



HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH



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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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A protester released from prison after three weeks of detention makes a three-finger (pro-democracy) sign as she reunites with her mother in Yangon, Myanmar. © 2021 The New York Times/Redux Images

DEAR FRIENDS,

From the beginning, the Covid-19 pandemic was more than a public health crisis. It was also a human rights crisis. Authoritarian leaders used it as a pretext to crush dissent. A favorite target were healthcare workers who challenged the official story about the pandemic, and censoring them invariably made the health crisis worse. The repression also complicated efforts to address parallel problems, whether climate change, abuses during armed conflict, or the poverty and inequality that the pandemic so glaringly spotlighted.

While mostly on pandemic lockdown in home offices from Nairobi to São Paulo, our staff forged creative ways to continue their work and defend people's rights. With our partners, we generated intense economic pressure on Myanmar's junta, exposed atrocities in Ethiopia, and identified hundreds in need of evacuation from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. We also raised pressure on Brazil to stop burning the Amazon and helped to advance the cause of justice, whether in the case of a Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army commander convicted of war crimes at the International Criminal Court or a Syrian agent convicted of state-sponsored torture in a German court.

The ability of our staff to secure change starts with your partnership. In the pages that follow, you can learn more about the headway we are making in confronting today's challenges. Together, we are opening pathways for people to assert and defend their basic human rights.

Thank you for supporting our cause.

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Kenneth Roth
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IN CONVERSATION

Senior Indonesia Researcher **Andreas Harsono** and Australia Director **Elaine Pearson**

The Indonesian Army in July ended the abusive practice of “virginity testing” of female recruits, following years of research and advocacy by Human Rights Watch and others.

Andreas: Elaine and I were at a Chinese restaurant in Jakarta in 2014, asking three young Indonesian women about their experiences being forced to wear a hijab in state schools.

Elaine: We asked about their worst experience, expecting a response related to hijabs. But one of the women shared her story of the shame and pain of so-called virginity testing, required to enter the police force.

Andreas: I vividly remember seeing the shock on Elaine’s face. I had heard rumors about these police tests, but the media never covered it, and women never spoke about it openly.

Elaine: Andreas went on to interview more women about the issue and released a report and video that ignited an outcry from Indonesian women’s rights groups.

Andreas: I met with 15 police commanders in January 2015. They justified the practice saying if they could perform the test on men, they would! But eventually they listened to our concerns and, later that year, the National Police chief ended the practice.

Elaine: The Army took longer. Andreas worked on the issue for years, report after report. That’s what makes Human Rights Watch so great: We don’t give up!

Andreas: Our key allies were military doctors who couldn’t publicly oppose the practice but passed us documents; Army officers’ daughters who raised awareness on social media; and the National Commission on Women’s Rights, which used our research to press for action.

Elaine: Our added value was bringing international pressure. We created a powerful video featuring brave women, generated heaps of media attention, and tirelessly advocated with players including the militaries of 16 countries.

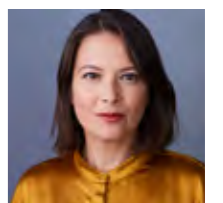
Andreas: The ban imposed this year shows that building coalitions and sticking with an issue really pays off.

Above: Members of the Indonesian Air Force march during celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the Air Force in Jakarta, Indonesia. © 2016 Reuters/Beawiharta

Left: People demonstrate for equal rights and an end to violence against women in Jakarta, Indonesia. © 2018 Bay Ismoyo/AFP via Getty Images



Andreas Harsono
Senior Indonesia Researcher
[@andreasharsono](#)



Elaine Pearson
Australia Director
[@PearsonElaine](#)

OUR APPROACH

INVESTIGATE — EXPOSE — CHANGE

Our Approach in Action: Victory for Children's Rights in Greece

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

INVESTIGATE

For years, we have conducted rigorous and independent investigations of human rights abuses against migrants in Greece, including tens of thousands of children arriving without a parent or guardian. Speaking with migrant children, as well as officials, aid workers, experts, and others, we meticulously documented the **arbitrary and prolonged detention of asylum-seeking children** in dirty, crowded police cells, often with unrelated adults.

A child watches through a fence as Greek police officers stand guard at a refugee camp in Greece. © 2016 Reuters/Marko Djurica

EXPOSE

We published our first report on the consequences of the “protective custody” regime—as the practice was called in Greece—in 2008. We followed up with **2 reports, 17 dispatches, 16 news releases, 13 commentaries, 4 multimedia pieces**, and **several letters to officials** calling for children to be in safe, kid-friendly housing with the freedom to learn, play, and thrive. To generate momentum for change, we launched a **#FreeTheKids campaign** and reached out to global media outlets—which cite our work nearly **1,000 times a day**—as well as to **12 million social media followers**.

Human Rights Watch produced graphics for its #FreeTheKids digital campaign. © 2020 Human Rights Watch



CHANGE

We partnered with local groups and engaged in strategic advocacy with Greek and European Union officials. We urged Greek authorities to implement short-term alternatives to detention, called on the Greek prime minister to release the nearly 300 children behind bars, and advocated for an end to the “protective custody” law. Through our **campaign**, we mobilized the public to call for change. In response, Greece **ended the practice** of detaining unaccompanied migrant children in jail cells and gradually **released all kids** from custody—a **huge victory for the affected children and for children’s rights**.

Child refugees previously in Greece sit aboard a bus at Hanover airport in Germany. © 2020 Hauke-Christian Dittrich/picture alliance via Getty Images

“ Some talk about desperate people. What I see are desperate reasons, desperate situations, desperate risks, and extraordinarily courageous and resilient people.”

Judith Sunderland

Associate Director, Europe and Central Asia Division, on refugee and migrant communities @sunderland_jude

Families flee their homes in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, as the Taliban take over provincial capitals, towns, and trade routes. © 2021 Paula Bronstein via Getty Images



2021 IN NUMBERS

OUR ORGANIZATION

510 staff

89 nationalities

33 registered offices worldwide

Staff based in **105** cities

Revenue from **22** countries

44,000 donors globally

Annual budget of **97 MILLION** US dollars

NO government funding accepted

OUR WORK

Research covering **100** countries

6,000 publications

32 MILLION website visits

12 MILLION social media followers

300,000 media mentions

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

*Data as of October 2021



IMPACT

PROTECTING THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON AND ITS DEFENDERS

When the burning rainforests of Brazil captured the world's attention in 2019, international media reported that the Amazon was headed toward a tipping point where it would release vast amounts of the greenhouse gases it stores, with dire consequences for efforts to curb climate change.

Cláudio José da Silva stands on the bank of Brazil's Pindaré River. As a member of the "Forest Guardians" of Caru Indigenous Territory, Maranhão State, he patrols the land to detect illegal logging and report it to authorities.
© 2018 Brent Stirton/Getty Images for Human Rights Watch



Eýy Cy, a Pyhcop Catijj village chief, serves as one of Governador Indigenous Territory's Forest Guardians, in Brazil's Maranhão State. © 2018 Brent Stirton/Getty Images for Human Rights Watch



Jaciane Guajajara is still awaiting justice in the 2007 killing of her father, Tomé, by loggers who invaded their village to recover a truck seized by Indigenous people seeking to stop illegal logging in Araribóia Indigenous territory, in Brazil's Maranhão State. © 2018 Brent Stirton/Getty Images for Human Rights Watch

Generating Global Pressure on Brazil

- Our fact-finding, using testimony taken on the ground and satellite imagery from the sky, helped to refute Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's claim that the fires were set by small-scale farmers. Rather, **we showed that the deforestation was largely the work of big criminal networks** and that the government was failing to intervene, effectively giving them a green light.
 - Our advocates in Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Washington, and other major capitals used this data, and the stories of forest defenders, in an **extensive campaign** to generate international pressure on the Brazilian government.
 - Knowing that Brazil sought a trade deal with the European Union, we persuaded European officials to condition support for the deal on Brazil reducing deforestation. **The deal is now stalled until Brazil demonstrates more progress.**
 - By providing vivid evidence of President Bolsonaro's destructive Amazon policies, we **blocked Brazil's attempt to join the environmental committee** of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
 - After **European officials used our findings to challenge** the Bolsonaro administration for effectively suspending the collection of fines for illegal deforestation, the government restored the fines. It also announced plans to expand the country's environmental enforcement agency significantly.
- Much remains to be done to reverse the damage wrought by President Bolsonaro's disastrous environmental policies. But the international pressure that we helped generate is making a difference.**



IMPACT

SECURING JUSTICE FOR THE WORST CRIMES

Human Rights Watch champions access to justice for victims of the worst crimes—genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. We helped establish the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 and keep working to improve its performance. Where the ICC lacks jurisdiction, we seek other avenues to justice, including through universal jurisdiction—which allows prosecution of grave crimes in national courts, regardless of where a crime occurred. We saw significant progress in 2021.

Olivier, 16, was abducted by members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 2009 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. © 2010 Marcus Bleasdale for Human Rights Watch



Boniface, 14, was abducted by the LRA and forced to remain with them for six months until he escaped during an attack by the Ugandan army. ©2010 Marcus Bleasdale for Human Rights Watch



Yoris was shot by the LRA in 2010, as he cycled home from a market in the Democratic Republic of Congo. © 2010 Marcus Bleasdale for Human Rights Watch

Justice Through the International Criminal Court

- For some 15 years, we documented atrocities in the armed conflict between the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government, and campaigned for justice. In a historic judgment in February, the ICC **convicted a senior LRA commander** of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- We have extensively documented serious crimes committed in Palestine, by both the Israeli government and Hamas authorities, and urged ICC action. In March, the ICC prosecutor **announced an investigation**, bringing Israeli and Palestinian victims an important step closer to the justice that has long eluded them.
- With partners, we campaigned for an end to punitive sanctions that former US President Donald Trump imposed on the ICC prosecutor in response to investigations in Afghanistan and Palestine that could implicate US and Israeli nationals. The sanctions threatened the independence of the ICC and sought to deprive victims of grave crimes of access to justice. In April, President Biden **lifted the sanctions**.

Justice Through Universal Jurisdiction

- Partnering with survivors, refugees, and activists, we helped build momentum for the first trial involving state-sponsored torture by Syrian authorities—long a focus of our research. The trial occurred in a German court under the principle of universal jurisdiction. In February, the court **issued a landmark verdict convicting a Syrian official** of aiding and abetting crimes against humanity.
- We played a central role in documenting atrocities during Liberia's civil wars and urged Swiss officials to use the principle of universal jurisdiction. In June, a Swiss court **found a perpetrator of atrocities in Liberia guilty of war crimes**.

Progress toward justice is rarely quick. These important steps were made possible by our sustained research and advocacy, often in partnership with others.



Addressing Today's **URGENT CHALLENGES**

The world has not stood still for the Covid-19 pandemic. Armed conflicts, humanitarian disasters, and severe repression continue to threaten people's rights. Even as the pandemic complicates on-the-ground investigations, we persist, developing new methods to uncover the truth and deploying our findings where they can make a difference.

FORGING A RIGHTS-RESPECTING WORLD

Human Rights Watch was built for moments like this. Our decades of experience working in some 100 countries gives us a depth of knowledge and an established network of local activists that enable us to inform policymakers and journalists worldwide. When security threats, border closures, or the pandemic make physical access difficult, we still find ways to collect and deploy the facts.

When we cannot directly influence rights violators, we enlist sympathetic governments and institutions to exert pressure to curb atrocities and prevent new ones. To extend a lifeline to those in need, we encourage a strong humanitarian response from the United Nations and donor governments. To deprive rights-violating leaders of legitimacy before their people and the world, we publicize

their abuses and urge condemnations. We also call on governments to impose targeted sanctions on rights-abusers and to withhold the tools of repression by refusing arms sales and military aid. To bolster our research findings and collect evidence for future prosecutions, we persuade governments and the UN to launch formal investigations.

For example:

- The conflict in the **Tigray** region of Ethiopia triggered one of the world's most dire humanitarian crises. We documented a range of human rights violations, including the Ethiopian government's obstruction of aid, that put millions at risk of famine. With access to embattled areas impossible, we interviewed witnesses to abuses who had fled to Sudan and spoke with aid workers and others in Ethiopia over secure channels. Using social-media videos and satellite imagery, we verified their accounts of atrocities and urged immediate action.
- Since a military coup ended **Myanmar's** decade-long experiment in democratic rule, the junta has brutally cracked down on widespread protests, killing more than 1,300 people. We worked with local partners to develop ways to squeeze generals and military-backed companies financially—then helped persuade the United Kingdom, the United States, and governments in the European Union to impose targeted sanctions.
- After a 20-year conflict, the Taliban took over Kabul and the rest of **Afghanistan**. Once in power, they swiftly reimposed nationwide restrictions on women, journalists, and activists. With others, we worked behind the scenes to identify, for immediate evacuation, people most at risk of arrest or execution. We used our networks in Afghanistan to report on Taliban abuses and engaged governments to find ways to avoid a humanitarian crisis.

These tactics are never 100 percent effective. But through careful fact-finding and strategic advocacy, a small group of people can raise the cost of repression and ameliorate suffering around the globe.



Women and children fleeing conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region arrive at the border with Sudan. © 2020 Associated Press

THANK YOU

Your partnership allowed us to remain a voice of reason and a force for progress against the massive challenges of 2021. Because of the pandemic, it was difficult to meet face to face to interview survivors of rights abuses or advocate with those in power. But we met online, worked the phone, used innovative research tools—satellite data, drone imagery, and open-source material—and kept making a difference.

By promoting human rights in a time of crisis, we are building toward a more equitable recovery from the pandemic and more effective solutions to the problems of poverty, authoritarianism, violence against civilians, and environmental decline. Alongside our civil society partners, we are advancing the fundamental values of equality, dignity, and justice for all.

Human Rights Watch accepts no government funding. To conduct our work, we rely entirely on our dedicated community of supporters, listed in the following pages.

Thank you for being a part of our movement.



Michele Alexander

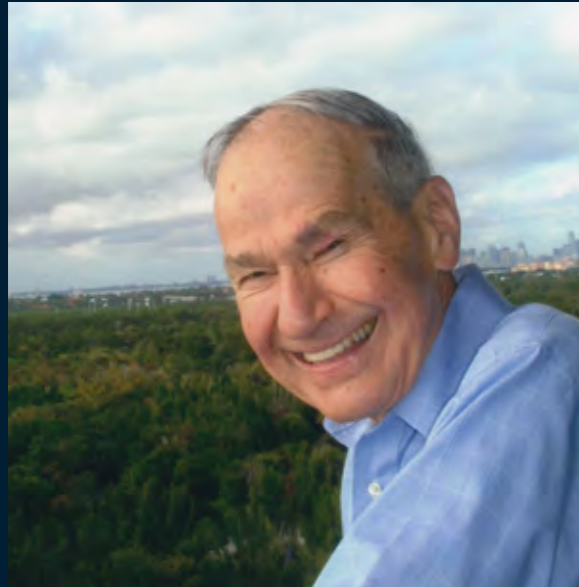
Michele Alexander
Chief Development Officer



Young Somali women consult a smartphone at the Dadaab refugee complex in Kenya. © 2018 Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP via Getty Images

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened by the passing of four long-serving board members whose friendship and guidance we will always cherish.



Michael E. Gellert
(1931-2021)

Supported Human Rights Watch for decades, informed by his experience as a refugee from Czechoslovakia. His generosity bolstered our work on Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as our communications and multimedia capacity. We will remember Michael for his wit, commitment, and ever-present smile.



Vartan Gregorian
(1934-2021)

Beyond leading academic institutions and resurrecting the New York Public Library, helped to steer the development of Human Rights Watch. In various roles, he buoyed us with his creativity, intellectual vibrancy, and energy—indeed, exuberance.



Joan R. Platt
(1945-2020)

Supported Human Rights Watch for years, in many roles. Generous, fearless, and thoughtful, Joan helped to build and guide our US Program and was a passionate advocate for the rights of women and children.



Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber
(1937-2020)

Was a key force behind our globalization efforts. He played a central role in opening our Paris office and launching and leading our Paris Committee. As an accomplished writer, Jean-Louis drove a reshaping of our communication methods, especially in the Francophone world. His intellectual leadership and passion for the mission were contagious.

Photo: © Patrice Normand/Leextra

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* In memoriam

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* For a complete listing of all living and deceased members of our Legacies for Justice Society, please visit HRW.org/legaciesforjustice.

As of June 30, 2021

DRIVING GLOBAL CHANGE

I joined Human Rights Watch in early 2021 and am excited to work for this amazing organization. To ensure that Human Rights Watch can meet today's urgent challenges and drive global change, we must prioritize operational excellence, a robust organizational infrastructure, and staff resilience and wellbeing. We are eager to build on the organization's achievements.

In the past year, we focused on critical issues of risk management and compliance; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and working during a pandemic in support of our mission. We created our first-ever senior-level DEI position and added capacity to key operational functions. Recognizing the need to do our part to reduce climate change, we are considering how we can operate more sustainably. We are also assessing our investments in technology to better support our operations, knowledge-sharing, and physical and cyber security.

Staff resilience and wellbeing is key to our success. We provided support to help staff manage the challenges of the pandemic and are now looking strategically at how we will work in the future. We created space for conversations and learning about race, privilege, and power, and how they play out in the world and in the organization. We plan to keep investing in hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse, highly qualified team.

I am deeply inspired by the passion and commitment of our colleagues, partners, and supporters around the world who are working together to ensure justice and equality for everyone, everywhere. Thank you for your dedication to the human rights cause.



Wisla C. Heneghan

Wisla Heneghan
Chief Operating Officer
[@wislaheneghan](#)



Dewa Mavhinga interviews youth in Zimbabwe after security forces used excessive lethal force to crush nationwide protests. © 2019 Human Rights Watch

This annual report is dedicated to the memory of our beloved colleague Dewa Mavhinga.

Human Rights Watch's Southern Africa director, Dewa Mavhinga, passed away on December 4, 2021. Dewa was a respected researcher, a fearless advocate, and an indefatigable human rights champion known for his unwavering dedication and deep expertise, but above all for his warmth, generosity, and unflinching kindness.

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As of November 2021

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the fiscal year ended 30 June 2021

	USD			UNAUDITED		
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTALS 2021FY	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTALS 2021 FY
PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE						
Public Support						
Contributions and grants	32,581,599	50,224,234	82,805,833	27,451,022	42,315,497	69,766,519
Contributed Services and Properties revenue	3,321,546	148,241	3,469,787	2,798,507	124,898	2,923,405
Special events	5,635,857	—	5,635,857	4,748,387	—	4,748,387
Less: direct cost of special events	(672,125)	—	(672,125)	(566,286)	—	(566,286)
Total Public Support	40,866,877	50,372,475	91,239,352	34,431,629	42,440,394	76,872,024
Revenue						
Net investment income (loss)	4,093,917	33,859,487	37,953,404	3,449,254	28,527,683	31,976,937
Publications	7,511	164	7,675	6,328	138	6,466
Change in value of beneficial interest in split-interest agreements	26,722	—	26,722	—	—	—
Other	425,490	—	425,490	358,489	—	201,293
Total Revenue	4,533,640	33,859,651	38,413,291	3,836,585	28,527,821	493,609
Net assets released from restrictions	50,622,831	(50,622,831)	0	42,651,327	(42,651,327)	—
Total Public Support and Revenue	96,043,348	33,609,295	129,652,643	80,919,541	28,316,888	109,236,429
EXPENSES						
Program Services						
Africa	7,859,596	—	7,859,596	6,621,957	—	6,621,957
Americas	2,807,396	—	2,807,396	2,365,319	—	2,365,319
Asia	7,710,675	—	7,710,675	6,496,486	—	6,496,486
Europe and Central Asia	5,548,426	—	5,548,426	4,674,723	—	4,674,723
Middle East and North Africa	5,215,318	—	5,215,318	4,394,069	—	4,394,069
United States	2,889,748	—	2,889,748	2,434,704	—	2,434,704
Children's Rights	3,632,213	—	3,632,213	3,060,254	—	3,060,254
Women's Rights	3,190,977	—	3,190,977	2,688,498	—	2,688,498
Disability Rights	2,638,243	—	2,638,243	2,222,803	—	2,222,803
LGBT's Rights	1,989,871	—	1,989,871	1,676,529	—	1,676,529
Other programs	20,230,143	—	20,230,143	17,044,532	—	17,044,532
	63,712,606	—	63,712,606	53,679,874	—	53,679,874
Supporting Services						
Management and general	10,561,606	—	10,561,606	8,898,485	—	8,898,485
Fundraising	16,948,239	—	16,948,239	14,279,424	—	14,279,424
Total Supporting Services	27,509,845	—	27,509,845	23,177,910	—	23,177,910
Total Expenses	91,222,451	—	91,222,451	76,857,784	—	76,857,784
Change in Net Assets before foreign currency translation (loss) gain	4,820,897	33,609,295	38,430,192	4,061,757	28,316,888	32,378,645
Cummulative Translation Adjustment	463,127	1,800,535	2,263,662	390,199	1,517,007	1,907,206
Change in Net Assets	5,284,024	35,409,830	40,693,854	4,451,956	29,833,895	34,285,852
Net Assets:						
Beginning of Year	22,949,717	182,573,164	205,522,881	19,335,858	153,823,633	173,159,491
End of Year	28,233,741	217,982,994	246,216,735	23,787,815	183,657,528	207,445,343

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the fiscal year ended 30 June 2021

	USD	EUR (1.19)
ASSETS	2021 FY	2021 FY
Cash and cash equivalents	38,327,353	32,192,079
Investments	189,446,174	159,120,464
Contributions receivable, net	18,020,488	15,135,848
Prepaid expenses and other assets	3,601,894	3,025,319
Fixed assets, net	7,209,018	6,055,030
Total Assets	256,604,927	215,528,740
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	6,997,105	5,877,039
Deferred rent	3,391,087	2,848,257
Total Liabilities	10,388,192	8,725,296
Commitments and contingencies		
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	28,233,741	23,714,208
With Donor Restrictions	217,982,994	183,089,236
Total Net Assets	246,216,735	206,803,444
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	256,604,927	215,528,740

A complete version of the Human Rights Watch financial statements for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2021 is available at: [HRW.org/financials](https://www.hrw.org/financials)

*Financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2021 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.

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 (front, top left) Two women hold hands during the Rainbow Pride parade in Tokyo, Japan.
 © 2019 Alessandro Di Ciommo/NurPhoto via Getty Images
 (back, top left) Fatima, 9, lost her leg in an airstrike in Syria. To continue her education, she has to walk about three kilometers to school each day. © 2020 Muhammed Said/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

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Human Rights Watch Annual Report 2021 is inclusive of the organization's work and reflective of its supporters from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

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