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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Refugees Can Create Change in the Countries They Fled

Publication from The Advocates is a how-to guide

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN (02/28/14) – Whether a country is in turmoil because of a brutal dictator, lawlessness, or persecution of religious groups, people in diaspora communities can create change in their homelands — even if they live half-way around the world, thanks to a resource manual released by Minnesota-based The Advocates for Human Rights.

The manual, “Paving Pathways to Justice & Accountability: Human Rights Tools for Diaspora Communities,” provides practical tools and step-by-step guidance for using monitoring, documentation, and advocacy from afar to change policy and improve human rights conditions in other countries.

“Members of diaspora communities play an increasingly important global role and can be a bridge between individuals, governments, and international legal and political mechanisms,” said Jennifer Prestholdt, deputy director of The Advocates. “Diaspora communities are critical links to effect change in social institutions and structures to hold governments accountable.”

The Advocates points to its work with Oromo diaspora communities in the United States and the United Kingdom to illustrate the power held by those who fled their homelands. The Oromo, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, have been repressed and have had their human rights abused by Ethiopian governments since the late 19th century.

“Although not based on on-the-ground fieldwork in Ethiopia, we developed a carefully researched and credible report that has been cited as a basis for recommendations by UN bodies and as supporting evidence in immigration,” Prestholdt said.

The report, “Human Rights in Ethiopia: Through the Eyes of the Oromo Diaspora,” details torture, extra-judicial execution, arbitrary arrests and detention, lack of due process, and inadequate prison conditions. It also documents the state surveillance apparatus and violations to freedom of speech, assembly, association, and expression, as well as violations of economic, social, and cultural rights.

There is no cost for the manual, which can be downloaded by going to The Advocates for Human Rights’ website, www.TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org, and entering “Paving Pathways” in the search bar.

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