Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Sankhu-Palubari Community School
Looking back on the past year, we see hope amidst overwhelming challenges. These are difficult times for advocates for human rights around the world. Here in the United States, continued assaults on migrants and punitive cutbacks in asylum protections have increased the demand for our services and reduced the protections available to victims of human rights violations.

Our work on behalf of refugees and immigrants continues to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of immigration policy. The United States government has violated international treaty obligations and federal law in implementing these policies. The violations continue despite protests, lawsuits, and evidence of severe harm caused to children and families. People are being denied the right to seek asylum, and the swift change in rules without appropriate rule-making procedures leaves many without recourse. Our government continues its assault on asylum seekers—keeping the advocacy community off-balance with changing standards and increasingly drastic threats of future action. Fortunately, because of our dedicated staff and volunteers, we were able to serve clients in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and find lawyers for many more in other states.

Our women’s human rights work continues as we strive for a better, safer world for women. We trained young lawyers from more than 15 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in our Legal Training Academy and through our partnership with the Women’s Human Rights training institute. We brought together 31 human rights defenders from 17 countries to strategize about the best ways to address attacks on the advancement of women’s rights and LGBTI rights in the same region.

We have continued our work to combat human trafficking with the publication of our Safe Harbor for All Report and our Labor Trafficking Protocol Guidelines. Our work with the United Nations on the benefits of female inclusion in male-dominated workplaces culminated in another acclaimed report.

Our work for international justice continues as we seek to hold governments accountable for human rights abuses, taking two teams to advocate at the United Nations in Geneva. We are working with the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty to advocate for abolition of the death penalty around the world. Finally, we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of our Sankhu-Palubari Community School in Nepal.

As we recommit ourselves to the work ahead in 2020, we know that the challenges of this past year have made us stronger. We know that our community is standing with us and that we can accomplish much together. We are grateful for the dedication and inspiration of the amazing people who share their lives with us. Together we can change the world for good.

Wishing you peace in the New Year,
We often speak of the unique and effective volunteer model The Advocates employs to promote human rights, but not everyone understands it. In this newsletter, I would like to explain our model of operation and why I believe in it so strongly.

The model relies on outreach, both to determine what our work will be and to recruit the volunteers to help us do it. We are not an organization with an extremely large staff, basing its selection of projects on what our in-house experts believe to be important. Instead, our few but highly skilled professionals maintain a global network of ties to in-country and diaspora human rights defenders. We base our work planning on their requests for help, not on our own ideas of what they need. For example, we recently enlisted the aid of major U.S. law firms to investigate organized and well-funded attacks on women’s rights in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We initiated these projects, not because this was our idea, but because our partners in those countries sought our help to defend themselves and the women they strive to protect against increasing propaganda, legal initiatives and even violence that they were commonly experiencing.

We also engage in outreach to respond to these requests for help and to accomplish all that The Advocates accomplishes, with such a small staff and budget. We leverage the contributions of hundreds of pro bono volunteers every year, both lawyers and other professionals, to advocate for human rights. Our volunteers work at the United Nations, represent asylum seekers, investigate human rights abuses, and help with much of the other work The Advocates undertakes in defense of human rights. It is only through the dedication of our many volunteers that we have been able to provide legal counsel for thousands of asylum seekers, achieve consultative status with the UN and file dozens of reports each year, write the standard international protocol for investigation of potentially unlawful deaths, win law changes to fight domestic violence, shine a light on Minnesota’s own sex and labor trafficking problems, and on and on.

Our work not only helps the vulnerable, but also inspires our many volunteers, who often testify that their work with The Advocates has changed their lives. Our volunteer model is so efficient that, with an annual budget in FY 2018 of only $1.9 million, we were able to provide more than $5.7 million in services to the cause of human rights.

There are many other fine human rights organizations, but none implement a model like ours as effectively as The Advocates for Human Rights. All who support The Advocates should take great pride in that fact.

SAVE THE DATE
THE ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS’
2020 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS
DINNER

Monday, June 15, 2020

featuring
Lee Gelernt, Deputy Director of the ACLU Immigrants’ Rights Project
winner of the 2020
Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award
Refugee & Immigrant Rights

New Attacks on Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

This administration’s anti-immigrant policies continued to escalate throughout the past year, with new regulations, executive orders, and policies issued at unparalleled speed. Fundamental tenets of refugee protection are under attack, placing tens of thousands of people in peril in refugee camps, at the United States’ borders, and throughout the country. Meanwhile, an array of changes designed to make it harder to enter the United States and easier to be deported have rolled out throughout the immigration system.

These changes reflect a decades-old agenda of anti-immigrant and white nationalist groups pushing back against policies that foster an increasingly diverse country. They also are the residue of the unfinished business of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The 1965 Act eliminated race-based immigration quotas in the spirit of the civil rights era but sought to maintain the country’s racial balance through a new immigration regime centered on family-based immigration.

The administration continues to undermine the United States’ commitment to refugee protection. In September, the President announced the lowest refugee resettlement ceiling since the program’s inception in 1980. He also announced a plan to require states and localities to “consent” to the resettlement of refugees in their communities. Set at 18,000, the cap will leave in peril nearly 98% of the 1.4 million people identified by the United Nations as in immediate need of third-country resettlement. It also leaves out the rest of the world’s more than 25 million refugees.

The drawdown of refugee arrivals comes alongside a relentless attempt to narrow asylum eligibility and deter people from seeking protection in the United States from persecution and torture. The United States returned more than 51,000 asylum seekers to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols, or Remain in Mexico policy, to await hearings on their asylum claims. There they have little access to legal advice as they prepare and litigate their cases before immigration judges.

Despite the purported end of the family separation policies that scooped up more than 2,600 children in the summer of 2018, thousands of children are warehoused in massive detention centers for increasingly long periods of time. Meanwhile, family separations and mass prosecutions continue.

Those asylum seekers who can pursue their cases face new hurdles. Two attorney general decisions overturned decades of case law in the complex area of “particular social group” asylum claims. These decisions have in their sights Central American and other women fleeing domestic violence and persecution on account of their family relationships. Another decision attempts to eliminate the possibility of release on bond for arriving asylum seekers, leaving them subject to arbitrary detention for months while they pursue their protection claims—a violation of international human rights standards.

Meanwhile, the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention capacity continues to increase. ICE booked in more than 500,000 people in FY2019—including more than 37,000 people booked into family detention centers.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“ARTICLE
14:
Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”
Every day, more than 50,000 people sit in ICE custody awaiting hearings or deportation. This widespread use of prolonged, indefinite detention effectively coerces immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers into giving up claims to remain in the United States and agreeing to deportation.

Other policy changes threaten the health and vibrancy of the United States. New rules defining who is considered a “public charge” received widespread attention, including over a quarter of a million comments to the proposed regulation. The rule change generated fear throughout immigrant communities and drove an estimated one in seven adults in immigrant families to avoid public benefits.

Receiving far less attention were changes to the Diversity Visa program requiring applicants to have a valid, unexpired passport in order to enter the lottery. The new passport requirement promises to disproportionately impact less affluent people and undermine the program’s intent to ameliorate the effect of racial and ethnic exclusion laws.

Additionally, an October proclamation requiring immigrants to the United States to prove they will be covered by health insurance or have the financial resources to pay for reasonably foreseeable medical costs could keep out up to 65% of future immigrants who would be admissible under current law.

“The relentless attacks by this Administration on immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers make The Advocates’ work more crucial than ever,” said Robin Phillips, The Advocates’ executive director. “With the help of our supporters, we continue to defend the human rights of immigrants and asylum seekers and work to change these inhumane policies.”

The Advocates and its volunteers provided legal help in almost 1,200 matters last year, representing refugee and immigrant clients from more than 50 countries as they sought protection from persecution, torture, trafficking, and arbitrary detention. The Advocates’ National Asylum Help Line continues to help asylum seekers find legal representation in the communities where they live, helping over 6,000 callers since its inception in 2015.

Despite unprecedented attacks on the laws, rules, and regulations designed to help refugees and immigrants, The Advocates perseveres in its mission to make a world in which every person lives with dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and peace.

Please see an expanded version of this article, with footnotes, at The Advocates’ online blog, The Advocates Post.
Faegre Baker Daniels reported a case victory for an unaccompanied child who entered the United States in the summer of 2014, when he was 10 years old. The child is a son of a soldier who fled El Salvador after being targeted and assaulted by gang members. Christine Kain and Emily Bodke Zabrana argued for asylum based on imputed political opinion and being a member of a particular social group. The Faegre team assisted the child in representation before the asylum office, immigration court, Board of Immigration Appeals, and before the immigration court again.

Students from the University of North Dakota Legal Clinic, under the supervision and guidance of Sabrina Balganwalla, provided initial representation to an indigenous woman from Guatemala. The woman arrived in the United States seeking asylum with three of her children in the summer of 2015. The Advocates’ Staff Attorney Alison Griffith finished representation before the immigration court, advocating for the family’s asylum claim based on persecution the mother suffered on account of being an indigenous Guatemalan woman. The court granted asylum.

Kate Swenson and Sybil Dunlap of Greene Espel reported a case victory from the Asylum Office for a Rwandan man who was persecuted based on his mixed Hutu Tutsi identity and interethnic marriage. The client is working to reunite with his wife and children who are currently in hiding in a neighboring country.

Anna Tobin of Greene Espel reported a case victory from the asylum office for a Rwandan man who was persecuted on account of his Hutu ethnicity.

The University of Minnesota Human Rights Clinic reported a grant for a former military officer from The Gambia. The client was represented by students from the University of Minnesota Human Rights clinic, under the supervision of Professor Stephen Meili and a former staff member of The Advocates, Emily Good. The Advocates staff also provided some support for the interview.

Chris Bercaw, Maggie Carnahan, Dan Lenhardt, Greta Mattison Megna, and Dale Williams, lawyers from Dorsey & Whitney LLP, reported an asylum victory for Eftu Omer. Eftu fled to the United States from Ethiopia after she and other family members were detained, tortured, and accused of being politically active against the government because they expressed pride in their Oromo heritage and culture. Two family members died as a result of the persecution. The Dorsey lawyers argued successfully for Eftu to receive an expedited interview and opinion, based on evidence that her young children were being harmed by her absence. With the grant of asylum, Eftu will be able to bring her husband and children here for a new life of safety.

**DORSEY & WHITNEY ATTORNEYS WIN ASYLUM FOR CLIENT**

“Eftu has endured the unfathomable pain of separation from her children, whom she left in Ethiopia years ago in hope of bringing them to safety in the United States. I admire her courage and strength and hope that she is reunited with them soon.”

Chris Bercaw, board member & pro bono attorney with The Advocates
The Advocates is celebrating a pair of victories against labor exploitation and trafficking this year.

Labor trafficking is closely linked to labor exploitation, such as wage theft or dangerous working conditions. In certain industries, some businesses routinely refuse to pay workers what they are legally owed, avoiding liability through subcontracting, misclassifying employees, and threatening retaliation if anyone complains. Traffickers take advantage of this environment of impunity, coupling exploitation with coercion and control that keeps their victims trapped, unable to stop working.

A key component of a system to combat labor trafficking is a robust response to labor exploitation. As The Advocates documented in our report *Asking the Right Questions*, our system for responding to labor exploitation was not doing enough to combat abusive employers.

To address those gaps, The Advocates worked as part of a coalition to pass a state law criminalizing wage theft and a Minneapolis ordinance expanding the protections at the city level. The Advocates is now working on implementing the new law and city ordinance, including training investigators on identifying labor trafficking that may be occurring in wage theft cases. Thank you to everyone who supported these efforts. We look forward to continuing to improve Minnesota’s protections for workers and response to labor trafficking and exploitation.

“If you earn a wage, you should be paid a wage. If a worker has their wages stolen, it is no different than any other kind of theft.”

Governor Tim Walz, Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan State of Minnesota
and the traffickers threatened them with deportation and physical violence when they complained.

The Advocates coordinated legal assistance for more than 30 of those workers, and secured T-Visas for all of them. The T-visa is an immigration remedy that allows survivors of trafficking to stay in the United States and work legally. However, the processing time of the T-visa has increased significantly during the last few years; it can now take more than two years. These long waits are dangerous for the victims, because their trauma as victims of a serious crime and lack of legal status in the United States make them vulnerable to experiencing additional exploitation.

Although human trafficking, such as labor trafficking, is pervasive in our society, its victims can be invisible because they often work at times or in locations where they are not seen. The Advocates encourages community members to demand that companies and employers to take full responsibility for their recruiting methods and working conditions and take active steps to ensure that they are not supporting labor trafficking.

Most of us have had eggs for breakfast, and we do not think much about how those eggs got from the farm to our plate. If, however, you have watched the documentary “Trafficked in America” produced by Daffodil Altan and Andrés Cediel, you know that a criminal network in Ohio exploited undocumented children, forcing them to work at an egg farm for months in very poor conditions. The children did not have the option to leave or quit the job, because the recruiters threatened to harm them and their families. This is an example of labor trafficking.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), human trafficking generates an annual illicit profit of $13,000 per victim. Most importantly, survivors experience harmful effects on their physical and mental health, and recovery is a long-term process. In Minnesota, 22.2 percent of the trafficking cases identified in 2018 involved labor trafficking. The trafficking occurred in the following industries: domestic services, agriculture, and construction. For example, in 2016 authorities raided Svihel Vegetable Farm. The workers there were recruited in the Dominican Republic with the promise of a good salary and a better life. The reality was different. The work was hard, the salary low, the living conditions poor, and the traffickers threatened them with deportation and physical violence when they complained.

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Women’s Human Rights

The Advocates Welcomes WATCH

In June 2019, the court monitoring and judicial policy organization WATCH became a part of The Advocates for Human Rights. WATCH was established to make the justice system more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children. WATCH has been monitoring Hennepin County Courts for more than two decades with the help of volunteer court observers. It has been instrumental in making significant changes in how cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse are handled in the Hennepin County courts. Many of these changes have been implemented in other states, as well. In the last five years, WATCH expanded into Ramsey and Washington counties and issued two reports on the prosecution of sex trafficking in those counties.

Ending violence against women is an organizational priority for The Advocates. Without monitoring and accountability, systems fail to protect women. By integrating new and existing volunteers, The Advocates will continue to use court monitoring and documentation to change and implement laws to end violence against women. The Advocates and WATCH’s supporters are thrilled to join hands. As WATCH founder Susan Lenfestey stated, “We are honored that the work of WATCH will continue as a project of The Advocates for Human Rights.”

Since June, The Advocates has carried on WATCH’s work by doubling the number of existing volunteers and continuing monitoring in all three counties. The Advocates looks forward to merging its time-tested fact-finding methodology with WATCH’s court observation monitoring to develop reports with recommendations to strengthen how the justice system holds offenders accountable and promotes victim safety.

The Advocates needs volunteers to help monitor courts in Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington Counties. No prior experience is needed. Volunteering requires an application, interview, reference checks, online training, and three-hour shadowing with a seasoned WATCH volunteer. If you are interested in becoming a court observer for the WATCH project, please sign up on The Advocates’ website TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org/watch.

In September, The Advocates presented Susan Lenfestey with the 25th Gold WATCH Award. The Award honors individuals who have made a permanent and significant improvement to the criminal justice system. Susan has been an effective and inspiring champion for the rights of women and children her whole life. When Anita Hill’s sexual harassment testimony was ignored in the Clarence Thomas hearings, and when a young Minneapolis woman was sexually assaulted and murdered by a man who had never been held by the system despite a record of violent assaults on women, she got the idea for WATCH.

Susan is also a committed and effective advocate. She accepted the Gold WATCH Award in honor of three women’s rights advocates who came before her and inspired her: Sheila Wellstone, Arvonne Fraser, and Marlene Kayser.
Throughout the past two years, The Advocates trained a cohort of women’s human rights lawyers from countries in the Former Soviet Union through the Legal Training Academy for Women’s Human Rights. The Advocates trained 16 Russian-speaking lawyers from eight countries on forms of violence against women and how to use United Nations and European mechanisms when all domestic remedies have failed to advance women’s human rights. These courageous lawyers are often working under onerous conditions and laws that suppress their capacity to work as part of civil society.

“It was an honor to have helped train these talented women and men—a new generation of human rights defenders,” said Rosalyn Park, Women’s Human Rights Program Director. “These lawyers are poised and prepared to safeguard women’s human rights in their home countries and beyond. We expect to see them leading efforts to advance women’s human rights in the years to come.”

The Legal Training Academy originated with The Advocates’ work with the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute (WHRTI), the founding model for this type of training program. Continuing its longstanding partnership with the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF), The Advocates has trained lawyers from countries across Europe and the Soviet Union on women’s rights and international tools. The Advocates is currently training 25 lawyers from 15 countries for the seventh round of WHRTI in Sofia, Bulgaria. In partnership with the BGRF and Equality Now, WHRTI strives to build the capacity of young lawyers from Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union for litigation on women’s rights issues. This November, The Advocates will return to Bulgaria to train on UN and European tools to protect women’s rights.

The impact of these training programs can be seen in the actions of their graduates—graduates of WHRTI have already brought anti-discrimination cases in the European Court of Human Rights as well as the European Court of Justice. The training programs also grow the ranks of advocates able to teach these skills to others. For example, some graduates of WHRTI, who The Advocates helped train, have gone on to lead sessions at its Legal Training Academy for Women’s Human Rights.
Safe Harbor for All

Expanding Its Protections >

In 2019, The Advocates for Human Rights, the University of Minnesota’s Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), and Rainbow Research (“the team”) released their Safe Harbor for All report. The report is the fulfillment of a mandate from the Minnesota Legislature to conduct a strategic planning process exploring expanding Minnesota’s Safe Harbor protections to all adults.

The report is based on research to identify the potential impacts of policy changes on the safety, health, dignity, and justice for adults involved in transactional sex, including victims of trafficking and exploitation. Based on input from 294 stakeholders from across Minnesota, the report sheds light on the harms—including lack of housing and police protection—to adults who are trafficked for sex or are involved in transactional sex.

The report makes 19 recommendations, including steps that Minnesota can take immediately to improve conditions for the adults at risk, including the following:

∞ Adopting legal remedies to reduce the negative impact of arrest;

∞ Beginning focused planning efforts to expand services; and

∞ Reforming current practices within institutions such as Child Protection Services, the police, and housing authorities to reduce stigma and discrimination, increase system accountability, and show more respect for autonomy and cultural forms of healing.

The team has submitted the full report to the legislature. The Minnesota Department of Health also produced a companion strategic plan based on the report and its findings, which they submitted to the legislature. We hope that the legislature and stakeholders across the state will use the report to make decisions about how Minnesota can better prevent exploitation and trafficking of adults, and all people involved in transactional sex, through concrete investments and action.


Here’s one easy way. Last summer my mom and I were together when Facebook suggested to her that she consider “donating her birthday.” She liked the idea. In less than five minutes she had a Facebook fundraiser up with a link to a story about our work. We had a great time watching the donations come in. When Facebook displayed the fundraiser in her friends’ News Feeds, they saw a moving story, a personal connection, and gave. She ended up raising $900!

By Liz Kelleher, Events & Individual Giving Coordinator at The Advocates.
In addition to training human rights defenders around the world to use the mechanisms of the United Nations to advance women’s human rights, The Advocates and volunteers leverage those same mechanisms. In February, The Advocates sent a team of staff and volunteers to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland to participate in a session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW was reviewing the human rights records of Colombia and Ethiopia.

At the session, volunteers Peggy Grieve, who serves on The Advocates’ board, and Professor Greta Friedemann-Sanchez of the University of Minnesota Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs presented findings from their research in Colombia on violence against women there. The Advocates also used stories from its asylum clients to brief members of CEDAW on violence against women, as well as civil and political rights violations against women in Ethiopia. Finally, Peggy Grieve presented client stories and made recommendations during a half-day discussion on trafficking in women and girls in the context of migration.

“I have included The Advocates for Human Rights in my will because I want to continue supporting its work into the future. The Advocates provides a unique service to people who cannot always speak for themselves and makes life better for them. The Advocates has local impact with its work on immigrant rights, trafficking, and stopping violence against women, as well as impact around the world with other communities that need its help.”

Janet Leslie, supporter and volunteer at the UN
International Justice

Spanning Generations and Continents, The Advocates’ UN Advocacy Delivers Results

The Advocates’ annual Study & Advocacy Trip to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland included a record number of countries, topics, and UN bodies. The Advocates worked side by side with human rights defenders from Albania, Cote d’Ivoire, and Russia, as well as with partners in the Ethiopian and Vietnamese diasporas. With the help of its volunteers, ages 17 to 83, The Advocates maximized its impact in Geneva. The Advocates worked with the Tai Studies Center to brief the Human Rights Committee on indigenous rights for its review of Vietnam. Drawing on asylum client experiences, The Advocates briefed the same Committee for its review of Eritrea. The Advocates also briefed the Committee on the death penalty, immigration, and human trafficking for the upcoming review of the United States.

The Advocates’ team also met with dozens of Human Rights Council delegates and delivered oral statements to the Council for debates on topics ranging from the death penalty in Iran to LGBTI rights in Chechnya to ethnic persecution in Ethiopia. After delivering her oral statement on Eritrea, the team’s youngest member, Olivia Leyba, earned an unusual “That’s awesome!” from one of the UN staffers, who was delighted that a 17-year-old had so eloquently addressed the Council.

The Advocates’ goal in briefing the Council members was to get the UN Member States that they represented to make recommendations to the countries under review to improve the human rights problems that The Advocates had identified. The Advocates’ work was very effective. For example, The Advocates focused its advocacy efforts regarding the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on civil and political rights. State agents in the DRC have escalated the use of violence, targeting critics of the government. The Advocates gathered information on the situation in the DRC from interviews with Congolese clients seeking asylum in the United States.

In response to what The Advocates was hearing from clients, The Advocates recommended that the DRC establish legal mechanisms for the prevention of human rights violations and that perpetrators be brought to justice. Of the 39 countries that made recommendations regarding civil and political rights and State violence in the DRC, The Advocates had provided information electronically to 36 of them and personally met with representatives of 20 of them. Many of the recommendations made used the very language that The Advocates had proposed.

The DRC responded to this international pressure—pressure that increased thanks to The Advocates’ work. In September 2019, the Democratic Republic of the Congo accepted a recommendation from Maldives that it “Take the necessary steps to ensure that laws and regulations are in full accordance with the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s international obligations with respect to freedom of assembly, association, and expression.” This recommendation bore close resemblance to the language used in a recommendation The Advocates made. The DRC also accepted a recommendation from Ireland about acts of reprisal against human rights defenders and journalists. This means that the DRC has taken the first steps toward making meaningful change in its human rights conditions, and will be required to report on its progress.
Death Penalty

Leading a Global Movement to End Executions

When Attorney General William Barr announced in July that the federal government will resume executions, the United States joined the ranks of outlier countries like China, Iran, and Iraq. In 2018, the worldwide number of executions was at its lowest level in ten years, and the United States has been the only country in the Americas to carry out any executions during the last decade.

Domestically and internationally, authorities are rejecting the death penalty. 21 states plus the District of Colombia have formally abolished the death penalty; Delaware joined their ranks in 2016, Washington in 2018, and New Hampshire earlier this year. In April, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced a moratorium on executions, joining three other governors who have put a halt to the practice by executive order. Many states are not actively using the death penalty; over the last five years, just twelve states have carried out executions.

On the world stage, 142 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice, and 9 countries have been added to the list since 2015. 87 countries have taken the additional step of ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—a step that marks a country’s formal commitment before the world to abolish the death penalty permanently. Since 2014, nine countries have taken that step.

The Advocates for Human Rights adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty in 1991, and since that time it has collaborated with international partners to write reports pushing for abolition of the death penalty in 36 countries—including the United States. As a long-time member of the Steering Committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, The Advocates is at the forefront of a global movement to end executions.

“We are able to leverage The Advocates’ amazing pro bono support to amplify the voices of Coalition members, so when the United Nations examines their governments’ human rights records, we know the death penalty will be front and center,” says Senior Staff Attorney Amy Bergquist, who is serving her second term as Vice President of the World Coalition.

In addition to working with Coalition members to report to the UN, The Advocates spearheads the planning for the Coalition’s World Day Against the Death Penalty every October 10. And as part of the Coalition’s five-year strategic plan, The Advocates enlisted pro bono paralegals at Faegre Baker Daniels to conduct a needs assessment of the Coalition’s 160+ members. The team created a password-protected database that Coalition members can use to seek out help and advice from colleague organizations around the world.
The Advocates and the Sankhu-Palubari community are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Sankhu-Palubari Community School (SPCS). The school’s students and faculty are enjoying learning and teaching in a brand new school building, built after the 2015 earthquakes damaged the original rented building. Together, The Advocates, its local partner Educate the Children – Nepal, and the community run the school; they currently serve more than 370 students from pre-Kindergarten to 10th grade, the end of high school in Nepal.

The Advocates’ Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt, who oversees the Nepal School Project, says, “It has been inspiring to see the growth and success of the school over the years and it is needed more than ever. Although public education in Nepal is compulsory and technically free, uniform and textbook costs and other fees are too high for many families to afford. Children whose parents cannot afford the public-school fees generally become child laborers, working in agriculture or in brick-making. They are also at risk of being trafficked for sex or labor.”

SPCS was founded to provide education as an alternative to child labor for the most disadvantaged children in the community, and it is meeting that goal. Another of the school’s original goals was to have gender parity in its student body. SPCS is meeting that goal, too. After years of outreach and support to families, the girls who start school are staying in school and 52% of the students are now girls. The school also welcomes all children regardless of caste or ethnicity.

These diverse students receive an outstanding education. The graduates of SPCS score at the top on Nepal’s national examination and many SPCS alumni continue their education at universities with the help of scholarships. The SPCS curriculum includes education on human rights, spreading the knowledge and message of human rights in Nepal.
Great friends, great award winners, great sponsors, great energy, and great success describes the 2019 Human Rights Awards Dinner. More than 650 people joined The Advocates to listen to the 2019 Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award Winner and keynote speaker Professor Andrés Cediel, honor the volunteer award winners, welcome WATCH (Women at the Courthouse) to The Advocates, participate in the silent auction, and learn about current challenges and opportunities from Board Chair James O’Neal and Executive Director Robin Phillips. A special thank you to the event planning committee, to contributors to the Fund-the Need drive, and to all who made the evening a great success.
Volunteer award winner Alena Levina was honored for her years of service as a translator and interpreter.

Volunteer award winner Charles Weed was honored for his years of service supporting The Advocates’ technology and web presence.

Pat Brenna received her award from Executive Director Robin Phillips (R). Pat was honored for her years of assistance with The Advocates’ Awards Dinner fundraising efforts.

Volunteer award winner Alena Levina was honored for her years of service as a translator and interpreter.

Members of the Zonta Club of Minneapolis, including Pro Bono Counsel Theresa Dykoschak (C) were honored for their support of asylum seekers.

The Somali 92 Team, a group of pro bono lawyers, paralegals, law students, and other professionals, were honored for their work in helping Somali immigrants in immigration court.
The generosity of our supporters made the 2019 Human Rights Awards Dinner possible. Thank you for helping make it a success!

Human Rights Leaders

Cristine Almeida
Chris Bercaw & Mary McKelvey
Carrie Brasser
Aviva Breen
Cargill
Carolyn Chalmers & Eric Janus
Jim Dorsey & Dee Gaeddert
Karen & Rick Evans
Fish & Richardson, P.C.
Dulce Foster & Joe Muretta
Greene Espel PLLP
Rachel & Tom Hamlin
Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota

Human Rights Partner

Batell & Assoc.

Human Rights Defender

Ballard Spahr LLP

Human Rights Ambassadors

Briggs and Morgan, P.A.
Gray Plant Mooty
Stinson LLP
Thomson Reuters

Human Rights Allies

Loan Huynh & Aydin Ozturk
James H. Binger Center for New Americans, University of Minnesota Law School
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Nilan Johnson Lewis, PA
Jim & Sally O'Neal
Schwebel, Goetz & Sieben, P.A.
Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner, P.A.
Catherine Shreves & Tom Bird
Nancy Speer
Jean Thomson
Ellen & Jim van Iwaarden
Jane & Dobson West
Western Bank
WAYS YOU CAN GIVE

The Advocates relies on friends like you to represent asylum seekers, help survivors of trafficking, testify at UN meetings, provide training to partner human rights organizations in Eastern Europe and other countries, change laws and policies, and assist LGBTQI+ persons and organizations around the world. We are grateful for each and every way you support our work. Your contribution of any amount helps us change the world for good.

Making Friends at the Minnesota State Fair

The Advocates spent a productive two weeks at the Minnesota State Fair in August. The friendly outreach of the staff and volunteers at the booth helped The Advocates break its previous State Fair outreach record. This year, The Advocates talked with 12,692 visitors! The Advocates’ bright booth, located in the Education Building, was stuffed with information and games designed to introduce fairgoers to human rights and the work of The Advocates.

The chance for staff members to take the pulse of the public on immigration issues was invaluable as well. Deputy Director Michele Garnett McKenzie noted, “Minnesotans take great pride in the warm welcome Minnesota has provided refugees resettling here through federal programs. So it really bothered people when they learned through our spin the wheel game that the current administration has drastically reduced the number of refugees being admitted. Our challenge is to turn that unease into human rights action and work together to reopen America’s doors to immigrants and refugees.”
Thank you >

**Spring House Parties**

Thanks to our extraordinary hosts and co-hosts who make our house parties so amazing. The warm hospitality, delightful refreshments, and engaging program bring long-time and new friends together for a great cause. Please enjoy the photos and make sure to join us at our upcoming house parties.

Our Spring Refugee and Immigrant Rights party was hosted by Kristine Mandler and John Mandler. Client resilience, volunteer persistence, and asylum victory stories are at the heart of our Refugee and Immigrant Rights house parties. With the government’s constant attempts to stop refugees from seeking asylum and undermine the asylum process, these parties are a ray of hope.

Deputy Director Michele Garnett McKenzie (L) mingling with clients and guests at the Refugee and Immigrant house party.

Former Program Assistants James Henderson (L) and Sonja Carlson (R) with guests at the Refugee and Immigrant house party.

Host Kristine Mandler (R) with guests.

Maggie Gilbert, Sarah Marshall, and co-host Catherine Shreves (L-R).
Our Nepal School House Party, hosted by Board member Mary Parker and Dr. David Parker, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Sankhu-Palubari Community School.

Guests enjoying great food.

Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt, Debra Heisick, and Lhumo Tso (L-R).

The sunroom was a quiet spot for supporters to catch up.

At our house party in Washington, D.C., hosted by Suzanne Turner and David Schulman, The Advocates celebrated its national advocacy work.

Liz Brailsford, Karl Lockhart, and Joshua Schoen (L-R).

Arianna Deming, Courtnie Gore, Aaron Van Alstine, Sarah Brenes and Rosalyn Park (L-R).

At the house party to benefit our International Justice work, we were inspired by former asylum client Nagessa Dube’s report on his testimony at the United Nations. The party was hosted by Kathleen Seestadt, Bob Seestadt, and Ann Manning.

Redwan Hamza, Bula Atomssa, and Ethiopian Ambassador Ewnetu Debela (L-R).

Hosts Bob Seestadt and Ann Manning with Linda Donaldson (L-R).

Volunteer and supporter Paul Amla.
Thank you >

Women’s Spring & Fall House Parties

The Women’s Human Rights House Parties celebrated the many new initiatives and research projects to protect women, including the addition of WATCH (Women at the Court House) to our programming. Many thanks to our spring house party hosts Linda Foreman and Mel Dickstein and the fall house party hosts Sylvia Kaplan and Sam Kaplan.
The Advocates’ staff members.

Staff

Maryam Ahmed
Amy Bergquist
Jasmine Bradford
Sarah Brenes
Karen Bridges
Stefani Conyers
Theresa Dykoschak
Lindsey Greising
Alison Griffith
Liz Kelleher
Elizabeth Lacy
Madeline Lohman
Kaarin Long
Andrea Martinez
Michele Garnett McKenzie
Elizabeth Montgomery
Emily Olinger
Kerim Orsel
Rosalyn Park
Robin Phillips
Jennifer Prestholdt
Thekla Rura-Polley
Hanne Sandison
Ellen van Iwaarden

Tala Alfoqaha
Makayla Baker
Gauri Binoy
John Bird
Johan Calvert
Sophia Carpenter
Guy Chinang
Cooper Christianity
Addie Cross
Grace Cutris
Enes Demirel
Kate Denney
Natalie Dess
Kenza El Abdalouli
Eden Fere
Carissa Fitzlaff
Noah Forslund
Anela Galic
Michelle Gonzalez
Noah Hagoon
Jessica Hammond
Marie-Simone Kadurira
Emma Kane
Mohamed Khelfi

Claire Kincaid
Gretta Marston-Lari
Maya Mischke
Ladan Mohamed
Alejandro Moreno
Mary Mulcahy
Paul Olubayo
Amanda Ortiz
Elise Overman
Harriet Oyera
Brian Perez
Malinda-Mae Peschong
Nicole Pires
Katie Rabogiatti
Ny-Ony Razafindrabe
Josephine Schaut
Lara Schueth
Johara Sheikhomar
Hannah Shireman
Kylie Sievers
Alexa Sinha
Mariah Stewart
Amritha Subramaniam
Paul Sullivan

Spring & Summer Interns

Kristin Trapp
Anna Treimer
Emma Verges
Mariah Westerlund
Cedar Weyker
Broktawit Wubeshet
Alexandria Yakes
Samantha Zenanove

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SAVE THE DATE!

Human Rights Day Open House

Tuesday, December 10
4:00-6:00 PM

The Advocates’ Office
330 Second Avenue South | Suite 800 | Minneapolis, MN 55401