THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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In this issue of the Observer, we take a look back at 2017, a year that has been as challenging as any in the more than twenty years I’ve been working in the human rights movement. The Advocates was founded on the principle that we all play a part in making human rights real, and this principle is more relevant today than ever. It is news to no one reading this issue that the systemic affronts to dignity, freedom, and justice for all have been deep and widespread. As we note in our introduction, it would be difficult to overstate the impact of the 2016 election on our work and the dramatic increase in the demands that have come in its wake.

But, for every assault on human rights that we witnessed in the past year, we redoubled our efforts to advocate, educate, and litigate in the service of justice and human dignity. For every attack on our values, hundreds of our volunteers came forward. You can read about some of our initiatives in the pages that follow: the new court observer and pro bono bond project created in response to the Administration’s travel ban and increased punitive immigration policies; a collaboration with our partners to train more than 100 attorneys on the legal implications of sanctuary work so they can assist faith communities that are considering that option; training and supporting human rights defenders on a variety of issues worldwide, and more.

The fact is, there is great opportunity in the midst of the many challenges that face the human rights community. Even as we have watched appalling attacks on human rights, we have witnessed hundreds of thousands of people all over the world emerge from the sidelines, many for the first time, and say, “Enough!” Our movement has the power to inspire, to galvanize people, because it is grounded in the most basic principle of all, eloquently articulated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world is the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Our job as advocates is to insist that public policy uphold human dignity and fundamental human rights principles. These rights include: the right to security, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom from discrimination—rights that belong to each of us simply by virtue of being a member of the human family.

As we move into 2018, The Advocates will continue to build the human rights movement locally and globally with persistence and determination. Together we can make a difference, from saving the life of an individual asylum seeker who has come for protection from persecution to ensuring that legal systems in the United States and around the world work to eliminate violence against women.

We appreciate all the many ways you have helped us work toward our vision of a world where all people live with dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and peace. We know what to do. Please work with us to have an even greater impact in 2018 by making a donation, volunteering your time, and every day, advocating for human rights for all.

Robin Phillips
Executive Director
Less than 24 hours after the election of Donald Trump, worried clients and community members started calling and showing up in The Advocates’ office. They sought assurance about their status, their plans, and their futures. They sought information about the new Administration’s intentions. They sought clarification about what the election meant for them. For them and for those concerned about human rights worldwide, the election outcome was, and continues to be, earth shattering. For immigrants and refugees vulnerable to detention, deportation, and the loss of home and family, the stakes were, and are, high—very high.

The affronts to human rights under the Trump Administration have been relentless:

- Direct targeting of refugees and immigrants, including multiple orders banning Muslims and slashing refugee admissions to the U.S. in half;
- Undermining the role of the free press and questioning its legitimacy;
- Legitimizing white nationalist and other ideologies grounded in bigotry and hate;
- Tolerating sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of predatory sexual behavior;
- A plan by Attorney General Jeff Sessions to impose quotas on immigration judges, thus undermining judicial independence and access to a fair hearing.
- Upticks in reports of violence toward people of color, LGBTI people, women, and religious minorities in the broader community.

The Advocates has met these extraordinary challenges with renewed commitment and energy. The Women’s March in January set the tone for the year, as we joined hundreds of thousands of people worldwide in standing against sexism and bigotry of all forms. As we look back on our work in 2017, we look forward to 2018 knowing we will bring the same level of determination.
Upholding the Rights of Immigrants & Refugees

The proliferation of policies designed to get refugees and immigrants out of the country, and keep them out, is one of the dominant stories of 2017. But the rest of the story is being written by those who are fighting back against this decades-old agenda of fear and hate.

The past year seems to have brought to fruition the seeds planted in the early 1990s by white nationalists who warned of an “immigration invasion.” Without a total moratorium on immigration, they asserted, the United States would turn into a “third world” country. (The 1994 book *The Immigration Invasion* by Wayne Lutton and John Tanton makes for disturbingly current reading.)

The January travel ban, which took effect while travelers were in the air and resulted in chaos at airports around the country, was front-page news for days on end. New visa interview requirements, coupled with dramatic cuts to the Foreign Service budget, threaten to grind immigration to a halt more quietly. For thousands of refugees and immigrants in the United States, the future is increasingly uncertain. The DACA, or Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals Program, has been terminated. Temporary Protected Status designations are similarly being ended. Decades of spending on immigration enforcement have paid off in nearly limitless capacity. Immigration and Custom Enforcement’s 2018 budget request would support 51,379 detention beds every day, including 2,500 for families.

But human rights advocates are pushing back. From litigation challenging the travel ban to the newly launched court observer project, we have seen that effective resistance is possible.

By Michele Garnett McKenzie

Reuniting Families

Following President Trump’s January executive order banning entry to the U.S. from seven Muslim-majority nations, The Advocates for Human Rights and partner organizations filed a lawsuit on behalf of an Iranian couple and a Kenyan family to block enforcement.

The Center for New Americans, AMA Law Group PLLC, Apollo Law LLC, Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, and Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC joined The Advocates in the suit.

Farshid M. Zadeh, a legal U.S. resident, and his wife, Samaneh Raghimi, who had quit her job as a professor at Azad University to move to the United States to join her husband, were on a flight from Tehran, Iran, when the order was issued. When the couple landed in Amsterdam, Raghimi was notified that she would not be allowed to fly to the United States. Financial considerations forced Zadeh to return to Minnesota and his wife to Tehran. The couple (pictured at left at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport) was reunited when U.S. District Court Judge James Robart ordered a nationwide halt to enforcement of the order.

In the second case, Mohamed Iye’s wife, Saido Ahmed Abdille, had been approved for an immigrant visa on January 18 after a five-year screening process. She planned to come to the U.S. with her two young children, who are both U.S. citizens, so one of the children could receive medical treatment. On January 28, Abdille was told she would be unable to board a flight to Amsterdam because of Robart’s order. She was able to make the trip several days later.

Photo credit: Courtney Perry for MPR News
When Children Seek Asylum >

More than 200,000 unaccompanied children have arrived in the U.S. since 2014. Most come from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, fleeing domestic, political, gang, drug, or other forms of violence. But legal representation for these young asylum seekers is scarce: 7 out of 10 children will not have an attorney to represent them.

What is involved in working with the littlest asylum seekers? Courtnie Gore, the Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow at The Advocates for Human Rights, reflects here on five challenges and lessons she has learned in working with child clients in the past year.

**CHALLENGE 1: ESTABLISHING TRUST.** In a first meeting with a child, I have to remember that this child has met a lot of “me’s.” That is to say, they have sat across from a stranger who asks very invasive questions. They are scared and have no reason to trust me. So, my initial approach is just to relate to them. I ask them to draw a picture of their home in the country they came from. This allows the child not to think about the painful circumstances that brought them into my office. I have them describe everything in the picture. They beam up with pride when they talk about the fruit in front of their house, their neighbors, or pets they’ve left behind. From that point on, we can talk more about their time in their home country: the good, the bad, and the persecution.

**CHALLENGE 2: UNDERSTANDING THEIR IMMEDIATE SITUATION.** We have to realize there’s a lot the children might lack in their day-to-day lives. It’s important to understand what is going on in their current home and whether their basic needs are being met. Unaccompanied minors often have a strong sense of loyalty to whomever takes them into their home here in the U.S. Thus, they may be hesitant to share details that would paint a relative or guardian in a bad light. Some undocumented guardians may have concerns about going to court or taking the minor to get his or her fingerprints taken. It’s important to address these concerns so you and the client can focus on the case.

**CHALLENGE 3: LISTENING DEEPLY.** A child doesn’t tell a linear story. That means we have to do a lot of piecing the puzzle together. A child may tell you about being raped by a relative. What they won’t tell you is that their grandmother often left them alone with the relative, who is a known drunk and abuser. It’s important to confirm events and put the stories in chronological order. Putting all the pieces of the puzzle together is essential.

**CHALLENGE 4: PREPARING FOR THE ASYLUM INTERVIEW.** This is one of the most challenging parts of the representation. The asylum interview is a whole different ballgame; it’s like starting at square one. The child will be sitting across the desk from yet another stranger. At that point we have to make sure the child is not vague, shy, or prone to revert back to how they were when they first came to our office. We have to prepare the child-client for the worst. Asylum officers have asked questions like, “Did your parents pay for you to come here?” to “Why didn’t you live with another relative?” in domestic abuse cases. You have to prepare the child for whatever might come.

**CHALLENGE 5: COMING TO CLOSURE.** The asylum interview could possibly be the last time you see a client. Some clients are okay with that. However, some are left feeling extremely vulnerable. It is important to follow up with the child, to see what additional referrals or needs he or she might have, such as medical attention, therapy, or other resources.

In September, I was thrilled to learn that my first client, an 11-year-old boy from Guatemala, was granted asylum. That day, I discovered that representing unaccompanied minors is as rewarding as it is challenging.

By Courtnie Gore

“A child doesn’t tell a linear story. That means we have to do a lot of piecing the puzzle together.”
Asylum Victories

The Advocates for Human Rights is the primary provider for asylum cases throughout the Upper Midwest. Other legal service agencies, including those providing immigration services, refer asylum cases to The Advocates. Volunteer attorneys represent most of our clients, who come from over fifty countries. They include opposition and human rights activists, political activists, victims of female genital mutilation and forced marriage, and members of the LGBTI community. Here are some examples of some successful cases this year.

A Salvadoran mother and daughter won asylum with the help of staff attorney Alison Griffith and the pro bono team of Rachel Hughey, Emily Wessels, Chris Davis, and Joe Dubis from the Minneapolis office of Merchant & Gould. The mother, the victim of attempted extortion by a transnational criminal organization, fled with her daughter and son after her family suffered repeated death threats. She and her daughter were sexually assaulted by a gang when she was unable to pay. The mother and daughter courageously testified against the gang, despite being discouraged from doing so by many, including the police. After they testified, a gang member was convicted and sentenced, but the threats from other gang members and their families, both at the hearing itself, and at their home, grew worse. Multiple attempts to escape by relocating in El Salvador failed: each time they moved, gang members found them and issued more death threats.

A client from Ethiopia was granted asylum three years after he entered the United States. Volunteer attorney Laura Tripiciano, a St. Cloud immigration attorney who has handled more than 25 asylum cases for The Advocates, helped expedite the interview after the client learned that the government attacked his wife in Ethiopia. Tripiciano is now assisting with reuniting the family.

In a 30-page decision, an immigration judge granted asylum to a six-member family who fled El Salvador after gangs threatened them for their involvement in alternative programming for youth and their support of a political party not supported by the new gangs. A team of volunteers including Henry Evans and Casey Eekhoff of South Dakota and Jones Day attorney Alexa Sendukas of Texas represented the family.

Volunteer attorney Brian Clark represented a Jamaican client who sought asylum after fleeing persecution based on his sexual orientation. He waited years for an interview, but once the interview occurred, asylum was granted quickly. “I am overjoyed to know that a genuinely good person will be free to be himself in our country, safe from the violent persecution for his sexual orientation that awaited him back in Jamaica. Thanks to The Advocates for making this possible. It is a reminder of the power that our profession holds, and I am truly honored to have been a part of this journey.”

Congratulations to the Merchant & Gould team that represented the Salvadoran mother and daughter for being recognized by Minnesota Lawyer in its list of 2017 Attorneys of The Year.
A new project of The Advocates for Human Rights aims to remedy two thorny obstacles to justice for immigrants: lack of transparency in court proceedings and high bond that can effectively extend detention even when the client is eligible for release.

The Human Rights Defender Project was launched last spring in response to the outpouring of volunteers following the travel bans. It grew out of a collaboration between The Advocates, the University of Minnesota Law School’s James H. Binger Center for New Americans, and Robins Kaplan LLP. It enlists volunteer court observers to watch immigration court proceedings and volunteer attorneys to represent detainees in proceedings to lower their bond. After a successful pilot coordinated by the Law School in the spring and summer, The Advocates took the reins of the Human Rights Defender Program with the addition of Robina Fellow Gaowen Li. The Robina Public Interest Scholars Program funds recent graduates of the University of Minnesota Law School to participate in a year-long fellowship at a public service organization.

Immigration court hearings are open to the public, but few people attend—and that’s a problem. “A system that operates behind the curtain prevents us from understanding what’s going on right under our noses. Transparency is essential for protecting people’s rights,” Li said. The Human Rights Defender Project’s volunteer court observers attend hearings and then report back issues of concern.

Though many detained people are eligible for release on bond, some detainees simply cannot afford the high amounts—minimum bond is $1,500, but actual bond amounts can be as high as $20,000. Volunteer attorneys represent the client in redetermination proceedings for lowering the bond. Legal representation makes a dramatic difference: Immigrants with representation are four times more likely to be released from detention than those without.

Li coordinates and supports court observers and volunteer attorneys as well as directly representing detainees. “Court is confusing for people in our clients’ situations,” she says. “The least we can do is help them understand what is happening to them. Everyone deserves representation.”

The Advocates is partnering with the Immigration Advocates Network’s #StandWithImmigrants online portal (standwithimmigrants.org) to launch the observer project nationwide.
Eight years ago, The Advocates for Human Rights received an email from Natasha Medjedovic of the SOS Center for Women and Children Victims of Violence-Nikšić in Montenegro. “Urgent!” the subject line read. The email asked The Advocates to assess a draft of the nation’s first ever law on domestic violence. Medjedovic explained that she and her colleagues had one day to file their report to the government—and within that time, The Advocates, with the help of pro bono attorneys, analyzed the law to ensure it complied with international law and standards.

The law, called the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention (LDVP), passed one year later, in 2010. Its passage was an important first step for Montenegro to take in meeting its human rights obligations. But passage of the law was not the end of The Advocates’ work there. In July 2015, The Advocates, in partnership with Medjedovic’s organization and the Women’s Rights Center in Podgorica, carried out fact-finding to monitor and document the government’s implementation of the law. They visited six cities and conducted 60 interviews with government officials, police, judges, prosecutors, health care workers, social workers, and others to identify gaps in implementation and conducted follow-up interviews in 2016 and 2017.

Their work culminated in the publication of a report documenting the gaps in the government’s response, reasons why they are happening, and recommendations to fix the problems. The Advocates and its partners used the report to submit findings and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council and Council of Europe. The joint stakeholder report reveals some good practices and initiatives but also documents continuing problems, including harmful attitudes and gaps in law and policy.

For instance, volunteer attorney Angela Liu from Dechert LLP, who assisted with fact-finding in Montenegro, reported that a mediator called domestic violence “a style of communication between the parties. [It is the] victim’s choice . . . to be communicated to with violence”

“My jaw dropped,” Liu said. “I kept thinking I would get used to the way our interviewees spoke about domestic violence. But in each interview, like this one with the mediator, I always learned something new.” (To read more about Liu’s fact-finding mission, go to her post on our blog at theadvocatespost.org. To learn about why mediation is harmful in domestic violence, visit stopvaw.org/mediation.)

Rosalyn Park, director of the Women’s Program, says the report is an important tool to drive change in Montenegro. “With our findings and recommendations, we can change the laws and how they are used to make women’s lives safer,” she said.

A mediator called domestic violence “a style of communication between the parties.”

Angela Liu
Human Rights Movement

Women’s Program Shares Expertise Internationally

This fall, major training institutes bookended The Advocates’ leadership at international women’s human rights conferences.

Launching the new Legal Training Academy, staff members Amy Bergquist, Theresa Dykoschak, and Rosalyn Park led the first of three sessions on women’s human rights in Sofia, Bulgaria in October. Sixteen fellows from countries in the Former Soviet Union participated in sessions on gender sensitization, forms of violence against women, LGBTI issues, persons living with HIV, and introductions to the UN and European human rights mechanisms. This new initiative seeks to develop human rights leadership and build capacity in the next generation of women’s rights leaders.

From Sofia, The Advocates traveled to Budapest to participate in the Women Against Violence in Europe (WAVE) annual conference. Women’s Program director Rosalyn Park presented at a workshop on monitoring and documentation of violence against women.

Frequently called upon as a global expert in women’s human rights, Park presented at the London School of Economics’ Centre for Women, Peace & Security in November as part of a panel called “Gender Equality: How Can the UN Lead?” Other distinguished panelists included former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Dr. Navi Pillay and the UN’s inaugural Victim’s Rights Advocate Jane Connors.

While in the United Kingdom, Park also attended the third workshop of the UN Gender Network at Durham University. The network examines the impact of gender equality policies within the UN to promote UN leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals. Members of the network, including The Advocates’ volunteer teams, have mapped out gender equality policies in all 65 UN bodies for the UN Gender Network.

Park then returned to Varna, Bulgaria to present at the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute (WHRTI) for young lawyers from Central and Eastern Europe. Led by longtime Advocates’ partner, Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, WHRTI provides participants with training in laws on violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, and employment discrimination.

“I raise up my voice not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard.”

Malala Yousafzai
Abolishing the Death Penalty

In the past year, The Advocates continued its decade-long partnership with the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. Staff attorney Amy Bergquist, vice-president of the Coalition, trained activists, judges, lawyers, and others in fact-finding and documentation in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Malaysia.

Fact-finding and documentation are key first steps in identifying whether a country is adhering to international standards on the death penalty. The most common method of fact-finding relies on interviews with prison wardens, prisoners, physicians, family members, and others, but not all countries allow interviews. So Bergquist developed a workshop that covers how to interview effectively and how to conduct fact-finding without interviews. Once fact-finding is complete, The Advocates assists activists to prepare reports to the UN—a role Bergquist says can make the difference. “If activists in a country tell us they need help, The Advocates will work with pro bono attorneys to provide assistance. In a lot of countries that still have the death penalty, pressure from the UN can be effective.”

Worldwide, the trend is abolition of the death penalty. A country that abolishes the death penalty will often take the lead on encouraging other countries to do the same. While there is an increasing recognition that the death penalty is a violation of human rights, exceptions remain.

For example, Malaysia mandates the death penalty for drug offenses. Although abolition remains the overarching goal there, the immediate goal is resentencing. “Even though it’s not abolishing the death penalty, it is saving lives, and in my book that’s a good thing,” Bergquist says.

The U.S. is another notable exception, though the death penalty is imposed and carried out less frequently than it has in the past. “It’s really just a handful of counties in this nation where prosecutors even seek the death penalty,” Bergquist says. “When I do these trainings, it enhances my credibility that I come from a country with the death penalty. I understand how frustrating it is to live in a country that still executes people.”

Above: Staff Attorney Amy Bergquist (front row) with anti-death penalty activists who participated in The Advocates’ training in Malaysia.

Right: Bergquist with Malaysian human rights attorney Suzana Norliahn

Far right: Participants at the training in Cameroon
Building Community at Home

Record Numbers Visit the State Fair Booth

A record 10,554 visitors stopped by The Advocates’ booth in the Education Building at the Minnesota State Fair. This year’s theme was “Color Me a Fan of Human Rights,” and plenty of visitors took crayons in hand and did just that. Visitors young and old were drawn to spinning the Human Rights Quiz Wheel to test their social justice knowledge. Many others picked up literature, bookmarks, buttons, and curricula and signed up for our mailing list. A robust corps of volunteers staffed 72 shifts during the 12 days of the fair.

The ever-popular Quiz Wheel sparked a great deal of discussion. The wheel consists of 12 multiple choice questions geared toward adults pertaining to a range of human rights issues. Each adult question is accompanied by a question geared toward children. For example, the question “How many refugees were resettled to Minnesota in 2016?” (the answer is 3,059) was accompanied by the question “What would it be like to live in another country?”

“We sensed this year that people were really hungry to talk to us about what they can do and how they can be active for human rights,” said Executive Director Robin Phillips. “I know people learned a lot from talking to us and spinning the Quiz Wheel. We always want visitors to leave our booth inspired and educated, and I think they did.”

Equipping lawyers to assist faith communities

In Minnesota and throughout the nation, faith communities are responding to increased immigration enforcement by exploring the option of providing sanctuary, or safe haven. It’s a decision that requires taking into account a broad range of legal, financial, and other questions. Unfortunately, there are not many resources available to help faith communities wade through such issues.

In July, The Advocates’ Deputy Director Michele Garnett McKenzie joined Legal Corps, ISAIAH, and attorneys John Madeiros of Myers Thompson and Phil Steiger of Dorsey & Whitney (pictured) in the first-ever nationwide training to equip volunteer lawyers to help lead faith communities through such deliberations. About 200 attorneys attended, both in person and online.

“There is a lot of confusion and misinformation about the legal and other risks involved in providing sanctuary,” says Garnett McKenzie. “Some congregations were saying no to sanctuary assuming there was high risk, others were saying yes not realizing there is some risk.” Steiger had been involved with his own congregation in considering sanctuary and, with his team at Dorsey, developed a chart of legal implications and questions that formed the basis of the July training. It covers a range of topics, from the simple—what provisions are in the congregation’s insurance policy, for instance—to the complicated, such as what to do if authorities show up at the door. “People have been relying on guidance that was developed when the sanctuary movement first arose in the U.S. in the 1980s, making decisions based on old memos or snap judgments. Congregations need to be making these decisions based on current law and their own governance structure and weighing that against their own faith call and risk tolerance,” Garnett McKenzie says.
Can a mechanism that has been effective worldwide in holding governments accountable for suspicious and unlawful deaths help advance solutions to the pressing human rights issue of police-involved shootings in the United States?

That was the question under discussion November 4 at a symposium On the Science and Law of Investigating Potentially Unlawful Deaths at Home and Abroad, held at the University of Minnesota. The Symposium brought together a unique gathering of international experts, community activists, Minneapolis city and police department officials, and a prosecutor. The mechanism under discussion was The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (commonly known as The Minnesota Protocol), conceived and drafted 35 years ago by the founders of The Advocates. In 2015, the United Nations commissioned The Advocates to help update the Protocol to meet 21st century needs and incorporate 21st century resources. The symposium marked the North American launch of the revision. Staff attorney Jennifer Prestholdt, Director of the International Justice Program, served on the international team of legal and forensics experts that revised and updated the Protocol. The new guidelines reflect the vast changes in technology, forensics, and international law in the past 30-plus years.

Dr. Stuart Maslen, international expert on humanitarian protection and the use of force and project manager for the revision, was a featured speaker. He noted that there is a “clear blue water” between the the uniform standards outlined in the Protocol and the various jurisdictional standards used to investigate police-involved shootings in the United States. Shining a light on international standards and procedures that have been successful in achieving accountability for unlawful death, he said, can be valuable in helping establish more effective investigative and prosecutorial protocols in the U.S.

Keynote speaker John Chisholm, the Milwaukee County District Attorney, concurred. He spoke to the complexities and difficulties of prosecuting police-involved shootings—current law and standards, he said, give police great leeway in using lethal force while in the line of duty. Those same laws and standards make it difficult to investigate and prosecute questionable shootings.

Chisholm is active with the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, which recently released The 21st Century Principles of Prosecution under its Peace Officer Use of Force Project. He said that as the group was developing the principles, it lamented the lack of uniform guidelines. He was enthusiastic about the potential of international standards to offer a way forward.

The symposium was cosponsored by The Advocates and the University of Minnesota’s Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies, Human Rights Program, and Institute for Global Studies.

The Minnesota Protocol Revised

The Potential to Address Police Involved Shootings >
An Enduring Instrument of Justice >

It has been almost 35 years since the founders of The Advocates for Human Rights first identified a troubling gap: no guidelines existed for investigating disappearances, political assassinations, and other unlawful or suspicious deaths. Without guidelines to articulate the arduous and painstaking steps needed to successfully investigate a suspicious death, the chance of effectively bringing perpetrators to justice was slim. And without the ability to bring perpetrators to justice, such deaths were likely to continue occurring.

The particular event that motivated Samuel Heins, Barbara Frey, David Weissbrodt, and other members of The Advocates, then called the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, was the assassination of Philippines President Benigno Aquino in 1983, but the problem was worldwide. Over the next several years members of the Committee worked on a solution. In 1987, after several days of hard work, they finalized The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death: a Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.

It became known simply as The Minnesota Protocol, and it was a groundbreaking articulation of forensic, evidentiary, and legal protocols that should be followed in investigations. The United Nations adopted it in 1991, and it is now widely accepted as the international standard. It has been used in Guatemala, Rwanda, East Timor, Bosnia, and elsewhere.

“A suspicious death occurring anywhere in the world is potentially a violation of the right to life, often described as the supreme human right, and therefore a prompt, partial, and effective investigation is key to ensuring that a culture of accountability – rather than impunity – prevails.”

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the foreword to the revised Minnesota Protocol

Revised Protocol Launches in Thailand >

In September, Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt traveled to Bangkok and Chang Mai, Thailand, to participate in a U.S. State Department Professional Fellows Exchange Program. She met with government officials to discuss implementation of the Minnesota Protocol in Thailand, with lawyers’ associations to discuss how to use pro bono to enhance human rights work, and with NGOs working on human rights issues.

Prestholdt (on far right) is pictured with Neal Murata, Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy, and Jintana Sakulboriak, a Thai lawyer who participated in the exchange program at The Advocates in Minneapolis.
“As a rule, refugees do not bring terror, they flee terror. Refugees resettled to the United States are already subject to multiple layers of security screenings.”

Mark Hetfield, recipient of the 2017 Don & Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award, with the Frasers. Hetfield was honored for his work as a global refugee rights leader. He is the longtime executive director of HIAS, the world’s oldest organization dedicated to refugees.
Robert Aronson, Faith Laken, Carol Freeman, and Aviva Breen

director Sarah Brenes, right, presented a Volunteer Recognition Award to Karam Law. Pictured are Matt Woodward, Tina Zedginidze, Marc Prokosch, and Leslie Karam.

The Kubisa family sang before dinner was served.

Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt presented a Volunteer Recognition Award to Yorn Yan and David Seng Chor.

Refugee and Immigrant Program Director Sarah Brenes, right, presented a Volunteer Recognition Award to Karam Law. Pictured are Matt Woodward, Tina Zedginidze, Marc Prokosch, and Leslie Karam.

Rachel Hamlin, Sarah Beaty, Rick Neville, and Jan Neville

Dorette Mefeune, Grace Nziyin Tcheundem, Eric Galatz, and Monica Kelley
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Polaris
R.F. Moeller Jeweler
Rhonda Phillips
Robin Phillips
Rocco Altobelli
Rose Park
Rutgger’s Bay Lake Lodge
Saint Paul Saints
Sakana Sushi & Asian Bistro
Sam & Char Meyers
Blue Plate Restaurant Company
Sawbill Canoe Outfitters
Sea Change
Sea Life
Shereen Fakier
Simonson’s Spa
Soderberg’s Floral & Gift
St. Croix Festival Theatre
Stages Theatre Company
STEELE Fitness
Steinkraus Family
Tangle Town Gardening
The Buttered Tin
The Commodore
The Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
The Olive Grove
The Outing Lodge at Pine Point
The Wellness Center
Tiny Diner
Trapped Puzzle Rooms
University of Minnesota
Valleymfair Family Amusement Park
Vertical Endeavors
Voxel Virtual Reality Parlour
Wilderness Inquiry
Woven Arts
YogaFit Studios

The Advocates’ summer interns along with staff members Courtnie Gore and Jennifer Prestholdt
This fall, friends, volunteers, and supporters of The Advocates for Human Rights gathered for house parties that advanced the Women’s Human Rights Program, the Refugee and Immigrant Program, and our overall work. House parties are a valued source of financial support and occasions to celebrate the human rights community. We thank this fall’s generous hosts: Steve Melli and Leigh Payne; Marlene and Tom Kayser; Andrea and Jim Rubenstein; and Julie Shelton and Jeffrey Harvey.

Jerry Ziertman traveled from Florida to attend the Refugee and Immigrant Program party.

Ben Cooper visits with Robina Fellow Gaowen Li, who coordinates The Advocates’ Human Rights Defender Project.
Guests listened to Amna Arabi (below) speak about her experience of coming to the U.S.

Board Member Amy Crawford and host Andrea Rubenstein

Jalia Simaha spoke at the Refugee and Immigrant Program party.

Polly Talen and Jean Greenwood at the Refugee and Immigrant Program party.

Theresa Dykoschak, Amanda Adams, Alena Levina, Judi Corradi, Rosalyn Park, Ali McElroy, Mila Yakovlev, and Ophelia Bagirova Karamuschko at the Women’s Program house party.

Barbara Lordi, Scott Dyer, and Board Member Carolyn Chalmers.

Amna Arabi

Karen Evans, Loan Huynh, and Maya Salah at the Women’s Program house party.
Changing the world for good.

SAVE THE DATE!

2018 HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD DINNER

Thursday, June 21
The Minneapolis Depot

Featuring Jane Connors
Inaugural UN Advocate for the Rights of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse