

FREEDOM NOW

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



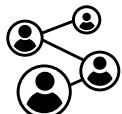
OUR MISSION



Freedom Now protects individuals and communities from government repression and defends human rights. We fulfill this objective through:



pro bono legal representation of prisoners of conscience;



coordination and capacity building of stakeholders; and



focused research and analysis of human rights issues, repressive laws, and government tactics.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As I look back on 2025, I am tremendously proud of what we have accomplished. We campaigned for the release of 48 people in 20 countries resulting in the release of six prisoners; we provided more than \$25,000 in support grants to Afghan women working to rebuild civil society in their country; and we generated significant media attention for our clients.

These successes are not Freedom Now's alone. They are made possible by the partners we made along the way -- the teams of lawyers at international law firms that provide us with pro bono support; the government officials that amplify our advocacy; and the brave local activists who provide us with essential information from the ground.

But our most important partners have always been our supporters. Individuals who believe deeply in Freedom Now's mission and join us in our efforts to free the wrongfully detained through financial, moral, and legal support. As always, we remain grateful for your trust and support.

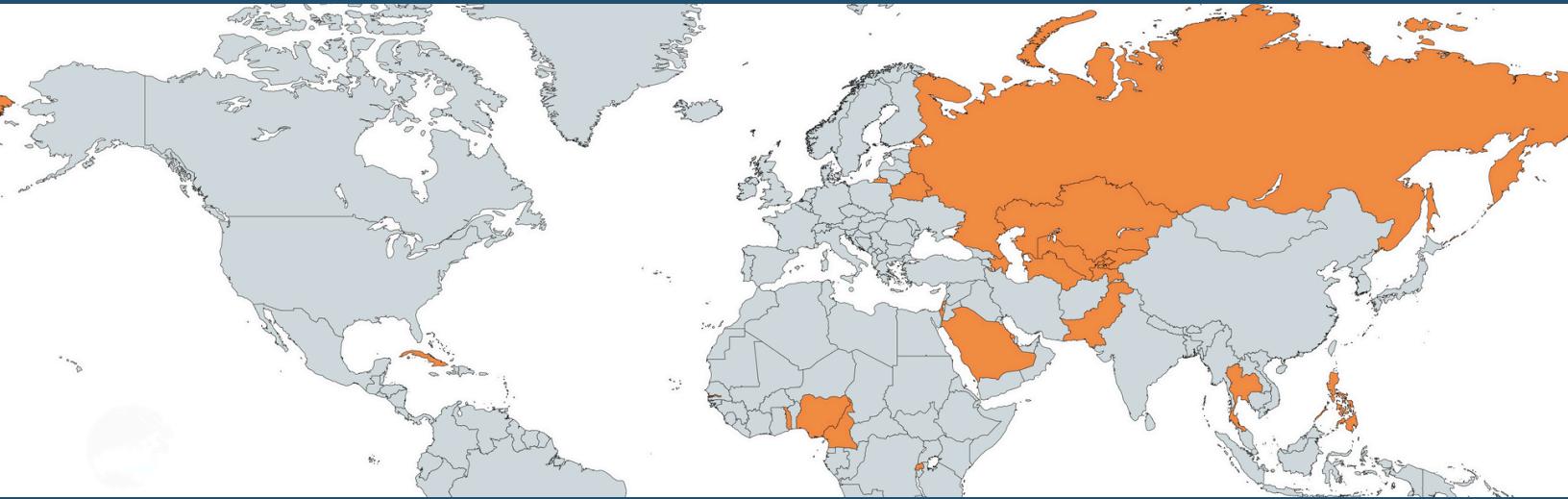
Read on to learn more of what we accomplished in 2025 and what we will be working on in the year to come.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrea J. Prasow".

ANDREA J. PRASOW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BY THE NUMBERS



WHO WE HELPED IN 2025



15 Activists imprisoned for political or civic activism



13 Politicians imprisoned for opposing the ruling government



8 Individuals imprisoned for religious beliefs, practices, or advocacy



7 Journalists imprisoned for reporting



4 Human rights defenders imprisoned for advocacy



1 Lawyer imprisoned for defending human rights

Working
within

20

countries

Representing

48

individuals

Helping to
free

6

prisoners

PROTECTING THE RULE OF LAW



Freedom Now represents prisoners of conscience before international human rights tribunals. We bring legal claims against repressive governments that stifle the human rights and fundamental freedoms of activists, journalists, lawyers, and religious and ethnic minorities among others. Through our legal work, we obtain redress for victims of wrongful detention and other abuses, such as torture. Our efforts not only free individuals, they strengthen respect for international human rights law and institutions.

Freedom Now, along with our pro bono legal teams, won two cases at the United Nations in 2025 for clients in Belarus and Tajikistan. We prepared and submitted another brief on behalf of clients in the Philippines and often liaised with the UN on developing situations regarding our other clients, both imprisoned and recently released.

\$1,569,445

**Value of pro bono services
donated by law firms in 2024**

2,047

**Hours donated by
law firms in 2024**

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY

We mobilize powerful voices by engaging with key institutions, government officials, and citizens. Our efforts target multiple pressure points, making it more difficult for autocratic governments to escape scrutiny.



When Azerbaijan was chosen to host the UN's November 2024 COP29 Climate Change Conference, **Freedom Now organized with other human rights and climate groups the Demand Rights at COP Campaign** to urge the international community to use the opportunity to take decisive action to end Azerbaijan's crackdown on civil society.

On April 29, Freedom Now's Executive Director **Andrea Prasow testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission** to provide an update on Azerbaijan's human rights abuses and how the U.S. government can further support political prisoners in Azerbaijan and take a stronger stance against President Aliyev's repressive regime.

Abdoul Aziz Goma is an Irish citizen of Togolese origin who has been imprisoned in Togo since 2018 for providing assistance to local protesters. After a prolonged period of pre-trial detention he was sentenced to 10 years in prison in February 2025.

Freedom Now engaged with members of the European Parliament about the case and **in September 2025 the Parliament adopted an urgent resolution calling for Abdoul's release.**

Togo immediately reacted to the resolution by summoning the European Union's ambassador to discuss the action. It also served to give Abdoul hope as he was in the midst of a 40 day hunger strike to protest his imprisonment.



PUBLICIZING OUR CLIENTS' STORIES

Freedom Now represents individuals with compelling, but largely unknown stories. Attracting attention to their cases is often essential to winning their freedom. Freedom Now tells the stories of our clients through the media, ensuring they do not disappear from the public eye and increasing pressure on their jailers.

RTÉ News Sport Entertainment Business Lifestyle Culture Gaeilge | Player TV
News ▶ World ▶ Ireland Business Sport Nuacht Programmes RTÉ Investigates

Togo summons EU ambassador over resolution for detained Irish citizen

Updated / Saturday, 13 Sep 2025 10:12

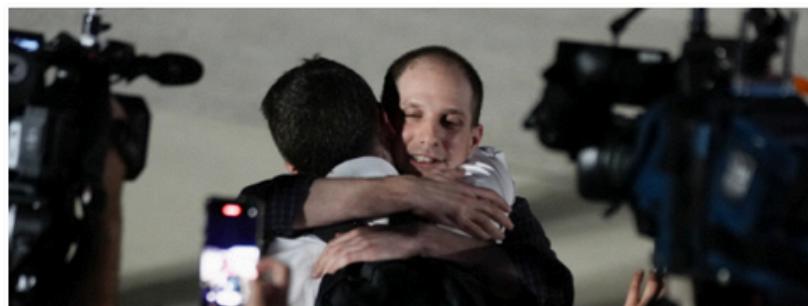


RealClear Politics

Polls Election 2020

NOW READING: BEYOND THE HEADLINES: THE GLOBAL STRUGGLE FOR PRISONER RELEASE

UP NEXT: TARIFFS COULD BRING WORK BACK IN SHORT ORDER



Beyond the Headlines: The Global Struggle for Prisoner Release

By Andrea J. Prasow
February 09, 2025

The European Correspondent



How to be(come) a political prisoner in Belarus: the case of Dzyanis Ivashyn

Anna Sas | 08/07/2025

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER | <https://www.ncregister.com/news/belarusian-catholic-father-and-journalist-marks-5-years-in-prison>

Belarusian Catholic Father and Journalist Marks 5 Years in Prison

While the US State Department has Ihar Losik on its radar, it is not yet known whether Pope Leo XIV is aware of the case.



PRESERVING CIVIL SOCIETY IN AFGHANISTAN

Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, they have systematically erased women from all aspects of public life. At Freedom Now, we work closely with Afghan women who are organizing grassroots movements to seek justice and respect for human rights; we also engage Western governments to ensure they continue to demand the Taliban comply with their human rights obligations, and support Afghan women in Afghanistan and in the diaspora.



\$26,600

Support grants sent to Afghan women to support their work

5

Trainings on computer literacy and grant writing skills provided to Afghan civil society members

1

UN mechanism for accountability created after sustained international pressure

**FREEDOM NOW
CLIENTS**

RELEASED IN 2025



MUBARAK BALA



Mubarak Bala is a humanist leader and an outspoken advocate for religious freedom in Nigeria. He warned of the threat of religious extremism, denounced harmful religious practices, and criticized Nigeria's highly restrictive blasphemy laws. But his secular views and break with Islam made him a frequent target of government harassment.

In April 2020, he was arrested for posts he made on Facebook about the prophet Muhammad. After a trial rife with irregularities he was sentenced to 24 years in prison.

Mubarak's release from prison was announced in January 2025, and he has temporarily been relocated to a safe foreign country.

Freedom Now and its NGO partners took several actions to maximize pressure on Nigeria, including [filing a petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) and [working with members of the U.S. Congress](#) to directly appeal for Mubarak's release.

LISDIANI AND DANI RODRIGUEZ

Lisdiani and Dani Rodríguez Isaac are sisters who joined nationwide peaceful protests in Cuba in July 2021 to express their discontent over living conditions. They were arrested with 14 others in their rural hometown and sentenced to eight years in prison.

In January 2024, Dani learned she was pregnant. After initially failing to provide her with the necessary medical care, authorities allowed Dani to be temporarily released on bail in May 2024 so she could carry out her pregnancy. Before she was due to return to prison, both sisters were conditionally released after they were included in Cuba's January 2025 prisoner amnesty.



Dani is on extended parole until 2029 and Lisdiani out with a non-custodial sentence. They could be returned to prison for minor infractions. **We continue to support their case and are working to have these conditions dropped.**

VLADYSLAV YESYPENKO

Vladyslav Yesypenko was reporting on a story in Russian-occupied Crimea for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Ukrainian service when he was arrested by agents from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) in March 2021. After being subjected to brutal torture, he produced a coerced confession and was sentenced to five years in prison.

On June 20, 2025, Yesypenko was released from Russian custody and was able to reunite with his family (pictured below). [Freedom Now filed a petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of Yesypenko in November 2024.](#) An opinion is pending.



MOHAMMED EL-HALABI



Mohammed El-Halabi was serving as operations manager for World Vision International in Gaza when he was arrested by Israeli authorities in June 2016. He was charged with financing terrorist activities for allegedly diverting over \$50 million in World Vision funds to Hamas—an impossibility, given that amount far exceeded the organization's operating budget for even the preceding decade. Subsequent investigations by foreign auditors found no evidence of these claims and Mohammed maintained his innocence. In June 2022, after six years of proceedings plagued with procedural irregularities, Mohammed was convicted on undisclosed evidence and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

He was released in February 2025 as part of Israel's mass-release of Palestinian detainees. However, the appeal of his conviction still remains pending before the Supreme Court. [Freedom Now will continue to support Mohammed as he seeks to overturn his unjust conviction.](#)

IGOR LOSIK

In September 2025, journalist Igor Losik was released from prison in Belarus as part of a mass amnesty of 52 political prisoners who were subsequently relocated to Lithuania.

Prior to his arrest, Losik worked for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and ran a Telegram news channel. On June 25, 2020, he was arrested and charged with “violating public order,” for using the Telegram channel to allegedly create public disturbances ahead of the 2020 election. On December 14, 2021, after five months of a closed trial, he was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

In January 2023, Freedom Now and Dechert LLP filed a petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on Losik’s behalf. In August 2023, the Working Group found that his imprisonment violated international law.

Unfortunately, more than 1,200 political prisoners remain imprisoned in Belarus. Among those still wrongfully detained is Dzyanis Ivashyn, a journalist, economist, and political scientist who was arrested in March 2021 and is serving a 13-year prison sentence for his investigative reporting. **In August 2025, Freedom Now initiated a letter writing campaign to show solidarity for Ivashyn.**



Igor Losik embraces his brother Mikita for the first time in five years.

**FREEDOM NOW
CLIENTS**

**FIGHTING FOR THEIR
FREEDOM**

TOFIG YAGUBLU



For more than 30 years, Tofiq Yagublu has refused to be silent.

A member of the Musavat Party since 1992 and a prominent figure in Azerbaijan's political opposition, the 64-year-old has endured multiple arrests and physical assault, yet continues to speak truth to power. In 2013, he was sentenced to five years in prison for participating in anti-government protests, a sentence the European Court of Human Rights determined violated international law. He was pardoned several months later. In 2020, he was charged with hooliganism and sentenced to four years and three months in prison.

His latest imprisonment began in December 2023 when he was arrested on bogus fraud charges. He spent 15 months in pre-trial detention before he was finally convicted and sentenced to nine years in prison.

Despite chronic asthma and fragile health worsened by a 40-day hunger strike, Tofiq endures. His resilience embodies the power of conviction over fear.

Disturbingly, Tofiq's case is not an outlier. He is one of more than 400 political prisoners currently detained in Azerbaijan, victims of a massive crackdown on civil society that began in December 2022.

Freedom Now has sought to use Tofiq's case to shed greater attention on the crackdown. **We successfully worked with the U.S. House of Representative's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to add Tofiq to the Defending Freedoms Project and with Rep. James McGovern's office to send a letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio asking him to work to secure the release of Tofiq and all political prisoners in Azerbaijan.**

FRENCHIE MAE CUMPIO, MARIEL DOMEQUIL, AND ALEXANDER ABINGUNA

“Red-tagging” is a practice the Filipino government has used since the days of the Cold War to label individuals as communists or subversives and subsequently bring spurious criminal charges against them. It is often applied to journalists, human rights advocates, and other individuals who dare to challenge the government..

This strategy was employed against Frenchie Mae Cumpio, Mariel Domequil, and Alexander Abinguna as they were arrested in pre-dawn raids in February 2020.

Prior to their arrests, each of activists held various positions in their community related to human rights. Frenchie was the executive director of the community news Eastern Vista website and a radio news anchor for several outlets. Her reporting focused on alleged human rights abuses perpetrated by the police and military. Mariel was a women’s rights activist and community organizer with the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, a Christian missionary organization. Alexander was a member of the Karapatan Council, which conducts research and documents human rights abuses in the Philippines.

Two other human rights activists were also arrested in the raid, Marissa Cabaljao and Mira Legion, but were later released on bail. The group is collectively referred to as the “Tacloban 5.”

Although their trial began in June 2020, the proceedings against them are still ongoing as of November 2025. In July 2021, new charges were filed against Frenchie, If convicted, she could face a maximum of 52 years in prison.

In September 2025, Freedom Now and the law firm Dechert LLP filed a petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of Frenchie, Mariel, and Alexander. In the meantime, we continue to monitor their trial.



BUZURGMehr YOROV

Ten years ago lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov left his office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan to attend a meeting at a police station. He would never return to his law firm.

Buzurgmehr is one of Tajikistan's most prominent human rights lawyers who had built a career on taking on politically sensitive cases no one else would touch. Two weeks before his arrest he took on representation of 13 political opposition leaders who the government had falsely accused of orchestrating a failed coup. Mere hours before his arrest Buzurgmehr held a press conference in which he claimed one of his clients had been tortured.

In October 2016, after a trial riddled with due process violations, he was sentenced to 23 years in prison. Since then, his sentence has twice been shortened under mass amnesties. However, in a demonstration of their cruelty, authorities have repeatedly brought new, trumped-up charges against him—most recently in July 2023. The ensuing convictions have extended his sentence and pushed his expected release date to September 2043, by which time he will be 72 years old.

Freedom Now has worked on Buzurgmehr's case since 2018 and has undertaken a number of initiatives to secure his release. Most recently we worked with a coalition of international human rights groups to highlight the 10th anniversary of his arrest which resulted in a [joint statement](#) from our partners, a [joint statement from 14 international bar associations](#), and a [short video to relay his story](#).

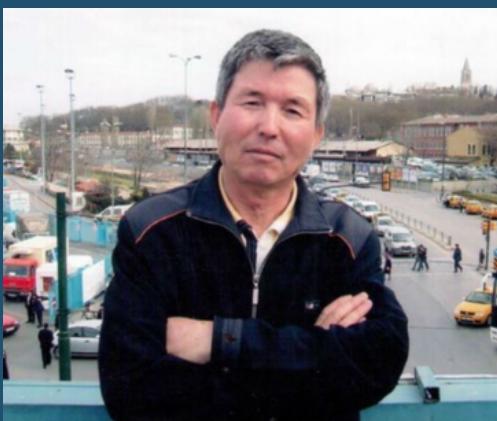


IN MEMORIAM



Frank Rusagara 1955-2025

Frank Rusagara was a former military officer who held several high-ranking positions, including as Rwanda's defense attache to the UK. He was arrested in 2014 and had spent the last 11 years in prison on politically motivated charges related to his criticisms of President Paul Kagame's government. In December 2017, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that Rwanda had violated international law by detaining Frank and called for his immediate release. Frank's colleague and brother-in-law, Tom Byabagamba, remains imprisoned and is not set to be released until 2032 on similarly politically motivated charges.



Salijon Abdurakhmanov 1950-2025

Salijon Abdurakhmanov was a journalist from the semi-autonomous region of Karakalpakstan in the Central Asian nation of Uzbekistan. He was known for his outspoken criticism of the government and reporting on issues of human rights and corruption. He was arrested in 2008 and spent more than nine years in prison on fabricated drug charges before he was released. Salijon spent the final years of his life in Germany with his family.

ABOUT US

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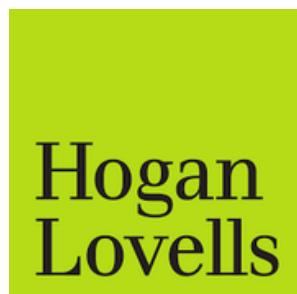
Grace Roundcount
Program Assistant

OUR PARTNERS

We are proud to have collaborated with many human rights organizations throughout 2025 that share our commitment to ending arbitrary detention and restoring the rule of law. We are especially proud of collaborations with the following organizations:



Freedom Now is grateful for the support we receive from our law firm partners, law schools, 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:



McGillivary
Steele
Elkin LLP

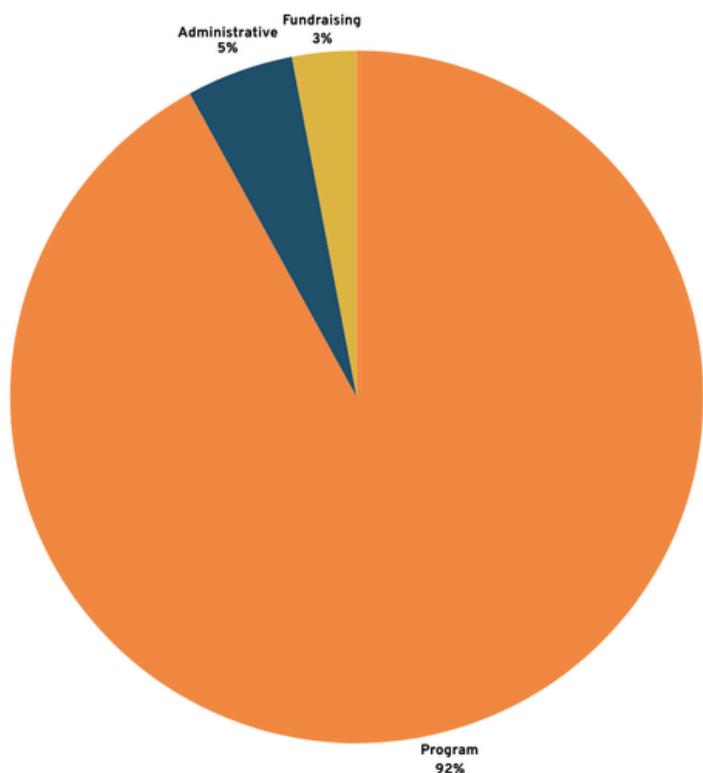
FINANCIAL REPORT

November 2024-October 2025

Revenue

Foundation Grants	\$73,000
Individual Contributions	\$272,825
Pro Bono Support	\$1,569,443
TOTAL	\$1,915,268

EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



Expenses

Personnel	\$537,211
Legal Services	\$1,569,443
Office Rent	\$33,000
Travel and Meetings	\$16,571
Consulting Fees	\$124,141
Telecommunications	\$6,189
Administration and Indirect Costs	\$11,131
Support to HRDs	\$26,600
TOTAL	\$2,324,286