

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION IN SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

HRW SWEDEN IMPACT REPORT

(EFFEKTRAPPORT)

SEPTEMBER 2017



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 work to the attention of the Swedish public, the private sector and the government, to particularize 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 in 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 400 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 <https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/sweden>.

On the cover: A girl plays in a public park in Patan, Nepal. Thirty-seven percent of girls marry before age 18, and 10 percent are married by age 15. The minimum age of marriage under Nepali law is 20 years of age. Human Rights Watch launched a global campaign against child marriage in 2011 and conducted in-depth investigations in Nepal in 2016. © 2016 Smita Sharma/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 in order 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 in order 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 in order 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.



Human Rights Watch's Senior Iraq Researcher Belkis Wille interviews an Iraqi civilian living in Mosul. The Iraqi central government and Kurdistan Regional Government, with the support of the United States-led international coalition, began military operations in October to retake the city from the Islamic State, also known as ISIS. ©2017 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 deepen 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 in 2016. Using funds raised in Sweden, the Board of HRW Sweden has decided to support several projects this past year, including:

Environment and Human Rights

We recently launched a formal program on human rights and the environment—the first of its kind at any major human rights organization. Our work will focus on the human rights impacts of toxic pollution, climate change, and attacks on environmental defenders.

We bring strengths to the environmental cause, in many ways precisely because we are not an environmental group. Using principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and freedom of speech and association, we can give voice to communities most affected by environmental degradation and climate change, and advocate, in close collaboration with environmental groups, for respect for their rights.

Young girls wash dishes near Eland coal mine in Malawi. The mine is affecting water sources. As a result, women and girls must walk longer distances to fetch water, which is dangerous and means there is less time to attend school or earn money. ©2016 Lauren Clifford-Holmes for Human Rights Watch



We are increasingly prioritizing research on the human rights implications of climate-harming activities, focusing on key sectors, like the coal industry, which is responsible for 40 percent of global carbon emissions. In September 2016, we published a [major report](#) and [video](#) on abuses linked to an uptick of coal and uranium mining operations in Malawi, such as concerns about increased rates of illness, poor air and water quality, forced resettlement with no or little compensation in nearby communities who have been left in the dark about the risks of mining. Five months after the report release, Malawi's President Peter Mutharika signed a bill into law that could enable people to request and obtain vital information to protect their health and livelihoods, such as water-quality testing results.

Protecting Civilians in Syria

We devoted enormous energy to documenting atrocities committed against civilians by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and supplemented by the Russian air force. Using satellite imagery corroborated by local testimony, we [documented](#) 950 air strikes in eastern Aleppo in just one month last fall. During that period 440 civilians, including 90 children, were killed in eastern Aleppo. We recorded Russian-Syrian military strikes that hit [hospitals](#) and [schools](#), as well as the use of indiscriminate [cluster munitions](#), [incendiary weapons](#), and most recently [chemical weapons](#).

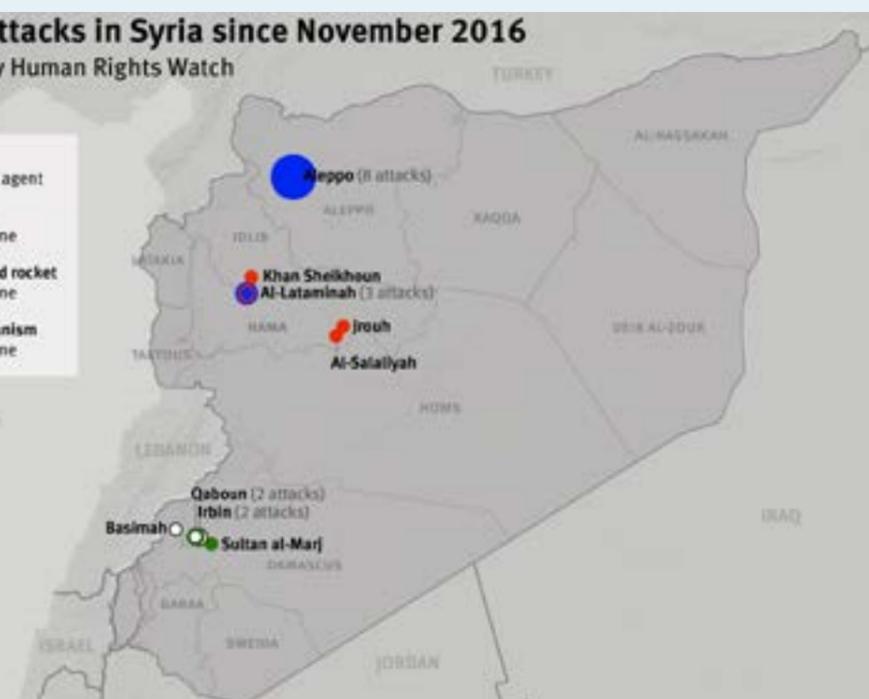
Unable to use public shame to compel Assad to change course, we instead focused on President Vladimir Putin and generated pressure on Russia to use its leverage to stop these violations. We began by [encouraging](#) the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to hold a special session on Syria, which it did in October. It overrode Russian objections and ordered an end to the bombardment of civilians in Syria, the opening of besieged areas to humanitarian aid, a special investigation into atrocities, and steps to bring war criminals to justice.

Human Rights Watch found new evidence that supports the conclusion that Syrian government forces have used nerve agents on at least four occasions in recent months. ©2017 Human Rights Watch

Chemical Attacks in Syria since November 2016

Documented by Human Rights Watch

- Warplane delivering nerve agent
- Helicopter delivering chlorine
- Ground-launched rocket delivering chlorine
- Unknown mechanism delivering chlorine



A week later, we helped [mobilize](#) an effort to question the suitability of Russia's candidacy for re-election to the HRC. Over 85 organizations joined us to [call on UN member states](#) to question the candidacy of a government that was so actively involved in attacks on civilians. Major media outlets picked up the story. When the election was held on October 28, Russia lost its seat at the HRC for the first time ever—by two votes. This flurry of multilateral condemnation contributed to Russia and Syria halting their bombing of eastern Aleppo for three weeks.

Then, in an unprecedented move, the UN General Assembly in December created a new prosecutorial-like mechanism to assist in the investigation of serious crimes in Syria since 2011 by gathering and preserving evidence for future criminal cases. We initiated the idea of pressing the General Assembly to take this step and circumvent the deadlock on Syria in the Security Council. The accountability mechanism still needs \$5 million to get off the ground, and we are now turning our attention to ensure states invest resources to ensure a path to justice for the Syrian people.



Human Rights Watch interviewed 60 people with first-hand knowledge of the chemical attacks from this past year, and reviewed dozens of photos and videos of impact sites and victims that were posted online and provided directly by local residents. These are screen captures from our video, "[Syria: New Evidence Shows Pattern of Chemical Weapons Use](#)." ©2017 Human Rights Watch

Defending LGBT Rights Around the World

Over the last year, we worked tirelessly to document abuses and advocate for change in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. In 2016 we produced 11 in-depth investigative reports exposing LGBT rights abuses—the most we have ever produced in a single year. We are especially proud of [Dignity Debased](#), our report on forced anal exams in eight countries.

In many countries where same-sex conduct is considered a crime, transgender women and men suspected of being gay are forced to submit to anal exams. These “tests” are degrading and traumatic; they have no scientific value and are simply meant to humiliate and torment LGBT people. Our report helped launch a global campaign to put an end to this shameful practice. As a result, authorities from the United Nations, World Health Organization, and Tunisia have condemned it.

Also noteworthy are the three pieces we produced on discrimination against LGBT students in the US in late 2016: [a big report](#) on harassment and hate in the hallways of America's schools; [another](#) on transgender students being singled out by rules denying them access to bathrooms and locker rooms; and a [video](#) on the negative effect that “no promo homo” laws, laws that ban anything that may be construed as “promoting homosexuality,” are having on students.

Refugee Rights in the Middle East and Europe

In the past year, we have documented abuses against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers attempting to reach the European Union (EU), and have used this documentation to urge EU member states and the European Commission to roll back harmful policies, [encourage](#) burden-sharing of refugees, and forego new policies that would place migrants at risk.

For example, in Greece, we called attention to the desperate situation facing migrants. In March we [documented](#) how, due to the flawed EU-Turkey migration deal, asylum seekers are effectively trapped in overcrowded and abysmal conditions on the Greek islands, where they face deteriorating security conditions. We have used our report to urge the EU to address the failings of their agreement with Turkey, which was designed to lift the refugee burden on Greece not by sharing it with other EU countries, but by returning asylum seekers to Turkey, where they are unlikely to receive effective protection. We have also reported on the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers with [disabilities](#) and those who are [older people](#); the [mental health crisis](#) for asylum seekers and migrants trapped on the Greek islands; [flawed procedures for determining age](#) that can lead unaccompanied children to be treated as adults instead of receiving the special care and protection they need; and detention of [unaccompanied migrant children in police stations](#).

Protecting Ethnic Minorities in Burma

In December 2016, HRW's satellite imagery program enabled us to find [irrefutable evidence of atrocities](#) against the Rohingya, a marginalized minority in Burma's Rakhine state. After Burma's military destroyed more than 1,500 buildings in nine Rohingya villages, declared the area a military zone, and blocked access for journalists, we used our satellite imagery analysis to overcome government denials.

Alongside firsthand [witness testimony](#)—based on interviews with refugees who had fled to Bangladesh—we established patterns of abuse that left more than 85 people dead and displaced another 65,000.

In the past month, we found that Burmese security forces are committing [crimes against humanity](#) against the Rohingya population in Burma, including forced deportation, murder, and rape, resulting in countless deaths and mass displacement. We are advocating for the United Nations Security Council and concerned countries to urgently impose targeted sanctions and an arms embargo on the Burmese military to stop further crimes against humanity.



The Burmese military has conducted a campaign of arson, killing, and rape against ethnic Rohingya that has threatened the lives of thousands. These are screen captures of our video, "[Rohingya Tell Horror Stories of Rape, Killings by Burmese Army](#)." We use pseudonyms to ensure their safety. ©2016 Human Rights Watch



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, human rights in the Middle East, and children's rights.

Women's Rights: We have pressed the Swedish government to implement its feminist foreign policy within the UN Security Council, on which it is currently serving, and have urged Sweden to step up and take increased political responsibility for [women's sexual and reproductive health](#) following the United States' reinstatement and expansion of the Global Gag Rule. The latter strips foreign NGOs of all US health funding if they offer information about abortions, provide abortions, or advocate liberalizing abortion laws—even if those specific activities are supported through other funding streams. We have called upon Swedish government to help mitigate the negative impact of this harmful "rule" by allocating [resources to reproductive health services](#) that might be crippled by the loss of US funding.

Human Rights in the Middle East: In advance of the Swedish Prime Minister's trips to Jordan in August 2016 and Iran in February 2017, we [urged](#) him to raise critical human rights concerns with the Jordanian and Iranian governments. We held another meeting on Iran with the government in June and briefed them on the findings of our May [report](#) documenting discrimination against women in Iran's job market. In addition, we have continuously updated the Swedish government on our research in Iraq, including our documentation of human rights abuses by Kurdish forces that receive Swedish training. Before the Swedish Trade Minister left to lead a trade delegation to [Saudi Arabia](#), we advised her of our concerns regarding the Saudi government, including its role in air strikes that have killed civilians in Yemen. We also called upon the Swedish government to provide political and economic support to UN mechanisms to secure accountability for war crimes committed during Yemen's ongoing civil war, which we [documented](#) extensively.

Children's Rights: In March, Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Director [Zama Neff](#) and Sweden Director Måns Molander met with Swedish government officials, to press for increased protection of children's rights and the right to education in situations of conflict. We also urged Sweden to prioritize protection of schools in armed conflict during its work at the UN Security Council, where Sweden currently chairs the UN Expert Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

In addition to our advocacy to promote women's rights, children's rights, and human rights in the Middle East, we continued to [call upon](#) the Swedish government to support rights-respecting EU responses to migration. This includes ongoing follow-up from our 2016 [report](#) on the treatment of unaccompanied migrant children in Sweden. Finally, we have prioritized increased engagement with the business community in Sweden, with the aim of enlisting them as allies in our advocacy.

Engaging Swedish Media on Human Rights

HRW Sweden has expanded coverage of Human Rights Watch's work in the Swedish media over the year, through regular interviews with Human Rights Watch experts. Key radio and news outlets regularly interview, and often seek out, our researchers and advocates to offer expert advice and provide a human rights perspective on current political affairs. Human Rights Watch is mentioned in Swedish media on a daily basis. And we have developed relationships with the most important media outlets, including TT and Swedish Radio and TV. These relationships have helped Måns place op-eds, including a March piece in [Advokaten](#), a June piece on China in [Svenska Dagbladet](#) and a September piece on Syria, also in Svenska Dagbladet. Our engagement on social media, mainly through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), also remains a high priority.

Conducting Outreach from Stockholm

Since its first meeting in June 2016, the Stockholm Circle of Friends has expanded to 13 dedicated members who are helping Human Rights Watch reach out to new constituents, broaden our social networks, and plan and organize events. The most successful of these events was undoubtedly the second annual Stockholm Voices for Justice Dinner, which we held on May 9, 2017.

Thanks to the heightened profile that our Stockholm office has helped us attain in Sweden, new actors are reaching out to support Human Rights Watch. The [Way Out West](#) music festival in Sweden August 2017 featured a [campaign](#) by GodEl called #KissingisCaring.

Another highlight from our development and outreach activities includes a [panel debate](#) we held with Amnesty International in Almedalen in July, and during which we discussed the state of human rights in Europe and Sweden. As in the past, we also hosted a series of private dinners, breakfast meetings, lunch gatherings, and bilateral meetings aimed at deepening our relationships with existing and prospective supporters.

Funds raised will help support the activities of HRW Sweden as well as further research and advocacy in the larger Human Rights Watch network that are relevant to the Swedish public and deepen the understanding in Sweden of human rights issues globally.

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 or not 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, 2017 was a year of considerable accomplishment. 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. HRW Sweden's staff and operations are fully engaged in Stockholm.

HRW Sweden and Human Rights Watch recognise the critical role of partnerships and beneficiaries in all of 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.](#)