

2011 Annual Report



American ideals. Universal values.



Eleanor Roosevelt in 1948 with the newly adopted Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“Thank you [Human Rights First] for being so important and so relevant to our country and to the world.... [Y]ou bring us back to core values.”

—Senator Chuck Hagel

IT WAS AN AMERICAN who led efforts at the United Nations more than 60 years ago to forge international agreement around a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Without Eleanor Roosevelt’s leadership, the “Magna Carta of all mankind” may never have emerged. American leadership was essential then, and it is so today.

That is why at Human Rights First our central mission is to foster American global leadership on human rights. We challenge our country to be the “shining city on a hill” that our Founding Fathers envisioned. How well it lives up to that vision makes an enormous difference. When it falls short, tyrants find a shield—and an excuse. And the consequences can be dire, even deadly.

But when the United States leads by the power of its example, it can be an unparalleled force for good. Human rights activists everywhere look to the United States for inspiration, and count on it for support.

Today, the U.S. economy continues to struggle, the military is stretched

thin, and our politics seem hopelessly dysfunctional. Many argue that the United States is in decline. Is this any time to talk about American leadership?

I say it is. Because it is not a vibrant economy or a powerful military or a peaceable body politic (if we ever had one) that has made the United States a beacon. Our country’s ideals are the source of its strength, the substance of its soul. As President Jimmy Carter once said, “America didn’t invent human rights; human rights invented America.”

We believe that respect for human rights is the bedrock on which to build a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world. This conviction—that freedom is foundational—is why we call ourselves Human Rights First.

Every day, we put that belief into action. In this report, you will read about the tangible difference we’ve made over the last year in the lives of people seeking freedom and dignity—protecting the persecuted, speaking truth to power, and bringing Americans



from across the political spectrum together in common cause. We will never stop pressing our country to lead, to heed the call of Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, who said, “Use your freedom to promote ours.” Thank you for partnering with us to ensure that America remains a beacon of hope for the world.

Elisa Massimino
President and CEO
Human Rights First

Challenging Proponents of Torture

At Human Rights First, we don’t just preach to the choir. After the Osama bin Laden operation, Elisa Massimino went to the conservative American Enterprise Institute to debate prominent torture proponents: former Attorney General Michael Mukasey, former Bush speechwriter Marc Thiessen, and John Yoo, author of the infamous “torture memos.”



Challenging the United States to Lead

ON HUMAN RIGHTS, the United States must be a beacon. Activists fighting for freedom around the globe continue to look to our country for inspiration and count on us for support.

Upholding human rights is not only a moral obligation; it is a vital national interest. America is strongest when our policies and actions match our values.

Human Rights First is an independent advocacy and action organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals.

We believe American leadership is essential in the struggle for human rights, so we press the U.S. government and American companies to respect human rights and the rule of law. When they fall short, we step

in to demand reform, accountability, and justice.

Around the world, we work where we can best harness American influence to secure core freedoms.

We know that it is not enough to expose and protest injustice, so we work to create the political environment and policy solutions necessary to ensure consistent respect for human rights.

Whether we are protecting refugees, combating torture, or defending persecuted minorities, we focus not on making a point, but on making a difference. For over 30 years, we have built bipartisan coalitions and teamed up with frontline activists and lawyers to tackle issues that demand American leadership.

"Human Rights First believes, as I do, that democracy and human rights are essential to social progress."

—Madeleine K. Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, 1997-2001

The Importance of American Leadership

When the United States leads on human rights, other countries follow. When it doesn't, other countries often do not fill the void—tyrants and dictators do. This year, we called on the U.S. government to lead an international effort to stop the slaughter in Syria.

JULY 27, 2011

Los Angeles Times

hftimes.com

HUMAN-RIGHTS GROUPS URGE ACTION ON SYRIA

BY BORZOU DARAGAH, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Reporting from Beirut — A trio of major human-rights groups on Wednesday sounded separate alarms about the violent crackdown against the pro-democracy movement in Syria, accusing the regime of war crimes and urging the international community to hand the leadership in Damascus before a tribunal.

More than 1,400 Syrians have been killed in the nearly 4-month-old uprising, which seeks to bring democracy to a nation that has been run by the family of President Bashar Assad

or its political allies since 1963. Human Rights First, a Washington-based advocacy group urged United Nations Security Council members to take action. "The situation in Syria cannot be allowed to deteriorate further," Neil Hicks of Human Rights First said in a statement. "The U.S. government must lead international efforts to adopt a resolution condemning Syria's actions at the U.N. Security Council. Syria's leaders should be put on notice that they will be held to account for their actions."

At least 16 people were killed Tuesday and Wednesday in Hama, the country's fourth-largest city, during a crackdown that began after large crowds gathered for weekly protests Friday in the city's central square. Residents interviewed by the New York-based group Human Rights Watch said authorities are rounding up all males ages 10 to 45 at checkpoints or during raids of specific homes. "The forces would surround a building with a big number of cars, then go inside to arrest

Making the National Security Case for Human Rights

NO OTHER area of policy in recent times has strained America's commitment to human rights more than the struggle against al Qaeda. Yet this tension presents an opportunity to challenge the notion that rights and security are alternatives in a zero-sum game. With the help of an unprecedented coalition of more than 50 retired generals and admirals, we are mounting that challenge.

The military leaders with whom we work know firsthand that our nation is stronger—and safer—when, as General David Petraeus urges, we “live our values.” Together with this distinguished group, we are building a consensus against torture and in favor of strong, rights-respecting national security policies consistent with American ideals and international law.

In 2011, the demise of Osama bin Laden reignited a public debate about torture's efficacy. So we joined forces with Senator John McCain, a fierce opponent of torture and a victim of it himself, to push back. We engineered a swift and emphatic response to the torture lobby, ensuring that the voices of national security experts—like those in our military coalition—were front and center. Thanks to our work, the effort by torture apologists fizzled. We will continue to face

“Your keen appreciation that the United States has a solemn duty to ensure the security of its citizens while remaining faithful to our values has given your voice special credibility among governmental decision-makers, military leaders, and the human rights community.”

—Senator John McCain, in a letter to Human Rights First President and CEO Elisa Massimino

down those who seek to take our nation back to the “dark side.” We are winning the argument.

One of our central objectives in 2011 was to preserve federal court jurisdiction over terrorism cases in the face of a push in Congress to send them all to Guantanamo for military tribunals. Our seminal report *In Pursuit of Justice*, authored for us by two former federal prosecutors, forms the basis

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DEFEATED LEGISLATION THAT WOULD HAVE REAUTHORIZED “ENHANCED INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES.”

of our argument. As we worked to create the political space for civilian trials, the United States transferred Ahmed Ghailani, self-professed al Qaeda operative, from Guantanamo to New York to stand trial. His conviction in a fair and smooth trial vindicated our approach.

We achieved a breakthrough in our effort to bring accountability to the Wild West world of private security contractors with the launch of an unprecedented International Code of Conduct. The code exposes

companies to independent assessments of their operations. At the same time, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted unanimously to approve the Civilian Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (CEJA). We have been a driving force behind CEJA, which will close gaps in U.S. law, making it easier to prosecute security contractors for serious human rights abuses.

Our focus on the treatment of detainees at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan continued, with a particular emphasis on defending their due process rights. After a fact-finding mission, we published a groundbreaking report revealing that more than 1,500 detainees at Bagram lack access to counsel and are often detained based on secret evidence. Publicity around our report helped us secure a provision in the otherwise disastrous 2012 Defense Authorization Act that authorizes lawyers for some Bagram detainees. During the debate over that bill, we blocked a measure that would have reinstituted the Bush-Cheney torture program, another sign we are winning the argument against torture.

Fighting Fear

To cut through the fear that clouds the debate over national security, we rely on arguments grounded in facts and reason. As our military-leader partners often point out—including retired Generals Joseph Hoar and Charles Krulak, on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*—Americans need to reject fear and embrace their ideals.



LIVING OUR VALUES

The United States is stronger and safer when it acts in accordance with its ideals. This fact informs all of our national security work. Above, General David Petraeus—as shown in an anti-torture TV ad we produced—says, “I don’t think we should be afraid to live our values.”





Protecting the Persecuted

2011 MARKED the 125th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, a potent symbol of our country as a refuge for “huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” To ensure that this remains not just an ideal but also reality, we advance laws and policies that treat refugees fairly and help persecuted individuals gain protection.

Every year, thousands of refugees arrive in the United States seeking asylum: survivors of torture and genocide; women escaping the threat of “honor killings;” and people persecuted because of race, religion, political views, or sexual orientation. But all too often they end up behind bars, left to navigate an immigration system that is daunting even for native English speakers.

They need lawyers, and most can’t afford them. This is where we step in. We operate one of the largest and most successful pro bono asylum legal representation programs in the country. We train lawyers from top firms to take on these cases. Together we’ve helped thousands of persecuted refugees gain the protection they deserve and begin new lives in safety and freedom. This year, we provided

“The assistance that Human Rights First provides to the [pro bono] law firms is really beyond helpful. They are the experts.”

—Daniel Brown, partner, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP

services worth \$30 million to more than 800 clients, winning about 90 percent of our cases.

The impact could not be more dramatic: safety instead of danger, freedom instead of oppression, and sometimes life instead of

2011 VICTORY

**LEVERAGED \$30M OF DONATED
LEGAL SERVICES TO PROTECT
800 PERSECUTED REFUGEES,
WINNING 90% OF OUR CASES.**

death. Our clients are people like C.K., a gay man who faced terrible persecution in his native Peru. His father beat him and threatened to kill him. When he was in high school, a group of men in the street attacked him. The police refused to take action, saying he deserved the abuse.

He fled to the United States in 2002 and, after years of living here, he found his way to us. Refugees are

required to file for asylum within a year of their arrival—an arbitrary and often unrealistic deadline—but C.K. received an exemption because of extraordinary circumstances: he had HIV/AIDS, which would only intensify his persecution were he to return to Peru. We recruited an attorney, Audrey Powers of Fish & Richardson P.C., who helped him win asylum in 2011.

We also work to make the asylum system more just and efficient. For example, we’ve long called for an end to the one-year filing deadline, which leads to the deportation to danger of many vulnerable people. In 2011, at an event we organized, the Obama Administration committed publicly to support this crucial reform.

And thanks in part to our advocacy, the U.S. government pledged in 2009 to reform its detention system and stop holding asylum seekers in places meant for criminals. This year, as we pressed the government to fulfill that commitment, we published a report detailing progress and what remains to be done.



To Fix Problems, We First Expose Them

Our on-the-ground research exposes human rights problems and informs our recommendations to solve them.

In 2011, the *New York Times* editorial page cited our groundbreaking report, *Jails and Jumpsuits*, to support its call for reform of the immigration detention system.



Supporting Human Rights in the Middle East

THIS WAS the year of the Arab Spring. While the democratic uprisings had various causes, they are, at their core, about citizens demanding recognition of what belongs to them: their human rights.

Having worked in the region for years, we were in a position to aid activists leading these movements. Historically, the United States has backed dictators in the name of stability, but as the uprisings exposed once and for all the bankruptcy of this approach, we promoted policies grounded in human rights. While American foreign policy will vary from country to country, its basic commitment to core freedoms should be consistent.

As always, we're focusing on countries where the United States has the strongest influence—in this case, longtime American allies Egypt and Bahrain.

The democratic uprising in Bahrain is proportionally the largest in the region, and the monarchy there has shot at, detained,



"Thanks Human Rights First for standing with me when I most needed it."

—Dr. Nada Dhaif, one of twenty medics who have been persecuted for treating democracy protesters injured during the crackdown in Bahrain

and tortured activists. We partnered with activists in Bahrain to highlight their plight and to get them heard in Washington, D.C.

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**BLOCKED \$53M U.S. ARMS SALE TO
BAHRAIN AS IT CRACKED DOWN
ON PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTORS.**

And because of our on-the-ground research exposing these abuses, we gained an online following of Bahrainis and became a go-to source in the press.

It is in both the moral and strategic interest of the United States to stand with people, not their oppressors. Armed with our research, we were able to put the brakes on the U.S. government's planned \$53 million weapons sale to the regime.

The overthrow of the Mubarak regime was transformational, but as the ongoing unrest

demonstrates, it was only the beginning of Egypt's transition to democracy.

We're supporting activists as they work to complete their revolution, with a focus on building civil society, protecting Internet freedom, and securing fair elections. We won a crucial victory when the military regime agreed to admit international monitors for parliamentary elections in November.

Those elections produced a large turnout and were largely free of fraud and intimidation. The success of the Islamist constituencies, including the ultra-conservative Salafis, is no reason to give up on the electoral process. But the continuing crackdown on activists and women threatens this process and the entire democratic transition, and we're calling on the United States to use its considerable leverage to compel the military regime to respect human rights.

Reality that Matches Rhetoric

"We seek to place the United States on the side of human rights, in deed as well as word." Interviewed on NPR, Human Rights First's Brian Dooley said the proposed U.S. sale of arms to Bahrain would hurt the pro-democracy movement there as well as the image of the United States.



NO U.S. WEAPONS FOR BAHRAIN

In 2011, as the Bahraini regime brutally cracked down on democratic protestors, we helped block the U.S. sale of \$53 million of weapons to its ally. Backing activists, not their oppressors, is the right choice both morally and strategically for the United States.



U.S. Looks To Sell Military Equipment To Bahrain

By Jackie Northam
October 7, 2011

MELISSA BLOCK, HOST: The Obama administration is looking to sell the Bahrain more than \$50 million worth of military equipment and support. And the timing of that move is facing criticism. Human rights groups and some members of Congress point out that the Bahraini government has been violently cracking down on pro-democracy protesters. And they say an arms deal would reward Bahrain for bad behavior, as NPR's Jackie Northam reports. JACKIE NORTHAM, BYLINE: The \$53 million arms deal for Bahrain would include armored Humvees and anti-tank missiles. Bahrain is a long-time ally of Washington and the U.S. Fifth Fleet is based in the tiny island nation. In normal circumstances, an arms deal such as this would not seem out of the ordinary. In fact, the U.S. sold about \$200 million worth of military equipment and support in 2010. But since February, Bahrain has been in the grip of its own Arab Spring and the country's rulers have cracked down hard on protesters and their sympathizers, most of whom are from the majority Shiite community. Brian Dooley, with the Human Rights First organization, says he's staggered the US would sell arms to

Charting the Promise and Peril of New Technologies

A photograph of a person at a protest, holding a laptop and a tablet. The tablet screen displays a video of a protest. The person is wearing a yellow sweater. The background is a blurred crowd of people at night.

IN 2011, repressive regimes tried to quash Arab Spring uprisings using traditional, brutal methods: mass arrests, detention, and torture. But they also had new weapons at their disposal.

After torturing 39-year-old activist Abdul Ghani Al Khanjar with stiff rubber hoses, Bahraini officials showed him transcripts of his text messages and cell phone conversations. The government had spied on him with surveillance software it bought from Western companies.

Regimes have used such software and the Internet to spy on thousands of activists. "This is a commerce of death for the companies that place this technology in the hands of dictatorships," says Saeid Pourheydar, a journalist tortured at Evin Prison in Iran.

The Arab Spring revealed the potential of new technologies to organize protests and increase political freedom, but governments are attempting to hijack them. Whether they remain instruments of progress will depend on the actions of governments and technology companies, which both have obligations to respect human rights in the digital realm.

“Special thanks to Human Rights First, who have been supporting the people of #Bahrain & the doctors from the very beginning.”

—@angryarabiya—Zaynab al-Khawaja—daughter of imprisoned activist

Internet freedom should be a cornerstone of American foreign policy. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has articulated a promising vision; now the Obama Administration must act on it. We achieved

2011 VICTORY

SECURED \$28M IN U.S. GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO PROTECT ONLINE ACTIVISTS AROUND THE WORLD.

one of our goals this year when the State Department invested \$28 million in grants to support Internet activists around the world. The funding will help “netizens” protect themselves from persecution.

We believe companies must respect the right to privacy and free expression, and we hold them accountable when they fall short. To help companies understand and implement their obligations, we co-founded the Global Network Initiative (GNI), an accountability effort that brings together tech companies and human rights groups. GNI’s members—which include Google, Microsoft,

and Yahoo—commit to putting human rights principles into practice and submit to external assessments of their performance.

To highlight the needs of activists, we teamed up with Esraa Abdel Fattah. Known as “Facebook Girl,” she’s a leader of the Egyptian revolution who knows firsthand both the promise and perils of online activism. We brought her to meet with Facebook executives, and she urged them to make the safety of activists a priority.

Also this year, our President and CEO Elisa Massimino testified before Congress in support of the Online Freedom Act, a bill that would prevent U.S. companies from selling surveillance and censorship technologies to repressive governments. “Corporate thinking and behavior need to change in order for companies to become partners protecting freedom of information and digital privacy,” she said.

Promoting Human Rights Worldwide

Building on many years of experience working in Egypt, we supported Arab Spring activists in 2011. For CNN, Human Rights First President and CEO Elisa Massimino discussed the Internet shutdown in Egypt, urging activists and their supporters to “get ahead of events in the next round of the fight between censor and citizen.”



“FACEBOOK GIRL” GOES TO WASHINGTON

Esraa Abdel Fattah, a co-founder of Egypt’s April 6 Youth Movement, helped organize the protests that overthrew the Mubarak regime. In 2011, we brought her to D.C., where she met with politicians, tech executives, and students at McKinley Technology High School.





Stopping Violence Rooted in Hatred

HATE CRIMES ALTER—and sometimes end—lives. They create fear that extends well beyond the primary victims to oppress entire communities, and if people live in fear, they cannot live freely.

In other words, hate crimes are a serious human rights problem. Preventing them is a priority for us.

Alongside other groups, we've fought for strong hate crime laws in the United States; as a result, the country has a system capable of prosecuting, punishing, and preventing bias-related violence. We work with European governments to institute similar capacities. And we aim to increase American leadership, pressing the U.S. government to speak out and take action on behalf of persecuted minorities.

Laws are essential but insufficient. Our influential Ten-Point Plan recommends that governments not only enact and enforce laws but also identify and condemn hate crimes, report on them, undertake special inquiries, reach out to community groups, empower

“Human Rights First was the first, if not only, human rights organization to understand that we have to deal with hate crimes first and foremost.”

–Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

anti-discrimination bodies, and encourage international cooperation.

But we take an even wider view of this issue, targeting the intolerance that spawns hate crimes. Laws that discriminate against

2011 VICTORY

**U.N. ADOPTED OUR CALL TO
IMPROVE TREATMENT OF LGTBI
REFUGEES AND VICTIMS OF SEXUAL
AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.**

minorities often inspire violence, so we work to block hateful legislation, like Uganda’s infamous “Kill the Gays” bill. And because hate speech often leads to hate crimes, we counter it, not with laws but with more speech.

In 2011, an Italian man with links to an extremist group went on a shooting spree in Florence, killing two Senegalese traders and injuring another three before turning the gun on himself. In Italy and in other countries,

xenophobic violence is increasing, so this year we intensified our efforts to prevent it. We published a Framework for Action, which outlines several steps states should take to protect migrants and refugees from violence.

Much of our work in this area centers on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which, because of our efforts, is the only international body that formally recognizes hate crimes. This year we helped to produce a Memorandum of Understanding that allows the U.N. Refugee Agency to tap into OSCE’s resources as it combats hate crimes against refugees and migrants.

We also worked to strengthen the U.N.’s protection of refugees who face persecution because of their sexual orientation. At our urging, the U.N. Refugee Agency adopted new policies and guidelines on working with LGBTI refugees and victims of sexual and gender-based violence.



EXPOSING ANTISEMITISM

At Human Rights First, we treat antisemitism for what it is—a serious human rights problem. Human Rights First President and CEO Elisa Massimino [left] went to the State Department to discuss the rise of antisemitism, and what we can do to stop it.

A Go-To Source

A range of publications seeks our input on human rights issues. In 2011, the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, a global news service, asked us to comment on hate crimes in Europe.



November 18, 2011

Report: Hate crimes data in Europe inadequate

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The European body monitoring hate crimes said that governments fail to provide adequate data.

A report on hate crimes in 2010 released this month by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe found that some states do not collect any data at all on such crimes, a finding that was backed by the Anti-Defamation League and Human Rights First.

“Significant gaps in data collection remain a major obstacle to understanding the prevalence and nature of hate crimes within most participating states and across the OSCE as a region,” said the report by the organization’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. “A number of participating states do not collect any statistics at all on hate crimes. Some participating states

collect data, but do not make the data public.”

“Creating a uniform standard for hate crimes reporting and getting nations in the 56-member OSCE to comply has for years dogged hate crimes reporting, despite periodic pledges by member nations to increase reporting.”

“Seven years ago in Berlin, the OSCE countries pledged with great urgency to gather data on

Cutting off the Supply Chain for Slaughter

A photograph showing a large number of assault rifles, likely M16-style, standing upright in rows on a wooden surface. In the foreground, there are several wooden ammunition boxes. One box is prominently displayed, labeled 'BALL CARRIER' and 'M16'. Another box is open, revealing a large quantity of ammunition. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

NEVER AGAIN. That pledge in the wake of the Holocaust led to international standards affirming the rights and dignity of all people. Yet mass atrocities persist.

Holding perpetrators accountable is important. That's why we spearheaded the creation of the International Criminal Court. But because it's even more important to prevent mass atrocities, we focus on ensuring that the U.S. government identifies—and disrupts—countries, businesses, and individuals that provide weapons and other support to perpetrators. These “enablers” are a key link in the supply chain for slaughter.

This year, for example, Russian weapons and trade with Asian and African nations helped to sustain the crimes against humanity committed by the Syrian regime. As Syrian citizens face systematic brutality—including torture, summary executions, and sexual violence—we're pressing the United States and the international community to increase pressure on Syria by disrupting the forces that are enabling—and profiting from—the atrocities.

“Human Rights First coined the term ‘enablers’ and they provided clear documentation of outsider resourcing used to perpetrate atrocities.”

—George A. Lopez, Hesburgh Professor of Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies

To improve the ability of the U.S. government to respond to mass atrocities, we helped organize and manage a simulation exercise in April 2011. Using war games techniques, we devised a scenario in which

2011 VICTORY

**OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ADOPTED
OUR CALL FOR AN ATROCITIES
PREVENTION BOARD.**

a fictional African country faces a mounting humanitarian crisis and potential genocide. We provided information in stages to participants—government officials—who had to make decisions in real time based on a hazy picture of events on the ground. The exercise, which was hailed as a success by everyone involved, underscored the importance of early action and high-quality intelligence.

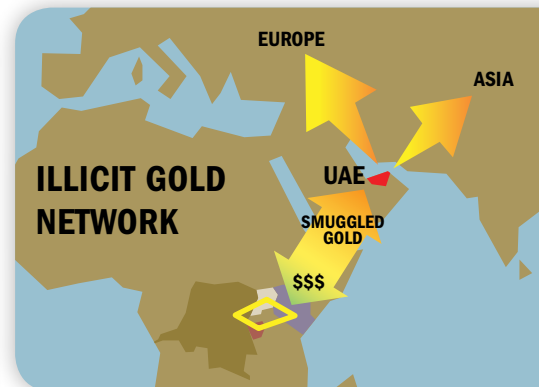
The simulation exercise also highlighted the need for coordination among govern-

ment agencies. This finding provided a boost to our longstanding push for the creation of an interagency body that can catalyze different parts of the government to act. And in August 2011, we succeeded as President Obama announced the launch of the Atrocities Prevention Board, which will have the capacity and authority to trigger timely action. Now we’re working to ensure that the Board makes combating “enablers” a priority.

Also in 2011, one of the world’s most infamous enablers was brought to justice. Viktor Bout—the “Merchant of Death” depicted by Nicholas Cage in the movie *Lord of War*—dealt weapons that fueled mass atrocities. But because laws restricting the flow of small arms are weak or nonexistent in many countries, he was convicted only of conspiracy, not illegal arms trafficking. We’re pushing for a U.N. Arms Trade Treaty that would help close these gaps in the law.

Relying on the Rule of Law

In 2011, Human Rights First’s Winnie Chen co-wrote a piece for the *San Francisco Chronicle* about the dangerous weaknesses in laws restricting small arms trafficking. Such weapons help fuel mass atrocities.



WHERE GOLD FUNDS ATROCITIES

It's not just weapons that enable atrocities but also commodities, supplies, and services. An illicit gold trade contributes to atrocities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than five million people have died in a civil war.

San Francisco Chronicle

TOUGH TO PROSECUTE ARMS DEALERS WITHOUT LAWS

SCOTT STEDIAN, WINNY CHEN

In a trial that played out with far less fanfare than the “Lord of War” movie based on Viktor Bout’s life, the public got a rare glimpse into the shadowy world of international arms brokering. Bout was convicted by a federal jury in New York this week on four counts of conspiracy, including conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. Not among the counts against him, ironically, was his alleged involvement in nearly 20 years of transporting arms.

Bout, whose renowned ability to

deliver weapons and goods to almost any region of the world earned him the nickname “merchant of death,” has long maintained that his transportation services—though reprehensible—are not illegal. For some of his activities, he may be right.

As of last year, only 47 percent of the world’s governments have reported that they have basic controls on the import of small arms and light weapons, such as AK-47s and shoulder-fired missiles. Only 52 governments have any form of controls on arms dealers operating

in their countries, and of that, less than half have criminal or monetary penalties associated with illegal gun running.

The consequence of these kinds of legal vacuums can be deadly. Because arms dealers can relatively easily exploit weak national control systems, arms continue to flow to perpetrators of mass atrocities, enabling widespread violence against civilians and sustaining conflicts much longer than they would normally run. In 2004, the Department of Treasury barred Bout

Defending Religious Freedom

IT WAS MURDER. Early in 2011, Salmaan Taseer—governor of Pakistan’s Punjab province—was killed by his own bodyguard. The motive? Retaliation for Governor Taseer’s criticism of Pakistan’s blasphemy law. A Christian woman had been sentenced to die for blasphemy, and it was after visiting her in prison that Governor Taseer spoke out.

Governments use blasphemy laws to stifle dissent, harass rivals, and persecute religious minorities. Accusations of blasphemy have also prompted mobs to take the law into their own hands and inflict horrific violence on “blasphemers,” sometimes while authorities stand by.

Taseer’s daughter Shehribano, 22, has taken up her father’s courageous work advocating freedom of worship. Gunmen have kidnapped her brother, Shahbaz, yet she refuses to be silenced.

In 2011, we teamed up with Shehribano to oppose the creation of a global blasphemy code at the U.N. Speaking at a forum we



“With Human Rights First, I have an international support system of people who are working hard to make a difference.”

–Pakistani activist Shehribano Taseer

organized at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, she told her personal story to explain the dangers of blasphemy laws. Thanks to her courage and eloquence, we won. Both the Human Rights Council and

2011 VICTORY

**TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF SPEECH
AND RELIGION WE BLOCKED U.N.
GLOBAL BLASPHEMY CODE.**

the General Assembly adopted a measure on combating religious intolerance that does not restrict freedom of speech or religion.

That's just one part of our agenda to promote religious freedom and combat hatred. We work to protect Jews, Muslims, and other religious minorities from persecution. In Europe, we're pressing governments to pass and enforce tough hate crime laws. With its strong legal framework and history of religious pluralism, the United States is in

a position to lead by example on this issue, and we work to make sure it does.

Here at home, we confront the stigmatization of Muslims, who have faced mounting violence and harassment since 9/11. This year we organized a groundbreaking event called “Faith Shared.” Dozens of churches in 26 states invited imams to read from the Qur'an during Sunday services.

Faith Shared built bridges in communities across the country and projected an image of religious tolerance to the world—an image that has been distorted by events like “Burn a Koran Day.” The *Washington Post*, which gave prominent coverage to the event, quoted a congregant at the National Cathedral: “[Faith Shared] was even more moving than the normal service here on Sunday.”



“FAITH SHARED”

On June 26, 2011, Christian clergy in churches across the country hosted readings from the Qur'an and other religious texts as they welcomed their Muslim and Jewish counterparts. The event—which we organized with the Interfaith Alliance in response to mounting Islamophobia—sent a message of religious tolerance to the world.

Worldwide Impact

From our base in the United States, we work to protect human rights around the world. This year, we led the effort to block a global blasphemy code at the United Nations—a victory for freedom of expression and religion. “A huge achievement,” we said in this Reuters piece, “because...it focuses on the protection of individuals rather than religions.”

REUTERS Islamic bloc drops U.N. drive on defaming religion

Friday, March 25, 2011 | By Robert Evans

GENEVA (Reuters) - Islamic countries set aside their 12-year campaign to have religions protected from “defamation”, allowing the U.N. Human Rights Council to approve a plan to promote religious tolerance on Thursday.

Western countries and their Latin American allies, strong opponents of the defamation concept, joined Muslim and African states in backing without vote the new approach that switches focus from protecting beliefs to protecting believers.

Since 1998, the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) had won majority approval in the council and at the United Nations General Assembly for a series of resolutions on “combating defamation of religion”.

Critics said the concept ran against international law and free speech, and left the way open for tough “blasphemy” laws like those in Pakistan which have been invoked this year by the killers of two moderate politicians in Pakistan.

They argued that it also allowed states where one religion predominates to “keep religious minorities under tight control or even leave them open to forced conversion or oppression.”

But Pakistan, which speaks for the OIC in the rights council, had argued that such protection against defamation was essential to defend Islam, and other religions, against criticism that caused offence to ordinary believers.

Islamic countries pointed to the publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed in Denmark in 2005, which sparked anti-Western violence in the Middle East and Asia, as examples of defamatory behaviour, and said that their

From Our Board Chair



THE POPULAR UPRISINGS known as the Arab Spring unseated presidents and sent waves of unrest flooding the Arab world. These events present an unprecedented opportunity for advancing human rights globally and for releasing hundreds of millions of people from the shackles of tyranny. But they also create great uncertainty, with uneven progress from country to country, and new threats and challenges that could set back the cause of human rights everywhere.

Human Rights First has been working for democratic change in the Middle East for decades, supporting the work of courageous activists

who started out as a few dozen lonely voices calling for freedom and dignity in an ocean of repression and dictatorship. Thirty years later, their calls for representative government, justice, and human rights have been taken up by a new generation of activists, many of whom were not even born when the first local human rights organizations were struggling to exist.

Human Rights First is working to support those who stand for universal values in the Middle East. Advancing human rights will serve the best interests of the people in the region and of the United States. We promote U.S. policies that support human rights, providing practical recommendations to policymakers and backing them up with face-to-face advocacy based on in-depth knowledge of country situations. We bring activists to Washington to amplify their voices in the corridors of power. We activate our growing constituency of supporters to involve them in targeted campaigning. We build relationships with the business community, in Egypt for example, because we know that business can be a powerful ally in promoting greater

respect for the rule of law and more accountable government in times of transition. We focus on challenging issues like the threat of religious extremism or safeguarding the rights of religious minorities.

At Human Rights First, we believe that a world in which there is greater respect for human rights is a more secure and peaceful world for all of us. The transformations launched by the Arab Spring present a unique strategic opportunity to turn relationships that have been a source of so many of our country's challenges and problems for decades into sources of mutual benefit and hope.

This is difficult work, but it could not be more important. Thank you for standing with us.

William D. Zabel
Chairman of the Board
Human Rights First

“We are grateful to our board members, who are a constant source of guidance and inspiration.”

–Elisa Massimino, President and CEO

President and CEO

Elisa Massimino

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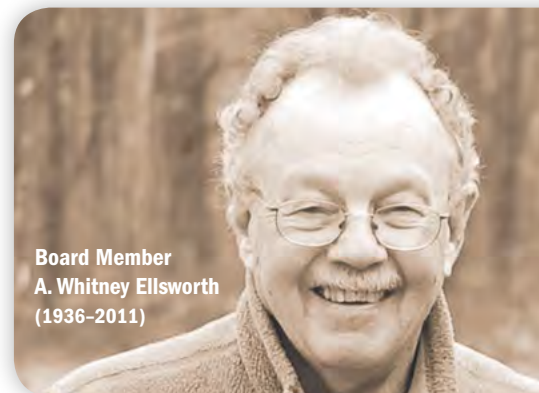
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WHITNEY ELLSWORTH

This year we mourned the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Whitney Ellsworth. As the founding publisher of the *New York Review of Books*, he brought a businessperson’s acumen and an editor’s eye to our board, where he served for 18 years.

Whitney helped to guide our marketing and fundraising efforts, always stressing the importance of strong writing. As a former chair of Amnesty International, he helped us build on the successes of the human rights movement and forge our own path. We will miss his wisdom, leadership, and compassion.

To honor his commitment to human rights and the importance of the written word, our Board established the A. Whitney Ellsworth Communications Fellowship.

Board Members Speak Out

A diverse group united by a common commitment to human rights and the rule of law, our board deftly steers the organization and also speaks out in their own voices to advance our cause.



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Human Rights First is grateful for the generosity of all who help make our work possible.

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—Ms. T., Human Rights First pro bono client from West Africa

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Established in 2002, this award pays tribute to lawyers and law firms that have carried on Judge Frankel's dedication to human rights by demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to pro bono service.

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Fighting for Due Process

In 2011, as part of our effort to make immigration detention more just, we defended the right of refugees to appear before a judge, as opposed to a video screen. Quoted in the *New York Daily News*, Human Rights First's Ruthie Epstein said, "The video conference presents tremendous due process concerns."



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“They gave new lives to my family and me, and all of their services provided are free.”

–Mr. K., Human Rights First pro bono client from Sudan

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**Shehrbano Taseer
 and Brian Williams**

2011 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Brian Williams, Anchor and Managing Editor of *NBC Nightly News*, presented the award to Shehrbano Taseer of Pakistan whose father, governor of Punjab province, was murdered because of his opposition to repressive blasphemy laws. She is carrying on his struggle for freedom of expression and worship.

“Without their help I cannot imagine my situation. It helped me find housing, food, and the legal paper I am writing to you on.”

–Mr. M., Human Rights First pro bono client from Colombia

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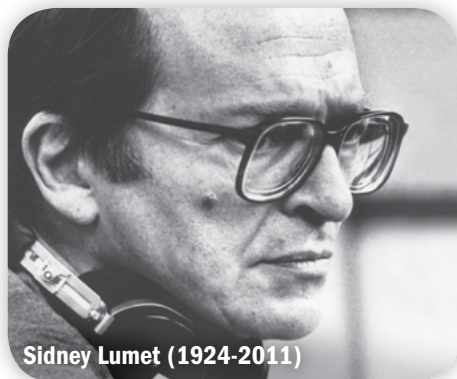
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Sidney Lumet (1924-2011)



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SIDNEY LUMET AWARD FOR INTEGRITY IN ENTERTAINMENT

Named for the legendary director, the award honors entertainment that highlights human rights issues and advances understanding. At our annual dinner, we gave the inaugural award to Michelle and Robert King, creators of the television show *The Good Wife*, for their nuanced exploration of human rights issues, including Internet freedom, asylum, torture, and repression in China. Academy Award Winner Philip Seymour Hoffman presented the award, and most of the show's cast, including Julianna Margulies and Josh Charles, were in attendance.

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**Shehrbano Taseer, Elisa Massimino,
 Bill Zabel, and Basem Fathy**

2011 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Actor Josh Charles presented Egyptian Basem Fathy with the Human Rights Award. Fathy, a co-founder of the April 6 Youth Movement, handled logistics for the protests that forced an end to the Mubarak regime.

“They all felt my pain. They show me respect and they treated me like a human being.”

–Mrs. H., Human Rights First pro bono client from Iran

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Partnering with Frontline Activists

We work alongside activists and rely on their expertise to guide our work. To amplify their voices, we bring them to the United States to meet with policymakers and journalists. In 2011, one of our partners, Egyptian Basem Fathy, had a long discussion with WNYC's Brian Lehrer.



The screenshot shows a webpage for WNYC's 'The Brian Lehrer Show'. At the top, the WNYC logo is displayed next to the text 'wnyc.org 93.9 fm am 820'. Below this, the title 'The Brian Lehrer Show' is prominently featured, followed by the subtitle 'Now the Hard Part'. The date 'Thursday, October 27, 2011' is listed. A paragraph of text describes the show's focus: 'With the OWS protests underway, Egyptian democracy activist Basem Fathy talks about the similarities and differences between Zuccotti Park and Tahrir Square, and the work left to be done.' Below this, it lists 'Guests: Basem Fathy' and 'Tags: egypt, occupy wall street'. At the bottom, there is a small audio player interface with a play button and a progress bar.

2011 Financials

Nearly \$31 Million of In-Kind Contributions

Human Rights First works with hundreds of committed pro bono lawyers who dedicate their time and talent to protecting the rights of refugees seeking asylum in the United States. In the past year volunteer attorneys in New York, New Jersey, and the Washington, D.C. area put in more than 73,000 hours to represent hundreds of asylum seekers. Their participation—worth nearly \$31 million—is four times the value of each dollar we spend on this program.

Additional Financial Information

Human Rights First is a 501(c)(3) registered charity, has an annual independent audit performed, and files informational returns with various governmental regulatory agencies. A copy of the full audited financial statements by BDO LLP is available upon request.

Charity Ratings



★ ★ ★
Three Star Charity



FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets	2011	2010
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,572,516	\$5,029,721
Investments at fair value	5,365,839	800,950
Grants and pledges receivable, net, current portion	3,015,500	1,105,769
Other receivables	131,611	—
Prepaid expenses and other assets	32,546	77,795
Total current assets	11,118,012	7,014,235
Grants and pledges receivable, less current portion	2,823,313	247,019
Security deposit	104,999	95,447
Fixed assets, net	345,056	369,501
Assets	14,391,380	7,726,202
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable, accrued expenses, and other liabilities	\$609,623	\$656,421
Deferred event revenue, current portion	—	95,000
Total current liabilities	609,623	751,421
Commitments		
Net assets		
Unrestricted	4,096,908	3,695,663
Unrestricted—Board designated fund for future operations	2,500,000	2,500,000
Total unrestricted net assets	6,596,908	6,195,663
Temporarily restricted	6,184,849	779,118
Permanently restricted	1,000,000	—
Total net assets	13,781,757	6,974,781
Liabilities and Net Assets	\$14,391,380	\$7,726,202

"Highest rated human rights organization."

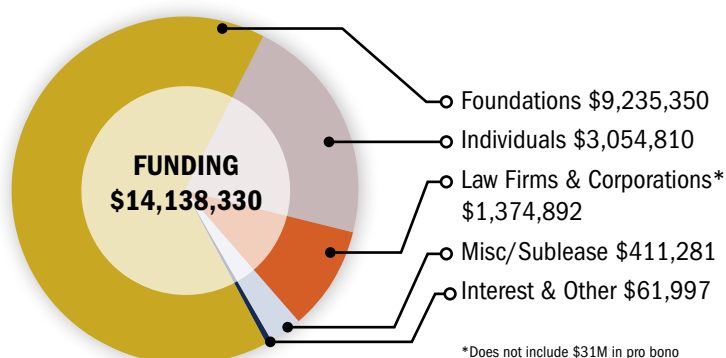
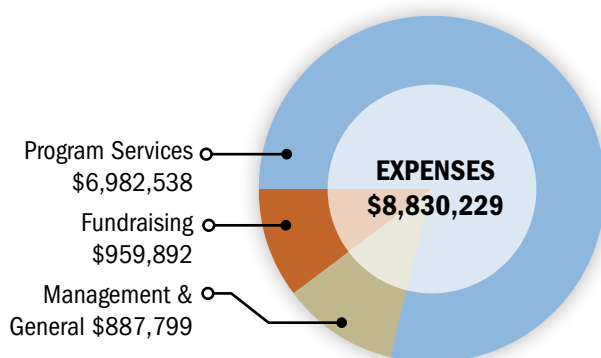
–Charity Watch

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	2011 TOTAL	2010 TOTAL
Revenues and Other Support					
Grants, pledges, and contributions	\$4,595,647	\$7,948,908	\$1,000,000	\$13,543,555	\$7,579,593 [†]
Contributed program services ☉	30,822,428	—	—	30,822,428	28,003,088
Investment	62,454	—	—	62,454	41,266
Other income	411,057	—	—	411,057	245,405
Net assets released from restrictions	4,201,968	(4,201,968)	—	—	—
Total revenues and other support	40,092,554	3,746,940	1,000,000	44,839,494	35,869,352
Expenses					
Program services	37,496,739	—	—	37,496,739	34,341,460
Supporting services					
Management and general	1,196,022	—	—	1,196,022	1,267,557
Fundraising and development	959,895	—	—	959,895	908,020
Total supporting services	2,155,917	—	—	2,155,917	2,175,577
Total expenses	39,652,656	—	—	39,652,656	36,517,037
Change in net assets	439,898	3,746,940	1,000,000	5,186,838	(647,685)
Net assets, beginning of year, restated	6,157,010	2,437,909	—	8,594,919	7,622,466
Net assets, end of year	\$6,596,908	\$6,184,849	1,000,000	13,781,757	\$6,974,781

☉ \$31 million in pro bono legal services.

[†] GAAP accounting principles require that non-profits report multi-year grants and pledges in their entirety as revenue in the year that the pledge is made. During prior years, Human Rights First received a number of significant multi-year grants and pledges that ranged from two to five years in duration.





American ideals. Universal values.

Human Rights First is an independent advocacy and action organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals. We believe American leadership is essential in the struggle for human rights so we press the U.S. government and American companies to respect human rights and the rule of law. When they fall short, we step in to demand reform, accountability, and justice. Around the world, we work where we can best harness American influence to secure core freedoms.

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REUTERS/PETER ANDREWS

