

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVER



Politics or Protection:
How U.S. Asylum Policy Puts People at Risk

Director's Desk

It has been a year of challenge and opportunity. When we started sheltering in place in March of 2020, we never imagined that we would still be working remotely at the end of 2021. Unable to travel to other countries or to the United Nations, we became experts in virtual advocacy and training. Unable to see clients in our office, we became adept at creating access through digital platforms. The challenges have created numerous opportunities to involve more clients, more partners, more law firms, more *pro bono* lawyers, and more volunteers in our work.

While COVID-19 ground most immigration proceedings to a halt, federal immigration officials continued to detain people in increasingly perilous conditions. Court proceedings adjudicating deportation orders of detained immigrants continued as well. Volunteers stepped up, representing clients they never saw in person to win release from immigration custody and the chance to remain safely in the United States.

Meanwhile, other extraordinary volunteers persisted in monitoring cases in immigration court. Their observations showed a severe lack of clearly defined standards, oversight, and accountability, which resulted in failures of health care, safety, and due process. The methodical documentation allowed us to address concerns quickly and to report that these systemic failures led to serious human rights abuses of people detained in Minnesota jails. You can read more about this in a report we published in March.

Our work at the UN expanded during the pandemic. The shift to remote advocacy allowed us to grow our partnerships with human rights defenders around the world. Together we reported on human rights abuses in countries being reviewed by the UN. These partnerships included grassroots activists from Antigua and Barbuda, Hungary, Kenya, Singapore, Syria, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and more.

We continued to work with the Women's Human Rights Training Institute, supporting the development of young human rights lawyers in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. A new online platform allowed us to adapt the curriculum for remote participation. We are excited by the potential for creating a hybrid institute that will allow for more participation by partners and volunteers worldwide.

In the spring, we recognized Darnella Frazier at our virtual Human Rights Awards Dinner for her bravery in documenting the murder of George Floyd with her cell phone. Because of her, millions of people saw first-hand the horrifying impact of white supremacy and systemic racism. We are inspired by Darnella's quick action and courage in bearing witness to police violence.

Through it all, our volunteers and donors have worked closely with us to meet these challenges. Because of you, we have made progress.

Thank you for all the ways you support us in changing the world for good.



Robin Phillips
Executive Director

Distance Learning, Nepali Style

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Cover image: Shutterstock



Students at the Sankhu-Palubari Community School recently returned to in-person learning.



Teachers at the Sankhu-Palubari Community School (SPCS) have brought innovation and a commitment to the right to education to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rising numbers of COVID infections and low vaccination rates have meant school closures for much of 2021. Very few SPCS students have access to technology and connectivity, but teachers were able to share lessons via mobile phones using Facebook Messenger and Zoom. Teachers traveled by foot and by motor bike to remote villages in the rural eastern Kathmandu Valley to teach small groups of students, ensuring distance learning for all students, even those whose families do not own a mobile phone.

The Sankhu-Palubari Community School is a pre-K through 11th grade school founded by The Advocates for Human Rights in 1999 and operated in partnership with Educate the Children-Nepal and the local community. The school provides an alternative to child labor to 375 of the most vulnerable students in the area. By providing a completely free, high-quality education, the school makes the right to education a reality for hundreds of Nepali children.

Child labor remains a widespread problem in Nepal, with an estimated 1.6 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 in child labor. Child labor in

brick kilns is one of the most common and exploitative forms of child labor in Nepal, exposing children to injury. Child labor is also common in agriculture, the service industry, and jewelry and rug manufacturing. Nepali children, especially girls, are also at risk for trafficking and domestic servitude. The pandemic has reportedly increased the risk of child labor in Nepal.

While public education at government schools in Nepal is technically free, school fees and the cost of supplies are barriers that keep children from the poorest families out of school. SPCS welcomes all children regardless of caste or ethnicity; currently, 7% of students are Dalit and 55% are Indigenous, from families who do not speak Nepali at home. Girls make up 53% of the SPCS student body, even in grades 8-11. According to UN Women, each additional year of primary education increases girls' potential wages by as much as 10 to 20%, as well as reduces their vulnerability to early marriage and violence.

The Sankhu-Palubari Community School was recently given permission by the government to reopen for in-person learning. As students return to school in Nepal, The Advocates is now also raising funds to open a new computer lab to better support the needs of SPCS students—today and in the future.

New Report: Istanbul Convention and

The Advocates released *A Roll Back for Human Rights: The Istanbul Convention Under Attack* in November, coinciding with the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign.

Undertaken with the support of the law firm of Akin Gump, the report details the alarming opposition to the Istanbul Convention, formally known as the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. It documents how opponents have strategically influenced the debate over ratification. The report's findings, drawn from interviews with stakeholders, focus on Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

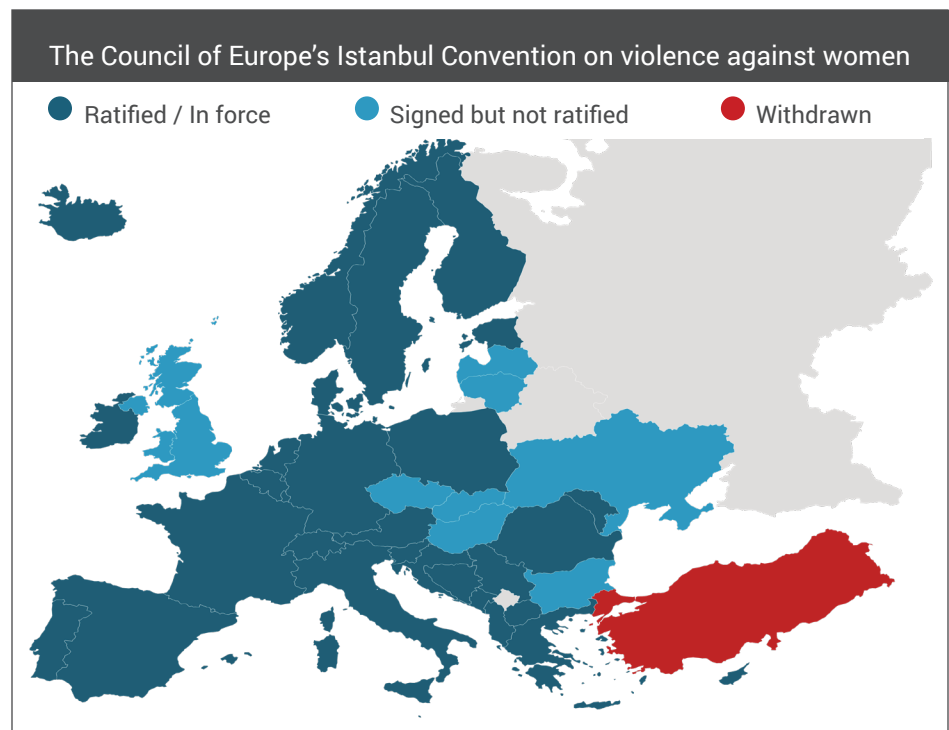
The Istanbul Convention entered into force on August 1, 2014, following ratification by the tenth CoE Member State. The comprehensive treaty explicitly defines gender-based violence and domestic violence as human rights

“We must not forget we live in the most free and safe time, and that is why we are facing this big backlash—because this is their last stand.”

- Austrian human rights defender

violations which ratifying states must prevent and punish. As of May 2021, a decade after opening for signature, 34 countries had ratified the Istanbul Convention.

The Istanbul Convention builds on decades of international law to recognize that violence against women is a human rights violation. As a result, it requires coordinated and consistent state action



Status as of September 24, 2021. Source: Council of Europe. Created with Datawrapper.

to protect and support victims and their children, punish perpetrators, and prevent violence.

Despite initial momentum, the Istanbul Convention now faces growing opposition across Central and Eastern Europe, the Former Soviet Union, and in Turkey. The fourteen countries investigated initially embraced the treaty on some level. Each signed the Istanbul Convention, and Turkey's vote to ratify was the Turkish Parliament's only unanimous vote in all of 2012.

Yet, several developments indicate the speed with which the opposition gained political and public influence to sway opinion: the stalled ratification processes in Ukraine, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Armenia, and the Czech Republic; the resistance to full implementation of the convention in Croatia, Romania, and Italy; Poland's announced intention to withdraw from the treaty, and; Turkish President Erdoğan's March 2021 decree actually withdrawing from the convention.

Policymakers who previously supported the convention are reluctant

to publicly mention it or support ratification. Poland has even begun to directly lobby its neighbors to reject the Istanbul Convention and adopt the so-called Convention on the Rights of the Family, an alternative document produced by opponents of the Istanbul Convention.

The Advocates documented similar threats to the Istanbul Convention in all countries it investigated. Opposition tactics fall within three categories: 1) defending the "traditional" family, defined as the lifelong union of a biologically male husband and a biologically female wife whose goal is procreation; 2) generating fear and hysteria about the convention's requirements; and 3) stoking nationalist sentiments. Many of the individuals, organizations, and networks that oppose the Istanbul Convention also attack other issues, including LGBT+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and immigrants' rights.

Increasingly, women's human rights defenders have faced threats to their physical safety. Many of The Advocates' partners have reported threats of violence and attacks. In addition,

Women's Rights Under Attack

frivolous lawsuits designed to intimidate and suppress defenders' human rights activities have become commonplace. The Istanbul Convention, and with it, the right of women to be free from violence, has become collateral damage in a broader transnational movement that opposes many of the rights it associates—correctly or not—with the treaty.

Meanwhile, the working space for civil society, especially women's rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to counter this backlash and continue protecting women's human rights is shrinking. Increasing restrictions include: limiting the ability of human rights NGOs to receive international funding; enacting burdensome registration or reporting requirements; intimidation and violent

attacks against human rights defenders; the invasion of spaces normally reserved for human rights NGOs by private interest groups, lobbyists and Government Operated NGOs (GONGOs); defunding women's NGOs; and self-censorship by civil society due to fear of persecution and lawsuits.

In the face of these coordinated attacks, civil society plays an increasingly crucial role in defending women's right to be free from violence. Despite the rising challenges, human rights NGOs have mounted successful campaigns engaging thousands of women in support of the Istanbul Convention. Their efforts to promote the Istanbul Convention and educate the public and policymakers about violence against women have led to improvements in law and policy

and, in some cases, enhanced public understanding about the issue of violence against women. Civil society movements have organized mass demonstrations against government actions that would restrict or suppress women's rights and fundamental freedoms, including in Poland and Turkey.

The report captures some of the most promising and successful strategies human rights defenders are employing to resist this backlash. As summarized by one Austrian human rights defender, "We must not forget we live in the most free and safe time, and that is why we are facing this big backlash—because this is their last stand. We must remember there is a crack in everything, and that is where the light comes in, and we must be that light."



2 • 0 • 2 • 1 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD RECIPIENTS

Honoring Women's Rights Defenders

This year, the Don & Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Awards went to two groups that have been indefatigable in defending the rights of women and refugees: the **Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS)** at U.C. Hastings College of the Law and **Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)**.

CGRS protects the fundamental human rights of refugee women, children, LGBTQ individuals, and others who flee persecution in their home countries. Staff focus on policy advocacy, training and technical assistance, and litigation. In 1999, following her groundbreaking legal victory in *Matter of Kasinga*, Karen Musalo founded CGRS to meet the needs of asylum seekers fleeing gender-based violence. CGRS has grown into an internationally respected resource for gender asylum, renowned for its knowledge of the law and ability to combine sophisticated legal strategies with policy advocacy and human rights interventions. CGRS provides invaluable

resources to lawyers working on gender-based asylum cases. CGRS takes the lead on controversial issues, participates as co-counsel or amicus curiae in impact litigation, produces an extensive library of litigation support materials, maintains an unsurpassed database of asylum records and decisions, and works in coalition with immigrant, refugee, LGBTQ, children's, and women's rights networks.

WAVE unites 160 women's organizations from 46 European countries under one umbrella: to prevent and combat violence against women and children. Since 1994, WAVE has been a fearless voice promoting women's human rights across Europe. It works tirelessly to influence policy makers, build the capacity of women's NGOs, share cutting-edge information, carry out research, and facilitate networking. Its campaign activities focus on fighting for the rights of women survivors and their children to receive specialist support



Center for Gender & Refugee Studies



and protection. The biennial WAVE Country Report provides up-to-date information on the status of women's specialist services in Europe. WAVE's training institute empowers women's organizations by building capacity and advocacy skills. And its annual conference brings together hundreds of women's rights defenders.

Gold WATCH Award: Recognizing Champions of Minnesota's Criminal Sexual Conduct Statutory Reforms



Photo: Bill Cameron

The Advocates for Human Rights presented the 2021 Gold WATCH Award to those responsible for comprehensive updates to Minnesota's criminal sexual conduct laws. Driven by experiences of countless sexual assault survivors who were denied justice under the state's outdated laws, the new laws took effect in September.

The long-overdue changes resulted from more than two years' work by sexual assault survivors, advocates, attorneys, and law enforcement to draft much needed updates. State Representatives Kelly Moller and Marion O'Neill co-authored the new legislation based on the recommendations of the Criminal Sexual Conduct Statutory Reform Working Group. The lawmakers worked tirelessly to see the changes passed into law.

The work took on new urgency in March after a court ruling set off a media firestorm. The Minnesota Supreme Court decision in *State v. Khalil* held

that existing state law did not punish the sexual violation of a victim who became intoxicated after drinking voluntarily. The court held that, under the law in effect at that time, a crime was committed only if the intoxicant was administered without the victim's agreement.

Women's Human Rights Program Director Rosalyn Park, who presented the Gold WATCH Award at a September 26 event, told the crowd, "This year, we are pleased to present the Gold WATCH Award to an incredible group of individuals who have worked tirelessly to strengthen Minnesota's laws on criminal sexual conduct. Thank you for the outstanding work you have done to strengthen the protections and human rights for women and children in Minnesota."

The Advocates served on the working group, represented by Kaarin Long, who testified at hearings throughout the legislative session.

2021 Gold WATCH Award Recipients
(Pictured left to right) Statutory Reform Working Group Steering Committee members Kaarin Long, Lindsay Brice, Thi Synavone, Christina Warren, Rebecca St. George, Suzanne Elwell, KiloMarie Granda, Rep. Kelly Moller, and Rep. Marion O'Neill.

About the Gold WATCH Award

The Advocates for Human Rights' WATCH Project seeks to make the justice system more effective and responsive in handling cases of violence against women and children, and to create a more informed and involved public. The Gold WATCH Award recognizes individuals or groups who move us closer to a judicial system that consistently protects the human rights of women and children.

Understanding Minnesota's Criminal Sexual Conduct Laws

Minnesota's updated criminal sexual conduct laws reflect today's expectations of the right to be free from sexual violence. Minnesota law now includes:

- ▣ A "voluntarily intoxicated" provision to punish those who knew or should have known that the other person was too intoxicated to give consent to sexual conduct.
- ▣ A sexual extortion provision to punish using blackmail-like threats to compel unwanted sexual conduct—such as threats to the victim's housing or employment, to share private sexual images, or to report the victim to immigration authorities.
- ▣ A provision to clarify that educators and their staff are prohibited by their professional jobs from sexual conduct with high school students, even if they are not directly in a position of authority over the student, as provided in a current statute.
- ▣ A low-level felony offense for sexual penetration without consent, even absent proof of force or intoxication, to clarify that sexual penetration requires affirmative consent.
- ▣ A provision protecting 13-year-olds instead of grouping them with older teenagers under the law regarding sexual conduct with children.
- ▣ A provision capping at five years the age range within which an older person can claim they made a "mistake of age" regarding sexual conduct with a 14- or 15-year-old. This replaces the previous ten-year cap on the "mistake of age" defense.

225,780,000 women worldwide

(6% globally) report they have been subjected to sexual violence from someone other than their husband or partner.¹

Tracking Cases on Gender-based Violence through the Justice System

WATCH project volunteers continue to observe court cases related to domestic violence and sexual assault via Zoom in Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington Counties.

To apply to volunteer, contact Elizabeth Montgomery at emontgomery@advrights.org.

80 current volunteers

904 hearings in Hennepin County

1,830 hearings in Ramsey County

177 hearings in Washington County²

“I am glad to be a part of this group that is looking to observe the judicial system and make sure things run smoothly and suggest anything that could be changed for the better.”

- WATCH volunteer

¹ World Health Organization, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (2021). The true prevalence of non-partner sexual violence is likely to be much higher given the stigma related to this particular form of violence.

² Current figures as of September 2021.

Immigration Detention & COVID-19: Human Rights Concerns in Minnesota Jails

A report by The Advocates for Human Rights, the James H. Binger Center for New Americans at the University of Minnesota Law School, and the Minnesota Immigrant Health Alliance highlights serious failures to protect health, dignity, and due process rights for people held in Minnesota jails.

Using the lens of immigration detention, the report distills information obtained through interviews with people detained by or released from ICE detention in Minnesota; interviews with Minnesota attorneys who represent people detained by ICE; reports from the Immigration Court Observation Project; insights from medical professionals; and information in the public domain. The report found that the COVID-19 pandemic strained a largely unaccountable system rife with human rights failings.

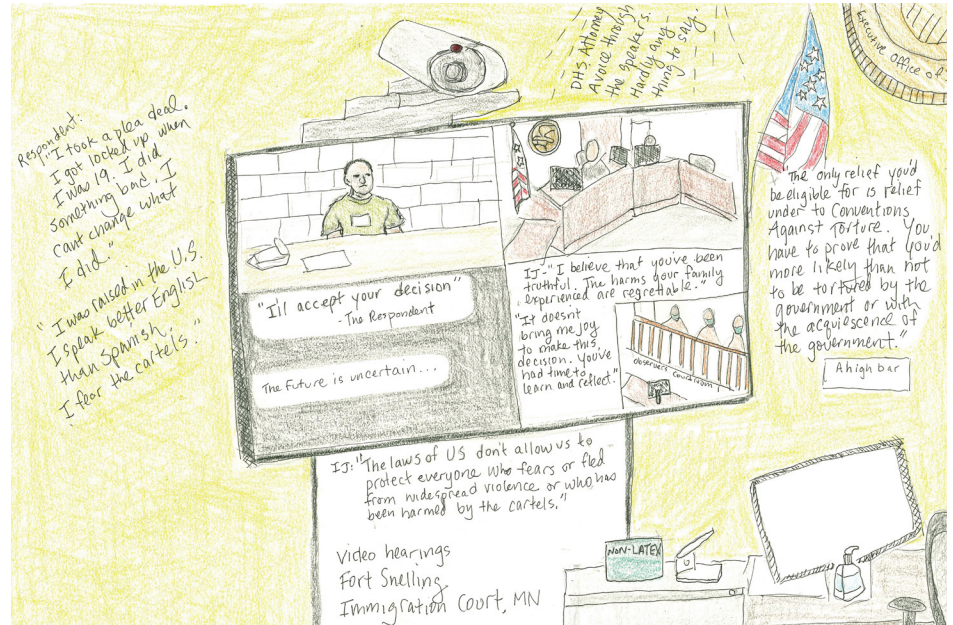


Illustration: Amy Lange

Key Findings: Immigration Detention & COVID-19



ICE continues to contract with Minnesota jails despite documented violations of healthcare standards, including:

- allowing unlicensed, unavailable, or untrained personnel performing healthcare functions;
- failing to use interpreters for health screenings of people with limited or no English;
- failing to get consent for procedures or when providing psychotropic medication;
- failing to provide required health screenings of new arrivals, screen for TB or read TB test results, assess gynecological conditions, or perform welfare checks on people on suicide watch; and
- discontinuing medication for opioid withdrawal without adequate warning and inappropriately charging for medications.



Committing routine violations of UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)

which state that solitary confinement should be used only as a last resort, for a maximum of 15 days, and prohibited for people with disabilities.



Failing to ensure access to a fair day in court. Barriers to accessing legal counsel, language assistance, and immigration

forms resulted in hearing delays and interfered with the ability to raise defenses to deportation. In some cases, detained people chose deportation over continued detention where they believed their safety was at risk.



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Immigration Court Observers



Photo: Bill Cameron

A number of Immigration Court Observers have demonstrated extraordinary loyalty and leadership since the program's inception in 2017. Together, these highly committed volunteers have completed more than 900 shifts at the Fort Snelling Immigration Court. We are grateful to them for their incredible contributions to the human rights movement.

Immigration Court Observers

(Pictured standing, left to right) Heidi Wortel, Fran Bohlke, Pamela Kildahl, Peter Frederick, Joan Naymark, Miriam Goldfein, Dana Lindsay, Nancy Poemann

(Seated, left to right) Jeff Odendahl, Doreen Marie Von Berg, Susan Sexton, Florence Brammer, Project Coordinator Amy Lange

Key Findings: Latest Stakeholder Report



Length of Time in the United States

- Average: 12.9 years
- Median: 12 years
- Range: 6 months to 46 years

15 years in the U.S.:

"My family can't eat. I need to work. I can't wait."

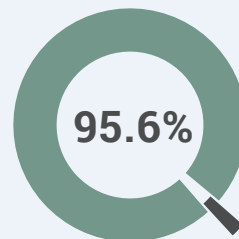
21 years in the U.S.:

"I've been detained 15 months already. If I can't get bond, I want to be deported."

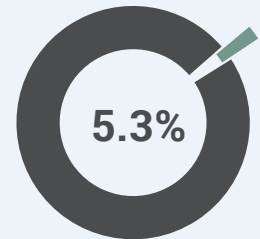
32 years in the U.S.:

"I don't want to fight the case or anything. I just want to get it over with."

Legal representation significantly increased the chances of getting bond.



Of the 45 cases granted bond, 95.6% had an attorney.



Only 5.3% of pro se cases were granted bond.



Scan the QR code to read the full reports.

Politics or Protection: How U.S. Asylum

1 Placed on “rocket docket” in 2015. Still pending.

B arrived as an 11-year-old from Central America. After seven years, B’s complex legal case remains pending. Like many unaccompanied children, he is waiting in line for a small number of visas allocated to victims of serious crimes and to abused, abandoned, or neglected children.

2 Filed 2015. Still pending.

“They broke my finger and injured my shoulder. I still have pain in my shoulder whenever I try to lift anything heavy. They put a tire around my neck and poured gasoline on me. By some miracle, the police arrived before the attackers could light a match.” A fled his country because, as a gay man, he feared for his life.

As people crowded the Kabul airport ahead of the U.S. troop withdrawal from its 20-year deployment in Afghanistan, the Biden administration scrambled to respond. An estimated 134,000 people were evacuated in a matter of days and either brought directly to the United States or relocated to “lily pads” around the world to await processing onto U.S. military bases.

1 The abrupt evacuation swiftly brought tens of thousands of people to safety in a move that, while far below the demand for evacuations, demonstrates U.S. capacity to protect people from human rights violations—at least when public sentiment and political will align.

But in September, while the first Afghan arrivals were being welcomed, Border Patrol agents riding horses beat back Haitian asylum seekers at Del Rio, Texas. The horrifying images coincided with a federal contract announcement seeking bids to staff—with Haitian Creole and Spanish speakers—the Migrant Operations Center at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, where thousands of Haitians were detained in the 1990s after interdiction by the U.S. Coast Guard to deter them from seeking asylum.

The expulsion of Haitian asylum seekers took place under the authority of Title 42, a federal public health provision first invoked by the previous administration. The Biden administration’s continued use of Title

42 to turn back asylum seekers without hearings stands in violation of U.S. treaty obligations. The policy, which has disproportionately hit Black and Central American asylum seekers, is a stark contrast to the emergency evacuation from Afghanistan.

U.S. and international law recognize that people who have fled their countries because of a “well-founded fear” of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group are “refugees.”

2 But the U.S. refugee protection system is designed to meter the arrival of refugees, not for rapid response. As a result, most Afghans arriving throughout the fall have been admitted into the country on “humanitarian parole,” not as refugees. This quasi-status allows people to live and work in the United States for two years with no clear path to permanent status.

Without congressional action, tens of thousands of Afghan “parolees” will need to file applications for asylum. A political compromise in September ordered federal asylum officials to expedite adjudication of Afghan asylum applications, in a move that will swamp a chronically under-resourced system.

We have been here before. In 2013, The Advocates responded to the legal needs of Central American children and families fleeing violence in the region’s

Behind the Scenes: The Advocates’ Afghan Legal Clinic

In a Minnesota hotel, the hallways are filled with the pitter-patter of small feet exploring yet another temporary home. Afghan families are here while they await more permanent housing. One hotel room holds The Advocates’ legal clinic. The room is crowded, as an attorney, interpreter, and case manager all join a newly arrived person from Afghanistan, who’s here to understand the immigration papers he’s been given.

The team meets with families who were evacuated together and need

help to sort out immigration applications that were abruptly halted when the U.S. Embassy closed in Kabul. Others have only photos of their spouses and children on their phones. They want to know how long it will take to be reunited.

Some evacuees worked with the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Many had started the multi-step application for Special Immigrant Visas but are unsure of where they are in the process. In the haste of the military withdrawal and amidst fear of reprisal by the Taliban, many lost or

Policy Puts People at Risk

3 Northern Triangle. The immigration court’s “rocket docket” hauled children and families in for status hearings every two weeks. The Advocates set up a screening clinic with our Minnesota non-profit partners and doubled our docket of asylum cases at the court. Volunteers responded to the urgent calls for help, taking on hundreds of complex asylum claims.

But in 2017, the Trump administration changed priorities to focus on detained cases, effectively halting the progress of pending Central American asylum cases. Then COVID hit, shutting down the non-detained and affirmative asylum dockets completely and leaving the immigration courts with a backlog of more than 1.5 million pending cases nationwide. As of October 2021, less than 25% of those “priority” cases have been resolved.

In the meantime, with little fanfare and virtually no support, more than 850 children have joined family, friends, or foster homes in Minnesota in the last year alone. In deportation proceedings, these “unaccompanied alien children” are told to hire an attorney or represent themselves in immigration court. Many have viable but complex immigration options available to them. Without legal help, these kids are likely to be ordered deported before they get their high school diploma.

Meanwhile, Afghans who fear they will be targeted by the Taliban are on the clock. Twenty-five years ago, Congress

sought to deter people from seeking asylum by decreeing that people must file their asylum claims within one year of arriving in the U.S. The timeline is even tighter for those Afghans who were already here—they need to file for protection right away.

We know that when people move with dignity, the world is a more just, safe, and peaceful place. The Advocates is working for changes that bring our policies in line with our values and the realities of human migration.

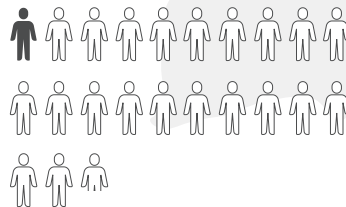
3 Filed 2015. Interviewed 2019. Still pending.

“They threw Molotov cocktails and stones at us until we stopped protesting.” Y, a political activist and social worker, fled his country after his brother was imprisoned and tortured for protesting the government.

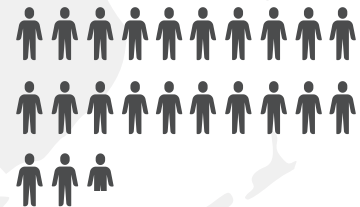
Asylum Office Statistics

Eight asylum offices and 800 officers decide cases in all 50 states and U.S. territories. The asylum case backlog has increased more than twentyfold from 2012 to 2020.

2012: 15,500 cases



2020: 350,000 cases



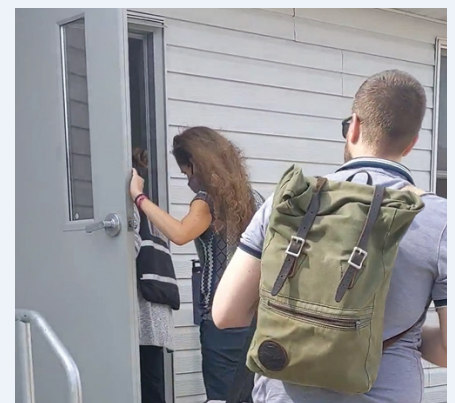
disposed of key documents.

During clinic appointments, the team tries to put the puzzle pieces together and plan the next steps on the arrivals’ legal journeys. Refugee and Immigrant Program Director Sarah Brenes explains, “In theory, many families should be able to easily obtain green cards, but in practice the path is more difficult. Important pieces of the paper trail may be missing.”

Staff Attorney Kim Boche says, “People tell us that the U.S. government

helped them get out, and they believe their immigration case is being handled by the government, too. They don’t understand that they only have permission to be here for two years. We have to break the news that the process is going to be longer and more complex than they think.”

Refugee & Immigrant Program Director Sarah Brenes and Program Associate Thomas Bird visiting a resettlement site. Photo: Staff Attorney Kim Boche



Peer-to-Peer Partnership with Moscow Community Center for LGBT+ Initiatives



Olga Baranova. Photo: Bill Cameron

The Moscow Community Center for LGBT+ Initiatives (MCC) has rightly received international accolades for its life-saving work evacuating people from Chechnya. But in its five years of existence, it has done so much more to promote human rights in increasingly challenging circumstances. Within days

of receiving word of the first evacuation, MCC signed a lease for a building that quickly became a full-service shelter providing safe harbor for dozens of people fleeing persecution in Chechnya based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. And central to its mission, MCC has built a growing and fierce community of LGBT+ folks, including other displaced LGBT+ Russians. People come to the Center for everything from clothing swaps to choir rehearsals to computer programming lessons to classes in conversational Hebrew, not to mention its annual Open Art Festival.

Supported by peer-to-peer funding from the U.S. Department of State and the Eurasia Foundation, The Advocates for Human Rights and MCC have worked together since 2017. The partnership focuses on building both organizations' capacity to deploy volunteers to support LGBT+ persons and to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Teams from MCC and The Advocates have visited one another at the organizations' Moscow and Minneapolis offices. The visits included working meetings, trainings, workshops, and other events. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has curtailed global travel, MCC's Olga Baranova was able to return to Minnesota in September 2021 and display artwork made by individuals served by MCC as part of The Advocates' event on September 29. Olga was also able to finally accept in person The Advocates' Special Recognition Award presented at the 2020 virtual Human Rights Awards Dinner.

The Advocates and MCC have also teamed up to document and report to UN human rights mechanisms on human rights violations against LGBT+ persons in Russia. Russian authorities continue to engage in and create a climate of impunity for widespread discrimination, harassment, and murders of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women.

“Unspoken” Project



In 2017, Chechnya's law enforcement and security officials launched an anti-gay purge. They rounded up dozens of individuals on suspicion of being gay, held them in unofficial detention facilities for days, humiliated, starved, and tortured them. These deeply emotional artworks were created

by individuals that the Moscow Community Center helped evacuate from the region and sheltered from persecution.

The artworks invite viewers to look at the terrible events from a different angle—not as detached reportage, but as the fate of each individual asylum seeker. Olga Baranova said, “These works are like recognition, like a heart-to-heart talk, like a confession. We also hope they serve as a kind of art therapy not only for the victims, but also for the viewers, awakening compassion and tolerance in them.”



Photos: Communications & Outreach Assistant Peter Olson



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Carrie Brassler



Photos: Bill Cameron

Carrie Brassler has been volunteering with The Advocates since she moved to Minnesota in 2018. She is passionate, dedicated, and an outstanding advocate. Carrie has represented several of The Advocates' clients in complex asylum and bond cases. With a longstanding passion for international relations,

Carrie has become actively involved in our international advocacy work, including travelling to Geneva in 2019 as part of our UN advocacy team. There she interpreted for our francophone partners, briefed members of the Human Rights Council, and presented statements to the UN Human Rights Committee on human rights issues in the U.S. In 2020, Carrie helped us pivot to remote advocacy by developing issue summaries and speaking at live events.

Scott Smith, a solo practitioner, has been a tireless *pro bono* lawyer tackling The Advocates' complex asylum, bond, and trafficking cases. Scott not only provides high-quality legal representation, but also goes above and beyond to support our clients holistically. He has coordinated with the Minnesota Freedom Fund to help clients post bond and return to their families and jobs. He has taken on a civil case impacting a

Scott Smith



trafficking survivor and secured medical evaluation and treatment for a detained client. Scott now serves as a mentor to other *pro bono* lawyers and has been instrumental in training and supporting new volunteers. With his zealous advocacy and contributions to human rights, he inspires all of us.





2 • 0 • 2 • 1
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDER AWARD

Darnella Frazier



Darnella Frazier changed the world with her stunning video documenting the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police. Her quick thinking and courage to bear witness to this horrifying event ignited a worldwide reckoning with systemic racism and police violence. Her video contradicted the original statement issued by the Minneapolis Police Department and provided the evidence necessary to charge and convict Derek Chauvin.

Mobile technologies make it possible to document human rights abuses as they occur and memorialize the facts to hold those responsible accountable. They provide an extraordinary tool to those brave enough to step forward as human rights defenders. As we work together to break down systemic racism and build a stronger, more just community, we owe a debt of gratitude to Darnella Frazier for making this moment possible.

The Human Rights Defender Award honors those individuals who demonstrate courage in stepping forward to protect, defend, and demand fundamental human rights. Often without intending to step into the spotlight and at personal risk, human rights defenders follow their convictions to do the right thing. They exemplify how each of us has the power to become an advocate for human rights.



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VOLUNTEER
AWARD RECIPIENTS

Stinson Rapid Response Team



Top row from left to right: Dennis Lane, Harvey L. Reiter, James Schoeberl
Bottom row: Michael K. Grigsby, William L. Greene, Yeun Gi (Jenny) Ahn. Photos: Stinson LLP

The Stinson Rapid Response Regulation Team stepped up to protect the right to seek asylum and receive due process in immigration proceedings. In 2020, the previous administration skirted administrative rules and proposed nearly 20 harmful regulations that would have gutted asylum and due process protections for victims of human rights abuses seeking protection in the United States. The Stinson team, led by Dennis Lane and Harvey Reiter, helped The Advocates respond quickly to these

regulatory attacks and perfected an amicus brief on behalf of the organization. When the previous administration made it almost impossible for our Liberian community members to receive Liberian Refugee Immigrant Fairness Act green cards, Dennis and Harvey crafted helpful sample language for *pro bono* attorneys to respond. Their outstanding legal efforts helped our community turn outrage into action and stopped the potential gutting of migrants' rights under our immigration laws.



Become an Advocate

The Advocates launched a free legal clinic in October to help Afghans navigate their complex immigration options.

Scan the QR code or go to TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/Afghans_Welcome to join the effort.



2021 World Day Against the Death Penalty Sheds Light on Women Sentenced to Death



World Day Against the Death Penalty, organized by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, is observed every year on October 10.



Senior Staff Attorney Amy Bergquist discussed Justice Ginsburg's legacy on the death penalty during a virtual education event.

Observed every October 10, the World Day Against the Death Penalty unifies the global abolitionist movement. It mobilizes civil society, political leaders, lawyers, and the public to support the call for universal abolition of capital punishment. The Advocates for Human Rights serves on the steering committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and chairs the working group that organizes the annual event.

The 2021 World Day highlighted women who are at risk of being

sentenced to death, who have received a death sentence, and who have been executed. Discrimination based on sex and gender, often intertwined with discrimination based on other elements of identity, such as age, sexual orientation, disability, and race, expose women to intersecting forms of structural inequalities. This discrimination can also compel authorities to disregard important mitigating factors, such as a history of gender-based violence and abuse.

The Advocates commemorated

World Day Against the Death Penalty with a program highlighting Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's opinions relating to the death penalty. A champion of women's rights, Justice Ginsburg famously said, "If I were queen, there would be no death penalty." Contrary to the Supreme Court majority's willingness to uphold the constitutionality of capital punishment, Justice Ginsburg's views reflect the growing international consensus that the death penalty is a cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment.

International Justice: Our Impact

25 collaborating partners worldwide

33 countries covered in human rights issue reporting

39 written reports to UN mechanisms on ten issues, including the death penalty

16 oral statements to UN human rights mechanisms

27 advocacy trainings and webinars

34 UN side events, live UPR debriefings, and treaty body briefings

Bringing Global Human Rights Home: 2021 Human Rights Awards Dinner

The Advocates' virtual Human Rights Awards Dinner brought global human rights into our homes with welcomes from advocates for human rights worldwide. The event included messages from our partners in Morocco, Bulgaria, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Malawi, Washington D.C., Trinidad and Tobago, France, Cameroon, Nepal, and Liberia. They spoke of their collaborations with The Advocates, from trainings for women's rights defenders, to anti-death penalty advocacy, to working on joint submissions to the United Nations. The Advocates builds strong, long-lasting relationships with our partners around the globe to address some of the most intractable human rights issues.

Honoring Human Rights Defenders and Volunteers

The Advocates presented the 2021 Don & Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award to two groups that have tirelessly defended the rights of women and refugees: the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE). Darnella Frazier, the young Minnesota woman who stood fast and documented the murder of George Floyd, received the Human Rights Defender Award. We also recognized outstanding volunteers who exemplify The Advocates' belief that everyone has a part to play in defending human rights: Dotty Bieurance, Carrie Brassler, Rhonda Phillips, Scott Smith, outstanding Immigration Court Observers, and Stinson LLP's Rapid Response Regulation Team.

Thank you to everyone who joined us to recognize the amazing advocates, witnesses, and volunteers at the heart of the global human rights movement.

Thank you to our sponsors!

HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS



HUMAN RIGHTS PARTNER



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER



HUMAN RIGHTS AMBASSADORS



HUMAN RIGHTS ALLIES



Chris Bercaw & Mary McKelvey • Aviva Breen
 Karen & Rick Evans • Linda Foreman & Mel Dickstein
 Dulce Foster & Joe Muretta • Barbara Frey & Howard Orenstein
 Rachel & Thomas Hamlin • Loan T. Huynh & Aydin Ozturk
 Nazneen Khatoun & Hyder Khan • Kathy & Allen Lenzmeier
 Sam & Char Myers • Jim & Sally O'Neal • Nancy Speer



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 HUMAN RIGHTS
 AWARDS DINNER

Please join us in June for the 2022 Human Rights Awards Dinner. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Liz Kelleher at lkelleher@advrights.org.

Introducing New Board Chair Karen Evans



Left to right: Organizational partners Jerome Lottering and Anna Głogowska-Balcerzak with volunteers Kiersten Chace, Matt Forsgren, Lisa Borden, Mark Petty, Peggy Grieve, Board Chair Karen Evans, Bradley Wallace, Executive Director Robin Phillips, Joan Kuriansky, Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt, and Women's Program Director Rosalyn Park. Photo: Senior Staff Attorney Amy Bergquist

In the spring of 2017, Karen Evans was standing in the Palais des Nations, headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, surrounded by human rights defenders from all over the world. After months of preparations, Karen was ready to experience the place where stories of human rights violations are told, and governments are held accountable.

Karen had been involved in The Advocates' work for a long time. She and now-Executive Director Robin Phillips met while working together at a Minneapolis law firm. They stayed in touch when Robin joined The Advocates. "Eventually, I began volunteering in small ways and attending the annual Human Rights Awards Dinner," remembers Karen. Karen received a volunteer award in 2018 for her extraordinary commitment.

In 2017, Karen decided to participate in the weeklong UN Study-Advocacy trip. Karen and the other volunteers observed

"I was surrounded by people who shared the common vision of making the world a better place."

the UN Human Rights Council session and shared The Advocates' research and recommendations with delegates. Karen knew that she was part of a global movement for human rights. "It was an emotional and inspiring experience to look around and see the diversity of our humanity. I was surrounded by people who shared the common vision of making the world a better place," shares Karen.

This experience changed Karen's life. She became more involved and joined

The Advocates' Board of Directors. Karen is passionate about engaging our community through events and calls supporters every week to thank them. In January 2022, she will become Chair of the Board. Karen says, "It's a great honor to become the Board Chair for such a great organization. It will be a new and exciting challenge for me. I am looking forward to the opportunity."

Sustain Our Work and Make a Difference

In Uganda, being gay can mean a death sentence.

They will kill me because of who I love.

- M, Uganda

M kept his identity hidden for most of his life, until an ex-boyfriend outed him to the police. Jailed and called a "wanted man" in a local newspaper because of his sexual orientation, his family disowned him. If forced to return to Uganda, he faces a life sentence in prison under anti-LGBT+ amendments to Uganda's constitution.

Making a recurring contribution ensures a steady stream of income to help clients like M find safety in the United States. As a monthly or quarterly donor, you allow us to adapt and respond to global human rights challenges in real time and with real action.

Scan the QR code or go to TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/Give/Monthly to become a sustaining donor today.

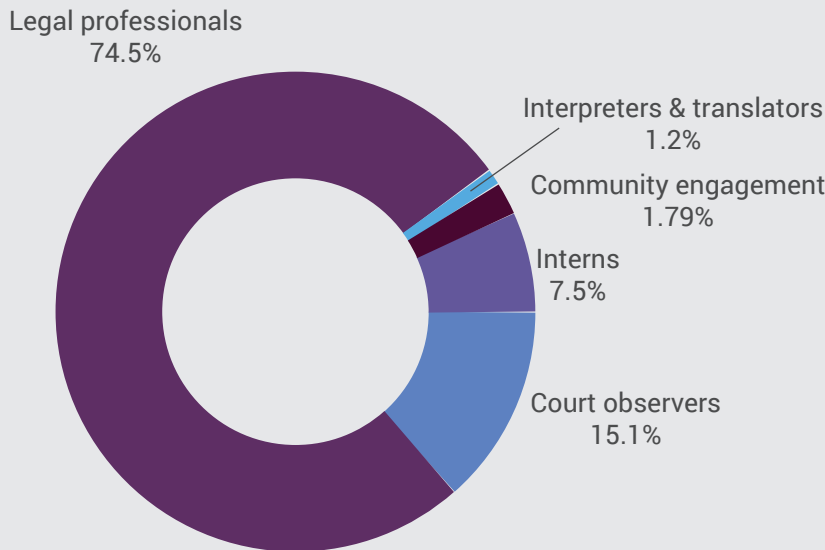


Volunteers make every dollar go seven times further.

The Advocates mobilizes volunteers to address some of the most pressing issues of our time because we believe that everyone has the power to advance human rights. Volunteers engage in hands-on human rights work, helping The Advocates accomplish critical research and advocacy and transforming themselves into advocates for human rights.

\$14.5 mil in-kind contributions in 2021

1,506 individual volunteers



Special thanks to our volunteer website team.



Developer Charles Weed
Designer Alex Parke
Content Editor Chris Duerkop
Information Architecture Consultant Samantha Bailey



Dotty Bieurance & Rhonda Phillips



Photos: Bill Cameron

Dotty Bieurance and Rhonda Phillips stepped up with extraordinary service during the pandemic, becoming core volunteer members of our Development team when we could not invite volunteers into the office. Dotty and Rhonda have been volunteers with The Advocates since 1995 and their willingness to support The Advocates has no limits. It is hard to encapsulate 26 years of being willing to support events, projects, and fundraisers, but for Dotty and Rhonda, no task has ever been too small or too big when they could find ways to help.

Snapshots: 2021 in Review

Hundreds of friends, volunteers, and supporters joined us this year at virtual and in-person events to learn about protecting dignity in migration, The Advocates' local and global advocacy, and our vision for the future of women's rights. We heard incredible stories from clients and celebrated human rights victories with our international partners. Thank you to all of the co-hosts, sponsors, award winners, and attendees who made these events special.



Thanks to a generous partnership with the Basilica of Saint Mary, The Advocates hosted events exploring the public sculpture *Angels Unawares* during its month-long installation in Minneapolis.

Above, from top: Staff, board members, and volunteers admire the public sculpture *Angels Unawares*. Photo: Events & Individual Giving Coordinator Liz Kelleher. Kalpulli KetzalCoatlucue Aztec Dancers at the *Angels Unawares* opening. Photo: Communications & Outreach Assistant Christina Chang.

Left, from top: Claire Perry and Women's Program Director Rosalyn Park at the House Party in the Park. Photo: Development Assistant Anaïd Plascencia. Peggy Grieve, Nancy Speer, Aviva Breen, and Suzanne Elwell at the House Party in the Park. Photo: Communications & Outreach Assistant Peter Olson. Board members Sam Myers and Loan Huynh spoke at this year's virtual Human Rights Awards Dinner.

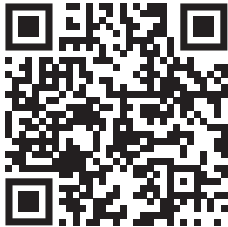


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