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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Advocates for Human Rights on Agenda for UN's Review of US Record; Launching Its Groundbreaking Resource Manual

In Geneva, The Advocates is empowering migrants to spark human rights' changes from afar

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN (02/28/14) – The Minnesota-based The Advocates for Human Rights launches a groundbreaking resource manual tomorrow (Friday) at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The manual “Paving Pathways for Justice & Accountability: Human Rights Tools for Diaspora Communities” is a how-to guide with a full menu of strategies and resources to empower migrants to be effective advocates for human rights in their countries of origin.

“Many migrants—refugees and asylum seekers in particular—leave their homes because of human rights abuses,” said Amy Bergquist, a staff attorney with The Advocates and the person presenting the manual to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). “Many were political and human rights activists, and they bring their experiences with them. From their new home base, they can bring change in their countries of origin.”

Members of diaspora communities agree. “We have the privilege to see those countries from a different perspective,” said Chanravy Proeung, co-director of the Providence Youth Student Movement based in Providence, Rhode Island, and a member of the Cambodian diaspora. “We need to have the people who are the most marginalized and affected by issues at the forefront of creating change not only here in the United States, but having influence in their countries of origin, too.”

The unique ability diaspora communities have to improve human rights around the world has largely been overlooked, according to Bergquist. “It's time for that to change” she said. “Tremendous advancements in technology and communication now allow people to form strong international networks and to share emerging information about human rights abuses almost as soon as they happen. This fundamentally changes the way human rights organizations work, including how they engage in human rights advocacy with the broader community beyond a country's borders.”

At UN headquarters in Geneva this week, Bergquist will also participate in review of the United States' human rights record and its compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UN's human rights review is a routine periodic reporting procedure for the U.S. and the other countries that have ratified the ICCPR, one of two treaties that together are equivalent to an international “Bill of Rights.” The U.S. ratified the ICCPR in 1992.

In the run-up to the UN review of the U.S, The Advocates submitted shadow reports to the committee calling attention to the human rights abuses caused by U.S. immigration laws and policies and by the use of the death penalty.

Bergquist also participated today (Thursday) on a panel with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders. Bergquist spoke about diaspora human rights defenders at the event, co-sponsored by The Advocates and running parallel to the UNHRC's work this week.

Created after two years of research, the Paving Pathways manual is available for download at no cost at The Advocates' website, TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/pathways.

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Paving Pathways: TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/pathways

Shadow Reports:

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About The Advocates for Human Rights

For more than 30 years, The Advocates for Human Rights has promoted and protected human rights here at home and around the world. The non-profit organization, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, documents human rights abuses, advocates on behalf of individual victims, provides free legal representation to people seeking asylum, works to prevent violence against women and girls, spearheads public policy and legal change, educates about human rights issues, and provides training and technical assistance to address and prevent human rights violations.