuses. The publications are available in multiple languages and formats and are often referenced in news articles worldwide.
3. *We make change.* Following the identification and publication of human rights abuses, advocates for HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch work closely with local authorities and organisations to achieve accountability and put an end to the abuses that they have discovered. The ultimate goal of all advocates in the Human Rights Watch network is to ensure that human rights are upheld worldwide and to promote justice and change.



Akshaya Kumar, Human Rights Watch deputy United Nations director, crossing the tidal levy between Shah Porir Diip island and Tek Naf, Bangladesh, while investigating atrocities by Burmese security forces against ethnic Rohingya in Burma's Rakhine State. © 2017 Anastasia Taylor-Lind for Human Rights Watch

ACHIEVEMENTS IN SWEDEN

Since opening the Stockholm Office in September 2015, HRW Sweden has hosted a range of events to grow its local community and further deepened its relationships with existing and potential supporters, as well as with key advocacy targets and media contacts. HRW Sweden was pleased to be selected as a beneficiary of the Swedish Postcode Lottery starting in 2016. Using funds raised in Sweden, the Board of HRW Sweden has decided to support several projects this past year, including:

Protecting Civilians in Syria

Seven years since it began, the war in Syria has grown increasingly complex. Men, women, and children endure daily atrocities, living in constant fear and struggling to meet their most basic needs. Against this chaotic backdrop, Human Rights Watch has played a leading role in exposing egregious human rights violations and advocating for their end.

We documented the use of [chemical weapons](#), with all evidence pointing to the Syrian government as the perpetrator. We exposed the US-led coalition's apparent [failure](#) to take adequate precautions to safeguard civilians, and indiscriminate attacks by the Syria-Russia alliance in [de-escalation zones](#), including with prohibited cluster and incendiary munitions.

As the Syrian government, Russia, and neighboring states stepped up their rhetoric on refugee returns, we documented unlawful returns from [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), and [Turkey](#) while highlighting [obstacles](#) the Syrian government was creating to stop some Syrians from returning home.

In a positive step forward, our [report](#) on Iran's use of Afghan child soldiers in Syria helped push the government of Afghanistan and members of Parliament to ask Iran to ensure that children are not used in the war. Our documentation and advocacy around the humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta also helped push the UN Security Council to pass a unanimous [resolution](#) calling for humanitarian assistance to the besieged enclave.

In the aftermath of the April 2018 chemical attack in Douma, we redoubled our efforts at the UN and in world capitals to counter Russia's attempts to stymie justice and accountability. Following an enormous joint advocacy initiative led by Human Rights Watch, a crucial mechanism was created for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks in Syria and elsewhere. It will lay the groundwork for accountability over grave crimes in Syria for years to come.

Shackling

Around the world, countless people with psychosocial conditions suffer abuses in institutions or are locked away for years, some without adequate food, water, or access to mental health services. In some countries, people with mental health conditions are often chained in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions. Shackling of this nature amounts to torture.

Human Rights Watch is working to eliminate shackling worldwide and is engaging with the Swedish public and policymakers to take a leading role on promoting alternatives to this abusive practice. We are building a global coalition – the first of its kind - of mental health experts, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), donor governments, and people with psychosocial disabilities themselves, to document and promote best practices to support people with mental health conditions. Together, we have seen incredible impact from our recent work:

The Ministry of Social Affairs in Indonesia has trained more than 25,000 health workers and provided medication to 3,000 community health centers – and has committed to do the same for all 9,500 centers in Indonesia by 2019. They have also taken steps to integrate mental health into their primary health care system, and have delivered mental health services and information to more than 16 million households this year alone.

Ghana’s Mental Health Authority took steps to [release](#) all people held in shackles at the Nyakumasi Prayer Camp last year, including girls as young as 12-years-old, and the Ghanaian Mental Health Authority announced that the government would finally enforce the ban on shackling.



Indonesia’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted an investigation—its second ever—into shackling and places of detention for people with psychosocial disabilities. Following the NHRC inspection, people with psychosocial disabilities were no longer chained at one facility featured heavily in our reporting. Left: a man with a psychosocial disability lies chained at the wrist on a platform bed at the Bina Lestari healing center in Brebes, Central Java. © 2016 Andrea Star Reese/Human Rights Watch

Defending LGBT Rights Around the World

We continue to stand up for the safety and dignity of LGBT people wherever they are threatened, to condemn abuse, amplify the voices of those affected, and call for lasting change.

This past year the LGBT community faced significant challenges, from arbitrary arrests and violence to state-sponsored discrimination. We exposed episodes of brutal homophobic government crackdowns in [Azerbaijan](#), [Chechnya](#), [Egypt](#), [Indonesia](#), [Tajikistan](#), and [Tanzania](#). For activists, it was a year of responding to a seemingly endless cycle of unfolding crises; we reviewed and produced more than 150 published products that help us push for change in the lives of LGBT people.

Among egregious abuses of the past year, there was also remarkable progress. We celebrated Finland, Germany, Malta, and Australia's embrace of [marriage equality](#), and the overturning of discriminatory laws in [Taiwan](#) and [Austria](#).

We continued to tackle deeply stigmatized issues and shed a light on abuses that had long been ignored and discounted. We made gains in [Tunisia](#) and [Kenya](#) in our advocacy campaign to end forced anal exams and continue to gain momentum for further advancements. We published our first [report](#) on the rights of intersex people, which led to groundbreaking victories with national medical associations in the United States. The hard-fought traction we secured with our partners this year is promising, but significant challenges remain to secure rights for LGBT people worldwide.

In January, we published "[No Choice but to Deny Who I Am](#)," a report on discrimination and violence against LGBT people in Ghana, followed in April by another report on abuses in the Eastern Caribbean, "[I Have to Leave to Be Me](#)," which includes an [interactive feature](#) sharing interviewees' personal stories of struggle, resilience, and hope for a better future.

NO LONGER ALONE LGBT VOICES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



To confront myths and counteract the isolation of many LGBT people in the Middle East and North Africa, Human Rights Watch and partner, AFE, teamed up to produce videos featuring Arabic-speaking LGBT activists describing their journeys of self-acceptance. The videos offer messages of support and encouragement to LGBT people throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Pictured: a screenshot from "['No Longer Alone': LGBT Voices from the Middle East, North Africa](#)." © 2018 Human Rights Watch

Refugee Rights in the Middle East and Europe

Long-running conflicts continue to rage throughout the Middle East and Africa, putting millions of civilian lives at risk and forcing people to seek safety across borders. In this challenging landscape, Human Rights Watch has worked to protect the rights of refugees at every step of their journey towards a safe and secure home. Our work over the past year led to promising results:

In Iraq, our [research](#) and advocacy helped push the government to close a so-called “rehabilitation camp” for families of suspected Islamic State (ISIS) fighters that punished civilians, including women and children, for their perceived connection to ISIS suspects. In Jordan, authorities agreed to an [amnesty](#) that allows Syrian refugees in urban areas to regularize their residency status. We have long called for this step to improve the well-being of refugee families and children’s chances of attending school. By late March, more than 22,000 Syrians living unofficially in urban areas had already signed up to regularize their status.

We trained a spotlight on the dire rights situation for hundreds of thousands of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Europe. We exposed rights violations related to [appalling reception conditions](#) on the Greek islands, poor conditions and [automatic detention for boat migrants](#) in Spain, [police abuse](#) of migrants in France, abuses of those making [dangerous journeys](#) from Libya to Italy, and abusive border policies in Turkey, [Hungary](#), and Poland.

Our [multimedia feature](#) documenting a two-week rescue mission in the Mediterranean sea and the European Union’s containment policies in Libya was viewed more than 100,000 times on [Facebook](#), bringing a human angle to the immigration debate. In response to a joint digital advocacy campaign, [#opentheislands](#), Greece committed to moving thousands of asylum seekers who were trapped in worsening winter weather conditions on the islands to better accommodations on the mainland. As a result of our advocacy efforts, more than 7,000 vulnerable women, men and children were transferred to safety on mainland Greece.



Protecting Ethnic Minorities in Burma

We played a crucial role in alerting the world to the scale and gravity of the Rohingya crisis when it unraveled in August 2017. Our researchers immediately mobilized to the frontlines to interview refugees and collect harrowing accounts of massacres, sexual violence, and other atrocities. We documented arson, killings, and rape, and published [satellite images](#) of more than 200 Rohingya villages destroyed, showing how the military's campaign amounted to [crimes against humanity](#). Throughout the crisis, we ran a [live blog](#) and issued a steady stream of [publications](#), Facebook Live [events](#), and [digital stories](#) and outreach.

Our groundbreaking [report](#) and [video](#), exposed how the Burmese military used rape as a weapon of war against Rohingya women and girls. The report garnered significant local, regional, and global media attention. More than 49,000 people tuned into our Facebook [live stream](#) of the press conference.

Using our firsthand testimony, our global network of advocates applied intense pressure on state, regional, and international institutions, urging them to support targeted sanctions on individuals implicated in the violence and to impose an arms embargo against Burma. Through briefings and appeals, we successfully strengthened policy statements and positions from a range of institutions, including the European Union, the UN Security Council, and the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict. We helped secure passage of a robust EU resolution that calls for an accountability mechanism, provides resources for preserving crucial evidence, and lays the groundwork for involvement by the International Criminal Court (ICC).



This is a screenshot from our video, "[Widespread Rape in the Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya in Burma.](#)" Burmese security forces committed widespread rape of women and girls as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Rakhine State. © 2017 Human Rights Watch

European Union and Western Balkans

Our team of researchers, advocates, and staff worked tenaciously over the past year to address a range of human rights issues and sustain a rigorous defense of fundamental freedoms in Western Europe.

We documented the rights implications of [counterterrorism laws](#) and policies in France and other EU states and shone a spotlight on [critical issues](#) in the Western Balkans, including [abuses against migrants and asylum seekers](#) and accountability for war crimes.

We challenged [radical right populism](#) drawing attention to the dangers it poses to European values and human rights. Our [commentary](#) aimed at audiences in France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom highlighted the positions of key political parties on human rights issues. We shed light on the normalization of deeply divisive and hateful rhetoric from leaders and abusive policies espoused by radical right populist parties and mainstream parties that seek to emulate them.

We documented efforts by populist governments in Poland and Hungary to weaken media freedom, hollow out the rule of law, and undermine judicial independence. In a [report](#) documenting the scale of Poland's authoritarian slide, we highlighted the consequences for women's rights and the rights of asylum seekers. We fought to preserve space for the work of local groups targeted by anti-NGO laws, funding restrictions, and smear campaigns. With the Hungarian and Polish governments acting in open defiance of the founding values of the European Union, we pressed EU institutions and member states to hold them to account. We initiated a [campaign to expel Hungary's ruling Fidesz party](#) from the European People's Party (EPP), a political group in the EU. The alliance with the EPP has shielded Fidesz from much of the criticism that has been directed at Poland over similar issues. Our joint advocacy in partnership with international and Polish NGOs has been important in maintaining the resolve of the EU institutions to tackle Poland's rule-of-law crisis and shoring up support for a [crucial vote by European Parliament](#) to launch a political sanctions process against Hungary's government over its sustained assault on democratic institutions.

Engaging Swedish Media on Human Rights

Over the course of the last year, more than 7,000 Swedish articles referred to Human Rights Watch's work. Key radio and news outlets regularly interview, and often seek out, our Sweden Director [Måns Molander](#), researchers, and advocates for expert advice with a human rights perspective on current political affairs. Our staff were regularly interviewed by [Advokaten](#), [Swedish Radio](#), [SVT](#), [TV4](#), [Dagens Nyheter](#), [Svenska Dagbladet](#), and TT News Agency, among many other news outlets. As a result, Human Rights Watch is becoming one of the leading commentators in Sweden on global human rights issues. Social media plays a role in that too, and we have grown our Swedish presence with a newly established Swedish [Facebook](#) page, augmenting regular posts on [Twitter](#) and our [Swedish-language website](#).

Advocating with Swedish Government Officials

We continuously raise our research and recommendations on pressing human rights issues with Swedish decision-makers. To maximize impact, we decided to focus our advocacy on thematic areas where we believe Sweden can make a significant difference at the international level—namely women's rights and human rights in Syria and Myanmar.

Syria: Last year, Human Rights Watch conducted groundbreaking research on accountability in Swedish courts for war crimes committed in Syria. In October 2017, we released a [report](#) of our findings and held a series of advocacy meetings with authorities, government representatives, and NGOs in Stockholm. We also arranged a [seminar at Parliament](#) and a round table seminar at Human Rights Watch's offices.

Our advocacy and report attracted significant attention in [international](#) and [local](#) media, and the recommendations to Sweden prompted a welcoming [public reaction](#) from Swedish prosecution authorities.

Myanmar: We approached the Swedish government, on several occasions and on multiple levels, about the Myanmar and Rohingya crisis. Our Sweden Director met with Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, for example, ahead of the minister's trip to Myanmar in November. We also advocated with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials in Stockholm for increased attention to Myanmar at the UN Security Council, on which Sweden is serving as a member from 2017 through 2018. In a letter to the Swedish Foreign Minister, we asked for a stronger focus, at the Security Council, on the issue of sexual violence in Myanmar. Our advocacy helped convince Sweden, together with the United Kingdom, to increase their activity and raise the public profile of the Myanmar crisis at the Security Council, and to call it to meet on the issue. The meeting led to a public statement that expressed concern about reports of excessive violence—the first Security Council statement in nine years on the situation in Myanmar. Our advocacy also helped strengthen the focus on sexual violence in the Security Council's discussions on the Rohingya crisis in December.

Women's rights: We continued to press the Swedish government to implement its feminist foreign policy generally on the Security Council. Following the United States' reinstatement and expansion of the Global Gag Rule, we urged Sweden to step up and take increased political responsibility for [women's sexual and reproductive health](#). The gag rule strips foreign NGOs of all US health funding if they offer information about abortions, provide abortions, or advocate liberalizing abortion laws—even if an NGO funds those specific activities from other sources. We continued to call upon the Swedish government to help mitigate the negative impact of this harmful "rule" by allocating [resources to reproductive health services](#) that might be crippled by a loss of US funding. We were pleased that the Foreign Minister asked us for advice on various international women's rights issues.

Conducting Outreach from Stockholm

The most successful outreach event of the many we have hosted in the last year, was undoubtedly the third annual Stockholm [Voices for Justice Dinner](#) on May 8th, 2018. Over 100 guests attended, and we raised over 2,6 m SEK.

We have also fostered partnerships with Swedish non-governmental organizations. Together with the UN Development Program and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, we arranged, in January, a [seminar on the State of Human Rights](#). The event's 110 tickets sold out in one day. In May, we had a [seminar with the Swedish Burma Committee](#) on how to secure accountability for the atrocities committed in Myanmar against the Rohingya population. We also explored a potential cooperation with the Raoul Wallenberg Academy about how to strengthen young people in Sweden to reject xenophobic and anti-democratic messages and stand up for human rights. As in the previous year, we hosted a [panel debate in Almedalen](#) with Amnesty International on challenges for human rights and democracy Sweden.

As we have expanded our media presence and deepened networks with policymakers and the Swedish government, our base in Stockholm has grown. In January, the one staff member was joined by three new employees, plus an intern. Similarly, our community of supporters in Sweden developed into an official Human Rights Watch Committee. The Committee's now 20 members—from various backgrounds and walks of life—support our fundraising, advocacy, and outreach efforts throughout Sweden.

EVALUATION OF HRW SWEDEN'S PROGRESS

HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch are committed to rigorous, transparent, and consistent monitoring and self-evaluation. When looking at impact, the Human Rights Watch network determines whether it has met its goals to bring about positive change for those facing human rights violations. HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch consider input on progress from key interlocutors, local human rights partners, and critics. They gauge how effectively they have allocated resources. To ensure that the Human Rights Watch network reaches the highest standards of accuracy and objectivity in its research and achieves the greatest impact from its advocacy, it engages in self-evaluation throughout the year.

Often, since it takes a great deal of time to bring entrenched human rights abuses to an end, HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch consider interim criteria for evaluation. These include whether they have succeeded in generating prominent Swedish press coverage about abuses they investigate; whether the Swedish or other governments act on our revelations by protesting the abuses or exerting diplomatic or economic pressure on the abusive government; whether we succeeded in building or protecting Swedish opposition to abuses; whether and how Swedish and other governments engage with the Human Rights Watch network or adopt and implement new policies to address the abuses it identifies and documents; and whether efforts are reflected in support from public media and Swedish donors.

On these criteria, there have been considerable accomplishments in the last year. HRW Sweden arranged more than 100 advocacy meetings with key decision-makers in Sweden. HRW Sweden also held several events to raise funds and showcase Human Rights Watch researchers and their work, including its Voices for Justice Dinner in Stockholm that raised a record high. In the last year, HRW Sweden continued to foster partnerships with other non-governmental organizations and built up a team of staff and fully engaged operations in Stockholm.

HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch recognize the critical role of partnerships and beneficiaries in all their work, including the planning and evaluation process. When the Human Rights Watch network evaluates its work it regularly speaks to victims, partner groups, advocacy targets, media, and others. Their feedback is invaluable in helping the organization further improve its strategies on a project basis and design and implement subsequent projects to be undertaken by HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch.

[Human Rights Watch](#) defends the rights of people worldwide. We scrupulously investigate abuses, expose the facts widely, and pressure those with power to respect rights and secure justice. Human Rights Watch is an independent, international organization that works as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all.

Human Rights Watch prints all of our reports in-house on 100% recycled paper. Our industrial printers and toner follow LEED standards. We work to ensure the most sustainable and cost-effective distribution of our publications, including electronic versions on our website.

HRW.org.