

NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE



Annual Report
2016



Content

2	Norwegian Helsinki Committee
3	Perspectives
4	Activities in 2016
5	The Russian Federation
8	Belarus
10	Ukraine
11	South Caucasus
16	The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB)
18	Central Asia
20	Turkey
22	Romania
23	Natalya Estemirova documentation centre
24	Human rights education
27	Human Rights in Norway
29	NHC Geneva representative
30	Co-operation and International Processes
32	EEA Grants
34	LGBTI: A year filled with rainbow actions
37	Communication
37	Finances
38	The NHC Secretariat
39	Organisation

Editor of the Annual Report:
Berit Nising Lindeman, Head of communication

Cover:
NHC's Inna Sangadzhieva during campaign to free journalist Khadija Ismayilova from Azerbaijan. Photo by Craig Jackson, Human Rights House Foundation.

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Established in 1977

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) is a non-governmental organisation that strives to promote respect for human rights both nationally and internationally. Its work is based on the conviction that civil society must document and actively promote human rights in order for states to secure human rights, both at home and abroad.

The basis of the NHC's work is the international human rights instruments adopted by the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the latter including the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

The NHC focuses mainly on the countries of Europe and Central Asia. The NHC pursues its goals irrespective of ideology or political system in these countries and maintains its political neutrality.

How we work

Human rights monitoring and reporting

By monitoring and reporting on problematic human rights situations in specific countries, the NHC is able to shed light on violations of human rights. The NHC places particular emphasis on civil and political rights, including the fundamental freedoms of expression, belief, association and assembly. On-site research and close co-operation with key civil society actors are our main working methods. The NHC has expertise in election observation and has sent numerous observer missions to monitor elections over the last two decades.

Support for democratic processes

By sharing knowledge and providing financial assistance, the NHC supports local initiatives for the promotion of an independent civil society and public institutions as well as free media. A well-functioning civil society is a precondition for the development of democracy.

Education and information

Through education and information about democracy and human rights, international law and multicultural understanding, we work to increase the focus on human rights. Our aim is to influence both public opinion and governments in human rights matters.

International processes

As in our educational work, the NHC seeks, by way of participation in international processes, meetings and conferences, to induce governments and international organisations to make human rights a priority.

Perspectives

Crime, Corruption and Complicity

When you drive from the airport to downtown Baku, you see many signs of Azerbaijan's oil wealth. A number of new signature buildings such as the three Flame Towers light up the evening skyline. The difference from 15 years ago is immense. In the nineties, Baku was a drab post-Soviet town reeling from the combined effects of war, economic breakdown and the environmental side-effects of oil production.

The improvements are striking, but the economic boom has benefited some more than others. Although most people are better off than in the nineties, the oil wealth has fortified the ruling Aliyev family's grip on power and made the Azeri elite incredibly rich. The human rights situation has gone from bad to worse. The political opposition is marginalised and many of my old colleagues from Azerbaijan's civil society have been imprisoned or have fled the country.

The government of Azerbaijan is carrying out a multi-pronged attack on freedom of expression. It is introducing harsh penalties for critical speech online, imprisoning young activists for nothing more than graffiti, blocking access to the websites of independent media and harassing and violating the rights of journalists.

A case in point is the recent imprisonment of Mehman Huseynov, Azerbaijan's top political blogger and chairman of the country's leading press freedom group. Huseynov was detained, maltreated in custody, and convicted of libel and sentenced to two years in prison on 3 March 2017 after daring to go public about the torture he had suffered at the hands of police officers. We will fight for his release.

The ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders may be linked to the dire economic outlook for Azerbaijan. Oil revenues are going down as major fields are gradually depleted, and the oil price is low. If the regime cannot pay its backers, the system may unravel.

For ordinary Azerbaijanis, the international community must seem a bit two-faced. On the one hand, there is condemnation of human rights abuses. On the other hand, Western companies, especially in the oil and gas sector, are doing business with the Azeri government. Indeed, up until recently, one of the new buildings in Baku, a cone-shaped tower 33 stories high, was crowned with the letters T – R – U – M – P.

Investigative journalists in the US and Azerbaijan have made a convincing case that the Trump organisation's Baku deal is an example of corruption involving both a dubious Azeri family and front companies for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The Baku Trump Tower appears to be a money-laundering operation in which the Trump organisation benefited from the use of its logo.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard supports terrorism in many places in the world. The US condemns corruption, human rights abuse and terrorism, yet in Baku the American president, a corrupt Azeri oligarch and an Iranian terrorist organisation appear to be in business together.

Hopefully, Trump's Baku deal will be investigated by US prosecutors; the allegations of complicity in money laundering are too serious to be ignored. One way to fight the unholy trinity of human rights abuse, corruption and terrorism would be to impose targeted sanctions against the perpetrators, including government officials.

The Magnitsky sanctions (named after a Russian whistleblower who was killed) provide an important model in the fight for accountability. Magnitsky sanction regimes have been adopted by the USA, UK and Estonia; other states should follow suit.



Bjørn Engstrand



Activities in 2016

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Statoil CEO Eldar Sætre and President Ilham Aliyev in Davos in January 2017 were featured prominently in Azerbaijan, where the government is keen to portray the president as being popular among international business leaders (Photo: official site of the president of Azerbaijan).

While many foreign businesses in Azerbaijan are not themselves corrupt, they benefit from a corrupt system. This fact should make them reflect harder on how they can support the establishment of rule of law and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. Together with our partners we need to remind Western businesses of their responsibilities according to the UN guidelines on business and human rights.

Wouldn't it be a great idea for Statoil and other major Norwegian companies involved in Azerbaijan to contribute to a fund to support human rights defenders and freedom of expression?

Maintaining checks and balances in political leadership is as important as ever.

The NHC is very happy to have become the Norwegian member of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) in 2016. In order for our human rights work to be more effective we must co-operate, as well as unite forces across borders. The Paris-based FIDH is a powerful worldwide network of human rights organisations. Membership in the FIDH will make the NHC's efforts more visible and more forceful, while the NHC can offer its experience and resources to the FIDH. Together, we will be able to defend human rights even better than before. Although our main focus is on the human rights challenges in Eastern Europe, we are also actively defending human rights in our own country, Norway. Thanks to our expertise and the wide-ranging networks of our staff, we are able to follow developments closely, take action on urgent matters and have an extensive range of project activities.

The Russian Federation

Despite the difficult relationship between Russia and the West, the NHC maintains the importance of a two-fold approach. Although we will criticise President Putin's regime and support sanctions against those responsible for violations of international law, at the same time we will co-operate with forces at the grass roots level and in civil society as well as with those state servants and politicians who want to make a difference within their framework of possibilities.

An increasingly restrictive legal framework complicates both our colleagues' and our own work in the Russian Federation. Even though this situation has an effect on our activities, it does not alter our goal, which is: to support civil society to the greatest extent possible, to disseminate information about violations and to advocate for holding those who violate the law accountable for their actions. To this end, we also challenge the Norwegian authorities. Since late 2015 we have participated actively in the ongoing public debate about asylum seekers in order to ensure their the right to apply for asylum in Norway. We argue that Russia cannot be considered as a safe third country for refugees.

The NHC has produced several statements, op-eds, presentations and interviews, either on its own or together with NGOs in Russia, in order to draw attention to the general human rights situation and to the working conditions of the NGOs, lawyers and journalists that address these challenges. We also draw attention to the emergence of an increasing protest potential at the grass root level, in which groups which previously stayed at home are now taking to the streets in protest. However, the number of political prisoners in Russia keeps on growing, and the NHC continues to focus on this through its co-operation with the Memorial Human Rights Centre, within the framework of our No Political Prisoners in Europe campaign. The list of political prisoners, while still not exhaustive, already consists of more than 100 names.

In May 2016, the NHC attended the forty-year anniversary of



Left: Head of the Liberal Party Trine Skei Grande hosted our delegation of Russian election experts and observers on a tour of and lunch at the Duma



Right: Pskov opposition politician Lev Shlosberg in the Norwegian Parliament.



Ane Tusvik Bonde and Inna Sangadzhieva at "Breakfast with Bernt (Hagtvedt)" – a discussion on Russian politics at the University of Oslo.





Lene Wetteland of the NHC greets Lyudmila Alexeeva on the occasion of the forty-year anniversary of the Moscow Helsinki Group.

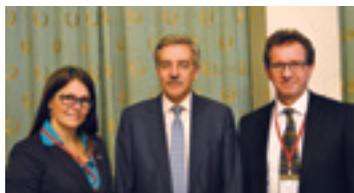


Julie Wilhelmsen, vice chairperson of the NHC board, moderating a discussion on civil society in Russia today between Teatr.Doc director Elena Gremina, human rights activist Anna Dobrovolskaya and lawyer Alexander Popkov.

Underground theatre Teatr.Doc performing their play *Human Rights Defenders* during the Globalisation Conference in Oslo. From the left: Nargisa Abdullaeva, Marina Klesheva, (back) Olga Lysak, Anna Dobrovolskaya, Konstantin Kozhevnikov.



St Petersburg ombudsman Alexander Shishlov talking to Norwegian Consul Heidi Olufsen; Peter Wille, Director of the National Institution for Human Rights in Norway; Secretary General of Amnesty International Norway John Peder Egenæs and Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal at the memorial to political repression in St Petersburg.



Wetteland, Shishlov, Ekeløve-Slydal.

the Moscow Helsinki Group, at which we gave our regards to the grand old lady of dissidence and human rights in Russia, Lyudmila Alexeeva. In September, Russia held elections for the national assembly, the Duma. In order to present the Norwegian public with an alternative view as well as a good foundation for understanding the Russian elections, we invited the following individuals to Oslo: Lev Shlosberg, a prominent opposition politician from the Pskov region; Lilia Shibanova, the head of the election monitoring body Association Golos; political scientist Ekaterina Schulmann; and four talented young election observers. We arranged meetings with relevant interlocutors and also had a tour of the Parliament. On 3 May, we conducted a panel discussion devoted to the upcoming elections. The NHC's Lene Wetteland also participated on the panel, which was moderated by *Minerva* chief editor Nils August Andresen. Despite the fairly negative backdrop, the panelists agreed that as there are institutions in place, even if they are "imitations", and as there is a growing popular interest in speaking out, there is still hope for democracy in the long run.

In October the NHC attended a round table event in St Petersburg – hosted by the Consulate General of Norway, Heidi Olufsen, and the Ombudsman of St Petersburg, Alexander Shishlov – together with several Russian NGOs and lawyers. The topic for discussion was compliance with decisions by the European Court on Human Rights and with the European Convention on Human Rights.

At the end of October the underground theatre Teatr.Doc visited Oslo and the NHC in order to perform its play *Human Rights Defenders* at the Globalisation Conference. In cooperation with the youth environment organisation Nature and Youth, we had also invited the brave Russian lawyer Aleksander Popkov, who is defending human rights in Crimea, and Anna Dobrovolskaya, an activist and the author of the play. In a panel discussion, they considered the conditions for civil society in Russia today together with Elena Gremina, the director of Teatr.Doc.

Øystein Windstad and Lene Wetteland on political murders in the Russian Federation and the working conditions for journalists, activists and opposition.



The NHC commemorates the murder of the brave human rights activist and journalist Anna Politkovskaya by organising an annual event in October in honour of her efforts to document human rights violations in Chechnya. This event is intended to draw attention to the impunity of those responsible for her murder and to shed light on the continuing human rights violations in Chechnya and the North Caucasus. In 2016, marking ten years since the murder of Politkovskaya, the NHC drew attention to the unresolved political murders in the Russian Federation. In co-operation with the Russian Film Club – a student organisation at the University of Oslo – we screened a movie about the assassinated opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, which was followed by a conversation between the NHC’s Lene Wetteland and the investigative journalist Øystein Windstad. Windstad has personal experience of the dire conditions for journalists and activists in North Caucasus: he was severely beaten when a minibus he was travelling in was attacked by masked individuals on the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia.

» Global Magnitsky campaign

During 2016, the NHC continued to co-operate with the Justice for Sergei Magnitsky campaign. The NHC arranged a breakfast side event on 25 May at the 2016 Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF). At this side event, OFF 2016 participants Nada Dhaif, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Jakob Mchangama, Zoya Phan and Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, discussed the Magnitsky sanctions and other measures which can help human rights defenders and whistle-blowers. Norwegian MP Ingjerd Schou and Geir Sjøberg, Human Rights Director of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented efforts that are being made at the Council of Europe and the UN to address abuses against human rights defenders.

The accepted story about Magnitsky – a Russian whistle-blower who was arrested, tortured and killed on the orders of the police whom he had named as being complicit in a case of large-scale tax fraud – is challenged by the Russian film director Andrei Nekrasov in his film *The Magnitsky Act: Behind the Scenes*. The film has attracted considerable attention from the Norwegian media. The NHC has participated in debates and published articles and documents arguing that the Magnitsky case is a well-documented human rights case and that in the film of Nekrasov misrepresents the facts. The NHC has co-operated with Russian human rights defenders and journalists in providing documentation and arguments.

The NHC’s priority, however, has remained to argue in favour of global Magnitsky sanctions being adopted by democratic countries. In the latter part of 2016, important progress in that regard took place in the US, where Congress adopted the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. UK and Estonia have followed suit by adopting similar sanctions.

NHC has started to prepare for a hearing to present the main elements of the Magnitsky case and to present cases eligible for Magnitsky sanctions from different parts of the world. The hearing will be part of the NHC’s fortieth anniversary celebration in the autumn of 2017.

Side event with OFF 2016 participants Nada Dhaif, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Jakob Mchangama, Zoya Phan and UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst discussing the Magnitsky sanctions.



Belarus

The human rights situation in Belarus has long been reflected in authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko's ability to bargain both with Russia and with the EU. Against the background of the ongoing military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Minsk was chosen to be the venue for the EU/Russia-brokered peace negotiations. Lukashenko made certain to present an image of an improving human rights situation by releasing political prisoners, but no significant political reforms have actually been implemented. Because the European Union's lifting of sanctions against the Belarusian leadership lacked a principles-based approach, the prospects for real improvements in human rights in Belarus seem to have been put on hold once again.

Nevertheless, co-operation between independent civil society groups and the authorities within the territory of the former Soviet Union is an upcoming new phenomenon. Such four-dimensional co-operation on particular issues or common interests is considered crucial to these societies in transformation. In co-operation with Belarusian civil society, the NHC has invited Belarusian authorities to Norway to learn from our NGO-Government model of co-operation for mutual benefit. Together with the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and our Belarusian partners, we have arranged two visits to Oslo in respect of domestic violence and migration respectively. The first visit, scheduled for February 23–26, was for representatives of the Law Initiative in Belarus and the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Belarus. Belarus has been preparing new legislation on families, women, parental leave for fathers and challenges with respect to domestic violence.

Belarus's Viasna Human Rights Centre and the Belarus Helsinki Committee from Vitebsk, which were in the middle of settling refugees from Ukraine, came to Norway on April 25–28. The NHC arranged several meetings with Norwegian authorities, including the Ministry of Justice, the police, migration authorities and NGOs. The Ministry of Migration of Belarus had also planned to participate, but unfortunately they did not receive the necessary Belarusian travel permits in time.

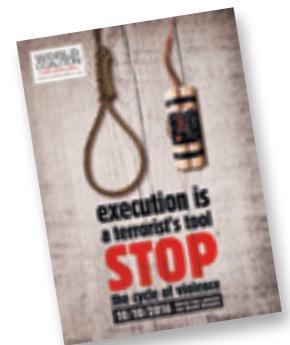


Marking the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster

Visiting a crisis centre in Oslo.



Belarusian partners at Stovner Police Chamber



In June, colleagues from the Viasna HRC and the FIDH arrived to participate in a massive event: the Sixth World Congress Against the Death Penalty, being held at the National Opera in Oslo. We had a stand together where we provided information about Belarus as the last country in Europe with the death penalty. We also arranged a side event during the Congress, calling for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus. The speakers were Valentin Stefanovitch from the HRC Viasna and Andrei Paluda, head of the Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty campaign, as well as Policy Officer Elisabeth Edlund, representing the EU External Action Service (EEAS). When a statement was made by Liubou Kavalioua, mother of Vlad Kovalov, a young man who was executed in Belarus, it was an emotional moment for everyone present.



Top: Viasna and the NHC at the march against the death penalty.

Left: Abolition Now march in Oslo.

Right: Handprints against the death penalty.

Joint FIDH/NHC stand at the World Congress Against the Death Penalty



Elisabeth Edlund with Inna Sangadzhieva and Berit Lindeman



Side event panel at the Death Penalty Congress





Ukraine

Promoting the documentation of war crimes and grave human rights abuses in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, as well as LGBTI work and election observation all remain essential areas of the committee's involvement in Ukraine.

Together with our partner the Brussels-based International Partnership for Human Rights, the NHC has documented war crimes and crimes against humanity in Donbass and Crimea. The NHC has funded domestic monitoring missions by Ukrainian experts as well as participating in a monitoring mission to Donetsk in May/June. The research was presented in two reports, one on cross-border shelling of Ukrainian territory and the other on artillery attacks on the village of Marina outside of Donetsk. Together with the IPHR, the NHC presented its collected evidence to the ICC in The Hague in June 2016. The findings were also presented during a seminar and meetings in Oslo in June, and in NHC articles and appearances in the Norwegian and international media.



How can Norway best promote justice in Ukraine? – Aage Borchgrevink, the NHC, Tonje Meinich, NORLAU, Norway MPs Bård Vegar Solhjell (SV) and Geir Jørgen Bekkevold (KrF), Ukraine MP Svitlana Zalischuk and expert Svitlana Valko.



South Caucasus

Armenia

Armenia was reminded of the geopolitical squeeze it is in when for a few days in April the so-called “frozen” Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan resurfaced at full strength. Unfortunately, the conflict has also been used by the authorities as a pretext to put a patriotic lid on much-needed debate on corruption and the protection of human rights in Armenia. In various statements throughout the year, the NHC continued to draw attention to the lack of investigation and accountability that allows this conflict to continue, fuelling human rights violations and limiting free and open discussion on both sides.

In July, a group of veterans from the 1991–94 Nagorno-Karabakh war killed a police officer, took other police officers and a paramedic hostage and barricaded themselves into a police station for several days in what was eventually dubbed “the Erebuni events”. Protesters gathered in the streets and squares of Yerevan, initially in support of the hostage takers, and due to the disproportionate force used by the police and authorities, the numbers of protesters grew to include those who objected to the regime in general. The NHC joined an international NGO monitoring mission that published a report on the protests, in which police brutality resulted in mass arrests, hospitalisations and increased



In April, serious fighting broke out along the contact line between Azerbaijan and the disputed Nagorno Karabakh enclave, illustrating how impunity for war crimes leads to more conflict (photo credit Caucasian Knot)

NHC Armenia senior adviser Lene Wetteland and Vardine Grigoryan of the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly – Vanadzor



On the road in Armenia.



The international monitoring group that investigated the behaviour of law enforcement authorities during the so-called Erebuni events launched the report together with Armenian partners in Yerevan in September.



Top: Front page report.



Right: The NHC's Lene Wetteland and IPHR's Svitlana Valko presented the findings and recommendations from the report *Beaten, burnt and betrayed: Armenians awaiting accountability for police violence* to several branches of the Armenian law enforcement authorities

distrust in the authorities. The findings of the report *Beaten, burnt and betrayed: Armenians awaiting accountability for police violence* were presented to the relevant authorities in Yerevan and to international decision-makers.

In the wake of growing public criticism and activism, police and authorities have intensified the pressure on activists, violence and illegal criminal prosecution. There are now nearly 20 political prisoners who have suffered discriminatory procedural treatment due to their political views. The NHC is following the situation together with its local partner the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (HCAV) within the framework of the No Political Prisoners in Europe campaign and website. Relations between police and citizens are problematic in Armenia, and the HCAV has conducted an assessment of the public perception of the law enforcement agencies. It has also been monitoring police actions and has provided legal aid to victims as part of our project co-operation.

A new constitution and electoral code came into effect in 2016, prompting protests and letters from the NHC and partners, particularly in respect of the possibility of civic election observation. The NHC's partners in Armenia provide

both analysis and assistance that address the lack of trust in various actors and institutions in society – the police, human rights defenders, the army, elections and the media. There is still a long way to go. Researchers from the research-oriented non-governmental organisation Socioscope have determined how activists and human rights defenders are perceived in Armenian society: for the most part the Armenian media ignores the activities and statements of activists, unless they portray them in a negative way, thus contributing further to the negative stigma attached to them in society.

Another example of NHC co-operation is that with the NGO Democracy Today, which identifies areas in the Armenian army where the rights of conscripts can be improved, despite the closed nature of the institution, which permits non-combat deaths, corruption and degrading treatment to continue with impunity. During the human rights education sessions of the Armenian Helsinki Committee, journalists participate along with activists and representatives of the country's national, sexual and/or religious minorities, fostering co-operation that results in articles and reports that use neutral terminology rather than prejudiced language or hate speech.



Road block separating the crowd from the scene of the hostage action in Erebus, south Yerevan.

NHC partner the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor hosted a caricature exhibition outside their offices after several indoor venues refused to give it space. Political caricatures are a way of reaching a wider audience with the questions that the mainstream media refrain from asking.



Azerbaijan

The large number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan remains a focal point. Thanks to joint advocacy by human rights organisations, pressure against the Aliyev regime has intensified and many of the most famous activists, lawyers and journalists were released during the winter and spring of 2016. This does not mean that the number of political prisoners has diminished. The numbers at the end of 2016 were approximately the same or higher than they were the year before. Two particular cases that caught our attention were Bayram Mammadov and his friend, twenty-two-year-old Giyas Ibrahimov, who were given ten-year prison sentences simply for spraying graffiti, then tortured into confessing to serious drug crimes. The use of bogus drug possession charges to silence critical voices is not new in Azerbaijan, where the authorities often plant drugs on their opponents in order to lock them up. Another high profile prisoner is Ilgar Mammadov, imprisoned since spring 2013 despite repeated calls from the European Court of Human Rights for his release.

Amid reports both of pressuring candidates and voters, and voting fraud, President Ilham Aliyev succeeded in having constitutional amendments adopted which broadens his

personal powers substantially, while dramatically weakening democratic institutions and further isolating and repressing dissent in Azerbaijan. The NHC has made a statement highly critical of the amendments and repeated calls for sanctions against the regime.

The NHC has focused on international advocacy and on providing support to imprisoned activists and the lawyers helping them. Co-ordination with other human rights organisations is important for the efficacy of advocacy efforts, and the NHC co-operates closely both within advocacy networks such as Sports for Rights and in bilateral contacts and actions with organisations such as the FIDH, the International Partnership for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch.

In May – together with Norwegian PEN, Amnesty Norway and the Human Rights House Foundation – we organised a protest on the fortieth birthday of imprisoned journalist Khadija Ismayilova. Fortunately, she was released from seventeen months of imprisonment two days before her birthday, so instead we were able to celebrate her birthday in the main street of central Oslo, with participation from the city mayor, Marianne Borgen, her brother, the documentary filmmaker Erling Borgen, and writers, diplomats and the citizens of Oslo. The day still offered an opportunity to call for the release of the remaining political prisoners in the country.

One of the year's most important events was the exhibition at the Akershus Art Centre, displaying the art from the Drawing for Freedom project, a co-operative endeavour between the NHC and the Academy of Fine Art of the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO). The exhibition was the culmination of a full year's co-operation,



Berit Lindeman met with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Oslo, greeting the freed political prisoner Anar Mammadli via social media.

Sweeping for Khadija: Film director Erling Borgen, Oslo Mayor Marianne Borgen, Bjørn Engesland and Amnesty head John Peder Egenæs



Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, signed a postcard for Khadija Ismayilova



The NHC met with Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland to discuss political prisoners in Azerbaijan.



NHC's Vugar Gojayev and other Azerbaijanis campaigning at the office of Dutch PACE member Tiny Cox.





Façade of the Akershus Art Centre covered by a banner of a government building in Baku

Arif and Leyla Yunus next to artworks of themselves.



an opportunity for KHIO and the gallery to exhibit the magnificent works of art and for the NHC to show the true face of the regime. Participating in the opening event was one of the former political prisoners, the young lawyer Rasul Jafarov who, prior to his arrest more than two years before, had been organising an Art for Democracy campaign, an inspiration for us. At a finissage a month later when we had the good fortune to receive the released political prisoners Leyla and Arif Yunus, we witnessed a moving encounter between the couple and the young artists who had portrayed them while they were jailed. The Yunuses also had the opportunity to meet with the Norwegian MFA and members of the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting.

In conjunction with the exhibition we also organised a joint seminar entitled To Draw is to See – on Art and Activism, engaging artists, experts and scholars in a discussion about how, and why art can be used as a tool to disclose and visualise as well as to engage an audience.

Art is a tool we can use to defend human rights, and it is important for public awareness. In the Art for Democracy campaign we managed to create a coalition between human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and artists. At the seminar Rasul Jafarov argued that this proved successful in

Azerbaijan and we managed to reach more people. The NHC concurs that art has proved itself a useful tool for our advocacy and reached out to the prisoners themselves.

The NHC was pleased to congratulate the winners of the Fritt Ord/ZEIT-Stiftungs Free Media Awards, which were awarded in a ceremony in Tbilisi. Among the winners we found imprisoned journalist Seymur Hazi from Azerbaijan, who was nominated by the NHC.

Spreading information about political prisoners is very important for encouraging action by decision-makers, and we have a website specially designed for the purpose, www.nopoliticalprisoners.org, which features information, updates and analysis of the situations in Russia, Armenia and, in particular, Azerbaijan.



Left: Anne Marit Austbø presents Drawing for Freedom.



Right: Rasul Jafarov

Opening the exhibition: Rasul Jafarov; Rikke Kommissar, director of the Akershus Art Centre; KHIO professor Jeanette Christensen; Liv Tørres, director of the Nobel Peace Center; Berit Lindeman; Anne Marit Austbø; artist Terje Nicolaisen

Azerbaijani activists at the exhibition



» Drawing for Freedom

The Drawing for Freedom art project is a co-operative endeavour between the NHC and the Academy of Fine Art of the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO). Art students sign up for a course on which they make creative renderings of political prisoners in Azerbaijan. The driving force behind the project at KHIO is Professor Jeanette Christensen. Artist and former NHC employee Anne Marit Austbø initiated the project.



Georgia

Senior advisor Aage Borchgrevink serves on the International Advisory Board of Ucha Nanuashvili, the Public Defender in Georgia, along with three international human rights experts. In this capacity Borchgrevink held a lecture on freedom of assembly in April 2016 and participated in the Board's annual meeting and press conference. The Office of the Public Defender is a national human rights institution and reports to the Georgian Parliament.

The NHC funded the domestic election observation mission of the Human Rights Centre in Georgia and organised and led an international election observation mission for the parliamentary elections in October. On this mission we co-operated with three international election monitoring groups. During elections that were otherwise relatively peaceful, three of our observers were physically attacked at a polling station by a group of individuals who sought to disrupt the vote count. The attack received widespread coverage in the Georgian media. This kind of attack represents the worst of Georgia's electoral legacy, and the NHC has been very active in pressing for an effective independent

investigation of the matter. So far two individuals have been charged with attacking our observers, while two policemen have been officially reprimanded for failing to protect the institution of international election observation.

The NHC has taken part in efforts to document war crimes committed during and after the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Georgia is a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the ICC remains the only realistic hope for justice. Together with its local partners, the NHC has documented in four reports that domestic investigations have not been effective. In January 2016 the ICC decided to open an investigation into the Georgian situation. This was an important breakthrough in these efforts to fight impunity, and the NHC has met several times with representatives of the Court in connection with the investigation. Together with our partner, the Human Rights Centre, we have instigated a project aimed at informing the Georgian public – and specifically victims of the war, lawyers and journalists – about relevant aspects of the ICC investigation.

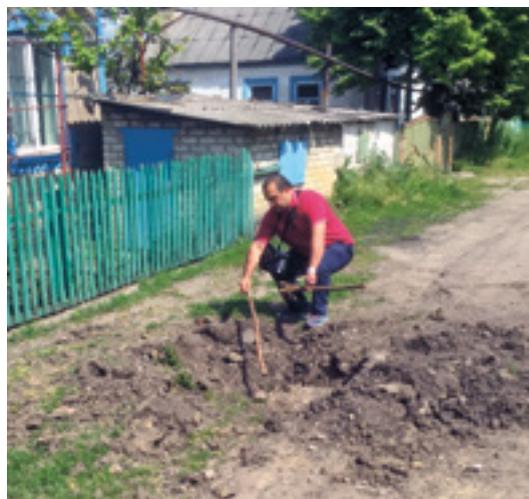


Georgia's Ombudsman Ucha Nanuashvili.

Mariinka, after an artillery attack



Simon Papuashvili of the IPHR determining the direction of a grenade



Editor Grigory Shvedov.



At the border with South Ossetia, editor Grigory Shvedov and journalist Saba Tsikitishvili



The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB)



Group work: fostering freedom of religion and belief in national legislation.

In 2016 the NHC assumed responsibility for providing secretariat services to the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB).

IPPFoRB is an informal network of parliamentarians and legislators from around the world committed to combatting religious persecution and advancing freedom of religion or belief, as defined by Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration for Human Rights.

Article 18 declares, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or

in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

At a time of rising violations of freedom of religion or belief around the globe, the IPPFoRB seeks to advance this fundamental freedom for everyone everywhere.

The IPPFoRB is centred around the Oslo Charter for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The Oslo Charter was signed in November 2014 by over 30 parliamentarians from around the world at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway.

Group photo at the Berlin IPPFoRB conference





Ed Brown at a Lysebu seminar.



Norwegian MP Abid Raja at a panel discussion in Berlin.

All participating parliamentarians are committed to accomplishing the shared goals of advancing freedom of religion or belief by:

- Promoting freedom of religion or belief for all persons through their work and respective institutions;
- Enhancing global co-operation by endeavoring to work across geographical, political and religious lines; and
- Undertaking efforts to jointly promote freedom of religion or belief, share information and mobilise effective responses.

Since the Oslo meeting in November 2014, the network has grown. In New York in September 2015 nearly 100 MPs met to further strengthen their bonds and signed the New York Resolution. IPPFoRB has produced 16 advocacy letters and seen the formation of several national and regional groups. All can be found at the website <http://ippforb.com/>

In 2016 the network sent out six advocacy letters and made a combined fact-finding and solidarity visit to Myanmar. Six parliamentarians from five continents participated in the trip. The delegation met with government and nongovernment representatives, including Burmese parliamentarians in Yangon and Naypyidaw, to build relationships and discuss ways to promote tolerance and inclusion in light of the restrictions and violations of freedom of religion or belief that have taken place and continue to take place, not least against the Rohingya Muslims.

The NHC is excited to be able to strengthen, protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief around the world by playing a significant and necessary role in the IPPFoRB secretariat.



Steering Committee of IPPFoRB meets with Merkel and Chair of party CDU in Berlin: left Norwegian MP Abid Raja, Elizabeth Berridge, MP UK, Angela Merkel, Volker Kauder, Chair CDU, Leonardo Quintao, Congressman Brazil and David Anderson, MP Canada.

» International conference in Berlin

In September 2016 around 130 MPs met in Berlin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave the keynote address on the closing day stating, *“Within a very short time, the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief has established itself as the central actor for this essential fundamental right. The fact that there is now such a strong network gives strength, courage and confidence.”*

Likewise, the then UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, said the following about IPPFoRB: *“The situation of freedom of religion or belief has dramatically deteriorated in many parts of the world, and countless people suffer harassment, intimidation, discrimination and persecution. One of the silver linings in these gloomy days is the IPPFORB, which has brought together parliamentarians from all over the world who are committed to using their influence on behalf of religious freedom for all. This new dimension of advocacy is a source of hope, which is so urgently needed today.”*

Central Asia

Strengthening local civil society is a cornerstone of the NHC's work in Central Asia and in 2016 it remained among the top priorities of our Representative Office in Almaty, **Kazakhstan**. From our field office we continued and expanded our partnership with civil society organisations in Kazakhstan working in the field of human rights or on issues related to the promotion of human rights. We identified new project partners, new avenues for co-operation and promising candidates for our small grants fund. By supporting promising local initiatives with small grants funding we were able to enhance local capacity to promote respect for human rights and democratic processes.

The NHC has closely monitored human rights developments in Kazakhstan and continuously called attention to worrying trends such as the shrinking space for civil society and independent media, conditions for that discourage exercising the right to peaceful assembly and restrictions on freedom of expression. In the spring, when popular discontent with proposed amendments to Kazakhstan's existing land code gave rise to protest rallies in several cities across the country, the NHC was monitoring the demonstrations and the repercussions by the authorities. Following the wave of protests, the NHC initiated a joint report chronicling the human rights abuses taking place in the wake of the demonstrations and advocated for respect of the right to peaceful assembly.



Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan.

When Kazakh civil society activists Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan joined the ranks of political prisoners in Central Asia following their outspoken involvement in the protests, the NHC observed the criminal proceedings against the two and performed extensive advocacy for the two to be released.

Following the unprecedented human rights crisis in **Tajikistan** in recent years, in 2016 the NHC continued to monitor developments through extensive fact-finding missions and kept raising key issues. In our advocacy efforts we targeted the Tajik authorities, international partners to Tajikistan, international organisations, the press and the general public. We also published statements and press releases calling attention to the egregious human rights abuses in the country.

During the summer, the NHC, together with our partners at Human Rights Watch, travelled to several locations in Europe and shot a documentary film showcasing the regime's practice of targeting critics abroad. The resulting film, *Tajikistan: Hunting Critics Abroad*, was first screened at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, where the NHC and others co-hosted a side-event dedicated to the human rights crisis in Tajikistan.

In the autumn the NHC initiated its work on a unified list of Tajik political prisoners. It also started compiling a docu-

The NHC's Marius Fossum with local civil society actors monitoring criminal proceedings against Kazakh activists Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan.





mented list of perpetrators of gross human rights violations for use in the NHC's advocacy for global Magnitsky sanctions.

In **Kyrgyzstan** the NHC continued its co-operation with local partners working in the fields of law and ethnic discrimination in the wake of the June 2010 violence in the south, as well as with organisations working on freedom of religion or belief. Through a range of dialogue and advocacy meetings over a period of three years, the NHC has also worked closely with other Norwegian partners, including the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, in responding to a request by the authorities in Kyrgyzstan to assist in the development of new legislation and a school subject on freedom of religion or belief for pilot schools in Kyrgyzstan. The NHC and the Oslo Center have contributed Norwegian and local experts as well as recommendations for the working group on the school curriculum and a textbook.

In the spring the NHC co-organised a workshop for members of the Kyrgyz parliament, focusing on democratic checks and balances and human rights, with an emphasis on the rights of minorities, including religious minorities. Later in the year, the NHC co-organised a follow-up workshop for parliamentarians on the relationship between democracy and human rights and economic growth. NHC partner Open Viewpoint monitored the coverage of religious topics in the media and

society, and also organised a larger conference in Kyiv, where experts and activists from Central Asia met for a useful exchange of experience with colleagues from Russia, Ukraine and Europe.

The NHC has travelled repeatedly to Kyrgyzstan and continued to identify potential organisations for new partnerships. During the autumn the NHC was in Kyrgyzstan monitoring the court case against human rights defender Azimjan Askarov.

The promotion of human rights in closed countries like **Uzbekistan** and **Turkmenistan** is indeed very challenging. There is little to no space for civil society and human rights records are abysmal. The NHC has continued to monitor developments in the two countries and raised human rights issues through public statements, press releases and advocacy meetings. In September, Uzbekistan made international headlines when the country's long-time authoritarian ruler President Islam Karimov died. With its expert knowledge of Uzbekistan and the region, the NHC was able to provide comments to the media and contribute to keeping Uzbekistan's human rights situation on the agenda. In December, the former prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev won the presidency in an election lacking all signs of free and transparent democracy. The NHC refrained from observing or publishing a statement on the election in order not to lend legitimacy to the process.



Marius Fossum at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw



The NHC's Marius Fossum speaks about the current human rights crisis in Tajikistan at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw

The NHC's Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal together with Einar Steensnæs of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights at a workshop for parliamentarians in Kyrgyzstan



The NHC's Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal and Marius Fossum together with colleagues from the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights and Kyrgyzstani members of Parliament at a workshop in Issyk-Kul



Turkey

Promoting the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief in Turkey

In 2016, religion continued to be an important subject in public policy and discourse in Turkey. However, little progress was made on the legal problems which undermine the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief for all. In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in July 2016, respect has further declined for independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and freedom of organisation. Human rights work in general has become more difficult because of restrictive laws, arrests and a polarised political situation. Minority groups and people in general have become more anxious about voicing critical opinions and speaking in critical terms about their situation.



Mine Yildirim and Aykan Erdemir according to the pen of Roar Hagen in Norwegian newspaper VG.



Mine Yildirim, head of the NHC Freedom of Religion or Belief Initiative, and Turkish politician Aykan Erdemir receive the 2016 Stefanus Priz.

International protection of freedom of religion or belief is also suffering. Judgments by the European Court of Human Rights finding that violations have occurred of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion have not been enforced effectively.

The NHC Freedom of Religion or Belief Initiative has continued its monitoring activities and arranged meetings and seminars. Most notably, in co-operation with the Ankara University Centre for Human Rights, a seminar was arranged on 18 February on the intersection between freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief. Both freedoms are fundamental human rights that Turkey has an obligation to uphold, but in practice they are not protected in line with international human rights law.

With funding from the Dutch Embassy's MATRA programme, the NHC is a partner in the Pluralism and Freedom of Religion or Belief in Schools project together with the Centre for Public Policy and Democracy Studies (PODEM) and Gündem Çocuk (Child Agenda – a human rights organisation focusing on children's rights which was closed following a decree issued under the state of emergency). The project focuses on religion lessons and manifestations of religion or belief in schools and their interaction with international human rights standards.

Upon being invited to do so, the Initiative made a submission to the European Commission Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations. The submission pointed out that the civil and political rights situation in Turkey deteriorated during 2015–2016. Some of the actions and statements of senior politicians – including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – had led to an erosion of the rule of law. The media and the judiciary were under pressure by the executive power, and there were challenges related to refugees, freedom of religion and belief, LGBTI and the ending of the Kurdish peace process.

In 2016, the Stefanus Prize, a human rights prize emphasising freedom of religion or belief, was awarded to Mine Yildirim, head of the NHC Freedom of Religion or Belief Initiative, and to Aykan Erdemir, a Turkish politician.

Yildirim received the prize for “organising the first conference in Turkey’s history where representatives of all the country’s religious and belief communities took part. [...] The Freedom of Belief Initiative creates forums for dialogue about complex issues of religious and belief groups’ legal status and the place of freedom of religion or belief in education.”

Activities on other human rights issues

The NHC has remained active in respect of a range of other human rights issues in Turkey. On 26 January 2016, the NHC arranged a seminar in co-operation with the International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI) and the Norwegian Medical Association Human Rights Committee. At the seminar, a leading human rights advocate from Turkey, Metin Bakkalci, presented and discussed some of the underlying unresolved issues which are leading to stagnation and setbacks for human rights in Turkey. Other speakers included: John



Panel seminar.

Kinahan, assistant editor of Forum 18 News Service; Beate Ekeløve-Slydal, political advisor of Amnesty International Norway; and Njål Høstmælingen, Director of ILPI.

The Freedom of Belief Initiative was launched in 2011 and joined forces with the NHC in 2013, when a three-year NHC project was established with core funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The initiative soon established itself as a serious, objective, human rights-based contributor to the field of human rights in Turkey. The initiative’s core monitoring and

reporting activities have produced several reports with concrete recommendations. Its advocacy work has led to discussions with the national authorities and with actors involved in the international protection of human rights, as well as to making significant contributions towards enabling inclusive dialogue between various stakeholders.

The project is headed by Mine Yildirim, an expert on freedom of religion or belief, and is based in Istanbul. Gunnar M Ekeløve-Slydal has oversight responsibilities for the Initiative at NHC and is involved in some of its activities. The initiative has its own website in Turkish and English: <http://inancozgurlugugirisimi.org/>



Metin Bakkalci at the House of Literature seminar.



Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal at the House of Literature seminar.



Beate Ekeløve-Slydal at the House of Literature seminar.



Seminar with the Romanian Ombudsman Victor Ciorbea

Ingrid Egeland Thorsnes of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO); Petter Wille, Director of the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution; and Gunnar Ekeløve-Slydal



Romania

The NHC was a partner of the Romanian Helsinki Committee in two projects during 2016.

One project focused on ways to improve execution of judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The NHC drafted a report on Norway's system of executions of judgments and invited the director of Norway's National Institution for Human Rights, Petter Wille, and a representative of the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud to take part in a seminar in Bucharest. At the seminar, Romanian authorities, lawyers' associations and civil society organisations discussed with their Norwegian counterparts how to improve execution and thereby prevent future judgments. The NHC was represented by Deputy Secretary General Gunnar M Ekeløve-Slydal and Advisor Czilla Czibalmos.

In the second project, the NHC drafted a report that described the Norwegian Ombud system and its protection mechanisms for human rights. The same Norwegian delegation took part in a seminar with the Romanian Ombudsman, civil society representatives and academics to discuss the role and functioning of the Ombud systems in the two countries.

Natalya Estemirova Documentation Centre

Keeping a record of crimes and human rights violations in the North Caucasus

The Natalya Estemirova Documentation Centre (NEDC), which was established by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in co-operation with eight leading Russian and international non-governmental organisations, aims to reinforce the work of civil society actors on documenting the gross violation of human rights in the North Caucasus region. The NEDC specialises in the analysis of the most serious crimes, which may amount to core international crimes. Analysis of the information collected by the NEDC continues as new information becomes available.

In 2016 the NEDC accomplished several significant goals, and by using IT-driven methodologies based on international human rights and humanitarian and international criminal law, it has developed a cutting-edge customised depository of documents. By analysing the materials collected and verifying and matching these with videos available on the Internet, it was possible to assemble to the greatest possible extent the chronology of events during the initial period of the second Russian-Chechen war.



Natalia Estemirova.

A LEADING DEPOSITORY FOR DOCUMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMES AND SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

The North Caucasus, especially Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, remains a region where serious human rights abuses regularly take place. Since the early 1990s the North Caucasus has experienced protracted conflict between federal Russian forces and local authorities loyal to federal authorities on the one side and groups of separatists or independent fighters on the other. During these conflicts, all parties have committed gross violations of human rights and humanitarian and international criminal law, including the disproportionate use of force, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture and inhumane treatment.

Although information about widespread violations committed during the conflict is available on the Internet on the websites of NGOs, the

civilian picture of the conflict is highly marginalised and unknown to the general public. Furthermore, within the context of the ongoing low-intensity conflict, serious abuses are still taking place. The region is characterised by impunity due to the negligence of state authorities and their unwillingness to investigate alleged violations and bring the perpetrators to justice. As the situation perpetuates the cycle of violence and undermines efforts for reconciliation and peace, both the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament have expressed that there is a need for a documentation centre for the North Caucasus.

The NEDC – consisting of analysts and experts in IT, domestic and international criminal law and

the events in the North Caucasus – has now collected the largest electronic archive of relevant documentation in the world. It has created a database containing information on human rights violations committed during conflicts between federal Russian forces and groups of separatists in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan from the 1990s up to the present.

In 2016 the NEDC drafted a report on the latest developments in the investigation and prosecution of a list of human rights cases in the region regarded as emblematic according to an inquiry by the rapporteur on the human rights situation in the North Caucasus of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The report will be published in 2017.

Human rights education

The Coalition for Trust project in the South Caucasus

In 2013 the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, together with partners from the region, established the Coalition for Trust project in the South Caucasus. The aim of the project is to build trust in the troubled region of the South Caucasus, drawing upon the best experience from the NHC's successful human rights-based trust-building projects in other conflict areas. A premise of the human rights approach to building trust is that members of civil society acquire a solid foundation in the knowledge, skills and competences relating to human rights and their protection, intercultural understand-

ing and participation in a multicultural society. This approach also requires knowledge about discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice and peaceful conflict resolution. The project's four-pillared methodology consisting of education, engagement of target groups, networking and advocacy provides members of civil society with knowledge and tools to use in linking human rights and building trust. In 2015, we officially established the Coalition for Trust as an international NGO. The Coalition has ten members, including the NHC, and is registered in Norway. In 2016, the project concluded with activities in Azerbaijan. Going forwards, the Coalition for Trust project is to be succeeded by an NGO of the same name, which plans to continue its activities.



Rasul Jafarov, Enver Djuliman and Marion Kipiani during a study visit to Serbia.



Istanbul conference.



Far left: Yerevan – group discussions on further activities of the Coalition for Trust.

Left: Enver Djuliman and Nino Thasladze presiding over the meeting on the establishment of the Coalition for Trust.

Peace tree
Participants
planted a tree of
peace in Odessa.

Youth Voices for Peace is a dialogue and reconciliation programme for Russia and Ukraine. The main target groups of the project are young human rights activists and students from both Ukraine and Russia. The goal of the project is to create and support an international network of young peacekeepers focused on the development and implementation of joint peacekeeping/peace-building activities between Russians and Ukrainians. In 2016 we organised four dialogue meetings between two groups, which were followed up with youth peace projects.



Education activities in the Russian Federation

The main goal of the educational activities in the Russian Federation is to contribute to the preparation of various professionals who will respect, monitor and use human rights in their daily work. Our work also includes the preparation of the young population for participation in democratic processes, in which we seek to strengthen civil society and democratise society. Project themes have included not only human rights, but also intercultural understanding and peace education. This year we have focused on human rights activists, journalists, youth and LGBTI as well as on teachers, law enforcement officials and prison officials.

Together with our partners we have developed improved methods for members of public observation commissions and for places of custody. We have also organised seminars for employees in closed institutions and for those who work with people with special needs in the Murmansk region.

Building on a long tradition, we have organised three schools on human rights for students at higher educational institutions in the Arkhangelsk region and one human rights school for Russian and Norwegian youth in Kirkenes, a city bordering Russia in the north with a history of extensive cross-border co-operation.



Enver Djuliman brings students out into the Kirkenes snow for ice-breaking exercises.



Lene Wetteland and Enver Djuliman discussing human rights in Russia and Norway with engaged students.

Youth from both sides of the Russian-Norwegian border after four days of discussions, late nights and reflection



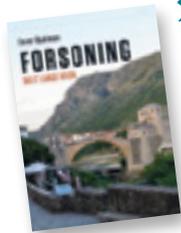


Russian journalists at a seminar in Oslo.

Barents Press journalists in Oslo for three-day workshop

Journalists in North-west Russia and the Norwegian journalists across the border experience some of the same challenges in their daily work. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the Barents Press journalists association organised a session in Oslo where Norwegian and Russian journalists met to exchange experience and discuss human rights in journalism. The Barents Press journalists had a tight three-day schedule of discussions with Norwegian journalists, sessions on ethics and human rights in journalism and visits to various institutions ranging from the Bredtveit women's prison to the VG media company.

” The language is precise and apposite – very impressive. Norway wants to be a nation of peace. Here is a basic book for all organizations in the field. Five points out of six!”
- Bernt Hagtvet, visiting professor at Yale University



Education activities in Norway

Education on location

The way you teach is as important as what you teach. Drammen High School and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee wanted to organise a travelling school to give students studying politics and human rights an opportunity to learn by visiting a live conflict. We opted for the Western Balkans because it is simultaneously a conflict and post-conflict region where one can learn about politics, human rights and peace-building efforts.

The students learned about history, the wars of the nineties, the transition from communism and war to democracy and peace, genocide, the human rights situation and reconciliation, and not least the international community's role in the Western Balkans. The students learnt through a variety of methods: lectures; meetings with human rights activists, politicians, victims and many others; and visits to historically significant places.



Students from Drammen in Mostar.

Co-operation with the University College of Southeast Norway

For more than ten years the NHC has supported the idea of establishing the human rights studies at the University College of Southeast Norway and has actively participated in this process. During this time the NHC has contributed to the development of such study programme by teaching in Norway and abroad. In addition to human rights and humanitarian law topics, we also teach transitional justice.

In 2016 the University College of Southeastern Norway and the NHC organised a conference entitled “The Role of the University in the Building of Peace”. We discussed how we can ensure that universities remain true to their core values and how they can contribute, in partnership with civil society, to building peace in conflict-ridden societies. The conference focused on the role of universities in various conflict zones and the challenges that Norwegian universities face when they collaborate with universities in areas of conflict.



NHC Secretary General Bjørn Engesland, Lars Petter Soltvedt of the University College of Southeast Norway and Enver Džuliman

Seminar on reconciliation

A seminar in June recognised that the world community is in constant conflict. At the same time, there are also ongoing reconciliation processes. At the seminar, we looked at conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Columbia and Norway.

Book publication: Signs along the way

In 2016, NHC Senior Advisor Enver Džuliman published a book entitled Reconciliation: Signs along the way. The book, published by PAX Publishing, offers insight based on the author's direct experiences of reconciliation.

Human Rights in Norway

NGO Forum for Human Rights

The NHC is the secretariat for the Norwegian NGO Forum for Human Rights. The Forum has 41 member organisations and provides input and recommendations to Norwegian authorities on human rights issues. It is concerned with issues to be discussed in international human rights fora as well as domestic human rights issues.

In 2016 the Forum engaged with a range of issues, including the protection of human rights defenders and human rights issues within the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum sent a letter to the Norwegian government criticising its cutbacks in support for human rights work.

The Forum has arranged separate meetings with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Torbjørn Jagland), the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders (Michel Forst) and Norway's National Institution for Human Rights.

The NHC has helped strengthen participation by civil society in the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly by co-ordinating travel support from the Norwegian MFA for Norwegian organisations.

Human Rights Human Wrongs documentary film festival

The NHC is proud to be a partner of the Human Rights Human Wrongs (HRHW) film festival. Scandinavia's only film festival dedicated to human rights was held for the eighth time in Oslo in February 2016. The goal of HRHW is to raise awareness of and generate debate on human rights issues that are not given the attention they deserve in the mainstream media. This year's festival was a six-day celebration

with documentary films, seminars, debates and much more. The audience was invited to learn, engage and debate with international and local guests. Topics included Mexico, Syria, Colombia, Senegal, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Burma, Tibet, Congo, Romania and Ukraine, refugees, extremism, land-grabbing, the war on drugs, citizen journalism, activism, Norwegian foreign policy and documentary film-making, just to mention a few highlights.

The NHC's particular contribution to the festival this year was an event before the screening of the film *The Near Far East*. The NHC was invited to participate in a panel discussion about truth and propaganda during the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the difficult role of the media. The panel, moderated by the NHC's Olga Shamshur, asked "How do we separate real news from lies?" The panellists were Stephane Siohan, a French journalist who has covered the situation in Eastern Ukraine extensively for *Le Figaro*, France 24 and other media outlets, and Sam Gregory, Program Director at WITNESS, an organisation that trains and supports activists and citizens around the world to use video to expose human rights abuses.

The second event was the screening of the award winning film *Toto and his sisters*, followed by a Q&A session where Raluca Negulescu and NHC's Csilla Czibalmos shared their experiences and insights about the plight of Roma communities in Romania. Raluca Negulescu is the Executive Director of the Policy Center for Roma and Minorities Foundation where she develops and runs educational programs for children in the ghettos of Bucharest. The discussion was moderated by Anders Nielsen from the NHC.



Ketil Magnussen, festival director, opening the Human Rights Human Wrongs documentary film festival



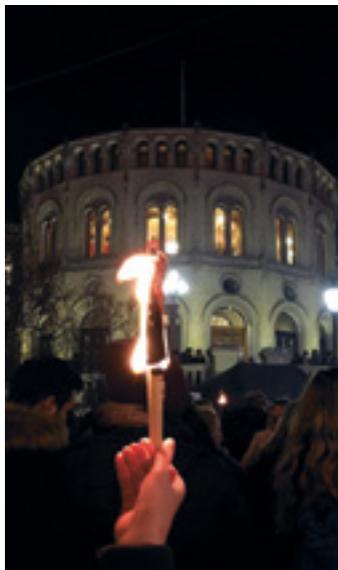
The NHC's Anders Nielsen and Csilla Czibalmos in discussion with Raluca Negulescu.

Panelists Stephane Siohan and Sam Gregory moderated by the NHC's Olga Shamshur





FIDH President Dimitris Christopoulos addresses Norway at a thousand lights for refugees.



Dimitris Christopoulos, Bjørn Engesland, Berit Lindeman.



FIDH President Dimitris Christopoulos

The right to seek asylum

During 2016 the NHC co-operated with other human rights organisations in Norway to criticise legal amendments restricting the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. In a letter dated 7 January 2016 to the UNHCR Regional Representation for Northern Europe, Amnesty International Norway, the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) and the NHC expressed “concerns that Norway now fails to uphold its international obligations with respect to the rights of everyone to seek asylum”.

The organisations maintained that even if Parliament had included a precondition for the amendments that they should be applied in a way that respects Norway’s international human rights obligations, the way in which the government had instructed the immigration authorities and the police to implement the amendments and the way in which the provision was applied both represented serious problems.

Norway’s National Institution for Human Rights

The NHC was active in promoting the establishment of the new National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in Norway in 2015 and has served on its Advisory Council since that time.

National Preventive Mechanism against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

At long last, Norway’s National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) was established and started operating in the spring of 2014. The NPM is a department within the Ombudsman’s Office. The NHC sat on its Advisory Council in 2016.

NHC Geneva representative

Ivar Dale is the Norwegian Helsinki Committee's representative in Geneva. Having spent several years in Central Asia as our Regional Representative in Bishkek and Almaty, he supervised our work in the region while bringing detailed knowledge to human rights reviews and hearings at the UN. Over the past year, Ivar has sought to create a stronger link between our important work on the ground and the committees and delegations in Geneva. Advocacy work by the NHC helps to create the basis for UN recommendations to some of the world's most oppressive regimes.



NHC Geneva representative Ivar Dale.



Side event on human rights in Central Asia with UN Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai and human rights defenders at the Palace des Nations, Geneva. Photo: Jeff Vize



Hearing on human rights in Turkmenistan at the EU Parliament, Brussels. Photo: Emanuele Sansonetti

SMILE, YOU'RE IN THE UN!

A president who recently made himself Leader of the Nation for life will not let himself be dictated by the United Nations.

It's Friday afternoon and I'm tired of wearing a tie. In an hour, I'll have to catch the train to Freiburg, where Norwegian prog-rockers Motorpsycho are taking centre stage. But for now, I'm in the back row at the UN Human Rights Council, watching the Tajik Deputy Minister of Justice squirm on an entirely different podium. Almost two hundred diplomats are seated around the great hall. They take the microphone in alphabetical order, one after another, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

Every ten minutes I whisper a quiet "Yes!" and send out an excited tweet. Oslo speaks out against Dushanbe! I rarely get re-tweeted.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the human rights version of Eurovision, a UN review that all countries must complete every four years or so. Now Tajikistan is up, and the timing could not possibly be better. Over the past six months,



the country has gone from average crook in the human rights underworld to ruthless mafioso.

Developments have been so hair-raising that even local activists are afraid to speak out about them. Instead, they put their trust in the fourth power of state. Not the Tajik one, mind you, where all branches are synonymous with the executive, but the international media. And particularly its coverage of what is happening in Geneva today.

Unfortunately, you'd be hard pressed to say what is less likely to catch the attention of the average newspaper reader: Tajikistan or the United Nations. Tajikistan may be the least known of the five republics in Central Asia, a region that is reasonably obscure in and of itself. Breaking news from Tajikistan draws viewers like an Estonian municipal election. At best, the UN is seen as a distant mishmash of abbreviations, at

worst as "a black hole into which disappear countless tax dollars and human aspirations, never to be seen again". One thing is certain – Tajikistan plus the UN does not make a front page.

And what happens when the issue is not just one man, but an entire political system? Which UN mechanism are you supposed to choose in the hope that something good will come out at the other end? You won't get far without learning the abbreviations.

But first – breaking news from Tajikistan.

Read the full story of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee representative in Geneva and his wanderings in the corridors of bureaucracy in Agenda Magazine:

<http://agendamagasin.no/kommentarer/smil-du-er-pa-fn/>

Co-operation and International Processes

Each year NHC staff participate in a range of international meetings and conferences. We strive to be a key player among organisations and fora dealing with human rights issues, our goal being to influence international organisations and states and convince them to protect human rights and promote human rights issues.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)

The NHC was present at the OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw and participated by way of side events, meetings and interventions covering a wide range of the issues in which the NHC is engaged. At a side event held jointly with Human Rights Watch and the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, we presented a short movie and stories of how activists have been persecuted by the regime both inside Tajikistan and in other countries. In a worrying development, the authorities in Tajikistan then immediately retaliated against the families of several of these activists at home. The NHC also co-hosted a

side event with the International Partnership on Human Rights and Armenian NGOs on the summer's protests and mass arrests in Armenia. We also made an intervention urging the use of the punitive OSCE Moscow mechanism against Azerbaijan in light of its rampant human rights abuses and the upcoming referendum, which would encroach upon Azerbaijani democracy even more.

Oslo Freedom Forum

The NHC is one of the Norwegian partners of the Oslo Freedom Forum, held each year in Oslo and convened by the US-based Human Rights Foundation. This year we arranged a breakfast seminar on 25 May as part of our campaign to promote Global Magnitsky Sanctions that will hold human rights violators accountable for their actions irrespective of their nationality. Participants included: opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza Jr; Bill Browder, head of Hermitage Capital and the Justice For Sergei Magnitsky campaign; and Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation for human rights defenders.



The NHC's Marius Fossum calls for sanctions against Azerbaijan at HDIM



OSCE/ODIHR Director Michel Links addresses an important audience at HDIM

Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation for Human Rights Defenders



#Eu4Human rights

On 21 June the NHC was invited by the EU permanent delegation to make an intervention at a seminar in connection with a visit by Stavros Lambrinidis, the European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights. Lambrinidis addressed the question of the universality of human rights and the shrinking space for civil society and human rights defenders, as well as the issues of coherence and effectiveness that the EU faces. Geir Sjøberg, Policy Director for Human Rights, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NHC were invited to challenge the EU. The NHC used the opportunity to bring up some of the ways the EU could better protect those who promote human rights in hostile environments for instance, through a more efficient sanctions regime. The discussion was moderated by Christian Borch.

NHC challenges Lambrinidis at #EU4Human Rights.



Christian Borch, Geir Sjøberg and Berit Lindeman.



International networks

The NHC is a member of several international networks of human rights organisations. In 2016 we finally became the Norwegian member organisation of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), joining a strong network of 184 human rights organisations worldwide. We believe this membership will strengthen our international outreach, giving us opportunities for joint fact-finding, advocacy and new perspectives in terms of both working methods and geographical focus areas.



Berit Lindeman is a member of the board of the election observer network EPDE, pictured here with Roman Udof of Golos, Russia and Anar Mammadli of EMDS, Azerbaijan



We are an active founding member of the Civic Solidarity Platform, which includes 35 leading civil society organisations and acts as an international platform for co-operation on advocacy in the OSCE area. We are also a close partner of the Brussels-based International Partnership for Human Rights. In 2012 the NHC was among the founders of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) with a secretariat in Berlin, uniting 14 leading NGOs with a focus on election observation. The NHC is a member of the EPDE steering committee. In addition, we are members of the International Coalition for the ICC (New York/The Hague), the Forum for International Criminal and Humanitarian Law (FICHL), the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe (DARE).



NHC staff plan co-operation with FIDH Director Antoine Bernard, President Dimitris Christopoulos and Sacha Koulaeva – Head of the Eastern Europe-Central Asia Desk.

From the FIDH Annual Assembly of FIDH in Johannesburg, South Africa



EEA Grants

EEA and Norway Grants Contributing to stronger civil society in Europe

Since 2005, the NHC has been responsible for co-ordinating information on Norwegian civil society under EEA and Norway financial mechanisms and NGO funds, with a particular focus on bilateral partnerships. The role of the NHC is to keep Norwegian civil society well informed about EEA and Norway Grants and NGO funds in the beneficiary countries, to assist in establishing contact and co-operation between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the beneficiary countries and in Norway and to give advice to the MFA in matters related to Norwegian civil society. In addition, the NHC functions as a co-ordinator for NGOs seeking contact in the beneficiary countries and with the Norwegian authorities.

EEA and Norway Grants represent funding from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to reduce economic and social

disparities and strengthen co-operation with fifteen EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. For the period 2014–2021, a total contribution of €2.8 billion has been agreed. The priorities reflect the priorities of the EU and aim to respond to the shared challenges facing Europe:

- Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness
- Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction
- Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy
- Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights
- Justice and Home Affairs

The NHC sees civil society as an essential building block for a democratic society. Strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations is therefore a key priority in our work.



Stop Hate Speech campaign, Csilla Czibalmos.

Visit by the Romanian Helsinki Committee to Oslo to study alternative punitive measures in correctional facilities.



Latvian service-providing organisations on a study visit to Norway.



As a contact point for organisations for the EEA and Norway Grants' NGO programmes, we contribute to the strengthening of ties between NGOs in Norway and the recipient countries, thus ensuring the valuable transfer of knowledge and know-how from all sides.

This year marked the end of the 2009–2014 programming period of EEA and Norway Grants, meaning that most projects funded under these programmes were concluded by April 2016. Nevertheless, joint activities by Norway and the recipient countries of the EEA Grants continued under bilateral initiatives, creating ample opportunities for organisations to meet and plant the seeds for future projects that may receive funding under the 2014–2021 programming.

For the NHC, this year also meant placing greater emphasis on highlighting good stories about projects created by Norwegian organisations with partners from countries that have received grants for NGOs through the NGO programmes. All stories were published on the NGO Partnership Portal and featured on the portal's Facebook page.

Norwegian organisations on a study visit to Slovakia on sustainable development and smart cities.



» A more inclusive society through prison reform

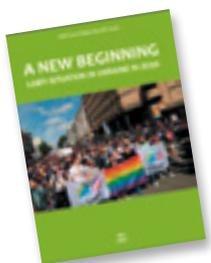
The NHC facilitated a visit to Norway by the Romanian Helsinki Committee in order for it to study Norwegian correctional facilities and provide recommendations to Romanian authorities on alternative punitive measures so as to improve the rehabilitation of prisoners. "What do Norwegians do that we don't do?" was the key question that the members of the delegation from Romania tried to find answers to between 15 and 21 October 2016. The delegation consisted of representatives of the Romanian prisons administration, the probation services and the Ombudsman.

The NHC facilitated meetings with the Norwegian Ministry of Justice, the Norwegian Correctional Services, the Norwegian NPM and NGOs working with prisoners and their families. It arranged for visits to a probation office and to Bredtveit and Halden prisons.

At the end of the study visit a representative of the Romanian Helsinki Committee reached the following conclusion: Norwegian society understands that punishing less and helping more creates a "win-win situation" and that deprivation of liberty should not be exacerbated by unnecessary restrictions on other civil rights. This is because sooner or later everyone is released from prison, and then anyone may encounter a former prisoner in the evening in a deserted alley. What kind of person do you want that former prisoner to be?



Bread and water coffeehouse in Halden's former police office also used as a prison until the 1970s.



Report by partner
Nash Mir

LGBTI: A year filled with rainbow actions

The situation for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) persons has emerged as an important focus of the NHC. While on the one hand we see that pressure from both state and non-state actors has increased many places, on the other we also see advocates for the community becoming stronger, more resilient and finding new and innovative ways to fight for freedom and equality. We are looking back on a year filled with rainbow actions, from marching at Oslo Pride together with our colleagues from Eastern and Central Europe and the Western Balkans through to intervening in cases of attacks on activists and organisations and providing training in the effective investigation of hate crimes and transgender health care for Ukrainian police, physicians and psychiatrists.



Boban Stojanović

Protesting attacks on LGBTI activists

We have seen several examples of attacks on LGBTI activists, and gave statements and called for Norwegian and international policymakers to intervene in specific cases. In February the NHC asked the Armenian authorities to investigate two attacks on LGBTI activists. The first case concerned threats and hate speech following the first Armenian LGBTI forum held by LGBT organisation PINK Armenia on 17–18 October 2015.

We also advocated for an investigation into the attack on Serbian LGBTI activist Boban Stojanović, who was brutally beaten by unknown assailants shouting homophobic slogans in downtown Belgrade on 21 August. Even though we see some progress in Serbia when it comes to legal protection for LGBTI persons, violence and discrimination remain widespread. Few of the cases reported are properly investigated and even fewer lead to convictions.

Meeting with State Secretary Elsbeth Tronstad.



Norwegian police officers visiting Kyiv to train Ukrainian police in fighting hate crimes.



Seminar at Pride House.



Oslo Pride 2016

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, the LGBTI organization FRI and Oslo Pride International invited LGBTI activists from Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Slovakia to celebrate Pride week, exchange experiences of their activism and meet with Norwegian policymakers and experts. We foresee this becoming a co-operative annual event for our organisations. We also organized two seminars during Oslo Pride.

The power of networking

Providing such discussion platforms for our partners and policymakers has become increasingly important to us. We can see that it leads to very clear results. During Oslo Pride 2016, the EEA and Norway Grants programme – one of the most important funding mechanisms for many European LGBTI organisations – were discussed extensively by participants and State Secretary Elsbeth Tronstad. At that point in time the strategic document for the new period were out for public consultation. Together, the participants successfully formulated strong recommendations for the explicit inclusion of LGBTI issues in the priorities of the grant mechanism. In the final document of the mechanism it is made clear that LGBTI is one of its fundamental priorities.

The NHC followed up on this initiative by presenting the programme at ILGA Europe's annual conference in Nicosia, Cyprus in October. We believe that by incorporating these recommendations, EEA and Norway Grants can continue to change the lives of LGBTI people in Europe for the better.

The NHC also took part in the international campaign against attempts by UN member states to terminate the mandate of the newly established UN Independent Expert to address violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). The campaign was successful: in a close vote on 21 November, the United Nations General Assembly committee affirmed that the Independent Expert should continue his work.



Oslo Pride guests.



Prime Minister Erna Solberg meets with Oslo Pride guests.



What is so provoking about the idea of “equality”?

The most comprehensive project focusing on the LGBTI field has been implemented with local partners in Ukraine since 2013. In this project we support the development of regional LGBTI groups through the public organisation Insight, and we encourage and build the capacities of local administrations and police for investigating hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Contrary to our expectations, the most challenging aspect of the project has been the Equality Festivals organised by Insight in co-operation with a wide range of civil society actors. The festivals were organised in Kyiv and several other cities in Ukraine in 2016, with the aim of drawing attention to the challenges and diversity of Ukraine’s most vulnerable groups. Using exhibitions, concerts, films and debates, the organisers bring people together to show how fighting for equal rights should be a common struggle for a Ukraine where all people have their own forms of cultural expression – regardless of their identity or which group they belong to. These festivals continue to be subject to attacks, and to obstructions from the authorities, but even so more people and organizations chose to join them all over Ukraine.



The NHC’s Mina Skouen speaking at the opening of the Kyiv equality festival.

Always last in line – transgender and intersex persons

Insight, our partner organisation in Ukraine, has despite prejudices initiated capacity-building and co-operation with Ukrainian physicians and psychiatrists on the provision of quality health care to transgender persons and on how to be “safe doctors” following the training. The first of such training events took place in Oslo when a delegation met with Norwegian peer experts working with the transgender community.

The group spent a day with Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad and Elsa Almås, both professors in sexology at the University of Agder and pioneers on human rights-based transgender health care. Sometimes it can take a long time to see clear results from the work done on LGBTI issues. At other times we see clear results after a single event, such as the event where a participant said that “before coming here I thought of this as a disease they should be cured of. Now I realise that they are not sick, and that I as a doctor can do many things to help them with their lives.”

Norwegian Embassy Counselor Petter Bauck and Olena Shevchenko, head of «Insight».



Evacuation during equality festival in Kyiv.



Attacks on equality festival in Lviv.



Communication

Media Contact

As an independent human rights organisation, we consider it imperative to maintain a high level of visibility and communicate our points of view to the general public, the media and directly to the Norwegian authorities. A significant aspect of the activities of our information department is therefore to communicate the work of the NHC and its views to the media and the general public.

The NHC set the agenda for several important human rights questions in 2016. NHC representatives are frequently used as commentators and experts and in debates on radio and TV programmes. The NHC has also made a substantial number of appearances in the international media.

Web pages

The communication department communicates the work of the NHC through its own website: www.nhc.no. The NHC is also active on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and actively uses these channels of communication to promote and communicate its work.

Publications

The NHC published the following reports in 2016:

- Fighting for accountability and democratic change in Ukraine (with the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR))
- Beaten, burnt and betrayed: Armenians awaiting accountability for police violence, published by the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and the Civic Solidarity Platform, with contributions from the NHC
- Final joint report of the limited election observation mission to the Republic of Georgia

The NHC published one policy paper in 2016:

- Policy Paper 1/2016: Hungary must provide space for civil society

All publications can be downloaded from the web page www.nhc.no or ordered from the NHC information department.

Membership

As of the end of 2016, the NHC had 260 individual members.



Finances

The total spending in 2016 was 40.3 million NOK out of which project support for partners constituted 25.1 million NOK. Total income balance was 40.1 million.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee's donors are primarily the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Freedom of Expression Foundation (Fritt Ord), US State Department, Open Society Institute, National Endowment for Democracy, OAK Foundation and the European Commission. Gifts, members contributions etc. provided an income of 145 000 NOK.

The NHC Secretariat



Bjørn Engesland
Secretary General



Lene Wetteland
Senior Advisor, Head of Russia section; Armenia



Csilla Czibalmos
Advisor, EEA grants project, Hungary and Roma-related issues



Staff abroad:

Ivar Dale
Senior Advisor, based in Geneva. UN-related issues and Central Asia



Gunnar M. Ekeløve-Slydal
Deputy Secretary General. General NHC policies, Turkey, international criminal courts and justice



Inna Sangadzhieva
Senior Advisor, Russia and Belarus.



Olga Shamshur Flydal
Advisor, Ukraine and Azerbaijan (on parental leave from May)



Marius Fossum
Regional Representative in Central Asia (Almaty)



Fernanda Zubillaga Nilsen
Head of administration, office management and finance



Enver Djuliman
Senior Advisor, Human rights education programme



Usam Baysaev
Project co-ordinator, Senior Advisor Natalya Estemirova Documentation Center



Botakoz Iliyas
Project Advisor at the NHC representative office in Central Asia (Almaty) until August



Berit Nising Lindeman
Head of communication. Senior Advisor, Belarus and Azerbaijan, election observation



Mina Skouen
Senior Advisor, Western Balkan and LGBTI-related activities



Aleksandra Sidorenko
Advisor, Natalya Estemirova Documentation Center



Valentina Kazachevskaya
Project Advisor at the NHC representative office in Central Asia (Almaty) from August



Anders Nielsen
Information advisor. Also responsible for the EEA grants information portal www.ngonorway.org



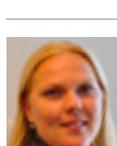
Ed Brown
Senior Advisor, Head of secretariat of the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief/IPPFoRB (www.ippforb.com)



Mine Yildirim
Head of Project, NHC Freedom of Religion or Belief in Turkey, based in Istanbul, Turkey



Aage Borchgrevink
Senior Advisor, Georgia, North Caucasus. International justice



Veronika Vimberg
Senior Advisor, Project Administration



Vugar Gojayev
Project Manager, based in Berlin

Organisation

The organisational components of the NHC are the annual meeting, the board and the council.

The annual meeting is our highest decision-making body and consists of members of the council and the board. The board holds monthly meetings, where decisions related to NHC strategy, principles and financial matters are made. The Secretary General heads the secretariat and is responsible for the daily operations of the NHC.

Board

Chairperson:

Ragnhild Astrup Tschudi

Human rights advocate with a special focus on Russia and Eastern Europe

Vice chairperson:

Julie Wilhelmsen

Research fellow, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Hauk Lund

Executive director, Hauk Lund Consulting A/S

Eirik Moen

Secretary General of the International Democrat Union

Kari Schage

Credit Manager/Head of Lending Department of Cultura Bank

Inger Skjelsbæk

Senior Researcher and Deputy Director at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Kjetil Mujezinovic Larsen

Professor, Norwegian Center for Human Rights

Lene Wetteland

Staff representative

Council

President:

Nora Sveaas

Vice president:

Anne Marit Bjørnflaten

Helge Blakkisrud

Kjell Magne Bondevik

Bernt Bull

Nils Butenschøn

Kristin Clemet

Juni Dahr

Ole Drolsum

Bente Erichsen

Frode Elgesem

Grethe Fossum

Geir Flikke

Dankert Freilem

Siri Frigaard

Bjørn Cato Funnemark

Steinar Gil

Jacob M Godzimirski

Trine Skei Grande

Bernt Hagtvet

Hans Morten Haugen

Åsne Julsrud

Prableen Kaur

Knut Kloster Jr

Idar Kreutzer

Gry Larsen

Ragnhild Lied

Anne Lijedahl Lynngård

Elisabeth Løland

Mette Newth

Manuela Ramin Osmundsen

Viktor Roddvik

Jan Tore Sanner

Per Saxegaard

Anne Julie Semb

Anne Sender

Marianne B Skou

Guro Slettemark

Bård Vegar Solhjell

Lars Petter Soltvedt

Atle Sommerfelt

Michael Tetzschner

Annette Trettebergstuen

Magne Ove Warsinski-Varsi

Maria Warsinska-Varsi

Vigdis Vevstad

Åshild Vige

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NHC Geneva
representative Ivar Dale,
UN Special Rapporteur
Maina Kiai and human
rights defenders at the
Palace des Nations,
Geneva. Photo: Jeff Vize