Freedom Now protects the right to liberty and the exercise of fundamental freedoms by helping free prisoners of conscience all over the world.

We are devoted to working on behalf of critical voices who are wrongly detained for peacefully exercising fundamental rights, like individual expression and belief and the right to associate and assemble.

It is because of their courage and commitment to human rights in the face of harsh punishment that our clients are imprisoned, and we provide essential help on their behalf – working in the courts and mobilizing an influential international community to obtain their release.

“Freedom Now restores voices. When I was imprisoned hundreds of miles from my friends and family, Freedom Now carried my voice to chambers of legal bodies, the halls of U.S. Congress, and phones and computer screens.

They speak for activists, journalists, and all individuals that governments have silenced.”

*Biram Dah Abeid, anti-slavery activist and former Freedom Now client*
Every day in countries around the world authoritarian governments imprison artists, activists, journalists, doctors, lawyers, academics, politicians and other independent voices. Once arrested, these individuals are brought before corrupt and biased courts in which rule of law is ignored and the outcome – their guilt – is predetermined.

I understand very well what it is like to be persecuted and wrongly imprisoned. I have spent a good deal of my life as a political prisoner in the Maldives, the country of my birth and where I served as its first democratically elected president between 2008-2012. Most recently, I was imprisoned in February 2015 for nearly one year after being arrested on fabricated charges intended to silence me. Freedom Now helped me and I am honored to now serve as their Honorary Co-Chair along with Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In this new role, I am delighted to share with you Freedom Now’s 2016 Annual Report. The report chronicles Freedom Now’s accomplishments over the past year, not least of which was the release of 19 prisoners of conscience. Human rights defenders, lawyers, and civil society activists will return to their communities in Azerbaijan, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, and Vietnam, prepared to defend democracy and bring to light government abuses.

Sadly, the report also serves as a reminder that human rights and civil society are under assault throughout the world. Thousands of individuals remain in prison in countries such as China, Ethiopia, Iran, Rwanda, and Uzbekistan. It is a stark reminder that Freedom Now’s mission could not be more timely or essential.

I hope you will find Freedom Now’s work as important and inspirational as I have, for none of the accomplishments over the past year would have been possible without your support. I encourage you to join me and Freedom Now in embarking on another year dedicated to ending arbitrary detention and restoring the rule of law.

Sincerely,

President Mohamed Nasheed
Honorary Co-Chair
Freedom Now
DEFENDING THE DEFENDERS
IN THE COURTS

We obtain justice for those wrongly accused and imprisoned by exposing persecution, restoring the dignity of their innocence, and securing their release.

Freedom Now, along with our pro bono legal teams, provide expert legal advice and representation before international courts and bodies, where we have won every case submitted.

We not only help individual victims, we partner with other organizations and local lawyers to engage in strategic litigation that addresses the root causes of arbitrary detention and systemic repression.

Our international pro bono partners contributed 2,082 pro bono hours in 2015.

The European Court of Human Rights is one of several regional human rights mechanisms.

(Photo/Council of Europe)
The key to a prison door is the weight of an international community bearing down on its wardens.

Freedom Now mobilizes influential officials, ambassadors, decision makers, and key institutions on behalf of our clients and on issues of critical importance to our clients and their communities, such as the fundamental rights to association, expression, and belief.

Freedom Now leads a May 2016 protest in front of the White House calling for the release of prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan.

(Photo/Freedom Now/2016)
After a public letter from the Sport for Rights’ campaign to several prominent artists detailing Azerbaijan’s human rights abuses, musician Pharrell Williams led a chant of “freedom” when he performed in Baku in June 2016.
(Photographer/Variety/2016)
Three weeks after Freedom Now and partners staged a demonstration in front of the Qatari embassy in Washington, DC, poet Mohammed al-Ajami was released from prison.

(Photo/Freedom Now/2016)
Defending the Defenders

In the Media

Repressive regimes operate in darkness. We shine a light and spread awareness about human rights abuses and repressive actions, telling the stories of our clients and their struggles.

By raising the profile of our work and our clients in the media, we can facilitate effective high level advocacy.

Senior Program Attorney Kate Barth participates in a press conference with Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) regarding arbitrary detention in Vietnam

(Photo/Freedom Now/2016)

Freedom Now’s Founder, Jared Genser penned an op-ed for the Wall Street Journal on how the US Congress could help jailed Chinese democracy activist, Liu Xiaobo
BY THE NUMBERS:
WHO WE’VE HELPED IN 2016

5 individuals jailed for religious beliefs, practices or advocacy
9 journalists imprisoned for reporting
19 human rights defenders jailed for advocacy
10 politicians jailed for roles in opposition
16 targeted for political beliefs or civil activism

working within 17 countries
representing 62 individuals
helping to free 29 clients
It was a momentous year for civil society in Azerbaijan with the release of 12 individuals whose cases Freedom Now gave considerable attention. All had been arrested and convicted on politically motivated charges in the last three years when Azerbaijan's crackdown on civil society and critical voices peaked.

Operating independently and as part of the Sport for Rights coalition, a coalition of more than 25 global organizations, we worked steadily to bring to light Azerbaijan’s human rights abuses. From providing legal assistance on individual cases submitted to the European Court of Human Rights and organizing congressional briefings and advocacy delegations in the United States and Europe to mobilizing celebrity action during the recent Baku-hosted Formula One European Grand Prix and helping to organize 40 protests in 40 cities, Freedom Now has dedicated itself to addressing human rights in Azerbaijan; efforts that have brought about the release of those most needed in society.

While we celebrate the releases of some of Azerbaijan’s most vital voices, there are dozens still who remain illegally detained in Azerbaijan, more being arrested, and those released facing threats and harassment. We continue to fight for their freedom and help bring democratic reform to Azerbaijan.
THE ISLAND PRESIDENT, IMPRISONED

“I WAS IMPRISONED IN FEBRUARY 2015 FOR NEARLY ONE YEAR AFTER BEING ARRESTED ON FABRICATED CHARGES INTENDED TO SILENCE ME. FREEDOM NOW HELPED ME.”

After nearly one year in prison in harsh conditions, Mohamed Nasheed – the Maldives’ first democratically elected president – was released in January and allowed to travel to the United Kingdom where he lives currently with his wife and daughters.

Freedom Now partnered with human rights lawyers Amal Clooney of Doughty Street Chambers, Ben Emmerson of Matrix Chambers, and Freedom Now founder Jared Genser to take and win President Nasheed’s case at the UN. We obtained the powerful support of policymakers and officials in the US, UK, throughout Europe and the Commonwealth as well as high ranking UN officials.

From abroad, President Nasheed continues to call for respect for the rule of law in his home country and to address global issues of crisis, like Islamic extremism and climate change.
Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdane, and Djiby Sow are anti-slavery activists. They were arrested in November 2014 during a peaceful demonstration about the Mauritanian government’s unwillingness to stop rampant slavery in the county and its mistreatment of at-risk members of society. Djiby was granted medical release in June 2015 and allowed to travel to France for life-saving surgery for which Freedom Now raised $12,000.

In May 2016, Biram and Brahim were released after nearly 18 months in prison, time spent in abysmal prison conditions, sweltering heat, and hundreds of miles from their families. Freedom Now hosted the two men in Washington, DC as they came to collect the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes Award. Together, we combed the halls of the US Congress to build support for their efforts to combat slavery.

In October 2016, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled the detention of Biram, Brahim and Djiby violated international law based on the legal case made by Freedom Now.

IN 1981, MAURITANIA BECAME THE LAST COUNTRY TO ABOLISH SLAVERY.

ACCORDING TO THE GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX, HOWEVER, OVER 43,000 PEOPLE - ROUGHLY 1% OF THE POPULATION, STILL LIVE AS SLAVES.
THE IMPRISONED POET

“If we measured your might it wouldn't hold a candle to a constitution. We shed no tears for Ben Ali, nor any for his reign. It was nothing more than a moment in time for us, historical and dictatorial, a system of oppression, an era of autocracy.”

For this poem, the government of Qatar arrested poet student Mohammed al-Ajami and sentenced him to life in prison, later commuted to 15 years.

In February 2016, Freedom Now partnered with organizations, including English PEN, Amnesty International, and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) to collect petitions from thousands of people and to organize coordinated protests in London and Washington, DC at the Qatari embassies.

In the same month, we organized students of Cornell University, which has a satellite campus in Qatar, to issue an open letter to the university's acting president about the case. Less than one month after these targeted collective actions, Mohammed received a royal pardon and was released. He and his family now live in Dubai.

Father Nguyen Van Ly, a Catholic priest and democracy activist has spent more than two decades of his life in prison in Vietnam.

His cause: democracy, respect for human rights, and freedom of belief. We worked to free him ten years ago from illegal detention, and once again came to his defense when he was convicted of endangering state security in 2007 by calling for democratic reform in Vietnam.

Father Ly is now 70 years old. He has spent years in solitary confinement, and is in dire health – conditions that were ignored and exacerbated in prison. Freedom Now acted as his voice, from winning his case at the United Nation and mobilizing dozens of policymakers to repeatedly calling for his freedom to coordinating 19 NGOs to call on President Obama to raise his case before a trip to the country in May 2016. Days before President Obama’s visit, Father Ly received a special amnesty and was finally once again released from prison.

Still, Father Ly's mobility is restricted as his health is poor and the government keeps him mostly under house arrest. Until he is completely free, we will continue to work towards his freedom.
Uzbekistan is one of the world’s worst human rights violators. It has imprisoned thousands of prisoners of conscience, although the true number is unknown as the government has shut down nearly all independent media and civil society within the country.

It was in this environment that Bobomurod Razzakov, a successful farmer and human rights activist, operated. As the regional chair of Uzbekistan’s only official registered human rights organization, he worked to expose government corruption and human rights abuses in the farming community, often providing valuable information to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the BBC.

Bobomurod was arrested in July 2013 after repeated threats against him and his family. He was sentenced to four years in prison and held in conditions that exacerbated his already poor health conditions.

Freedom Now exposed the repressive tactics of the Uzbekistan government by filing a petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and submitting his case to the UN Special Rapporteur on health regarding the inhumane conditions Bobomurod was subjected to.

Bobomurod is one of the very few to be released from prison in Uzbekistan and the first since the death President Islam Karimov, who ruled the country since the fall of the Soviet Union. We continue to work for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Uzbekistan, many of whom have been imprisoned for over a decade.

Thousands of people write letters to President Obama every day, but few of them are sent to jail for it. That is exactly what happened to Omani activist Saed Jadad who wrote a letter in early 2015 to raise human rights violations in his country and express frustration over US leadership in the region.

For this letter, the monarchy sentenced Saed to three years in prison for “undermining the prestige of the state.” He was released from prison in September 2016.
In May 2015, Ethiopia held parliamentary elections in which the ruling party and its allies won 527 out of 527 seats. This perfect record might be admirable if it were not for the fact that the Ethiopian government has been using its anti-terrorism law to imprison political opposition leaders and stifle dissent.

In November 2015, peaceful protests in the Oromia region sparked a violent response by the government, resulting in thousands of arrests and over 200 deaths. Ethiopia is currently under a state of emergency, the rights of its citizens in serious jeopardy.

Freedom Now continues to engage on several cases in Ethiopia, including:

**Andualem Aragie, et al.**

We recently adopted the case of Andualem Aragie, one of the most prominent opposition leaders in the country, and six of his colleagues who have been in prison since 2011 serving sentences ranging from 16 years to life.

The men were charged under the anti-terrorism law and convicted on evidence that included little more than inaudible telephone conversations and heavily edited video statements. This is one of a series of cases we have taken on in Ethiopia, where the democratic process continues to be eroded.

**Eskinder Nega**

A prominent journalist and critic of the Ethiopian government, Eskinder has been arrested on eight different occasions since 2005. He was mostly recently arrested in September 2011 after publishing an online column criticizing the prosecution of journalists and dissidents under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Eskinder was sentenced to 18 years in prison under the very same proclamation. His wife and young son were able to escape to the United States, where they live today.
A decade ago if would have been impossible to consider that the Burmese government might release Aung San Suu Kyi, one of the world's most famous prisoners of conscience, from house arrest. However, this former Freedom Now client is now the de facto leader of her country. It is a remarkable transformation, yet Burma has much progress to make in the area of human rights.

This is demonstrated by the case of Zaw Zaw Latt and Pwint Phyu Latt. The two Muslim interfaith peace activists were arrested at the request of nationalist Buddhist group for their part in a peaceful demonstration and gift exchange. The two were eventually sentenced to four years in prison with hard labor for illegally entering Burma after a humanitarian trip and coming into contact with a secessionist group. We have adopted this case in order to seek protection for religious minorities in the country.

The residents of the Ksar settlement had lived peacefully in the capital city of Nouakchott for years, until they were violently relocated by the Mauritanian authorities in June 2016. IRA-Mauritania quickly came to the aid of the residents, organizing protests against the government's heavy handed response. Shortly after the protests, authorities hunted down 13 IRA-Mauritania members, taking them from their homes and pulling them from their cars. The arrests occurred the very same week that our former clients anti-slavery activists Biram Dah Abeid and Brahim Bilal Ramdane were in Washington, DC to receive an award from the U.S. State Department. It was two weeks before any of the 13 were seen again, this time at a hearing at which they were charged with inciting violence, belonging to a banned group, and aggression against security forces. At the hearing it was evident many of the IRA-Mauritania members had been subject to ill treatment and torture.

The activists were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 3 to 15 years in August 2016, after a trial in which they were not allowed to present a defense. In November 2016, an appeal court released 10 of the activists. Three still remain in prison.

Central Asia countries continue to use the specter of Islamic extremism as an excuse to imprison critics and human rights defenders.

In Uzbekistan, fish farmer Aramais Avakian was arrested in September 2015 for alleged ties to ISIS. This might be alarming, if not for the fact that he is a well-known Christian.

After he was abducted from his car by masked police officers, Aramais was kept incommunicado for nearly a month. When his family was finally able to see him he had suffered considerable weight loss and was brought into the court on a stretcher because he had a broken leg, most likely from torture.

He is currently serving a seven year sentence after a trial marred by a number of procedural violations and inconsistencies.

When Moroccan journalist Mohamed al-Bambary went to renew his identification card in August 2015, he likely expected to be met with bureaucracy, not handcuffs.

An article Mohamed wrote in 2011 about protests in Western Sahara that turned violent after government intervention prompted the Moroccan government to arrest him and sentence him to 18 years in prison.

Mohamed will be one of several journalists we represent, wrongly imprisoned for reporting the truth.
RAISING INDIVIDUAL VICTIMS
& WORKING TO ENHANCE ADVOCACY AT
THE UN

For the first time since being awarded special consultative status with the UN, Freedom Now presented to the 32nd UN Human Rights Council. Executive Director Maran Turner made the interventions personally and highlighted some of our most urgent cases: Dilmurod Saidov of Uzbekistan, Ilgar Mammadov of Azerbaijan, and Andualem Aragie of Ethiopia.

You can watch video clips of her statements on Freedom Now's website (click to view).

The Special Procedures branch of the Human Rights Council is among its most effective tools in addressing human rights violations.

Freedom Now contributed to the work of these special mandate holders, attending and contributing to conferences aimed at improving the work and knowledge of two essential bodies, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

The London Peace Talks are a forum for inspirational people to share their stories about making extraordinary contributions towards peace. Other notable speakers have included Roméo Dallaire, Forest Whitaker, and Raed al Saleh, head of White Helmets.

Executive Director Maran Turner participated in the first ever London Peace Talks in November 2016 to discuss how Freedom Now's innovative model contributes towards resolving conflict and building more peaceful societies.

A video of the talk is available on Peace Talks' website (click to view)
Freedom Now is a nonpartisan US and UK-based nonprofit organization that works to free prisoners of conscience through legal, political, and public relations advocacy. We serve individuals who have been wrongly imprisoned all over the world, seeking their freedom from detention and justice for the violation of their most sacred rights.

Staff

Maran Turner, Executive Director
Kate Barth, Senior Program Lawyer
Karl Horberg, Senior Program Officer
Hannah Kim, Legal Fellow
Katherine Wilshusen, Policy Fellow

Board of Directors

Desmond Tutu, Honorary Co-Chair
Mohamed Nasheed, Honorary Co-Chair

Jeremy Zucker, Chair
Dechert LLP

Jared Genser, Founder
Perseus Strategies LLC

Peter Magyar
Magyar & Co. UK

Joseph McCarthy
Former Associate Dean of JFK School of Government, Harvard University

Thomas Dohrmann
McKinsey & Company

Grey McGillivary
Woodley & McGillivary

Joshua Newcomer
McKool Smith

Peter Choharis
Choharis Global Solutions

Ann Maura Connolly
City Year

Board of Advisors

Ambassador Diego Arria
Former UN official & Venezuelan diplomat

Professor Karima Bennoune
Assistant Professor of Law at Rutgers School of Law

Nuala Mole
Founding Director of AIRE Centre

Professor Jerome A. Cohen
Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations & Law Professor at NYU School of Law

Professor J. Christopher McCrudden
Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford

Birtukan Mideksa
Former prisoner of conscience in Ethiopia

The Honorable Patricia M. Wald
Former US Court of Appeals Judge

The Honorable Irwin Cotler
Former Members of the Canadian Parliament

Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC
Liberal Democrat life peer in practice at Blackstone Chambers

Dr. Yang Jianli
Former prisoner of conscience in China

Our Supporters

Freedom Now extends our profound gratitude to the individuals, law firms, and foundations whose generosity makes it possible for us to perform our critical work. We consider all of our donors essential partners in our mission. This list includes donors who made substantial gifts between November 1, 2015 and October 1, 2016.

Oak Foundation
Rob Granieri
Jeremy and Gretchen Zucker

Greg McGillivary
Joshua Newcomer

Thomas Dohrmann
Jared Genser

John and Vina Turner
Cecilia Skavlan

Teresita Alvarez Bjelland
Kathryn MacBride

Joseph McCarthy
Marc Gottridge

Ilene and Richard Barth
Jeremy Spector

Michael Wolkowitz
Nancy Zucker Boswell

Candace Gaudiani
Jerry Daniels
Our NGO Partners
We are proud to have collaborated with many human rights organizations throughout 2016 that share our commitment to ending arbitrary detention and restoring the rule of law. We are especially proud of collaborations with the following organizations:

Our Law Firm Partners
Freedom Now is grateful for the support we receive from our law firm partners and individual attorneys. It is because of this generous pro bono assistance we are able to provide individualized case assistance to so many prisoners of conscience.

- Dechert LLP
- Woodley & McGillivary
- Perseus Strategies
- McKool Smith
- Zora Ristanovic, Esq.
- Pia Dutton
- Sappho Dias

Woodley & McGillivary
### Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November 2015 - October 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Grants</td>
<td>$60,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Contributions</td>
<td>$314,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Bono Support (2015)*</td>
<td>$1,176,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,551,198</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November 2015 - October 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Benefits</td>
<td>$197,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services</td>
<td>$1,176,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office rent</td>
<td>$18,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and Meetings</td>
<td>$10,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Fees</td>
<td>$8,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>$2,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin Fees</td>
<td>$4,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, Postage, and Supplies</td>
<td>$353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,551,198</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes the 2,082 hours of pro bono time provided by law firm volunteers only and obtained during the 2015 calendar year. Pro bono rates are calculated at $565/hour, which is an average of rates charged by the law firms which provide us with services.*