

HUMAN  
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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ANNUAL REPORT 2020

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



# IN MEMORIAM



## **In July 2020 we mourned the loss of long-time Human Rights Watch supporter and friend, Tony Elliott CBE.**

Tony was a visionary publisher and founder of the global media and entertainment company Time Out. Tony was awarded Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 2017 for services to publishing. He was deeply involved in a number of charitable causes, including Human Rights Watch, where he lent his passion and expertise for nearly two decades, initially as a member of our London Committee and Film Benefit Committee, and ultimately as chair of our London Committee and a member of our Board of Directors. Always thoughtful and creative, Tony challenged the status quo and inspired us to pause and think about the direction of the organization in new and innovative ways. He was a force of nature. We were extremely fortunate to have benefitted from his generosity, spirit, and energy.

## DEAR FRIENDS,

The past year was particularly challenging. The Covid-19 pandemic overran hospitals and stole loved ones from us before their time. The crisis showed how censoring the free flow of information by some governments can contribute to a pandemic, and it laid bare the systemic inequalities and threats to our health that are inherent in oppression and injustice. It fell especially harshly on those already jeopardized by discrimination, armed conflict, and forced displacement.

At Human Rights Watch, we are confronting these troubling dimensions of the crisis, but also see a moment for transformative change. We are inspired by the frontline workers fighting Covid-19 and by the passion of global citizens taking to the streets to demand justice and equality for all. The pandemic brings a unique opportunity to show solidarity with these brave individuals and to address the systemic obstacles that keep far too many people from exercising their basic rights in the more than 90 countries where we regularly work.

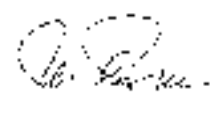
In the past year, alongside our partners, we have made real progress. Highlights include an International Court of Justice ruling ordering Myanmar to protect Rohingya Muslims who remain in the country from genocide, more than 100 countries committing to end using schools for military purposes, the relocation of unaccompanied migrant children from dangerous camp conditions in Greece, and significant reforms in Sudan and Saudi Arabia granting women the right to travel without a male guardian.

**Our ability to succeed in these difficult times depends on the generous support of partners like you. In the following pages, you can read more about how you helped us to address today's urgent challenges. Together, we strive to realize dignity, equality, and justice for everyone, everywhere.**

**Thank you for being a part of our movement.**



**Amy Rao**  
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Parisians in lockdown applaud healthcare workers battling the Covid-19 pandemic in France on April 14, 2020. © 2020 Martin Bureau/AFP via Getty Images

# A PERSONAL STORY

On a Sunday morning this past spring, I reached out to Dr. Tiffany Crutcher, a US advocate for criminal justice and policy reform in the US. I had just seen her on a news program, discussing the need for reparations for descendants of African slaves and for African American families who, like hers, had lost a loved one at the hands of police.



Protesters march against discriminatory and abusive policing in New York City on June 19, 2020. © 2020 Demetrius Freeman/NYTimes/Redux

Tiffany's story of loss was all too familiar and heartbreaking. Like so many other Black families in the US, Tiffany's family sought—but never received—justice for the death of a loved one. Neither have they received the equally important public and official acknowledgment that the lives of their Black loved ones mattered.

Talking with Tiffany was a stark reminder of why I work for Human Rights Watch: 401 years after the first African slave was brought to US shores, I still live in a nation replete with systemic racism and in which Black men and women can lose their lives at the hands of police or rogue citizens and never receive justice.

Overseeing the US work of Human Rights Watch in 2020 brought into sharp focus the need to face the truth about how certain lives are undervalued. As we documented the disparities so clearly revealed through the Covid-19 pandemic, listened to the voices of Black people, and recorded cries for racial justice ringing through the streets of countless towns in the US and beyond, it was clear that Human Rights Watch's work was needed now more than ever.

Ensuring equal access to health care regardless of race or income; protecting the right to vote for Black, brown, and poor people; responding to calls for justice when systemic racism rather than community protection determines police decisions—all that and more is the work of Human Rights Watch. **My mission is to ensure that equity and respect for rights become the norm and not an afterthought.**



**Nicole Austin-Hillery**  
Executive Director, US Program  
[@NicoleAustinHil](https://twitter.com/NicoleAustinHil)

# OUR APPROACH

INVESTIGATE - EXPOSE - CHANGE

Human Rights Watch employs a powerful methodology to defend human rights. We **INVESTIGATE** facts on the ground in more than 90 countries—often in partnership with local groups. We **EXPOSE** our findings to the broadest audience possible. We then meet with policymakers to offer realistic solutions, and we engage the public to exert pressure for meaningful, lasting **CHANGE**.



People riding on a train celebrate the signing of a power-sharing agreement between Sudan's military and the country's pro-democracy movement on August 17, 2019. © 2019 Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah/Reuters

## Our Approach In Action: Promoting Rights-Respecting Change in Sudan

Change can be long in coming, particularly when human rights abuses are entrenched, but we stay with a problem until we get results.

### INVESTIGATE

Since 1995, we have conducted rigorous, independent, impartial investigations of serious **human rights violations in Sudan**. A major concern was the war in Darfur that killed and injured hundreds of thousands of civilians. We meticulously documented the apparent war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir and four other officials.

Our researchers interviewed victims, witnesses, alleged perpetrators, and others to assess and corroborate the evidence. Sometimes we worked openly, other times more discretely, but even in the most repressive and closed countries we find ways to uncover the truth, including by speaking to people who have fled across borders.

### EXPOSE

Over two decades, we released **more than 800 products** on Sudan, including news releases, reports, multimedia products, and statements to the United Nations.

We disseminated our findings and recommendations to local and global media outlets—which cite our global work nearly **1,000 times a day**—as well as to **11 million social media followers**. With this megaphone, we remain one of the loudest and most effective voices about the ongoing conflict in Darfur. We were also the first to expose the military's violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators following al-Bashir's ouster in 2019.

### CHANGE

We engaged in strategic advocacy with world leaders, the EU, and the UN, and partnered with local groups to generate pressure for change. Our work helped pave the way for an **International Criminal Court (ICC) case against al-Bashir** and others.

After we met with Sudan's prime minister and senior officials in February 2020, the **government vowed to cooperate with the ICC to bring al-Bashir and four others to justice**. One of the suspects, former militia leader Ali Kosheib, surrendered in June and faces 50 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Sudanese government is now **investigating violence against protesters** and other past abuses and **implementing rights-respecting reforms**, including abolishing female genital mutilation and easing travel and dress restrictions for women.

# 2020 IN NUMBERS

## OUR ORGANIZATION

**491** staff

**86** nationalities

**33** registered offices worldwide

Staff based in **93** cities

Revenue from **23** countries

**40,000** donors globally

**44%** of funding comes from outside the US

Annual budget of **86 MILLION** US Dollars

**NO** government funding accepted

## OUR WORK

**119** researchers and research assistants

Cover **90** countries

**27 MILLION** website visits

**11 MILLION** social media followers

**6,000** Publications

**350,000** media mentions

in **60** languages across **190** countries

\*Data as of October 2020



# IMPACT

## PROMOTING DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR THE ROHINGYA

For decades, Rohingya Muslims have faced discrimination and repression under successive Myanmar governments. In 2017, a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military forced more than 740,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh for safety.

In a state of perpetual limbo, the Rohingya struggle to survive in makeshift huts against the threat of disease, malnutrition, landslides, cyclones, and Covid-19. The estimated 600,000 Rohingya who remain in Myanmar are subject to apartheid and persecution, restricted in their movement, and cut off from access to adequate food, health care, education, and work.

Yasmin Ullah, a member of the Rohingya community, smiles as she leaves the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands on January 23, 2020, after the court unanimously ordered Myanmar to protect the Rohingya from genocide. © 2020 AP Photo/Peter Dejong

### Leveraging our Global Reach to Pursue Justice for the Rohingya

- When the crisis erupted in 2017, we immediately deployed researchers to the area to collect evidence of atrocity crimes. The testimonies we took, coupled with our satellite images of hundreds of destroyed Rohingya villages, **alerted the world to the scale and gravity** of the abuses.
- Mobilizing our traditional allies and adding rare support from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, we helped to orchestrate global action that led to an **independent UN fact-finding mission** on Myanmar, which found evidence of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and “the hallmarks of genocide.”
- With partners on the ground, we continued to document the situation of the Rohingya, both in Myanmar and Bangladesh. As a protective measure, we helped to spur **targeted sanctions** by the US, EU, and Canada against several Myanmar military commanders, and **an arms embargo** by many Western nations.
- In line with our recommendations, the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 established an independent investigative body **to collect evidence for use in international prosecutions**.

- We worked closely with the Gambian minister of justice who brought a case under the Genocide Convention before **the International Court of Justice to address Myanmar’s atrocities**. Staff across Human Rights Watch leveraged their networks to enlist governments around the world to support the initiative. We also worked with Rohingya survivors to ensure their voices were heard in the courtroom and by the global media.

Our collective efforts took a major step forward in January 2020 when the International Court of Justice **unanimously ordered Myanmar to protect the Rohingya from genocide**. Although the road to justice is long, this landmark ruling brings a glimmer of hope to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya. It may help to deter further atrocities against them.

“Seventeen judges agreed unanimously that we exist. My family are now allowed to feel like they are humans, that there are eyes watching over them.”

Rohingya activist Yasmin Ullah





# IMPACT

## ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN SYRIA

**In the Syrian armed conflict, the Assad government has regularly committed war crimes as a central part of its strategy. More than 12 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes, often after the government’s indiscriminate bombardment and starvation tactics.**

In April 2019, the Syrian government and allied Russian forces launched a bombing campaign of the last region held by the armed opposition—the northwestern province of Idlib. At least 3 million Syrians, half of them displaced from elsewhere in the country, faced relentless air and ground strikes by Syrian-Russian forces who deliberately and indiscriminately attacked schools, hospitals, markets, and residential areas.

An 11-year-old girl teaches other children in a camp outside of Idlib city, northwest Syria, on May 7, 2020. © 2020 Muhammed Said/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

### Playing a Central Role in Ending Attacks on Civilians in Northwest Syria

A major focus of our work on Syria has been to end attacks on civilians in Idlib. Because Syria’s military today cannot fight effectively without Russian air support, our advocacy strategy has been **to bring pressure to bear on Russia.**

- We **meticulously documented indiscriminate attacks by Syrian-Russian forces** on civilians and civilian infrastructure. We also exposed how Syrian forces—with Russian backing—used banned weapons, such as chemical weapons of chlorine and sarin. We showed the Syrian-Russian forces’ callous disregard for civilian life.
- We **ensured that our reporting on war crimes in Idlib reached those with the power to make a difference.** We met with high-level European officials, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, to urge them to make clear that better EU-Russia relations will not happen until attacks on civilians in Idlib stop. They did so in a telephone conversation in February 2020 with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

- We **urged senior officials in Turkey to open the border for Syrians fleeing from Idlib.** In parallel, Turkey began busing Syrian refugees to the Greek border, alerting European governments to the possibility of a refugee influx if they did not press Russia to end the slaughter.

Combined, these efforts helped intensify pressure on Russia to stop bombing civilians in Idlib. The pressure led to **a ceasefire that began in March 2020 and has largely held to this day.** For many months—and we hope permanently—some 3 million Syrian civilians have slept in homes, shopped in markets, and attended schools without fear of being bombed.



# Addressing Today's **URGENT CHALLENGES**

The Covid-19 pandemic has altered life as we know it. Around the world, societies and economies have ground to a halt. Our healthcare systems are stretched to the brink, and many are losing friends and loved ones before their time.

The coronavirus does not discriminate, but its consequences do. The crisis disproportionately affects historically marginalized communities, who are less likely to be able to protect themselves and more likely to suffer the economic fallout.

The crisis has also shown the true color of many governments. Their first priority should be to meet the needs of their people, particularly those at added risk. Yet some leaders endanger lives by silencing critics and dismissing public health expertise. Others exploit public fear to expand their power or to push through divisive policies.

Against this backdrop, the pandemic also presents a momentous opportunity to work towards a more just and equitable world. As with other historic upheavals, it provides a chance to take bold, transformative steps toward a fairer social contract between governments and their people.

Children in Santa Marta, a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, watch as a volunteer disinfects public areas during the Covid-19 pandemic on April 20, 2020. © 2020 Mauro Pimental/AFP via Getty Images



**We strive for a world where nobody is left behind because of who they are, a world where governments serve the needs of their people rather than themselves.**

A woman poses with a protective facemask reading "I can't breathe" during a demonstration against racism and police brutality in Bordeaux, France on June 9, 2020. © 2020 NICOLAS TUCAT/AFP via Getty Images

## **Building the Future We Want to See**

Many facets of the Covid-19 pandemic may be beyond our control, but our future is not. We must act decisively now to create the world we want to see.


Working with a global network of activists and partners, Human Rights Watch will seize the moment to help build a more just and equitable post-pandemic world. We will:

- **Work toward a new era of equality and inclusion.** The pandemic presents an opportunity to address the inequalities the virus has laid bare. Building on the growing recognition that we are only as safe as our most vulnerable neighbors, we will focus on ensuring access to health care for all, while addressing the barriers—whether poverty, racism, or other exclusionary practices—that stand in the way.
- **Promote the imperative of accountable government.** In challenging times, governments that serve foremost themselves endanger their people. We will push back, pressing governments to permit the free flow of information that is needed to hold governments accountable to their people.

**Human Rights Watch was built for moments like this.** Our global reach—grounded in rigorous research and advocacy, a powerful megaphone in traditional and social media, and access to the halls of power—enables us to catalyze real momentum for change.

Since March, we have produced more than **400 news publications and media products** on governments' responses to Covid-19 and its complex human rights implications. Our investigations and reports drew **a record number of visits to our website**—some 60 percent more than ever before.

Our ability to generate pressure for change has yielded results. We helped to ensure that EU governments and tech companies respect rights in the development and use of digital contact-tracing apps, to push the Australian government to revise its far-reaching ban on nursing home visitors, and to spur prisoner releases in Brazil, Chile, South Sudan, and other countries. **Worldwide, we helped to protect the rights, health, and lives of millions of people.**

A group of people are protesting in a city street. In the foreground, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark jacket and a red and white scarf, is shouting with her mouth open and her right fist raised. To her right, another woman with long brown hair, wearing a red sweater and a white scarf, is also shouting and holding a Lebanese flag high in her right hand. Other people are visible in the background, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The background shows tall apartment buildings and a cloudy sky.

“I want to be treated as a human being, whether I’m a refugee, whether I’m transgender, whether I’m a Lebanese citizen.”

**Maya**

A trans woman refugee in Beirut on taking part in protests to reclaim LGBT rights during Lebanon’s revolution.

Maya (right) marching with protesters in Beirut, Lebanon on January 11, 2020. © 2020 Amanda Bailly for Human Rights Watch

# THANK YOU



Migrant children from the Moria camp in Lesbos island play after their arrival at the port of Piraeus on May 4, 2020 in Athens, Greece. © 2020 Milos Bicanski/Getty Images

In 2020, we faced extraordinary challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic affected all of us and placed immense strain on our healthcare systems, economies, and social structures. The pandemic also showed us how interconnected we are. We witnessed countless acts of kindness, solidarity, and support to get through these difficult times together.

That spirit of unity and hope presents a unique opportunity for humanity to band together and call for rights-respecting change. As we chart a course to a post-pandemic era, Human Rights Watch will continue working alongside partners to uphold freedoms, promote democratic values, and defend the protections that ensure dignity, equality, and justice for all.

The generous partnership of our close community of supporters, listed in the following pages, has never been more important. Human Rights Watch does not accept government funding. Our independence and impact result directly from people who share our commitment to a better future.

**Thank you for being a part of our movement.**



*Michele Alexander*

**Michele Alexander**

Deputy Executive Director  
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**New Council Presences Seoul**

**Judy Kwon**, Director

\* In memoriam

# Introducing our new Chief Programs Officer Tirana Hassan



We are thrilled to welcome Tirana Hassan as our Chief Programs Officer to lead the organization’s work in over 90 countries. Tirana, who previously worked at Human Rights Watch as a senior emergencies researcher, joins us from her most recent role as director of Amnesty International’s Crisis Response Program. She started her career as a social worker for young people at-risk of homelessness, went on to co-found an organization providing legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers, and worked for several humanitarian organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières, UNICEF, and Save the Children.

In her new role, Tirana oversees Human Rights Watch’s research, advocacy, media, and legal work. She is responsible for driving programmatic strategy, maximizing collaboration, fostering the safety and resilience of staff, and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion across the organization.

“Human rights provide the foundation—and the solutions—to address the biggest issues of our time, from racism, populism, and climate change to conflict, poverty, and inequality. I am excited to help lead Human Rights Watch as we work towards a safe and just world where everyone lives in dignity.”

**Tirana Hassan, Chief Programs Officer**

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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the fiscal year ended 30 June 2020

	USD			UNAUDITED		
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTALS 2020FY	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTALS 2020 FY
<b>PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>						
<b>Public Support</b>						
Contributions and grants	12,522,825	48,346,831	60,869,656	11,256,223	43,456,864	54,713,087
Contributed Services and Properties revenue	992,205	—	992,205	891,850	—	891,850
Special events	15,697,894	—	15,697,894	14,110,154	—	14,110,154
Less: direct cost of special events	(2,113,315)	—	(2,113,315)	(1,899,567)	—	(1,899,567)
<b>Total Public Support</b>	<b>27,099,609</b>	<b>48,346,831</b>	<b>75,446,440</b>	<b>24,358,660</b>	<b>43,456,864</b>	<b>67,815,524</b>
<b>Revenue</b>						
Net investment income (loss)	1,071,030	(780,983)	290,047	962,702	(701,992)	260,711
Publications	17,465	—	17,465	15,699	—	15,699
Change in value of beneficial interest in split-interest agreements	17,697	—	17,697	—	—	—
Other	223,943	—	223,943	201,293	—	201,293
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,330,135</b>	<b>(780,983)</b>	<b>549,152</b>	<b>1,195,601</b>	<b>(701,992)</b>	<b>493,609</b>
Net assets released from restrictions	63,897,497	(63,897,497)	0	57,434,681	(57,434,681)	—
<b>Total Public Support and Revenue</b>	<b>92,327,241</b>	<b>(16,331,649)</b>	<b>75,995,592</b>	<b>82,988,942</b>	<b>(14,679,809)</b>	<b>68,309,133</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
<b>Program Services</b>						
Africa	7,379,745	—	7,379,745	6,633,332	—	6,633,332
Americas	2,924,025	—	2,924,025	2,628,279	—	2,628,279
Asia	7,377,230	—	7,377,230	6,631,071	—	6,631,071
Europe and Central Asia	5,617,845	—	5,617,845	5,049,637	—	5,049,637
Middle East and North Africa	5,902,195	—	5,902,195	5,305,226	—	5,305,226
United States	3,025,492	—	3,025,492	2,719,483	—	2,719,483
Children's Rights	3,423,956	—	3,423,956	3,077,645	—	3,077,645
Disability Rights	3,110,049	—	3,110,049	2,795,488	—	2,795,488
LGBT's Rights	1,926,927	—	1,926,927	1,732,031	—	1,732,031
Women's Rights	3,234,544	—	3,234,544	2,907,391	—	2,907,391
Other Programs	19,309,123	—	19,309,123	17,356,131	—	17,356,131
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>63,231,131</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>63,231,131</b>	<b>56,835,714</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>56,835,714</b>
<b>Supporting Services</b>						
Management and general	9,285,543	—	9,285,543	8,346,371	—	8,346,371
Fundraising	16,519,715	—	16,519,715	14,848,853	—	14,848,853
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>25,805,258</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>25,805,258</b>	<b>23,195,224</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>23,195,224</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>89,036,389</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>89,036,389</b>	<b>80,030,938</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>80,030,938</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets before foreign currency translation (loss) gain</b>	<b>3,290,852</b>	<b>(16,331,649)</b>	<b>(13,040,797)</b>	<b>2,958,004</b>	<b>(14,679,809)</b>	<b>(11,721,805)</b>
Cummulative Translation Adjustment	(272,934)	(111,522)	(384,456)	(245,329)	(100,242)	(345,571)
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>3,017,918</b>	<b>(16,443,171)</b>	<b>(13,425,253)</b>	<b>2,712,675</b>	<b>(14,780,051)</b>	<b>(12,067,376)</b>
<b>Net Assets:</b>						
Beginning of Year	19,931,799	199,016,335	218,948,134	17,915,827	178,887,129	196,802,956
End of Year	22,949,717	182,573,164	205,522,881	20,628,503	164,107,078	184,735,580

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the fiscal year ended 30 June 2020

	USD	EUR (0.89)
<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2020 FY</b>	<b>2020 FY</b>
Cash and cash equivalents	44,668,603	39,814,798
Investments	144,849,654	129,109,919
Contributions receivable, net	15,929,749	14,198,782
Prepaid expenses and other assets	2,927,668	2,609,540
Fixed assets, net	8,379,469	7,468,934
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>216,755,143</b>	<b>193,201,973</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	7,588,774	6,764,158
Deferred rent	3,643,488	3,247,577
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>11,232,262</b>	<b>10,011,736</b>
Commitments and contingencies		
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions	22,949,717	20,455,942
With Donor Restrictions	182,573,164	162,734,296
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>205,522,881</b>	<b>183,190,238</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>216,755,143</b>	<b>193,201,973</b>

A complete version of the Human Rights Watch financial statements for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2020 is available at: [HRW.org/financials](https://www.hrw.org/financials)

\*Financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2020 were translated to Euros using a blended rate derived by Human Rights Watch. This method is not in accordance with US GAAP and has not been audited.

**Cover Photo:**

Kai Ayden, age 7, marches in a protest against police brutality in Atlanta, Georgia on May 31, 2020 following the death of George Floyd in police custody. © 2020 Elijah Nouvelage/Getty Images

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Human Rights Watch Annual Report 2020 is inclusive of the organization's work and reflective of its supporters from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

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