



# '23

ANNUAL REPORT



**CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS** is a politically and religiously independent human rights organisation. For more than 40 years, we have supported and worked with human rights defenders in some of the world's most repressive countries. We operate on four continents, with our headquarters in Stockholm. Through advocacy, litigation, and campaigns, we defend people's civil and political rights.

#### LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, more human rights defenders are killed than anywhere else in the world. Severe human rights violations and declining democracy are forcing many human rights defenders into exile. We work long-term with security training and digital solutions that enable human rights defenders to document violations safely. We also support human rights organisations through holistic security training and international advocacy. The department maintains an office in Bogota, Colombia.

#### EUROPE

Even though many countries in Europe protect human rights on paper, they often fall short in practice. In many places, populism and discrimination against minority groups are on the rise while the respect for human rights is in decline, bringing widespread challenges to the region's democratisation. In collaboration with human rights defenders, we focus on advancing Roma rights and LGBTI+ rights, freedom of expression, accountability, and advocacy. We have field offices in several countries and work in Brussels to ensure that human rights are high on the EU's agenda.

#### SWEDEN

While Sweden has come a long way in regard to human rights, there are still serious shortcomings. The country has gained a reputation for being a vocal defender of human rights internationally yet fails to address serious human rights violations at home. Among other things, Civil Rights Defenders works to combat discrimination, racism, and hate crimes and to strengthen the rights of migrants and rights of the indigenous Sámi people. Through legal action, advocacy efforts, and raising issues at a political level, we hold those in power accountable.

#### MENA

Throughout the region, civil and political rights are severely repressed. Human rights defenders are subjected to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, discrimination, and other human rights violations. In the Middle East and North Africa, we collaborate with human rights defenders to monitor and report on the human rights situation in several countries. We support regional networks, initiatives, and projects working with three major themes: justice and the rule of law, discrimination, and freedom of expression.

#### AFRICA

The East African countries we work in struggle with recurrent conflict and entrenched authoritarian governance. People in power mostly act with impunity while fundamental rights are routinely violated by state and non-state actors. Civil Rights Defenders supports the new generation of human rights defenders who promote human rights despite a conflict-ridden and repressive environment. We partner with established organisations and emerging grassroots groups to enhance their safety and the impact of their work.

# 1,351

In 2023, 1,351 human rights defenders in 39 of the world's most repressive countries received support through Civil Rights Defenders' Emergency Fund.

# 200

Since its launch in 2013, more than 200 human rights defenders have participated in the Natalia Project – the world's first GPS-based alarm system for human rights defenders at risk.

# 300

Civil Rights Defenders works with more than 300 human rights organisations across the world.

### EURASIA

A lack of respect for human rights is pervasive throughout Eurasia. Critics of regimes and dissidents are imprisoned on political grounds, and freedom of expression is severely restricted. New repressive laws are regularly adopted, making it increasingly difficult for human rights defenders to carry out their work. The situation in Ukraine is particularly difficult due to the war. Since the organisation was founded 40 years ago, we have worked to empower human rights defenders and to monitor developments in the region.

### ASIA

The state of democracy and human rights is deteriorating in many parts of Asia. In countries across the region, repressive legislation is used to silence critical voices and prevent the work of civil society organisations. People are increasingly prevented from organising and advocating for their civil and political rights. We ensure that human rights defenders who defy the risks and fight back receive support, including increasing their capacity to sustainably continue their work and emergency support when danger arises.

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Printed by Åtta.45, Stockholm 2024  
Copyright © 2024 Civil Rights Defenders  
Translation: Ordee OÜ  
Graphic design: Petra Handin/Poppi Design  
Cover photo: Phyllis Omido, human rights defender and Natalia Project participant, Kenya.  
Photo: David Lagerlöf pp. 4, 10, 11  
Unsplash pp. 6, 9, 13  
TIZIANA FABI/Getty Images pp. 14–15  
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# 50

Civil Rights Defenders supports human rights defenders in more than 50 countries and has a local presence in 11 countries.

# 91%

In 2023, 91 per cent of Civil Rights Defenders' income went to special purpose expenses.

# DEFENDING CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN A TURBULENT WORLD

In 2023, the global decline of democracy, rule of law, and human rights continued and, in many places, accelerated. At the same time, the world has witnessed a disconcerting proliferation and escalation of global, regional, and local crises. Conflicts, the climate and other environmental crises, involuntary large-scale migration, energy and food insecurity, increases in the cost-of-living, and a rise in populist leaders purporting to have simple answers to complex problems create a daunting global picture.

These are not discrete developments. They are deeply intertwined. At their core, they are connected to the acts and influence of autocracies and the erosion of democracies and respect for human rights. In particular, a lack of respect for civil and political rights weakens citizens' ability to determine their own future and impacts the capacity of communities to respond to crises and effect change at every level.

According to the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg, 71% of the world's population now live in autocracies, a dramatic increase from 48% just 10 years ago. Freedom of expression, clean elections, and freedom of association continue to deteriorate in more countries than improve. More than 40 countries are undergoing autocratisation, meaning that they are moving away from democracy, regardless of starting point. Even long-established democracies are not immune.

At Civil Rights Defenders, we are resolute in our belief that it is possible to stop and reverse the global

decline of democracy and human rights. Building a global human rights movement that is powerful, resilient, with human rights defenders able to actively defend our civil and political rights is key to turning the tide and empowering communities to advocate for justice, equity, and freedom. At the same time, we must work to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law by ensuring that human rights violators are held accountable, and that victims have access to justice.

## **NO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER WILL BE SILENCED IN DARKNESS**

We work together with human rights defenders in more than 50 countries to defend civil and political rights. With our Civil Rights Defenders of the Year Award we also highlight the work of exceptional human rights defenders and in 2023 Foro Penal from Venezuela received the award. With more than 400 lawyers and 6,000 volunteers across the country, Foro Penal is the first line of defence in the battle for human rights in Venezuela by providing help for people who have been imprisoned on arbitrary or political grounds. Thanks to them, thousands of protesters, activists, and opposition politicians have been released.

2023 also marked 10-years since the launch of our Natalia Project. Named after Natalia Estemirova of the Russian human rights organisation Memorial who was abducted and murdered in Chechnya in 2009, the Natalia Project has provided over 200 human rights



defenders from 43 different organisations around the world with the world's first assault alarm and community-based security system specifically dedicated to support human rights defenders. The Natalia Project has had a clear mission from the start: No human rights defender will be silenced in darkness – the world is watching.

Human rights defenders across the world are facing increasing risks and threats as they push back against the decline of democracy and human rights. Yet support for human rights defenders remains chronically underfunded. In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders had to decrease the amount of people we were able to support through our Emergency Fund for human rights defenders by nearly 40% compared to 2022 due to funding cuts. As a result, many human rights defenders in threatening situations did not get support precisely when they needed it the most, highlighting the urgent need for more resources.

### **THE YEAR OF THE BALLOT**

Democracy thrives when its foundations remain strong and resilient for which free and fair elections are essential. This year, 2024, has by some been referred to as “the year of the ballot”, with elections in over 70 different countries including more than half of the world's population. Each and every election is an opportunity for citizens to exercise their voice and break the global trend of democratic decline. But addressing democratic

setbacks requires a collective commitment to democracy and human rights from citizens, civil society, as well as policymakers.

In this annual report for 2023, you will find more detailed information about our work together with human rights defenders worldwide to defend civil and political rights in pursuit of our vision of a world of democratic societies. The commitment we made when we launched our 2023-2030 Strategy remains: We can act to defend democracy, human rights, justice, and the rule of law, or we can stand aside and allow authoritarianism to advance further and further, subjugating ever more people.

This work would not be possible without the contributions from our partners, donors, and many others. We are deeply grateful for your continued partnership and support. Together, we can reverse the global decline of democracy, rule of law, and human rights – the time to act is now.



Hanna Gerdes  
*Chairperson of the Board*



Anders L. Pettersson  
*Executive Director*

## OUR VISION

# A WORLD OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES IN WHICH WE ALL ENJOY OUR CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS.

## CORE VALUES



### COMMITMENT We count on you – you can count on us.

# C

We are dedicated to our vision and mission rooted in universal human rights. Building lasting relationships with brave human rights defenders and supporters of our cause, we are in it for the long-haul. We do not give up and we never give in.

### INTEGRITY We stand our ground.

# I

We are independent, and we resist undue pressure. We get our facts straight, always anchored in first-hand experiences and informed analysis provided by our partners. We uphold high ethical standards and use our position with care.

### TOGETHER We empower each other.

# T

We seek partnerships and collaborations. With mutual understanding and respect for each other, we work in a participatory and inclusive way, guided by a spirit of equality. We are only as strong as our colleagues and partners.

### INNOVATION We find new solutions to old problems.

# I

Our way of working is innovative to the core. We are proactive and bold in exploring new ways to support human rights defenders. With flexibility and creativity, we respond efficiently to emerging needs. Challenges are opportunities to learn, we make every effort to improve and be one step ahead.

# OUR STRATEGY 2023–2030

Democracy and human rights are in decline, and human rights defenders in all parts of the world face an abundance of challenges. In preparation for the development of our strategy for 2023–2030, in 2022, Civil Rights Defenders conducted a future trends analysis of the various contexts in which we operate and where we see the global situation for democracy and human rights heading.

Our key conclusion is that the current decline of democracy and human rights will continue and will likely accelerate. Civil society and human rights defenders around the world will be under increasing pressure: increasing regulatory and legal pressure; increasing discrimination based on the intersection of gender and other identities; increasing violence, imprisonment, and public ostracism; and increasingly innovative methods for repression. Human rights defenders will also contend with changing funding opportunities and a rapidly evolving digital environment.

Stopping and reversing the decline of human rights and democracy globally is possible. But doing so requires that Civil Rights Defenders and our partners around the world become stronger and even more innovative in the years to come. Authoritarianism is contagious, and authoritarian regimes listen and learn from each other, sharing information and tactics. Human rights defenders and democratic forces must do the same by working together to build a global human rights movement that is powerful and resilient.

We have developed our strategy for 2023–2030 to meet these challenges. It is based on input from our global network of partners and builds on our vision, mission, core values, and theory of change. It describes our contribution to strengthening the global movement for democracy and human rights through delivering on our four strategic goals: security, capacity, accountability, and engagement.

## STRATEGIC GOALS



**Human rights defenders are secure.**

**SECURITY**



**Human rights defenders have the capacity to defend human rights and democracy.**

**CAPACITY**



**Duty bearers are held accountable.**

**ACCOUNTABILITY**



**Stakeholders in society take action for human rights and democracy.**

**ENGAGEMENT**



# NEW RISKS – INNOVATIVE SECURITY SOLUTIONS

Being a human rights defender has always been a dangerous job, and it has only gotten more dangerous in recent years. From persecution and harassment to arbitrary arrests and disappearances, defenders on the frontlines face daily threats to their lives and safety. Civil Rights Defenders is dedicated to ensuring that human rights defenders can manage their security effectively and that they always know that we have their back.

We have built up an arsenal of tools to help improve the security of human rights defenders no matter what they face. We provide protection, physical equipment, digital security tools, emergency support, and a comprehensive programme of preventative security training opportunities to ensure our partners have the knowledge and tools they need to improve their physical and

digital security. For example, last year we provided VPNs to 2,188 human rights defenders so they could access internet sites even when blocked by their government. We complement this work with psychosocial support to help our partners deal with the stress that comes with putting your safety at risk every day in the fight for the rights of others.

We provide security support to human rights defenders in all the regions we work in, sometimes by ourselves, sometimes relying on our partner organisations' local expertise and network. We frequently use a train-the-trainers model. For example, we helped organise a training in physical and psycho-social security for women human rights defenders in South Sudan, led by trainers who had previously participated in our Training of Trainers programme.

## EMERGENCY FUND: RAPID SUPPORT WHEN IT IS NEEDED

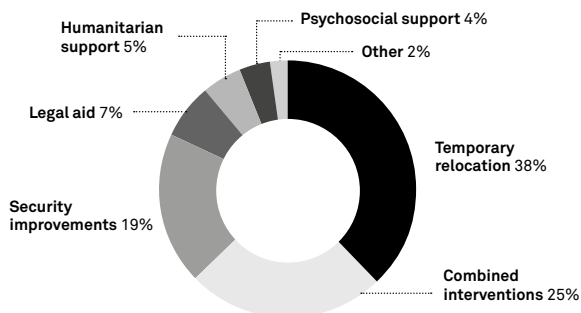
Defending human rights in many parts of the world means constantly facing risks and threats. When a human rights defender is confronted with a threatening situation, Civil Rights Defenders' Emergency Fund provides rapid support to strengthen defenders' security as quickly as possible. For instance, we provide legal aid, temporary relocation of people affected by persecution, or preventive measures such as security trainings and digital security solutions. The aim is to improve human rights defenders' security, so they feel safe enough to continue their work.

In 2023 we provided support to 1,351 human rights defenders and members of their families in 39 countries, seeing a 40% decrease of total number of beneficiaries

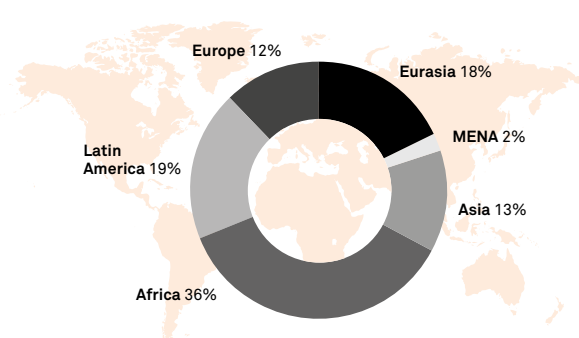
due to funding cuts compared to 2022. This situation forced us to focus on the most urgent cases. Despite the growing need, the allocation of sufficient resources remains inadequate, further limiting the ability of our organisation to respond effectively and sustain our commitment to fostering more democratic societies.

“As the civic space continues to shrink and the pressures on human rights defenders intensify, the role of Civil Rights Defenders' Emergency Fund, is even more critical. Our interventions not only improve the security of these courageous activists but also offer important moral support and encourages them to keep going”, says Zinaida Muradova, Director of the Emergency Fund at Civil Rights Defenders.

BREAKDOWN BY TYPE OF SUPPORT



BREAKDOWN BY REGION







## BURMA – THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IS EXTENSIVE

Since the military coup attempt in early 2021, the situation for human rights defenders, democracy activists, and journalists in Burma has further deteriorated. More than 4,400 people have been killed by the military junta, and over 25,800 people have been arbitrarily arrested. Despite the military's brutal suppression, people have come together to fight the dictatorship. Nationwide mass protests, boycotts, strikes, and coordinated civil disobedience movements have taken place. Human rights defenders, civil society activists, and journalists from across the country continue their work despite severe attacks by the military.

Over the last year, the junta's violence has increasingly targeted civilian populations. Attacks on civil society have also intensified. The arrests of human

rights defenders and journalists continue to have a chilling effect. Nearly 20,000 political prisoners remain in arbitrary detention, and over 160 people are subject to the death sentence.

Civil Rights Defenders provides flexible emergency funds to human rights defenders and their families to improve their security. Since the coup, over 750 Burmese human rights defenders and members of their families have received support from Civil Rights Defenders emergency fund. They are committed to upholding democracy in their country, and we want to help them find safe ways to do that. Most of the support has been to provide safe accommodation, but we have also offered secure office spaces and communication tools. The need for assistance is extensive and dire.

## OFF.GUARD

Our new digital tool Off.guard, launched in April, allows private individuals, journalists, and human rights defenders to share important information even during internet disruptions caused by authoritarian regimes.

During internet disruptions, Off.guard generates a feed of critical information that is automatically updated in the background. All information is then saved locally on the user's device, meaning that individuals do not lose access to information even if the connection is disrupted. This provides access to news and user-generated information that can be the difference between life and death.





## NATALIA PROJECT – 10 YEARS

10 years ago, Civil Rights Defenders launched the Natalia Project, the world's first assault alarm and community-based security system for human rights defenders. In the event of an attack, participants in the project can send out a distress signal so they can be located quickly and get help.

The Natalia Project is named in honour of Natalia Estemirova, a human rights defender from Chechnya who was kidnapped and murdered in 2009 because of her work. Her murder shook the entire community and human rights defenders around the world.

Civil Rights Defenders decided to invent a system that would enhance the protection of human rights defenders working in some of the most repressive and dangerous regions. The Natalia Project has had a clear mission from the start:

No human rights defender will be silenced in darkness – the world is watching.



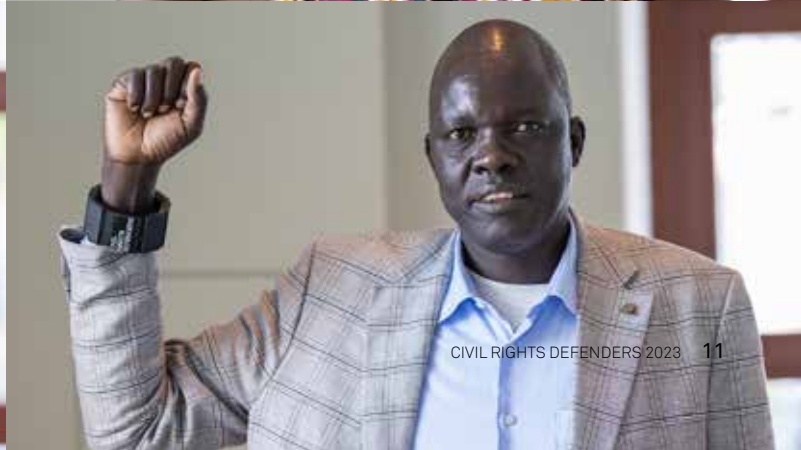
The Natalia Project officially launched on 4 April 2013. Over ten years, the Natalia Project has supported close to 200 human rights defenders and their communities worldwide. The participants have come from 43 different organisations from around the world – from media freedom groups and human rights lawyers to LGBTI+ activists and environmental rights defenders.

During 2023, the Natalia Project added more human rights defenders from Africa and Latin America to the alarm response system. We acted when the alarm was triggered. Our team also further developed our community-based approach and improved our internal response protocols.



**“ They sent me a death threat saying that if I kept doing what I was doing, they were going to kill me and everyone in my team. They said: ‘Everyone, we are going to kill them all’.**

Angela Maldonado, Colombian environmental and human rights defender on why the Natalia Project is so important to her safety.





## STRONG CIVIL SOCIETIES – THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Civil Rights Defenders believes that it is only through a powerful and resilient global human rights movement based on strong civil societies that we can build a democratic world. We are committed to helping human rights defenders manage their work effectively and increase their organisational capacity so that they can make long-term positive change in their countries.

We provide human rights defenders in more than 50 countries with innovative, flexible, and defender-centric partner support. Support can take many forms: expert advice, security training, skill and organisational development, as well as long-term financial support.

As support is always based on organisations' specific needs, it can look different in different regions. Some examples include: organising a European Union

advocacy workshop for our partners in Latin America; providing financial health consultations for our partners in Asia; leading capacity training for administrative and financial staff for our partners in Africa; and organising a "Leadership and Motivation" course to equip leaders of partner organisations in Eurasia with modern methods and tools for team motivation and development.

We also provide forums for human rights defenders to safely meet and share their knowledge and experiences. For example, we established an experience-sharing mission between the South Sudanese Human Rights Defenders Network and other East African partners to share expertise and best practices on governance, advocacy, protection, and the role of human rights defenders during elections.

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### SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM TRAINING



*Karen Mukwasi, participant in the training.*

The Defenders' Days Bootcamp is a training programme aimed at strengthening the security and capacity of human rights defenders and organisations. Civil Rights Defenders initiated the program in 2020 as an online capacity building and networking program.

The concept was developed to connect human rights defenders from different contexts and regions who have similar challenges and experiences, seeing how

important it is for human rights defenders to be able to meet, network, collaborate, and exchange knowledge and experience with colleagues in and outside their own region.

In 2023 we developed the Sustainable Activism Training Program within the Bootcamp concept, focusing on the psychosocial aspect of the stress that human rights defenders face every day. The programme is aimed towards the Defenders' Days global community and offers skill-sharing events and in-person and remote training opportunities with the goal of advancing networking opportunities and well-being among Human Rights Defenders. The Sustainable Activism Training Program also provides individual support including security consultations, digital security measures and psychological support based on needs assessments.

"The programme was not only an all-round learning experience for me, but it was also re-energizing because meeting defenders from some of the hottest spots in the world gave me hope. These colleagues showed that despite all the evil in the world there are people committed to work hard and make a difference," says one of the participants, Karen Mukwasi.



*The Rule of Law Forum, organised by Civil Rights Defenders in cooperation with the AIRE Centre.]*

## RULE OF LAW FORUM: A DECADE OF PROGRESS

Over the last ten years, Civil Rights Defenders has organised Rule of Law Forums in various locations across the Western Balkans. In 2021, we inaugurated the Nordic Rule of Law Forum which takes place in Sweden.

In November 2023, the Southeast Europe Forum took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, marking the Forum's tenth anniversary. The focus was "Balancing Data Protection with Transparent Justice: The European Legal Framework". In a world where technology is constantly reshaping legal landscapes, the discussions centred on how, in the context of judicial proceedings, one can find the balance between safeguarding the right to private and family life and ensuring the right to a fair trial. Over 120 participants, including judges from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and

ECHR's Vice-President Marko Bošnjak, attended.

In Sweden, the third Nordic Rule of Law Forum gathered 100 people to explore how the law and the legal system can combat issues of racial, ethnic and religious inequality. Drawing attention toward the ever-shifting understanding of racism in relation to law, the 2023 Nordic Rule of Law Forum was dedicated to critically examining how the law can be shaped to better take into consideration the many and varied nuances of racism.

Fostering dialogue and collaboration between different sectors of society, in the ten years since its founding, Rule of Law Forums have grown to become an important platform for promoting the rule of law, human rights, and regional cooperation.

## SUPPORTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE MENA REGION

Human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa are systematically prosecuted, harassed, intimidated, and imprisoned through the use of newly enacted 'fake news' and 'misinformation' laws or outdated penal codes that criminalise criticism (or 'insults') of public officials, state institutions or religion.

Journalists are a vital part of shedding light on the grave harms inflicted on vulnerable and discriminated groups in the region. In 2023, we supported independent media and media organisations in the Middle East and North Africa by training journalists in investigative and critical journalism and financing their work.





## OUR NEWEST OFFICE IN THE WORLD'S NEWEST COUNTRY

To support the local human rights movement, Civil Rights Defenders opened an office in South Sudan in autumn 2023.

"This gives us more solidarity and the sense that we are not the only ones struggling with human rights in South Sudan," says Jackline Nasiwa, a local human rights defender.

The development of human rights and democracy has gone slowly in the world's youngest country. Located

in a region scarred by conflict and human rights violations, both government institutions and civil society are struggling to get operations running smoothly. Yet the South Sudanese people have high hopes for a peaceful society with respect for human rights.

To support local civil society, Civil Rights Defenders opened an office in the country in the autumn of 2023. The office is run by local experts and staff and will support our civil society partners in South Sudan with



building organisational capacity, improving the security of their staff, engaging the community, and working to promote accountability.

“South Sudan has just begun its journey. It is crucial to build a strong civil society where people are aware of their human rights and are better equipped to promote and defend them,” says Mesfin Bekele, Director of the Africa Department at Civil Rights Defenders.

#### **ONE OF FEW HUMAN RIGHTS ACTORS**

There is a great need for humanitarian and development assistance in South Sudan after all the hardship and conflict it has endured since it gained its independence in 2011. The human rights sector seeks the support of local and international partners to lay its foundation to exert long-term strategic impact. Civil Rights Defenders aims to be a key player, working with local partners to promote human rights in the country.



## WE HOLD THOSE IN POWER ACCOUNTABLE

Governments and those in power must be held accountable when human rights are violated. Civil Rights Defenders, both on our own or in partnership with human rights defenders in our network, works to ensure that legal decisions, legislation, and practices respect or increase access to civil and political rights, both in Sweden and worldwide. We also make sure that individuals have access to justice and redress by initiating legal proceedings against those in power when human rights are violated.

We work across the world to help human rights defenders bring calls for accountability to various international bodies. Last year, we took part in two hearings on freedom of expression and the experience of political prisoners in Cuba at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. We facilitated an EU advocacy visit

for partners from Jordan to raise awareness of human rights infringements in the country, including shrinking civic space, the adoption of a new Cyber Crime Law, and attacks on LGBTI+ rights. Together with partners, we organised an International Criminal Court (ICC) side event bringing together ICC representatives with victims of crimes against humanity committed in Venezuela. We also organised a visit to the European Union for Burmese human rights defenders to call for accountability for human rights violations perpetrated by the military junta.

In addition, we conducted trainings in investigation and documentation with partners in East Africa, Syria, and Venezuela, among others in order to improve their ability to document crimes and to take perpetrators of grave human rights violations to court.

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## ARREST WARRANTS ISSUED AGAINST PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD AND ASSOCIATES FOR COMPLICITY IN WAR CRIMES AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

In November 2023, French criminal investigative judges called for the arrest of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and three associates for the use of banned chemical weapons against civilians in Syria. The arrest

warrants follow a criminal investigation into two chemical weapons attacks in the town of Douma and in the district of Eastern Ghouta in August 2013, which killed more than a thousand people.

The issuance of the arrest warrants sends a loud and clear message to the survivors—and everyone affected by the attacks and other atrocity crimes in Syria—that the world has not forgotten them and that the fight for justice will continue.

The investigation in France was opened in response to a criminal complaint based on testimonials of survivors of the August 2013 attacks, filed in March 2021 by the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression and by Syrian victims. Civil Rights Defenders and several of our partners joined the investigation as civil parties in 2023. Civil Rights Defenders and the partners have also filed a similar criminal complaint in Sweden concerning the 2013 chemical weapons attacks in Eastern Ghouta, and we continue the fight to hold the perpetrators accountable.







*Stockholm District Court.*

## MONITORING WAR CRIME TRIALS IN SWEDEN

Over the last year, Civil Rights Defenders has been monitoring two different war crime trials in Sweden. Through legal means, we continue our work to hold perpetrators of core international crimes – genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes – accountable and to achieve justice for victims of such crimes.

In September 2023, a landmark trial against two former executives at the Swedish oil company Lundin Oil started in Stockholm. The two corporate leaders have been indicted with complicity in grave war crimes in what is now South Sudan. It is the first time in Swedish history that the leadership of a multinational company has been put on trial to answer to charges of complicity in war crimes that occurred in the course of their business activities. Civil Rights Defenders has been closely monitoring the trial from the courtroom, publishing reports to provide regular updates about the proceedings.

Civil Rights Defenders has also been monitoring the trial of an Iranian citizen suspected of participating in the mass executions and torture of political prisoners in Iran during the summer of 1988. In December 2023, the Iranian citizen was ultimately convicted of war crimes

and murder by the Svea Court of Appeal in Stockholm. The legal proceeding was the first of its kind in the world – no one has previously been brought to justice for the mass executions and torture of political prisoners that took place in Iran during the 1980s. Since the start of the trial, Civil Rights Defenders has been on-site monitoring the proceedings, continuously publishing reports from the trial, including analysis and a summary of the verdict.

Both trials taking place in Sweden have been drawing international attention; our lawyers have been interviewed in both Swedish and international media outlets about the trials. Although Civil Rights Defenders has not been involved in the investigations and prosecutions of the accused in question, we work to pursue justice for core international crimes committed in countries across the globe. It is vitally important to thoroughly investigate these serious crimes to attain justice and redress for the victims. Our reports aim to amplify the importance of these trials to the media, civil society, and those affected by the crimes who cannot attend the trials.



## UKRAINE – ENSURING JUSTICE IN TIMES OF WAR

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Since then, Civil Rights Defenders has supported human rights defenders and journalists on the ground so that they can continue their important work. Many have chosen to remain in Ukraine to document what is happening inside the country and provide support to those in need, despite the risk to their own lives.

The crimes committed must be documented so that those responsible can be held accountable. Civil Rights Defenders works together with organisations in Ukraine to collect evidence such as photos, videos, and personal testimonies that can eventually be used in court. We support these organisations both financially and by providing guidance on how to collect and document crimes.

**“ The most terrible crimes are committed during armed conflicts. Making sure they will not go unpunished is a fundamentally important and difficult task.**

Valentyna Potapova from Almenda,  
one of our partner organisations in Ukraine

### CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS HAS PROVIDED

- Emergency support to more than 350 journalists and human rights defenders helping them evacuate and temporarily relocate to a safe location and providing satellite internet to enable them to continue their important work on the ground.
- Bulletproof vests, first aid kits, and insurance for independent journalists.
- Psychosocial support for frontline journalists and civic activists based in the temporary occupied territories of Ukraine.
- Legal support to victims of international crimes and human rights violations.
- Support and partnerships with organisations documenting war crimes and other human rights violations.
- Support to independent media covering the war and human rights violations.
- Advocacy activities in Brussels, Warsaw, and Stockholm together with our partners. This led to that the international sanctions list of individuals complicit in crimes against Ukrainian children was expanded.



## CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS AWARDED FOR WORK IN UKRAINE



*Chairperson, Hanna Gerdes, together with Lina Kushch from the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine.*

Civil Rights Defenders received the National Award for the Protection of Freedom of Speech, a yearly award issued by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU). NUJU is the largest journalist organisation in Ukraine, consisting of more than 18,000 members before the war.

“NUJU awards Civil Rights Defenders for the dedicated support provided to Ukrainian journalists

and human rights defenders. Especially in the circumstances of the war, we want to emphasise the significant contribution of Civil Rights Defenders as a partner of an initiative to document war crimes against media workers,” said Sergiy Tomilenko, president at NUJU.

“We are very honoured to receive the Ukrainian National Award for the Protection of Free Speech. Ukraine’s brave journalists stand on the front lines in the defence of the free word — not just for their own country but for anyone who believes in an open world. Since the beginning of the war, Civil Rights Defenders has provided support in every way we can so that these brave defenders of democracy can continue their important work. We are glad to receive this award as it confirms that our efforts have an effect and are needed,” said Hanna Gerdes, Chair of the Board at Civil Rights Defenders.

With the support of Civil Rights Defenders, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine documents journalists’ testimonies of war crimes, submits international reports, and draws international attention to crimes against media workers experienced during the war.



## ENGAGEMENT DRIVES CHANGE

Governments all over the world are building up narratives that chip away at human rights and democracy. Civil Rights Defenders and our partners counteract this trend by raising public awareness and engaging individuals, civil society, decision-makers, and corporations to act. Together, we work to promote and demand human rights, change negative narratives, and challenge oppressive practices. We endeavour to influence countries and decision-makers at the national and international levels. We initiate public debate, run campaigns, and highlight key issues in the media, digital media, and through seminars and reports. Civil Rights Defenders also raises up the experiences and words of our partners in cases where it would be dangerous for them to do it themselves.

For example, we launched the 'Exprésate: libres por derecho' exhibition on urban art in Geneva, Miami,

Washington, and Bogota in which urban artists depicted what they felt after interacting with political prisoners in Cuba. The project brought awareness and engagement to the situation in Cuba, in which those fighting for human rights regularly risk imprisonment for the work they do.

In April 2023, we published the report "Environmental Racism and Europe's Roma" highlighting how Romani communities across Europe have been banished to desolate locations, devoid of infrastructure, public transport, or services.

We also work to support journalists so that they can bring engagement and awareness to issues. For example, we worked together with women media professionals in Ethiopia to establish regional chapters across the country, expanding their network and ability to bring human rights abuses in the country to light.

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## FRONTERA COMÚN – HOW TO DEFEND LIFE AND RIGHTS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA

In April 2023, Civil Rights Defenders launched the book *Frontera Común* (Shared Border), which gathers experiences from six human rights defenders who risk their lives every day along the border between Colombia and Venezuela. The book shares personal stories and struggles as well as recommendations on how

to address the region's problems, with a focus on the actions the European Union can take.

The border between Colombia and Venezuela is one of Latin America's most complicated places to defend human rights.

"The work by women, indigenous peoples, journalists and all other human rights defenders in the region, their ability to stay in the region despite the violence, are key factors for change in the future. *Frontera Común* gathered many voices from the region and gave them the platform to describe the reality they work in and engage international decision makers with concrete recommendations on how to make lasting change," says Erik Jennische, Director of the Latin America Department at Civil Rights Defenders.

*Frontera Común* was launched at the Bogotá Book Fair in an event that gathered over 200 people including decision-makers from both countries. It also reached the book fairs of Cúcuta and Arauca. *Frontera Común* also sparked conversations in Venezuela, Stockholm, and Brussels on how to empower human rights defenders in the border region.





## BELGRADE PRIDE – THE BIGGEST MARCH YET

Belgrade Pride has come a long way since 2001 when the participants of the first march were attacked by a group of right-wing extremists. Over the course of more than two decades, Belgrade Pride has emerged as a symbol of resilience and resistance and became the most important event of the year for the LGBTI+ community in Serbia.

In 2023, Belgrade Pride took place under the slogan “We’re Not Even Close”, highlighting the fact that, despite significant progress, the LGBTI+ community in Serbia still faces increasing violence and discrimination. Pride Week was comprised of more than 50 events, including a human rights conference, a theatre festival, exhibitions, community talks, and more.

Pride March always stands out as a highlight of the Pride Week festivities. This time, the march gathered over 10,000 participants, making it the largest march in Belgrade Pride’s history. Its success was a significant step towards achieving equal rights for the LGBTI+ community in the country.

For many years, Civil Rights Defenders, together with other LGBTI+ and human rights organisations in Serbia, has played an integral role in organising Belgrade Pride. We are also supporting LGBTI+ rights and local Prides across the Western Balkans region, including Prishtina, Sarajevo, Skopje, and Tirana.



# BACKA DEMOKRATIN

## BUILDING ENGAGEMENT IN SWEDEN: BACKA DEMOKRATIN

Civil Rights Defenders acts as Sweden's civil rights watchdog. Despite Sweden's status as a free and democratic nation, the past decade has witnessed an increased number of political and legislative proposals that, if enacted, could undermine human rights and erode the foundations of Swedish democracy. To counter this concerning development, we needed to engage others in our work. That is why we launched the project Backa Demokratin in June 2023.

Backa Demokratin uses a comprehensive approach to mobilise broad support in defence of Sweden's democracy, and in specific, the rights and freedoms it rests upon. Mobilisation takes place on three levels, targeting:

- 1. civil society** – through strengthened capacity and coordinated advocacy,
- 2. rights holders** – through strategic litigation and political advocacy, and
- 3. the general public** – through creating engagement for broad public advocacy.

The project works to engage people from the Swedish general public with the goal of creating a movement for democracy. We educate people on how undermining the rights and freedoms of vulnerable groups in society threatens the rights and freedoms of everyone, the process of democratic dismantling, and – most importantly – how they can take action to ensure that Sweden continues to be a strong democracy.

Over the past year, our focus was on building a digital hub ([crd.org/sv/backademokratin](http://crd.org/sv/backademokratin)) for the work within the project, which will continue to be developed. So far, we have created a database with up-to-date legal analyses of proposed pieces of legislation, explained the risks of democratic dismantling, and asked the public to get involved by joining the network. By the end of the year, around 55,000 unique users had visited the page, and approximately 19,000 people had joined the network.



## KEEPING SWEDEN'S GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE

When the Tidö Agreement was presented in October 2022 by the new Swedish government, we published a rights-based review. In December 2023, we published our follow-up report, “As a whole, it is worrying: One Year with the Tidö Agreement”, reviewing how the agreement is being put into practice.

As a national watchdog, we sought to engage directly with the proposal and passage of various pieces of Swedish legislation that restrict or conflict with fundamental freedoms and rights. Additionally, we highlighted problematic political rhetoric that politicises and threatens critical voices in civil society.

The report outlines how the proposals put forward by the Swedish government (with the support of the far-right Sweden Democrats) conflict with fundamental freedoms and rights, especially regarding criminal and migration policies. It takes a comprehensive approach to better understand the combined impact of the proposals. It underscores that several proposals and decisions may not individually pose a threat to democracy but, when considered together and over time, weaken democracy.

In response to the reports, there has been a lively debate in the Swedish press, and several politicians and civil society members have invited Civil Rights Defenders to discuss our findings.

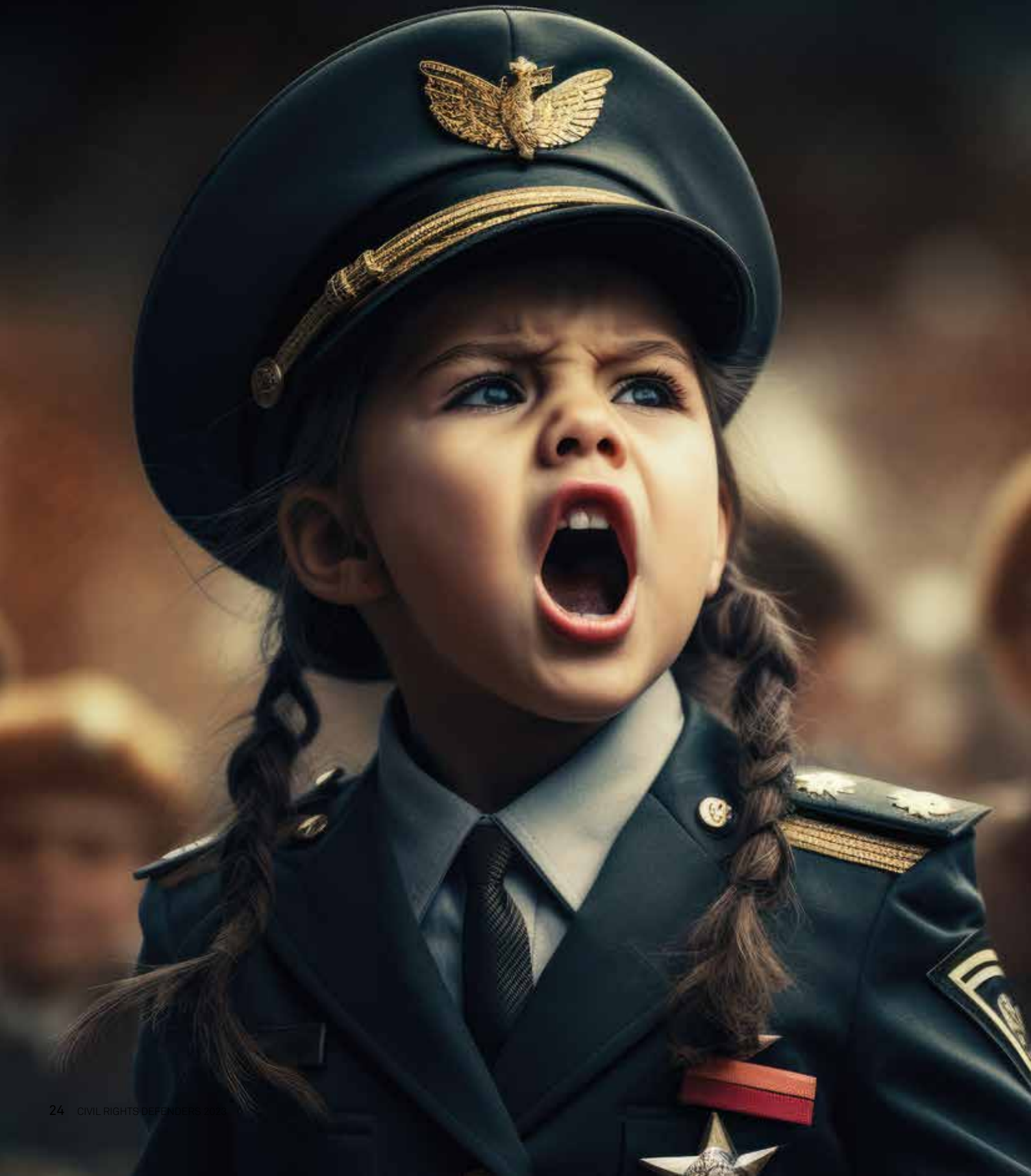
During the year, we also had several productive discussions with decision-makers from previous and current government administrations about individual legal proposals, expanded our network among grassroots organisations, and educated civil society members (e.g. minority and student groups, associations, and trade unions) about the dangers of democratic dismantling and the shrinking space for civil society. In 2024, we will launch additional activities with a clear focus on strengthening civil society actors in Sweden.

**Join the Facebook group:**  
[facebook.com/groups/backademokratin](https://facebook.com/groups/backademokratin)

**Sign up for the newsletter:**  
[crd.org/sv/backademokratin/#gamed](https://crd.org/sv/backademokratin/#gamed)



# IS YOUR SISTER A LITTLE FASCIST?





# GROWING SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

Backa Demokratin has been a cornerstone in growing support and engagement for our human rights work in Sweden in 2023, but it has been only one facet of our successful communication and fundraising strategy. Our online channels continue to grow, allowing us to shine a spotlight on the outstanding human rights defenders we work with all over the world and to educate the public about human rights issues.

Throughout the year, we were very visible in the press, appearing in over 1,500 press clippings around the world and publishing 20 op-eds on different human rights issues, including the Quran burnings and the Tidö agreement. We have continued to grow our fundraising

efforts, and we were particularly successful in reaching out to new supporters this year, engaging 11,110 new leads and 5,734 new donors.

Our 2022 winter campaign, “Oppression Offset”, won the 2023 European Excellence Award in the category of best Scandinavian campaign, and in March 2023, the organisation was awarded the Stenbeck Prize from Giva Sverige, the Swedish Fundraising Association, for our innovative way of spreading knowledge about democracy and human rights and our willingness to take a stand in the social debate.

## DICTATOR OF SWEDEN

In the winter of 2021, we developed “Dictator of Sweden”, a board game that simulates how the dismantling of Sweden’s democracy could play out in practice. The game was a huge success, and in 2022, we developed the game by adding new playing cards based on real proposals from the Tidö agreement.

In 2023, we released an additional expansion pack called “Culture War”, in which we draw inspiration from countries where ideas taken from the so-called “culture war” are used to undermine liberal democracy. We have now sold more than 10,000 copies of the game. The game is available in some schools and libraries, and we are working on creating a teacher’s manual so that it can be more easily used in classrooms.



At Almedalen 2023, Civil Rights Defenders hosted a “Dictator of Sweden” game night that engaged more than 300 participants, and more than 50 game nights took place around Sweden during the launch of our 2023 winter campaign selling “Dictator of Sweden”.



Our 2023 winter campaign was our most successful campaign to date. Using AI technology, we created images of a family of dictators, from little brother to grandma, asking if each one of them had a dictatorial tendency. Throughout the campaign, we sold more than 3,000 copies of the “Dictator of Sweden” game and 2,750 copies of the expansion packs, both to individuals and to companies who bought the game as gifts for their employees.



# FORO PENAL CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2023

Thanks to their tireless work, thousands of arbitrarily detained protesters, activists, and opposition politicians have been released from prison. The influential Venezuelan legal organisation Foro Penal and its human rights lawyers have become the hope for all those who want democracy in the country.

The human rights situation in Venezuela has deteriorated significantly since Hugo Chávez became president 25 years ago, and has further worsened under the leadership of Nicolás Maduro, with arbitrary arrests, systematic torture, and attacks against opposition members. Fundamental rights such as freedom of the press, expression, assembly, and association are severely curtailed, and human rights defenders are relentlessly harassed. To date, over 260 political prisoners remain incarcerated in the country. The government persistently seeks new approaches and implements new legislation to impede individuals from effectively advocating for their human rights.

Amidst this repressive environment, we find Foro Penal. They have become the first line of defence in the battle for human rights in Venezuela. More than 400 lawyers and 6,000 volunteers are spread across the country and work to help people who have been imprisoned on arbitrary or political grounds. The lawyers work entirely pro bono. Together they have helped more than 12,000 victims of political oppression. In many cases, the organisation has become the main obstacle against the government's repressive measures.

"We are very proud and happy to receive this award. The recognition of our work means a lot for the whole organisation – for me, our lawyers and our volunteers. But, it also means international attention. For us, that means protection. Attention from the rest of the world does not make us safe from persecution, but it does

make it more difficult for others to target us without anyone reacting," says Alfredo Romero, president of Foro Penal.

As Foro Penal plays an increasingly important role in the work for democracy and human rights in Venezuela, the pressure on the organisation has increased. Due to criminalisation and intimidation, many of its leaders have been forced to leave the country. Others have been subjected to economic and political pressure or even imprisonment. Despite the risks, the organisation continues its work.

Raquel Sánchez is one of Foro Penal's many pro bono lawyers and leads the organisation's operations in the Venezuelan region of Táchira, on the border with Colombia. She has been the subject of several attacks because of her work.

"It's a challenge; we work in a toxic environment, facing regular threats and lacking security. As human rights defenders, we are exposed to everything from physical assault to arbitrary arrests and criminalisation of our work. What motivates me to continue are my children, I was born in a country with democracy, and my wish is that they too will grow up and live in such circumstances," says Raquel.

Every week, Foro Penal compiles a report on the number of political prisoners in Venezuela. Their data is the most reliable in the country, and is used by both governments, international media, and human rights organisations.

Thanks to the work of Foro Penal, they have successfully drawn international attention to human rights violations in Venezuela. Venezuela is now under open investigation by the International Criminal Court for serious crimes against humanity.



## **ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Since 2013, each year Civil Rights Defenders presents the Civil Rights Defender of the Year Award to a human rights defender, organisation, or project that, despite the risk to their own safety, continues the fight for civil and political rights. The recipient of the award must carry out their work through peaceful means and as part of an independent human rights organisation.

# ANNUAL REPORT

ORGANISATION ID NO. 802011-1442

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS  
HEREBY PRESENT THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION'S ACTIVITIES

Civil Rights Defenders is a politically and religiously independent human rights organisation. The organisation defends people's civil and political rights and supports human rights defenders at risk in Sweden and in the countries around the world where respect for human rights is at its weakest. Civil Rights Defenders maintains a head office in Stockholm and engages in advocacy activities as well as legal processes and provides information on the human rights situation globally.

Registered office: Stockholm, Sweden

### VISION AND MISSION

#### Civil Rights Defenders' vision

A world of democratic societies in which we all enjoy civil and political rights.

#### Civil Rights Defenders' mission

Our mission is to defend civil and political rights together with local human rights defenders to increase their security, capacity, and access to justice.

We are part of a global movement of human rights defenders and partner with those at risk. Through legal means and public advocacy, we hold states, individuals and non-state actors accountable for human rights violations.

We stand up for the norms and values of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other relevant human rights standards. We encourage people to use these rights to promote democratic societies.

### WHY IS CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS' WORK IMPORTANT?

On the basis of the principle of equal dignity for all, Civil Rights Defenders works toward a world of democratic societies in which we all enjoy civil and political rights.

Conflicts and human rights violations increasingly pervade our world, and a well-functioning, strong, and local civil society is becoming increasingly important. Civil Rights Defenders endeavours to bring about progress in politics, business, and civil society by working and evolving together on the important issues of human rights. We believe that our commitment and expertise within our areas of knowledge help to bring about change and a better world for all.

### GOALS

Civil Rights Defender's strategic goals outline our ambitions for the strategy period 2023 to 2030. The four strategic goals are reflected in the organisation's theory of change – security, capacity, commitment, and accountability. Each overarching goal has its own sub-objectives that describe in more detail what the organisation is to have achieved by the end of the strategy period.

#### Security: We ensure the security of human rights defenders

- Civil Rights Defenders has the capacity and resources to minimise risks to security and mitigate the consequences when human rights are violated.
- Our partners have the capacity and resources to minimise risks to security and mitigate the consequences when human rights are violated.

#### Capacity: Human rights defenders have the ability to defend human rights and democracy

- Civil Rights Defenders provides innovative and flexible support to its partners, which is always based on their needs.
- Civil Rights Defenders is a resilient, sustainable, and effective organisation.
- Civil Rights Defenders focuses on using tools, methods, and technologies that are innovative, cutting-edge, or data-driven.

### **Commitment: Actors and stakeholders in society take a stand for human rights and democracy**

- Civil Rights Defenders, together with our partners, influences the narrative of decision-makers in favour of human rights and democracy.
- Civil Rights Defenders has commitment-driven working methods and creates opportunities for actors and stakeholders to get involved.
- Civil Rights Defenders is a highly respected human rights organisation with a focus on human rights defenders, in particular when it comes to our work in security, capacity, and accountability.

### **Accountability: Those responsible are held to account**

- Civil Rights Defenders is developing concrete and effective tools and methods to hold those responsible to account.
- Those responsible for human rights are held to account by Civil Rights Defenders or our partners.
- There is a strong international/regional framework for the promotion of human rights.
- Those affected when human rights are violated have access to a legal review.

### **EXPANSION OF CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY**

In order to effectively achieve its strategic objectives, Civil Rights Defenders needs to expand its organisational capacity. To achieve this, we have identified a number of priority areas where the organisation needs to expand. Civil Rights Defenders strives to have a maximum of three to five priority areas at any given time during the strategy period and is developing an action plan for each area with a description of both the current and desired state. Progress within priority areas will be monitored and evaluated quarterly. When the objectives within a priority area have been met, the area is closed and, if necessary, new priority areas are developed in line with the strategy.

### **ORGANISATION**

Civil Rights Defenders is a non-profit organisation working to promote human rights. Gerald Nagler is the organisation's founder. The annual general meeting (AGM) is the organisation's highest decision-making body. Civil Rights Defenders is a membership organisation with individual members. Membership is conditional on supporting the organisation's goals and core values (as expressed in international human rights treaties) as well as a willingness to work towards them. The organisation's activities are not primarily funded by membership dues but through fundraising and grants received.

Membership dues for 2023 were SEK 300. The AGM

elects the board, which at the end of 2022 consisted of eight members — five women and three men. Six board meetings were held during the financial year, three of which have taken place since the annual meeting in May 2023. There is no remuneration for the work carried out by the chair of the board and the board members.

### **BOARD OF CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

At the 2023 annual meeting on 31 May, Niclas Kjellström-Matseke and Ulla Andrén were elected as board members. Christoffer Lindblad left the board at the 2023 annual meeting.

- Hanna Gerdes, Chair of the Board (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)
- Ulla Andrén, Board Member (Present at 3 out of 3 board meetings)
- Noura Berrouba, Board Member (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)
- Lars Häggström, Board Member (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)
- Niclas Kjellström-Matseke, Board Member (Present at 2 out of 3 board meetings)
- Christoffer Lindblad, Board Member (Present at 3 out of 3 board meetings)
- Anne Ramberg, Board Member (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)
- Lena Svensson, Board Member (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)
- Caroline Thunved, Board Member (Present at 5 out of 6 board meetings)
- Christian Åhlund, Board Member (Present at 6 out of 6 board meetings)

### **NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

Since the 2023 annual meeting, the nomination committee has been comprised of Kerstin Brunnberg, Catarina Mannerfelt, and Carin Norberg.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Anders L. Pettersson

### **MEMBERS**

In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders had 28 members (2022: 23).

### **CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS' PERSONNEL**

The work of Civil Rights Defenders is primarily carried out by employed staff at the organisation's head office in Stockholm, in regional offices or through stationing in Asia, Africa, Belgrade, Bogotá, Brussels, Istanbul, Juba, Pristina, Sarajevo, Tbilisi, and Tirana. The total number of employees at the organisation's 11 offices at the end of 2023 was 102, compared with 101 at the end of 2022.

**Distribution by office**

Stockholm	74
Asia	1
Africa	2
Belgrade	7
Bogotá	8
Brussels	1
Istanbul	2
Juba	1
Pristina	1
Sarajevo	1
Tblisi	2
Tirana	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

**SIGNIFICANT EVENTS DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR**

The start of the year saw a start to the implementation of the organisation's new strategy for 2023 to 2030, which was developed during 2022 (read more at <https://crd.org/strategy/>). At the same time, work also began on the organisation's three priority areas: diversification of income, organisational ability, and measuring and evaluating results in respect of human rights.

At the end of December 2022, the Swedish government's new appropriations letter arrived at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The appropriations letter announced budget cuts for Sida, which had an impact on some of Civil Rights Defenders' project budgets for 2023. During the first quarter, the organisation updated its forecast for the year and the cuts from Sida resulted in somewhat reduced operations in some of the organisation's regions.

In the course of developing the work of the Eurasia region, a trip to Ukraine was made at the invitation of the Ukrainian government. During the trip, we met six of the organisation's partners, were awarded a prize, met the ambassador, and explored possibilities for establishing a presence in the country so that we could continue to work closely with our partners even during the ongoing conflict. This is to be able to continue strengthening civil society until the fighting comes to an end and the country enters a transformative period, where citizens and political rights will be central to Ukraine being a fully-fledged democracy in the future.

The year 2023 marked ten years since the launch of the Natalia Project, named after Natalia Estemirova, a courageous and inspiring human rights defender who was murdered in 2009 in Chechnya. The project combines reactive and proactive security measures for human rights defenders, including a training programme in risk assessment and security planning, as well as an alarm that sends a distress signal with geographic

location. The Natalia Project has helped to protect activists in several fields, such as civil and political rights, environmental rights, and LGBTI+ rights. It has a global reach with participants from 43 organisations. The project uses modern technology and collaborates with global technology companies to improve security for human rights defenders and ensure that they never feel alone in their work.

During the autumn, a new follow-up was conducted for the so-called Tidö agreement between the governing parties and the Sweden Democrats. The report came to be called "As a whole, it is worrying – One year with the Tidö Agreement"). We reviewed developments that occurred during a year with the agreement from a democracy and human rights perspective.

During 2023, we held a number of meetings with Swedish politicians and decision-makers for the purpose of advocacy. We had bilateral meetings with Minister for Justice Gunnar Strömmer, Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström, Minister for Employment and Integration Johan Pehrson, Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life Paulina Brandberg, Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Johan Forsell, Leader of the Centre Party Muharrem Demirok, Leader of the Social Democrats Magdalena Andersson, spokesperson for the Green Party Märta Stenevi, and Leader of the Left Party Nooshi Dadgostar, among others. During the year, we participated in various seminars and events to present a rights-based perspective, including during Almedalen week.

During the year, Civil Rights Defenders organised two Rule of Law Forums with the aim of improving respect for human rights and the principles of the rule of law, as well as promoting dialogue on these issues between different sectors of society. In September, the third Nordic Rule of Law Forum was organised in Stockholm, which brought 100 people together to discuss the ability of the law and the legal system to combat issues of racism. In November, the Rule of Law Forum for Southeast Europe took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The theme was "Balancing Data Protection with Transparent Justice: The European Legal Framework". More than 120 participants attended, including judges from the European Court of Human Rights.

During the spring, the Civil Rights Defenders' annual awards ceremony was held at the Fotografiska Museum in Stockholm. The Civil Rights Defender of the Year Award 2023 went this year to the influential legal organisation Foro Penal in Venezuela. Thanks to their tireless work, thousands of arbitrarily imprisoned protesters, activists, and opposition politicians have been released from prison. Foro Penal and its human rights lawyers have become the hope for everyone wanting democracy in the country.

The 2023 Christmas campaign once again put the spotlight on Civil Rights Defenders' board game "Dictator of Sweden", where we organised game nights, among other things. The game has helped to strengthen the organisation's brand within broad target groups.

The year, and particularly the autumn, was also characterised by considerable uncertainty surrounding the so-called SPO agreement. The government's reform agenda and its letter of appropriations to Sida pointed to a clear change in the direction of Swedish aid, which also affects the funding and role of civil society. In addition, Civil Rights Defenders' "diversification of income" priority area proved to be extremely relevant. The lack of information about a new SPO agreement also meant that the board did not make a decision on the budget at its last meeting in December. This work instead took place between Christmas and New Year, and in early January 2024. On 16 January, the board made a decision on the budget for 2024, which has since been revised in a new forecast.

## USE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

All of Civil Rights Defenders' assets are placed in bank accounts. No other financial instruments have been used.

## SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

### Work environment

During the year, the focus of Civil Rights Defenders' systematic efforts on the work environment has been to further develop the flexi-office in Stockholm. The changes have been systematically evaluated surveys of the entire workforce and discussions at a group level. Adjustments have been made in close dialogue with the project's management and reference group.

Following an evaluation, work related to the Leadership Forum for managers with HR responsibility, which was established in 2022 as part of efforts to strengthen the organisation's management function, was deepened including some structural adjustments for 2024. The forum met five times during the year, discussing relevant topics in line with the HR year and CRD's strategic objectives. The purpose of the meetings is to provide a safe platform for sharing information and reflecting on one's own leadership, as well as providing access to the competence of colleagues and the opportunity for capacity development.

The head of HR, together with the executive director, has worked with the health and safety representative and the trade union on a regular basis in order to systematically follow up on the systematic efforts relating to the work environment. During the year, a safety inspection was also carried out at Östgötagatan 90.

### Staff survey

Civil Rights Defenders conducted its annual employee survey during the autumn of 2023. Leadership, team effectiveness, and the organisational and social work environment all scored better than in the 2022 survey. The leadership index increased from 78 to 81 and the commitment index decreased slightly from 83 to 82. The spring of 2023 saw the introduction of a PULS measurement to follow up on any negative trends and work more proactively with the action plan during the year.

### Equality and diversity

Civil Rights Defenders is an international organisation with employees from countries all over the world. More than 20 different languages are spoken within the organisation. A new policy against discrimination and harassment was drawn up in 2023. The policy is based on both Swedish and EU legislation with the aim of developing a framework that applies to the entire organisation. HR has also developed mandatory digital training for all staff with the goal of increasing awareness and understanding of how people with different backgrounds, cultures, ages, ethnicities, gender, etc. can best work together harmoniously.

### Erasmus+ skills development initiative

Civil Rights Defenders started its journey with Erasmus+ in 2022. Our active efforts relating to Erasmus+ have ensured a common pedagogical approach and strategic leadership while developing skills in planning, facilitating, and evaluating the work. During 2023, 24 employees have had the opportunity to participate in an Erasmus+ training programme and thereby strengthen their individual and organisational capacity in line with the strategic objective of building an organisation "fit for purpose". In this way, we hope to continue to strengthen the organisation and be an increasingly resilient business that quickly adapts to current and future challenges.

### Digitalisation

In line with the strategy to create an organisation "fit for purpose", HR has mapped and analysed a number of different HR Management Systems (HRMS) during the autumn of 2022 and spring of 2023.

The purpose of an HRMS is to streamline HR work and automate HR data and HR processes. It will be easier for managers and HR to manage employee appraisals and to link the business's goals to employees' skills and potential (talent management).

The procured system will be implemented in 2024.

### Collective agreements

Civil Rights Defenders has a collective agreement for professional employees through FREMIA, Unionen, and Akademikerförbunden that covers staff employed in

Sweden. Local law and agreements apply for staff at local offices abroad.

Terms of employment in respect of remuneration and benefits for employees at the regional offices has been harmonised in close co-operation with HR and responsible regional managers.

### Travel and procurement

In accordance with the organisation's environmental policy, economic, social, and environmental considerations shall be taken into account in conjunction with the procurement of services, equipment, and materials for the organisation's offices, as well as in all other procurement. In respect of travel and transport, the most environmentally friendly options must be chosen whenever possible. Civil Rights Defenders takes responsibility for waste through waste separation and recycling of materials, and uses electricity from renewable energy sources.

### RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Civil Rights Defenders performs systematic risk assessment and risk management by identifying, analysing, and working to ensure that unforeseen events or circumstances do not have a negative impact on activities and expected results. By carefully and systematically analysing, documenting, and monitoring risks, adverse effects can be avoided or mitigated. The business differentiates between internal risks, such as the lack of adequate human resources, capacity or management functions, reporting of results, financial control, and corruption; and external risks, such as unexpected political, institutional, economic, environmental, social, or technical circumstances. Civil Rights Defenders uses an integrated risk management approach, which involves a continuous, proactive, and systematic process to understand, manage, and communicate risks from a broad perspective. It also means making strategic decisions that contribute to achieving the organisation's overall objectives. In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders strengthened its security team by way of a new employee who will work operationally in respect of the organisation's various departments.

Civil Rights Defenders operates in countries with a high risk of corruption and where human rights work is in many cases prohibited. Taking preventative measures is therefore important. The organisation has a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and has an anti-corruption working group consisting of representatives from the management and the board. The working group deals with reported suspicions of corruption and maintains and develops best practices for compliance with the policy. The policy has been updated during the year and standardised forms for reporting have been developed. During the autumn of 2023, a training course was rolled out to all employees with the aim of giving everyone the same basic knowledge about anti-corruption. All new employees are

also introduced to the organisation's work in respect of anti-corruption.

### PROFIT AND FINANCIAL POSITION

In 2023, the organisation had an operating loss of SEK -2,077 thousand. There are several reasons for this negative operating profit. We did not quite reach our fundraising goal for the year. Funds raised increased by 1.4% between 2022 and 2023. However, a great deal of time and resources from the organisation's fundraising department have been spent on securing funding for our work in Sweden. This is classified as "grants" and therefore does not appear under "fundraising". Furthermore, delays to some project activities contributed to a lower coverage of shared costs.

The organisation's financial results for 2023 were negative at SEK -2,727 thousand, compared to SEK +7,905 thousand the year before. This negative financial result can be attributed to a negative currency effect.

The organisation's equity, which was strengthened by roughly 405% between 2019 and 2022, deteriorated during the year and will remain in focus going forward to ensure sustainable growth so that equity is maintained at its current level or preferably increased. Profit of SEK -4,803 thousand will be carried forward. Equity carried forward thus amounts to SEK 10,448 thousand.

### GOAL FULFILMENT

For more information about the organisation's strategy, please visit <https://crd.org/strategy/>.

2023 was the first year of the organisation's strategy for the period 2023 to 2030. The year was spent implementing the strategy and starting up and working on the identified priority areas: 1. Diversified funding; 2. Organisational capacity; and 3. Measuring human rights results. The first two priority areas were underway throughout the year, while the third was temporarily paused and is expected to resume again in 2024.

### Civil Rights Defenders' strategic objectives

#### *Security – Human rights defenders are secure*

In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders supported human rights defenders and journalists in Ukraine, with emergency support granted to 350 recipients. Among other things, this support has been used for evacuation to a safe place, satellite internet, psychosocial support, protective vests, trauma kits, and legal support for victims of international crimes and human rights violations.

Globally, a total of 2,267 human rights defenders and their family members in 34 countries in 5 regions have received emergency support, enabling 91% of them to continue their important work.

During the year, we developed methods to strengthen the ability of human rights defenders to deal with the psychological pressure that their work exposes them to.



### ***Capacity – Human rights defenders have the capacity to defend human rights and democracy***

In the autumn of 2023, Civil Rights Defenders opened an office in South Sudan to support the local human rights movement. Run by local experts and staff, the office will support partners in South Sudan to build up organisational capacity, improve the security of their staff, engage the community, and work to promote accountability.

During the summer, Civil Rights Defenders participated in and organised Pride marches in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia. The Belgrade Pride march gathered more than 10,000 participants, which is the highest participation in the history of Belgrade Pride.

Human rights organisations from Colombia, Honduras, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela have developed advocacy strategies in respect of the EU, and met with the decision-makers responsible for the EU's human rights policy towards their countries.

In order to improve the organisation's internal capacity, the priority area "Organisational capacity" was initiated in the spring of 2023. The priority area contains several work streams, one of which is to strengthen the organisation's HR infrastructure. An HRM system has been procured and a digital training programme on diversity and discrimination has been launched on the digital learning platform Talent LMS. A policies review has been carried out, resulting in the launch of a global salary review process and the development of benefits and remuneration for the regional offices. The work is expected to be completed in 2024.

### ***Engagement – Stakeholders in society take action for human rights and democracy***

The Civil Rights Defender of the Year Award 2023 was awarded to the influential legal organisation Foro Penal in Venezuela. Thanks to the work of Foro Penal, it has been possible to raise awareness globally of human rights violations in Venezuela. Venezuela is now the subject of an open investigation by the International Criminal Court for serious crimes against humanity.

The Swedish winter campaign 2022, "Oppression Offset", won the 2023 European Excellence Award in the category of best Scandinavian campaign. In March 2023, Civil Rights Defenders was also awarded the Stenbeck Prize by the Giva Sverige organisation for its innovative way of disseminating knowledge about democracy and human rights and its willingness to take a stand in the debate.

The board game "Dictator of Sweden", developed back in 2021, has sold more than 10,000 copies. Its aim is to spread knowledge about and increase interest in democratic issues in Sweden.

In 2023, the "Backa Demokratin" project was launched, with the aim of increasing support for and engagement in the organisation's human rights work in Sweden. During the year, 19,000 people joined the network.

Civil Rights Defenders appeared in more than 1,500 press clips around the world during the year and published 20 debate articles linked to human rights issues.

5,729 new private donors were recorded during the year.

In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders received the National Award for the Protection of Freedom of Speech, an annual award issued by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) for its "dedicated support of Ukrainian journalists and human rights defenders".

In Europe, Civil Rights Defenders, together with partners, influenced the human rights narrative in the Western Balkans, providing direct input to more than 30 EU officials and directly contributing to reports and resolutions on democracy in the Western Balkans.

### ***Accountability – Duty bearers are held accountable***

In its work on accountability for international crimes, the organisation has, throughout the course of the year, spread knowledge about and increased commitment with regard to accountability for violations of international law by monitoring and reporting from two unique and high-profile trials in a Swedish court. The first was the trial against an Iranian citizen for crimes committed in Iran in 1988, and the second is the trial against representatives of Lundin Oil for international law crimes committed in what is now South Sudan. The reports have been widely circulated in Civil Rights Defenders' network.

For several years, Civil Rights Defenders has worked together with other organisations and crime victims to demand accountability for sarin gas attacks in Syria. In 2023, the organisation became a party to a case in France which resulted in French judges issuing international arrest warrants for several high-ranking representatives of the Syrian regime, including President Bashar al-Assad. Similar investigations are also underway in Sweden and Germany.

In Europe, Civil Rights Defenders, together with other organisations working to improve Roma rights, raised the issue with Secretary-General Guterres, Special Representative of Secretary-General Ziadeh, and United Nations member states, calling on them to finally resolve the situation of the lead-poisoned Roma communities in Mitrovica, Kosovo, by providing compensation to the victims.

During the autumn, Cuba was reviewed in the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review. Together with several Cuban and international organisations, we presented several reports on important human rights issues in Cuba to other member states of the United Nations, so that they would include the organisation's recommendations in their recommendations to Cuba. Many of the specific recommendations were used in the final report.

In Asia, the organisation continued to support partners who monitor and document human rights violations and interact with international bodies to demand accountability for human rights violations at an international level.

## FUNDRAISING

Civil Rights Defenders' operating income during 2023 amounts to SEK 175,590 thousand, which represents an increase of SEK 6,287 thousand (3.5%) compared to 2022. The income comes from both government and private funders, and includes both donations and grants. Fundraising from individuals (including inheritance and wills) increased by 2.6% from SEK 9,742 thousand in 2022 to SEK 9,996 thousand in 2023.

To ensure continued financial strength and long-term stability, in accordance with its strategy for 2023 to 2030, the organisation has continued to diversify its donor portfolio, with continued priority given to increasing funds raised from private funders. Moreover, there is an intention to continue developing collaborations with companies, foundations, and philanthropists in order to secure more diversified financing for the organisation, thereby reducing the risk of being too tightly tied to one donor.

Civil Rights Defenders is a member of Giva Sverige, which advocates ethical and professional fundraising, and works to increase donations in Sweden and improve the conditions for collecting donations.

The organisation benefits from the Tryggt Givande label, which is a mark of quality to confirm that the organisation complies with Giva Sverige's code of quality for ethical and economical fundraising, as well as internal control and governance. Civil Rights Defenders has a so-called "90 account" and works in accordance with the guidelines set by the Swedish Fundraising Control organisation.

### Public grants

In 2023, Civil Rights Defenders' income from grants from public bodies amounted to SEK 108,166 thousand, which corresponds to SEK 13,010 thousand less (-10.7%) than the previous year. The largest donors are Sida, followed by the Swedish Institute (SI) and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF). Grants from state actors are important for maintaining long-term engagement, in Sweden and in the world. The reduction is mainly due to the lack of support from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and reduced funding from the Swedish Inheritance Fund.

### Foundations and organisations

Foundations and organisations are key financiers for Civil Rights Defenders with SEK 30,418 thousand in income in 2023, an increase of 4%. The corresponding

figure for 2022 was SEK 29,199 thousand. The biggest contributors in 2023 were the Open Society Foundation, CIVICUS, the Gerald and Monica Nagler Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

### The public

During the year, Civil Rights Defenders raised SEK 9,129 thousand from individuals, compared with SEK 9,692 thousand in 2022, which is a fall of 6%. At the same time, income from inheritance and wills increased from SEK 50 thousand in 2022 to SEK 866 thousand in 2023, resulting in a total increase from the segment of approximately 3%. During the year, there has been a focus on increasing the number of new donors and monthly donors, which has led to both segments growing in terms of the number of individuals committing to donate. This gives us a good basis for follow-up work on engagement and loyalty in order to further increase the amount raised from individuals over a long-term basis. Monthly donations continue to be important, as they facilitate long-term planning and stability, and reduce administrative costs. Growing the donor base through new donors together with continued upgrade activities remains a priority in the coming year.

### Companies

During the year, companies contributed SEK 26,910 thousand to Civil Rights Defenders, either through long-term partnerships or by giving a one-off donation. In 2022, the corresponding income from companies was SEK 21,743 thousand, representing an increase of 24%. Donations and grants from companies are of great importance for our ability to meet the challenges ahead, and the organisation is continuing its focus on strengthening its partnerships with companies and organisations. Civil Rights Defenders has been a beneficiary of the Swedish Postcode Lottery since 2013, and received SEK 10,000 thousand in 2023 as well as additional grants via the Dream project. Other important collaborations that contributed to the organisation's activities included those with META, Neptunia Invest AB, and Microsoft.

## EXPECTED FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS MATERIAL RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Civil Rights Defenders' strategy for 2023 to 2030 is highly relevant to supporting formal and informal stakeholders in the countries where we work. Without these human rights defenders, civil societies would find it difficult to survive. Without strong and independent civil societies, democracies would be gradually dismantled. Such developments are dangerous in light of the continuing trend of autocratisation and that the degree of freedom for the average person in the world is back to a level

last seen in 1986. Today, 71% of the world's population lives in what can be classified as not fully democratic countries. The organisation's theory of change, therefore, remains based on the fact that civil societies can serve as a resisting force to authoritarian currents.

Civil Rights Defenders has played a role within Swedish development aid, with a focus on civil and political rights and democracy. The resources that the organisation has received through its agreement with Sida will very likely change as part of the current Swedish government's reform work with development aid. It is therefore difficult to make forecasts regarding agreements with Sida with any degree of certainty.

Consequently, efforts to diversify income streams, which is one of the three priority areas of the strategy, remain highly relevant. This means increased investment

in institutional donors as well as private fundraising. This year we have also continued to add resources for private fundraising. A major risk would be if our future income cannot cover the costs of running the organisation, including the work of supporting our partners. We have limited equity that we need to increase in the coming years.

In light of our incredibly strong growth since 2017, it is therefore natural that we consolidate the organisation, which involves a degree of adaptation. Consequently, we do not expect our expansion to be at the same pace as before; rather, it will be adjusted to existing levels.

#### CODE REPORT BASED ON GIVA SWEDEN'S GUIDELINES

Civil Rights Defenders follows the Code of Quality issued by Giva Sverige (the Swedish Fundraising Association) – see [www.givasverige.se](http://www.givasverige.se).



#### INCOME

Total operating income in 2023: SEK 175,590 thousand (2022: SEK 181,878 thousand)

Income is distributed as follows:

- Public bodies – 62% (67%)
- Foundations and organisations – 17% (16%)
- Public – 6% (6%)
- Companies – 15% (12%)

The outer circle shows the distribution of income for 2023, and the inner one for 2022. The decrease in state funds is clearly visible, as is the increase in the share of income from companies, which has increased by 3% over the year.



#### SPECIAL PURPOSE EXPENSES

Special purpose expenses for 2023 amounted to SEK 159,283 thousand compared to SEK 172,269 thousand in 2022, which is a decrease of 8%.

- Africa – 12% (9%)
- Asia – 6% (5%)
- Eurasia – 22% (21%)
- Europe – 18% (21%)
- Security and innovation – 16% (16%)
- Latin America – 10% (10%)
- Sweden – 10% (11%)
- Global – 5% (5%)
- Other – 1% (2%)

The outer circle shows the distribution of project expenses for 2023, and the inner one for 2022.

#### MULTI-YEAR COMPARISON

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
<b>Total income incl. interest income and similar profit items (SEK thousands)</b>	<b>175,775</b>	<b>189,793</b>	<b>126,198</b>	<b>101,771</b>	<b>89,042</b>
Operating income	175,590	181,878	124,871	101,771	88,954
Profit/loss after financial items	-4,803	3,836	5,626	2,772	-1,335
Project expenses/total income	91%	95%	88%	86%	90%
Fundraising expenses/total income	5%	4%	6%	5%	4%
Administrative expenses/total income	5%	4%	3%	6%	7%
Equity ratio	11%	20%	11%	7%	8%

## INCOME STATEMENT

	Note	2023	2022
<i>Amounts in SEK</i>			
<b>Operating income</b>	3		
Membership dues		9,000	4,500
Donations		23,113,176	22,805,099
Grants		152,377,207	159,054,241
<b>Net turnover</b>		<b>175,499,383</b>	<b>181,863,840</b>
Other income		90,959	13,964
<b>Total operating income</b>		<b>175,590,342</b>	<b>181,877,804</b>
<b>Operating expenses</b>	4, 5		
Project expenses	6	-159,283,282	-172,269,482
Fundraising expenses		-9,311,477	-7,175,411
Administrative expenses	7	-9,072,351	-6,501,527
<b>Total operating expenses</b>		<b>-177,667,110</b>	<b>-185,946,420</b>
<b>Operating profit/loss</b>		<b>-2,076,768</b>	<b>-4,068,616</b>
Other interest income and similar profit items	8	184,819	7,915,461
Interest expenses and similar loss items	8	-2,911,381	-10,846
<b>Total profit from financial investments</b>		<b>-2,726,563</b>	<b>7,904,615</b>
<b>Profit/loss after financial items</b>		<b>-4,803,330</b>	<b>3,835,999</b>
<b>Profit/loss for the year</b>		<b>-4,803,330</b>	<b>3,835,999</b>

## BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	Note	Amounts in SEK	
		2023-12-31	2022-12-31
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
<b>Tangible fixed assets</b>			
Movables, equipment, and installations	9	1,175,438	1,496,012
<b>Total tangible fixed assets</b>		<b>1,175,438</b>	<b>1,496,012</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
<b>Current receivables</b>			
Accounts receivable		969,638	34,177
Other receivables		7,348,560	2,822,809
Prepaid expenses and accrued income	10	3,379,025	2,479,945
<b>Total current receivables</b>		<b>11,697,223</b>	<b>5,336,931</b>
<b>Cash and bank balances</b>		<b>78,976,730</b>	<b>70,948,777</b>
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>90,673,953</b>	<b>76,285,709</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>91,849,391</b>	<b>77,781,721</b>
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Equity</b>			
Special purpose funds		0	0
Fund balances		10,447,720	15,251,050
<b>Total equity</b>		<b>10,447,720</b>	<b>15,251,050</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Accounts payable		4,401,406	2,365,868
Liabilities – received, unutilised grants	11	66,805,460	49,002,503
Other liabilities		2,214,716	2,151,560
Accrued expenses and deferred income	12	7,980,089	9,010,740
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>81,401,671</b>	<b>62,530,671</b>
<b>Total equity and liabilities</b>		<b>91,849,391</b>	<b>77,781,721</b>

## CHANGE IN EQUITY

	Special purpose funds (Emergency fund)	Profit brought forward	<i>Amounts in SEK</i> Total equity
<b>Opening balance 2023-01-01</b>	0	15,251,050	15,251,050
Special purpose funds designated by donor	0	0	0
Special purpose funds utilised from previous years	0	0	0
Result of the year	0	-4,803,330	-4,803,330
<b>Closing balance 2023-12-31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,447,720</b>	<b>10,447,720</b>

Around the world there are brave people who stand up for the rights of others without giving their own safety a second thought. The emergency fund enables us to help these people in vulnerable and urgent situations.

## CASH FLOW ANALYSIS – INDIRECT METHOD

	2023-01-01 –2023-12-31	2022-01-01 –2022-12-31
<b>Operating activities</b>		
<b>Operating profit/loss</b>	-2,076,768	-4,068,616
Adjustments for non-cash transactions		
Depreciation expenses	320,574	289,113
Interest received	184,819	220,723
Interest paid	-10,898	-9,515
Income tax paid	0	0
<b>Cash flow from operating activities before changes in working capital</b>	<b>-1,582,274</b>	<b>-3,568,295</b>
<b>Changes in working capital</b>		
Change in accounts receivable	-935,461	121,271
Change in other current receivables	-5,424,830	-855,019
Change in accounts payable	2,035,538	-2,951,616
Change in other current liabilities	16,835,462	-29,292,086
<b>Cash flow from operating activities</b>	<b>10,928,435</b>	<b>-36,545,745</b>
<b>Investment activities</b>		
Acquisition of tangible fixed assets	0	-544,594
<b>Cash flow from investment activities</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-544,594</b>
<b>Cash flow for the year</b>	<b>10,928,435</b>	<b>-37,090,339</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year</b>	<b>70,948,778</b>	<b>100,345,709</b>
<b>Exchange rate differences related to cash and bank balances</b>	<b>-2,900,483</b>	<b>7,693,407</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at year end</b>	<b>78,976,730</b>	<b>70,948,778</b>

## NOTES

### NOTE 1 ACCOUNTING AND VALUATION POLICIES

The organisation's accounting and valuation policies comply with the Swedish Annual Accounts Act, BFNAR 2012:1 (K3) and Giva Sverige's governing guidelines for annual reports.

#### INCOME STATEMENT

##### Operating income

Only the inflow of financial benefits that Civil Rights Defenders has received or will receive for its own account is recognised as income. Unless stated otherwise below, income is valued at the fair value of what has been received or will be received. Membership dues comprise payments received for membership of Civil Rights Defenders. Membership dues are recognised as income when payments are received from the members. A transaction in which Civil Rights Defenders receives an asset or a service with a value attached, without providing anything of the same value in return, constitutes a donation or a grant. If the asset or service is received because Civil Rights Defenders has met or will meet certain conditions, and the organisation has an obligation to repay the counterparty if such conditions are not met, such an asset or service is classified as a grant. If it does not constitute a grant, it is a donation. Donations are mainly funds raised from private individuals, companies, and organisations. Donations are reported on a cash basis, but if a donation refers to a specific time period, it is allocated to that period through provisions for special purpose funds in equity. If there are donations from companies and organisations that have been agreed but not received at the reporting date, these are recognised as income following individual assessment.

Grants are recognised as income when the conditions attached to them have been met. Grants received are recognised as a liability until the conditions attached to them have been met. This means that income is only recognised when it is highly probable that the grant will not be reclaimed. Grants forwarded to partner organisations where Civil Rights Defenders is responsible to the awarding body are also recognised as income. Grants consist mainly of cash and cash equivalents from public bodies, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), MUCF, National Endowment for Democracy, and the Swedish Postcode Lottery. Income not connected to Civil Rights Defenders' primary operations is reported under Other income for the respective period.

##### Operating expenses

Operating expenses include project expenses, fundraising expenses, and administrative expenses. Joint expenses such as IT, accounting, operational management, and communication expenses are allocated to project expenses, fundraising expenses, and administrative expenses according to an allocation key. Project expenses are those that are directly associated with the fulfilment of Civil Rights Defenders' purpose according to its statutes. These include expenses for personnel engaged to carry out activities adopted by the board, in and outside of Sweden, and any administrative expenses directly arising from the obligations the organisation has assumed in order to fulfil its purpose. Project expenses also include expenses for opinion-shaping and information activities regarding Civil Rights Defenders' mission. The monitoring, reporting, and auditing of projects are also classified as project expenses. Project expenses also include distributed activity-related support expenses, which are allocated to the relevant activity using allocation keys. Fundraising expenses are expenses intended to generate external income in the form of donations and grants from all donors and grant-awarding bodies, i.e. both private individuals and companies. This includes existing donors and efforts to identify new donors through campaigns, mailings, and maintenance of

donor registers. This includes costs for printed materials, postage, and payroll expenses. Fundraising expenses also include shared support expenses. Administrative expenses are those needed to run and administer the organisation. The administration constitutes a quality guarantee for both the purpose and the donor. Examples of such costs are board meetings and annual meetings, accounting and the preparation of the annual report, handling of salaries and social security contributions, VAT and tax declarations, audit of the organisation itself and the Giva Sverige quality code, and administrative systems such as accounting systems, supplier ledgers, and facility registers. Expenses not related to projects or fundraising are classified as administrative expenses. Administrative expenses may also include any joint support expenses that have not been allocated to project, fundraising, or membership expenses. All leases are recognised as operating leases, which means that lease payments are recognised on a straight line basis over the term of the lease. Remuneration of employees in the form of salaries, social security contributions, and other benefits are recognised as an expense as and when the employees perform the services. Pension obligations are classified as defined-contribution pensions and recognised as an expense in the year in which the pension is earned. Civil Rights Defenders is a non-profit association and as such is not liable to pay taxes.

#### BALANCE SHEET

Assets and liabilities are measured at cost unless otherwise stated below. Foreign currency receivables and liabilities are measured at the closing rate. Accounts receivable are measured individually at the amounts expected to be received. Civil Rights Defenders is a non-profit association – it does not aim to make a profit and has no external owners – which means that terms such as profit/loss and equity have a different meaning than for other legal forms, such as limited companies. Equity comprises funds, such as donations, that have been provided to enable the organisation to fulfil its purposes and have not been paid out at the reporting date, and for which there is no legally binding obligation classified as a liability or provision. As there are restrictions on the use of various funds, the following division is made:

- **Special purpose funds:** This capital may be used, but only for the purpose(s) specified by the donor. Such funds are generally used in the following financial year. The funds include fundraising donations where a specific project was specified, and which have not yet been utilised.
- **Equity carried forward:** This capital consists mainly of unused funds that have been provided to the organisation without restrictions, as well as the organisation's profit or loss. Unused funds that have been provided to the organisation without restrictions are at the disposal of the board and may be used in accordance with the organisation's statutes and to fulfil the organisation's purposes. The profit or loss for the year (before appropriation), as recognised in the income statement, represents the difference between operating income, operating expenses, and profit from financial activities.

### NOTE 2 ACCOUNTING ESTIMATES

No material items in the organisation's income statement and balance sheet are based on estimates and assessments.

Amounts in SEK

**NOTE 3 FUNDS RAISED**

<b>Donations recognised in the income statement</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Funds raised</b>		
The general public	9,129,805	9,691,684
Inheritance and wills	866,011	50,000
Companies:		
Swedish Postcode Lottery	10,000,000	10,000,000
Other companies	1,681,656	2,234,566
Other organisations	1,190,517	531,016
External foundations	245,187	297,834
<b>Total funds raised (a)</b>	<b>23,113,176</b>	<b>22,805,099</b>

Pro-bono services received have not been recognised in the income statement and in 2023 mainly related to services within data communication, advertising, and law (b).

<b>Grants recognised as income</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Funds raised (grants according to private law)</b>		
Foundations and organisations:		
Open Society Foundations	19,555,841	17,062,082
National Endowment for Democracy	1,709,938	2,881,539
CIVICUS	2,422,192	3,657,980
Gerald & Monica Naglers stiftelse	1,226,789	1,409,218
Stiftelsen Natur & Kultur	856,686	272,990
Hugo Stenbecks Stiftelse	343,034	0
International Federation for Human Rights	442,884	0
AIRE Center	263,307	839,880
The Foundation for Democracy & Pluralism	1,044,125	1,336,100
Other	1,117,100	910,450
Companies:		
Swedish Postcode Lottery	6,998,124	3,990,530
META	8,219,443	2,417,501
Coca Cola	0	1,078,420
Grindr	0	912,379
IKEA	0	547,101
Other	11,635	562,368
<b>Total funds raised (c)</b>	<b>44,211,098</b>	<b>37,878,539</b>
<b>Public grants</b>		
Sida – Strategic Partner Organisation	59,734,170	69,378,644
Sida	42,659,986	36,224,178
Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs	0	7,408,475
Swedish Inheritance Fund	972,422	3,252,553
MUCF	1,634,526	1,917,463
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Germany	12,694	909,244
Balkan Trust for Democracy	5,736	601,701
Swedish Institute	2,415,970	328,836
Erasmus	508,552	13,013
Other	222,053	1,141,593
<b>Total public grants (d)</b>	<b>108,166,109</b>	<b>121,175,702</b>

The donor "AIRE Center" has been classified as a contribution under private law in 2023, and formed part of public grants (EU) in the annual report for 2022. AIRE Center is a private law organisation with close links to the EU. The donor "Stiftelsen Natur och Kultur" formed part of "Other" contributions in the 2022 annual report.

<b>Total funds raised comprise the following</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Donations recognised in the income statement (a)	23,113,176	22,805,099
Donations not recognised in the income statement (b)	100,000	150,000
Grants in accordance with private law recognised as income (c)	44,211,098	37,878,539
<b>Total funds raised</b>	<b>67,424,273</b>	<b>60,833,638</b>



Amounts in SEK

<b>NOTE 4 SALARIES, OTHER BENEFITS, AND SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Salaries</b>		
Board of Directors	–	–
Executive Director	1,145,046	1,093,497
Other employees	43,930,576	40,276,961
Social security contributions	13,577,058	12,771,946
Pension expenses	4,161,729	3,900,363
<b>Total salaries and benefits</b>	<b>62,814,410</b>	<b>58,042,766</b>

The Executive Director's pension expenses accounted for SEK 358,529 (SEK 413,314) of total pension expenses.

The period of notice between Civil Rights Defenders and the Executive Director is six months. There is no severance agreement.

Remuneration below one half of the base amount totalled SEK 16,898 (SEK 28,908) and relates to expert groups within projects.

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Geographical breakdown of salaries and other benefits:</b>		
Sweden	31 096 425	29,252,899
Other countries	7 799 241	7,384,845
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 895 666</b>	<b>36,637,744</b>
<b>Average number of employees, Sweden</b>		
Men	23	23
Women	51	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Average number of employees, other countries</b>		
Men	11	13
Women	17	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Members of the board</b>		
Men	3	3
Women	6	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Directors</b>		
Men	3	3
Women	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

## NOTE 5 LEASES

Civil Rights Defenders mainly rents office premises in Sweden and in other parts of the world. Expenses for the year amounted to SEK 5,913,542.

Future office expenses are due as follows:

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Within 1 year	5 225 217	4,673,978
2–5 years	9 101 862	12,399,279
After 5 years	0	0

As of 1 September 2020, Civil Rights Defenders has signed a seven-year lease with a new landlord for our offices in Stockholm. The notice period for the contract is 12 months and the extension period is three years. From December 2020, Civil Rights Defenders transitioned to leasing its computers. The expenses for the periods of '2–5 years' and 'After 5 years' are not index-adjusted.

Amounts in SEK

**NOTE 6 PROJECT EXPENSES**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Africa	18,379,899	15,540,710
Asia	8,934,550	8,939,983
Eurasia	35,677,655	35,610,479
Europe	29,003,200	36,838,180
Latin America	15,743,448	17,856,914
Security and Innovation	25,015,641	26,684,731
Sweden	16,096,598	18,463,494
Global	8,373,296	9,264,062
Other	2,058,994	3,070,930
<b>Total project expenses</b>	<b>159,283,282</b>	<b>172,269,482</b>

**NOTE 7 ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Accounting expenses and administration	771,436	687,265
Human resource expenses	5,396,616	4,189,926
Project management and financial management systems	652,899	479,850
Office expenses	2,178,793	1,035,106
Board and membership expenses	72,607	109,378
<b>Total administrative expenses</b>	<b>9,072,351</b>	<b>6,501,526</b>

**NOTE 8 OTHER INTEREST AND SIMILAR PROFIT/LOSS ITEMS**

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Interest income	184,819	220,723
Interest expenses	-10,898	-9,515
Exchange rate differences, cash and bank balances	-2,900,483	7,693,407
<b>Total</b>	<b>-2,726,563</b>	<b>7,904,615</b>

**NOTE 9 MOVABLES, EQUIPMENT, AND INSTALLATIONS**

	<b>2023-12-31</b>	<b>2022-12-31</b>
Opening acquisition cost	2,048,271	1,503,677
Purchase costs		544,594
Closing accumulated acquisition costs	2,048,271	2,048,271
Opening accumulated depreciation	-552,259	-263,146
Depreciation for the year	-320,574	-289,113
Closing accumulated depreciation	-872,833	-552,259
Closing carrying value	1,175,438	1,496,012
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,175,438</b>	<b>1,496,012</b>

Depreciation as per schedule is calculated based on a useful life of seven years.

**NOTE 10 PREPAID EXPENSES AND ACCRUED INCOME**

	<b>2023-12-31</b>	<b>2022-12-31</b>
Prepaid expenses:		
Rent	960,352	909,858
Rent deposits	1,273,745	1,273,745
Other items	1,144,928	296,343
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,379,025</b>	<b>2,479,946</b>

Amounts in SEK

**NOTE 11 LIABILITIES – RECEIVED, UNUTILISED GRANTS**

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Liability, unutilised grant from Sida	25,844,359	9,059,146
Sida Strategic Partner Organisation	-2,458,289	-3,224,120
Open Society Foundation	16,322,775	12,653,643
Liability, unutilised grant from the Swedish Postcode Lottery	20,541,550	8,035,674
Liability, unutilised grant from others	6,555,067	22,478,161
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,805,460</b>	<b>49,002,503</b>

**NOTE 12 ACCRUED EXPENSES AND DEFERRED INCOME**

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Accrued social security contributions	1,566,388	1,684,469
Holiday pay liability	5,135,300	5,349,109
Other items	1,278,400	1,977,162
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,980,089</b>	<b>9,010,740</b>

**NOTE 13 PLEDGED ASSETS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES**

There are no pledged assets and contingent liabilities.

**NOTE 14 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFTER THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR**

At the beginning of December 2023, the organisation was informed by Sida that the SPO agreement would not be extended before the Swedish government presented its new CSO strategy. This was adopted by the government on 1 February 2024. Sida then awaited its new appropriations letter before any agreement could be signed with the organisation. The agreement was signed on 19 March 2024 and is valid from 1 February to 31 December 2024. The organisation needs to be adapted accordingly.

In light of the considerable uncertainty surrounding a new SPO agreement and the fact that the business has had a negative operating profit for the past two years, the organisation issued institutional advance notification in March 2024 in respect of eight roles. Negotiations with the union begin in April and are expected to be completed in the spring.

*This annual report has been signed digitally.*  
Stockholm, on the date stated by our electronic signatures

**Hanna Gerdes**  
Chair

**Anne Ramberg**  
Board Member

**Caroline Thunved**  
Board Member

**Christian Åhlund**  
Board Member

**Lars Häggström**  
Board Member

**Lena Svensson**  
Board Member

**Noura Berrouba**  
Board Member

**Ulla Andrén**  
Board Member

**Niclas Kjellström-Matseke**  
Board Member

**Anders Pettersson**  
Executive Director

Our auditor's report was submitted on the date stated by my electronic signature  
**Grant Thornton Sweden AB**

**Rebecca Ersryd**  
Authorised public accountant

# AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS,  
CORPORATE IDENTITY NUMBER 802011-1442

## REPORT ON THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

### Opinions

We have audited the annual accounts of Civil Rights Defenders for the year 2023. The association's annual accounts are included on pages 28–43 of this document.

In our opinion, the annual accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Swedish Annual Accounts Act and present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Civil Rights Defenders as of 31 December 2023 and its financial performance and cash flow for the year then ended in accordance with the Swedish Annual Accounts Act. The statutory administration report is consistent with the other parts of the annual accounts.

We therefore recommend that the annual general meeting adopts the income statement and the balance sheet.

### Basis for Opinions

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA) and generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities* section. We are independent of Civil Rights Defenders in accordance with professional ethics for accountants in Sweden and have otherwise fulfilled our ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions.

### Other matters

The audit of the annual accounts for 2022 was performed by another auditor who submitted an auditor's report dated May 16th 2023, with unmodified opinions in the Report on the annual accounts.

### Other Information than the annual accounts

This document also contains other information than the annual accounts and is found on pages 1–27 and 46–48. The Board of Directors and the Executive Director are responsible for this other information.

Our opinion on the annual accounts does not cover this other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion regarding this other information.

In connection with our audit of the annual accounts, our responsibility is to read the information identified above and consider whether the information is materially inconsistent with the annual accounts. In this procedure we also take into account our knowledge otherwise obtained in the audit and assess whether the information otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If we, based on the work performed concerning this information, conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

### Responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director

The Board of Directors and the Executive Director are responsible for the preparation of the annual accounts and that they give a fair presentation in accordance with the Annual Accounts Act. The Board of Directors and Executive Director are also responsible for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of annual accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the annual accounts, The Board of Directors and the Executive Director are responsible for the assessment of the association's ability to continue as a going concern. They disclose, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting. The going concern basis of accounting is however not applied if the Board of Directors and the Executive Director intend to liquidate the association, to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor's responsibility

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual accounts as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinions. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs and generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these annual accounts.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the annual accounts, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of the association's internal control relevant to our audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board of Directors and the Executive Director.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Board of Directors' and the Executive Director's use of the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the annual accounts. We also draw a conclusion, based on the audit evidence obtained, as to whether any material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the annual accounts or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion about the annual accounts. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the annual accounts, including the disclosures, and whether the annual accounts represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We must inform the Board of Directors of, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit. We must also inform of significant audit findings during our audit, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identified.

## REPORT ON OTHER LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

### Opinions

In addition to our audit of the annual accounts, we have also audited the administration of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director of Civil Rights Defenders for the year 2023.

We recommend to the annual general meeting that the members of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director be discharged from liability for the financial year.

### Basis for Opinions

We conducted the audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities* section. We are independent of Civil Rights Defenders in accordance with professional ethics for accountants in Sweden and have otherwise fulfilled our ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions.

### Responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director

The Board of Directors and the Executive Director are responsible for the administration of the association's affairs.

### Auditor's responsibility

Our objective concerning the audit of the administration, and thereby our opinion about discharge from liability, is to obtain audit evidence to assess with a reasonable degree of assurance whether any member of the Board of Directors or the Executive Director in any material respect has undertaken any action or been guilty of any omission which can give rise to liability to the association.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden will always detect actions or omissions that can give rise to liability to the association.

As part of an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards in Sweden, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. The examination of the administration is based primarily on the audit of the accounts. Additional audit procedures performed are based on our professional judgment with starting point in risk and materiality. This means that we focus the examination on such actions, areas and relationships that are material for the operations and where deviations and violations would have particular importance for the association's situation. We examine and test decisions undertaken, support for decisions, actions taken and other circumstances that are relevant to our opinion concerning discharge from liability.

Stockholm, on the date in the electronic signature.

Ernst & Young AB

**Rebecca Ersryd**

*Authorised Public Accountant*

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Hanna Gerdes**  
*international lawyer (Chair)*

Hanna Gerdes has worked nationally and internationally for 20 years to strengthen the protection of human rights and influence the development of society. Hanna is a lawyer in international law and has previously worked in strategic management and development roles at the Swedish Armed Forces, the Human Rights Fund, the Prime Minister's Office and the Equality Ombudsman. Hanna has extensive experience in board work, with organisations such as RFSU and Forum Syd. She has also been a member of the Swedish Committee on Constitutional Damages and has authored several books and publications on human rights. Hanna was awarded the Diversity Index Award 2018.



**Ulla Andrén**  
*(Board Member)*

Ulla Andrén has worked with aid and diplomacy for more than 40 years, mainly within Sida and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a geographical focus on Africa and Eastern Europe. Among other roles, Ulla has been head of department at Sida, as well as the Swedish ambassador to Mozambique. During the past five years, she has worked as an aid advisor for regional development co-operation in Africa at the Swedish embassy in Addis Ababa. Ulla has also worked with efficiency audits at the Swedish National Audit Office. In total, she has lived and worked in Africa for nearly 20 years.



**Noura Berrouba**  
*President LSU – The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (Board Member)*

Noura Berrouba works with democracy and human rights issues, focusing on the participation, involvement, and organisation of children and young people. She is the working president of LSU – the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, the platform for the Swedish youth movement. She has previously worked at the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa and with Sweden's permanent delegation to the EU. Noura has worked in several national and international contexts with democracy, human rights, and peace and security.



**Lars Haggström**  
*Senior advisor, IMD Business School (Board Member)*

Lars Haggström is Executive in Residence at IMD Business School in Lausanne, Switzerland, where he works with clients and is a lecturer and researcher in leadership and change. He is also the founder and CEO of the corporate and personal development company Enable Performance AB. Lars previously worked as HR Director of the renewable materials company Stora Enso, and before that as HR Director of Nordea. He has also worked in the pharmaceutical industry in the UK and the US. Lars has a degree in Behavioural Science and Economics from Uppsala University.



**Niclas Kjellström-Matseke**  
*(Board Member)*

Niclas Kjellström-Matseke is a Swedish business leader, board professional, and international investor with his own investment company. He was previously CEO of Novamedia/the Swedish Postcode Lottery from its inception in 2005 until 2016. Niclas has a particular focus on sustainable business and the UN's work with sustainable development goals. He also sits on the boards of several international, non-profit organisations, including as chair of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, and as a board member of the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Forest Whitaker's Peace & Development Initiative, and Robert F. Kennedy's Human Rights Foundation.



**Anne Ramberg**  
*Lawyer (Board Member)*

Anne Ramberg is a lawyer who worked at law firms for over two decades, including 13 years with her own firm. Between 2000 and 2019, she served as Secretary-General of the Swedish Bar Association. She holds numerous positions, including Chair of the Board of Uppsala University, Stiftelsen Expo, and Co-Chair of the IBAHRI. She also serves as conciliator and alternate member of the Bureau of the OSCE, as board member of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, the Southern African Litigation Center, and as ad hoc judge at the European Court of Human Rights. She has been a member of the Ethical Review Board at the Swedish National Police Board and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.



**Lena Svensson**  
*Economist, senior advisor focusing on the nonprofit sector (Board Member)*

Lena Svensson is a former certified public accountant and partner at PwC. She has several years of experience as an accountant and advisor in the non-profit sector and has, among other things, worked with organisations within the fundraising and international development sectors. Beyond leading numerous audit teams, Lena has held several leadership roles within PwC as group manager and business area manager and has been responsible for developing PwC's non-profit sector department. Lena currently holds several board positions and works as a consultant, specialising in associations and foundations.



**Caroline Thunved**  
*CEO Swedish Communication Association (Board Member)*

Caroline Thunved has more than 25 years of experience working in communication, marketing, and business development in both civil society and private industry. Caroline is CEO of the Swedish Communication Association. She has extensive experience in leadership positions and has previously worked at Save the Children Sweden, the Guides and Scouts of Sweden, and the Employers' Organisation IDEA. She ranked high on Resumé's top list of Supercommunicators and won the Stora Kommunikatörspriest in 2016.



**Christian Åhlund**  
*Lawyer (Board Member)*

Christian Åhlund has been a member of the Swedish Bar Association since 1983 with a focus on international humanitarian law, labour law, and criminal proceedings. Christian was a driving force behind the founding of the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) in 2002 and acted as its Executive Director until 2015. Christian has previously chaired the Swedish Bar Association's Committee on Human Rights and the European joint Human Rights Committee within the CCBE (Conseil Consultatif des Barreaux Européens). Between 2005 and 2020 he represented Sweden on the Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), serving as its chair between 2014 and 2018.

# DEPARTMENTS AND REGIONAL OFFICES AT THE END OF 2023

## HEAD OFFICE STOCKHOLM (SWEDEN)

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Anders L. Pettersson, *Executive Director*

Östgötagatan 90, SE-116 64 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +46(0)8-545 277 30, Email: info@crd.org

## DEPARTMENTS, HEAD OFFICE

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### Global Department

Gabrielle Gunneberg, *Director Global Department*

### Africa Department

Mesfin Bekele, *Director Africa Department*

### Asia Department

Rosanna Ocampo, *Director Asia Department*

### Eurasia Department

Helen Rask, *Director Eurasia Department*

### Europe and MENA Department

Goran Miletic, *Director Europe and MENA Department  
and Acting Director Global Department*

### Latin America Department

Erik Jennische, *Director Latin America Department*

### Legal Department (incl. activities in Sweden)

John Stauffer, *Legal Director and Deputy Executive  
Director*

### Security and Innovation Department

Annica Ekfeldt Renberg, *Acting Security and  
Innovation Director*

### Communications Department

Maria Granefelt, *Communications Director*

### Finance and Operations Department

Karin Ancker, *Chief Financial Officer*

### Fundraising and Partnerships Department

Anna Magnard, *Development Director*

## REGIONAL OFFICES/STATIONINGS

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### AFRICA

Email: africa@crd.org

### ASIA

Email: asia@crd.org

### BELGRADE, SERBIA

Kralja Milana 10/5, 11,000 Belgrade, Serbia  
Phone: +381 11 2686 894,  
Email: belgrade@crd.org

### BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Wework Usaquén, Cra. 7 # 116-50,  
Usaquén, Bogota, Colombia  
Email: bogota@crd.org

### BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Rue de la Pépinière 1, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium  
Email: brussels@crd.org

### ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Email: istanbul@crd.org

### JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

Plot no: 27, Hai Malakal, Juba, South Sudan  
Email: africa@crd.org

### PRISTINA, KOSOVO

Sheshi Zahir Pajaziti 62 5/25, 10000 Prishtina, Kosovo  
Phone: +383 49 44 66 33  
Email: pristina@crd.org

### SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Pehlivanuša 1/2, 71,000 Sarajevo,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Phone: +387 33 558 515  
Email: sarajevo.office@crd.org

### TBLISI, GEORGIA

Email: eurasia@crd.org

### TIRANA, ALBANIA

Rruga Pjetër Bogdani, Pallati Teuta No. 12 Kati 6,  
Ap 26, Tirana, Albania  
Phone: +355 69 703 1692  
Email: tirana.albania@crd.org

# JOIN US AND SUPPORT THE BRAVEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

Civil Rights Defenders is an international human rights organisation founded in Sweden in 1982. We work for and together with thousands of human rights defenders who fight for democracy and respect for people's civil and political rights across the world. Our task is to make sure that they can be safer, smarter, and faster in their work. We engage in advocacy activities and legal processes, and provide information on the human rights situation globally. With your support, we can accomplish even more.



## SUPPORT US

with a private donation, become a monthly donor or make a corporate donation. Please visit [crd.org/support-us](https://crd.org/support-us) for more information.

## COMPANIES

Do you share our values and want to positively develop your business with respect for human rights? Contact us to discuss how we can set up a partnership.

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