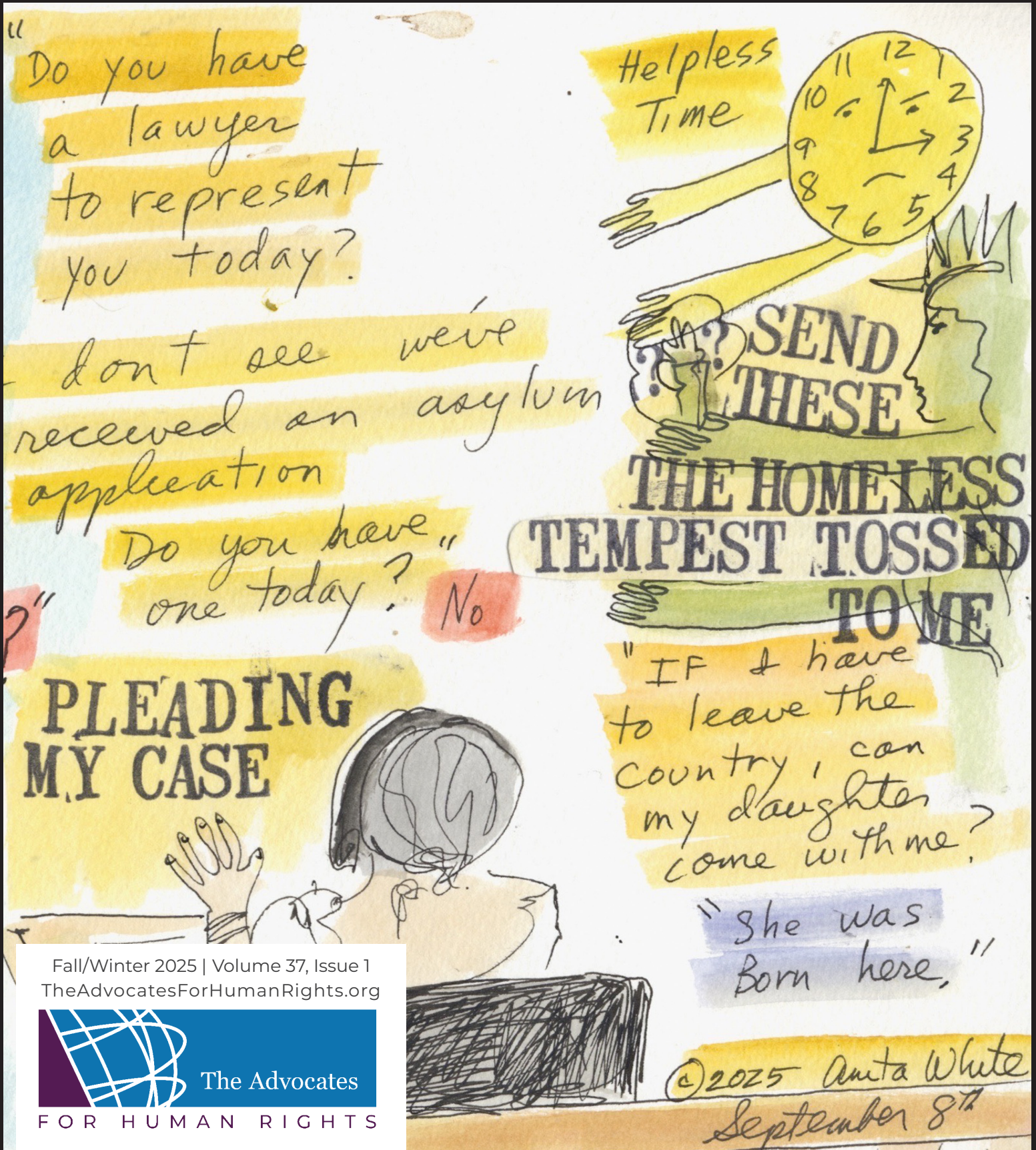


HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVER



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TheAdvocatesForHumanRights.org

Contents

Director's Desk.....	1
Summary Dismissals, Arbitrary Detention.....	2
Human Rights Awards Dinner: When Community Comes Together	3
Thank You to Our Sponsors.....	6
The Ongoing Impact of the 1995 Beijing Conference	7
2025 House Party Photo Gallery.....	9
Educating on Trans Rights: International Trans Day of Visibility	11
The Urgent Need for Protection of LGBTIQ+ People in Detention: The Advocates' Report to UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.....	13
U.S. Failure to Participate in Scheduled Human Rights Review Betrays Nation's Values.....	14
In Memoriam	15
International Advocacy's Critical Role Today	16
Volunteer Impact	19
Defending Immigration Justice in Challenging Times.....	20
Defending Women's Rights In A Hostile Environment	21
The Fallacy Driving the Death Penalty's Revival in the USA	22
No Longer Invisible: UN Shines a Spotlight on the Reality of Women Sentenced to Death	23
Ways to Give	24
Sankhu Palubari Community School Students Are Thriving	25

In this moment when the human rights movement faces some of its greatest challenges, The Advocates for Human Rights is pleased to announce the appointment of Michele Garnett McKenzie as Executive Director. McKenzie is a fierce champion of The Advocates' mission: to ensure that all people can live in dignity, equality, and peace. McKenzie replaces Robin Phillips, who led the organization for more than 22 years. McKenzie joined The Advocates as a staff attorney in 1999 and subsequently held positions leading the organization's immigration legal services, advocacy, communications, and operations. She began her new role in October.



Director's Desk

It's been quite a year. Transgender people stripped of personhood on their passports. The radical right's obsession with "gender ideology" reaching the mainstream media. Asylum seekers showing up to court only to find themselves hauled away into indefinite ICE detention. Pro bono asylum lawyers singled out in an executive order.

But this is what The Advocates for Human Rights was made for.

When we were founded in 1983, it was with the mission of implementing international human rights standards to support civil society and reinforce the rule of law. That mission is as powerful today as ever before. We are grounded in human rights and in the fundamental belief that each of us has a right to live with basic human dignity. We protect that dignity through civil society—where communities organize to make life fairer and freer for everyone. And we ensure safety with the rule of law—where no one is above the law and policies are the result of careful deliberation, not personal whim.

Let's be clear. **Autocracy aims to frighten us out of exercising our rights, even when it can't legally strip them away.**

But you have shown that we are not alone. This year more than 1,600 individual volunteers stepped forward with us to protect human rights. Together, we won asylum for our clients. We brought transparency to the courts. We continued toward abolition of the death penalty around the world. We strategized to build alliances. As the new Executive Director for The Advocates, my goal is to build on these successes and continue our fight for a more just world.

When community comes together, we are strong. We are resilient. We are brave. And I could not be more proud to be part of The Advocates for Human Rights.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Garnett McKenzie".

Michele Garnett McKenzie
Executive Director

Summary Dismissals, Arbitrary Detention

Immigration Court Observers Document Eroding Access to Asylum

Access to a fair day in court is foundational to our notion of justice in the United States. But unfettered immigration enforcement has turned that notion of justice on its head for people fleeing persecution or facing deportation.

Immigration Court Observation Project volunteers are documenting violations every day, including vanishing access to a fair day in court.

Among countless immigration policy changes, the move to strip asylum seekers of a chance to make their case before an immigration judge has been devastating. In late spring, people who had properly filed their applications for asylum with the Immigration Court appeared for their hearings only to have their **cases dismissed**, their **asylum**

applications tossed aside, and their lives turned upside down as they were **detained by ICE**.

Observers quickly documented how these new policies have pushed people out of immigration courts into coercive detention and have stoked fear to make people abandon their legitimate claims.

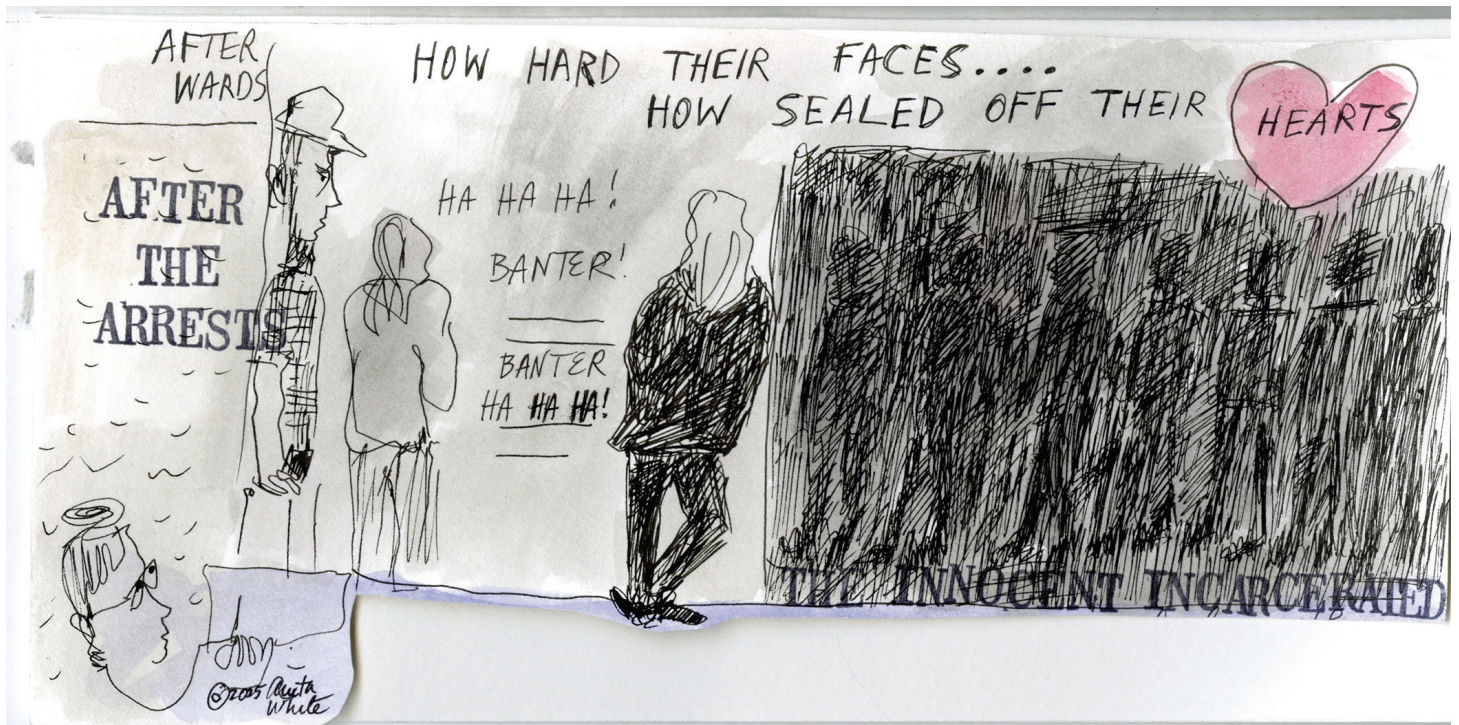
Observers report family members left bewildered and sobbing as their loved ones are handcuffed and led away. They also report increasing no-show rates—and removal orders issued in absentia.

One reason for the chaos: the One Big Beautiful Bill Act pumped an additional \$45 billion into the ICE detention budget while simultaneously capping the number of immigration judges at 800.

"It's clear the purpose is to break the immigration courts," says Lindsey Greising, Policy Counsel for The Advocates for Human Rights. "**It not only undermines our values, it has incredibly dangerous consequences for the people affected.**"

By documenting these policies and their impact, The Advocates' observers are exposing the true cost of out-of-control immigration enforcement in the news media and to Congress.

To become
a court
observer,
scan this
QR code.



When Community Comes Together

Celebrating Our Collective Power at the Human Rights Awards Dinner



Dan Supalla, Board Chair

“Every financial contribution you make, every volunteer hour you serve, and every conversation you have with your friends and family brings us closer to that more just and compassionate world.” — Dan Supalla, Board Chair

the right to education.

The Human Rights Awards Dinner keynote panel celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. (For a deep dive into the Conference’s impact, see page 7 for Charlotte Bunch’s statement.)

The panel, moderated by MPR’s

Nina Moini, brought together three women who had been on the ground in Beijing in 1995 and one youth activist to reflect on the event’s impact three decades later.

The conference, best known for Hillary Clinton’s famous call to recognize of women’s rights as human rights, forged relationships that have propelled our work forward for decades.

Robin Phillips and Barbara Frey, both former executive directors of The Advocates who were part of the organization’s delegation to the Beijing conference, remembered the energy of the event.

“..During the 70s, 80s, and 90s, we were experiencing a lot of advancements in human rights. The second wave women’s movement had taken hold, the Berlin wall had fallen...” — Robin Phillips, Senior Advisor

“...the 1990s were a special time in human rights. It was a time that we thought was normal going through it, but...the kinds of conferences and standards and events that were taking place, it’s pretty clear it was an extraordinary time.” — Barbara Frey

Hundreds gathered in June for The Advocates for Human Rights’ celebration of our guiding principle: that each of us has the power to defend human rights. In a year of escalating challenges to human rights in the United States and around the world, the evening focused on our collective resilience and the importance of creating a long-term vision for a better world.

The annual event honors outstanding volunteer contributions toward creating a world in which every person lives with dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and peace. This year, The Advocates recognized volunteers whose passion and dedication to human rights have strengthened transparency, accountability, and

Award Recipients

Khaleem Ali for international advocacy

Nathnael Berhanu for international advocacy

Kendra Highbanks for women’s human rights research and documentation

Ella Panchot for WATCH research and monitoring

Terese Pritschet for commitment to the Sankhu Palubari Community School

Kent Richey for international advocacy

Stinson LLP and the Deinard Legal Clinic for more than 100 pro se asylum applications

Immigration courtroom sketch artist **Anita White**



Above: Rosa Logar, Ponny White, Robin Phillips, Barbara Frey, and Nina Moini

Rosa Logar, founding member of Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), who was in Beijing as part of the Austrian government's official delegation, spoke about the impact a visible lesbian presence had on long-term organizing for LGBTIQ+ rights in China.

"I feel very very strongly that we have to work together so that these things can never happen again and that's why I became a human rights defender and activist and also a women's human rights defender." — Rosa Logar

The evening reminded all in attendance about the importance of our work, and the hope we have for a more just tomorrow.



The Advocates' staff

"The Advocates for Human Rights was built for moments like this – moments when the values we stand for are tested."
— Michele Garnett McKenzie, Executive Director



*Human Rights Awards Dinner Photos by Bill Cameron
and Christian Zander*

Human Rights Sponsors



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Char and Howard (Sam) Myers

Cheryl Olseth and James Empson

Jim and Sally O'Neal

Gretchen Piper and Scott Rosenbaum

Terese Pritschet

Nancy Speer and Jim Shaver

Dan Supalla

Jean Thomson

The Ongoing Impact of the 1995 Beijing Conference



“This is my hope for the future. And hope does not come out of the sky. Hope is a daily practice...”

By Charlotte Bunch

Charlotte Bunch is an American feminist author and organizer in women's rights and human rights movements.

The Beijing Intergovernmental Conference (and the NGO Forum that accompanied it) was the largest UN world event held to date. But it did not come out of nowhere. It was the culmination of 20 years of interaction among UN bodies, national governments, and a growing global women's movement that became visible during the decade between the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975 and the Nairobi Third UN Women's Conference in 1985.

As feminism and women's movements emerged globally in most of the world, the UN World Conferences became places to meet other women internationally pre-internet. The feminist focus began mostly on the civil society parallel events, but as we saw government attention to women as a growing force for

change, feminists formed caucuses to influence the official agenda too.

It was an exciting time from 1975 to 1995, as the UN and nonaligned movements allowed us to imagine beyond Cold War divisions and toward building North-South feminist alliances, even as we experienced and learned from divisions and differences among us.

Women in larger numbers learned to lobby governments often first through the UN and then back at home. It was a challenging time, but feminists began to be taken seriously beyond tokenism in the process. I see it as a breakthrough in two ways:

The UN became a place to put issues primarily affecting women on the global agenda that were not there before, like violence against women and reproductive and sexual rights, and to say that these so-called "women's issues" should be of concern to all.

We also brought feminist perspectives ... beyond just

'women's issues' onto other important agendas. Gender integration became a way of addressing all issues from feminists' perspectives on development, peace, human rights, transportation, climate, etc.

From Nairobi '85 to Beijing '95, feminists organized across regions to bring our perspectives into many UN arenas. The most obvious was the International Conference on Population and Development, where feminists helped move the focus from population to women's reproductive rights in Cairo in 1994. In 1992, women's caucuses at the Earth Summit in Rio linked gender to issues of the environment.

For the growing "women's rights are human rights" movement that gained attention in the early 1990s, our breakthrough was at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, where women's rights were acknowledged as universal human rights, and violence against women in war, in the community, and at home was addressed.

The Beijing Platform for Action was a triumph of all these strands as it linked women's rights as human rights in multiple areas & reflected many feminist views on the economy and other mainstream areas. **It also reflected the growth of global women's movements as a political force.** These breakthroughs were not without opposition, but the victory of 191 governments agreeing to the Platform left us exhausted and euphoric.

Since the Beijing accomplishments, challenges to it and backlash have been our story at all the UN reviews of Beijing—+5, 10, 20, 25, and 30.

But as we talk about the backlash to gender equality and women's rights that is so prevalent in these tumultuous times, I want to remember: whenever change is happening that threatens to shift power and control, there is backlash. This is the history of the world!

Advances for women's human rights have been considerable in the last 50 years. And opposition to gender equality and human rights has grown in the UN and governments because we touched a nerve—the patriarchy. That opposition has also grown against other marginalized people—racially, by gender and class, and by other factors.

But only coalitions that defend all human rights, not at the expense of others, will prevent this backlash. I see the coalitions and movements that will counter this backlash in the actions people are taking every day and everywhere in the U.S. and around the world.

This is my hope for the future. And hope does not come out of the sky. Hope is a daily practice that we build. I see that hope in the faces of so many people, especially young people today and I believe in it.

“To strengthen our impact, we form partnerships essential to our work. We have been learning together with women’s rights partners who have been doing this for years.”

—Rosalyn Park,
Women’s Rights
Director



Standing strong in our work at this year's House Parties

These parties are a good chance to mingle with other human rights activists, and learn more about The Advocates.



Kevin Frazell and Bill Cameron



Katie Eayrs and
Laura Buchs-Hammonds



Gayle Appelbaum



Gail Irish and David O'Fallon



Verónica Cadavid González and Loan Huynh



Donate to
The Advocates



Volunteer with
The Advocates



Frederick Dawe, Anna Fir, Terry Burke,
Marianna Miracle and Barbara Klas



Peggy Grieve and Alena Levina



Tom Hoch, Kate O'Toole, and Mark Addicks

Thanks to our house hosts for
opening their doors to us!

Steve and Amy Clay
Chris Bercaw and Mary McKelvey
Peggy Grieve
Tom Hoch and Mark Addicks
Jim and Andy Rubenstein



Rosalyn Park



Natalie Degheri and Nancy Speer

Photos by Christian Zander and Rebecca Mariscal



Educating on Trans Rights: International Trans Day of Action

Each year, the global community recognizes the International Trans Day of Action (also known as the “Trans Day of Visibility”) on March 31. This year, The Advocates’ Nathan Madson and Anthony Dallozzi joined the Minneapolis office of a Big Four accounting firm for an internal workshop focused on raising visibility about the human rights issues faced by trans and non-binary people.

E.M., a member of the firm’s team, started the workshop by sharing her personal story with the trans community. E.M. married her high school sweetheart and after three years, her then- husband came out as a transgender woman.

This experience broke the negative and irrational stereotypes she previously held around transgender people and others who were not cisgender. The allyship that E.M. showed her partner was an example of strength and unconditional love. While their relationship no longer worked as a marriage, they have remained friends. E.M. continues to be an advocate for the transgender community to this day.

Nathan Madson, who leads The Advocates’ international advocacy on LGBTIQ+ human rights, shared about the issues that transgender and gender-diverse people face around the world. The Advocates is a member of ILGA World, a global federation of more than 2,000 member organizations from 170 countries campaigning for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people.

The Advocates works closely with LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders worldwide, partnering to amplify their voices through reporting human rights abuses to the United Nations. The Advocates also provides legal representation to people forced to flee their countries because of persecution on account of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression. These abuses include a lack of legal gender recognition (not being able to change gender on identity documents); the criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity; discrimination against transgender people, including by lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people; and violence by government actors and private citizens.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration’s targeting of transgender and gender-diverse people has increased the number of human rights violations transgender and gender-diverse people living in the United States experience. The executive order that recognizes only sex assigned at birth and only two biological sexes uses a faulty binary understanding of biology that ignores intersex people and attempts to erase transgender people from existence. This executive order also

insultingly claims that refusing to recognize gender and only recognizing sex is necessary to protect women and girls.

These policy changes directly harm transgender and gender-diverse people. The Trump administration is denying certain government employees insurance coverage for gender-affirming care for their dependents. It is also ending gender-affirming care for people in federal prisons and reassigning them to prisons that corresponds to their sex assigned at birth, putting them in significant danger. The executive orders also permit a ban on transgender people in the military, implying they are not “mentally and physically fit” to serve in the military and that they are not “truthful” because their gender identity does not match with their sex at birth.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration has also gone further by attempting to erase the transgender community from history by removing the word “transgender” from the Stonewall National Park website. The move threatens to drive a wedge between LGB people and transgender people, despite the fact that the Stonewall riots that sparked the LGBTIQ+ rights movement in the U.S. were led by two trans women.

Divisive policies remind us that we must stand united in our fight for respect, protection, and fulfillment of the human rights of all.

4 Simple Steps to Respecting Trans People's Human Rights

1. Listen to and support transgender people
2. Donate your time and money to organizations that serve or are run by transgender people
3. Be aware of the issues and demand politicians end the dehumanization of trans people
4. Treat transgender people with kindness and humanity

The Advocates helps LGBTIQ+ migrants fleeing persecution find safety in the U.S. We partner with LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders to promote equality in their countries. We empower our LGBTIQ+ clients to share their lived experiences by participating in advocacy at the United Nations.

Read about our experience at Twin Cities Pride.



The Urgent Need for Protection of LGBTIQ+ People in Detention: The Advocates' Report to UN Special Rapporteur on Torture

At the United Nations Human Rights Council, The Advocates for Human Rights and Khaleem Ali spoke out for accountability and action on human rights violations against transgender individuals in detention. Around the world, including in the United States, recent policy shifts have intensified the risks facing those already vulnerable.

The current U.S. administration's executive order "defending women from gender ideology extremism" requires the federal government to recognize that "women are biologically female, and men are biologically male," dismissing well-established scientific, medical, and legal standards. These changes are being challenged in court. Yet, they already threaten discrimination against transgender and intersex people in detention, and if left intact, they would strip protections from transgender people.

In the United States, the executive order to forcibly relocate transgender people in detention based on their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender

identity is harmful. This practice disregards their safety, dignity, and fundamental human rights, exposing them to violence, harassment, and psychological harm. Requirements to deny access to gender-affirming medical care in detention leave transgender individuals without the treatment they need.

Worldwide, in many detention facilities, under the guise of "protection," authorities place LGBTIQ+ individuals in prolonged solitary confinement. The United Nations has long recognized solitary confinement as a form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment—yet detention facilities continue to use it to isolate and erase LGBTIQ+ people.

Principle 9 of the Yogyakarta Principles, a universal guide to human rights that contain international legal standards for sexual orientation and gender identity, demands that protection must not come at the cost of greater restriction of rights. Yet across detention facilities, LGBTIQ+ individuals are being mistreated,

dehumanized, and denied the basic protections afforded to all people under international human rights law.

During our advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council this March, The Advocates called on the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to investigate, document, and issue clear recommendations on the treatment of LGBTIQ+ individuals in detention.

The world is watching. We cannot allow state-sanctioned harm to continue unchecked.

"True justice is measured not only in laws, but in the dignity we uphold. When detention erases identity instead of protecting it, we must ask, 'Whose humanity is being safeguarded?'"

- Khaleem Ali, Caribbean Human Rights Defender and Attorney-at-Law

Watch the full statement here:



U.S. Failure to Participate in Scheduled Human Rights Review Betrays Nation's Values

We are outraged that the United States has failed to attend its scheduled Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council—the first country in the UPR's nearly 20-year history to refuse to participate. The U.S. first failed to submit its report, which was due on August 4, 2025, and has now failed to attend the review session scheduled for November 7, 2025. The UN has rescheduled the U.S. review for November 2026, providing additional time for the U.S. to submit its report and ensure compliance in the current UPR cycle.

“The Advocates condemns the United States' betrayal of this effective and important system. **Human rights are not values to be discarded or promoted when convenient—they are safeguards that have helped ensure peace and human security for nearly a century.** The UPR helps reinforce and improve human rights worldwide. The U.S. should help

improve the system through engagement and investment rather than attempting to undermine or belittle the process,” said Jennifer Prestholdt, Deputy Director at The Advocates for Human Rights.

In the UPR, the United Nations conducts a public review of the human rights record of each and every UN Member State. The Advocates for Human Rights submitted five stakeholder reports for the 2025 UPR of the U.S., providing recommendations on improving migrants rights, combating labor trafficking, protecting survivors of gender-based violence, limiting or abolishing the death penalty, and respecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. The current administration, however, undermined the process by failing to provide its own report.

Since the first UPR in 2008, the UN has reviewed all 193 UN Member States three times. No country has ever refused to participate in the

UPR. The U.S. failure to participate threatens the integrity of the UPR, opening the door for other countries to stop participating in the process. Despite being an initial leader in recognizing and promoting universal human rights, the U.S. is losing its standing and legitimacy in the international community. This loss of U.S. credibility and influence undermines the government's ability to affect the human rights policies of other countries, to the potential harm of service members and U.S. citizens worldwide.

Although it has never had to do so before, the UN is empowered to go forward with the UPR of the U.S. in absentia. When the U.S. failed to appear, the UN rescheduled the U.S. review to November 2026. In refusing to participate today, the U.S. is not avoiding scrutiny, but it is forfeiting the ability to present and defend its human rights record.

“The Advocates urges the U.S. to recommit to human rights and to engagement with the international community, starting with a commitment to engage in the UPR. The Advocates reminds the government that the U.S. has long-established obligations to uphold human rights that will not vanish even in the absence of a UPR. The Advocates and other human rights activists will continue to hold the U.S. accountable. Ensuring human rights for all requires nothing less,” concluded Prestholdt.



Connie Cameron



The Advocates mourns the loss of Connie Cameron, teacher, friend, and longtime advocate. Connie's husband, Bill, was one of the founders of The Advocates and Connie has been a supporter since the beginning. Bill recalls, "Connie and I were partners in all of our commitments to the community. She always showed up."

Connie recognized the dignity in all human beings. She was concerned about the mistreatment of indigenous people from a young age, and she understood the importance of recognizing the full human rights of all people. Connie's life work was education and she was always looking for ways to help and support children, from teaching in the classroom to working with Mentor Connection, a program to provide high school students with meaningful professional guidance and experience.

Connie was a bright light and a fierce advocate. She made The Advocates and our community a better place for us all. We will miss her greatly.

Veronica Clark

The Advocates mourns the loss of long-time volunteer, friend, and donor, Veronica Clark. Veronica was a passionate advocate for racial justice and gender equality. She was involved in many aspects of the organization, including volunteering on several of The Advocates' delegations to the United Nations, both in Geneva and New York. As part of this work, Veronica delivered a powerful oral statement to the UN Human Rights Council on racial justice issues in the United States and represented The Advocates at the UN Commission on the Status of Women meeting just weeks before her sudden death in March.

In addition to her work at the United Nations, Veronica hosted events at her home, participated in international conferences and assisted with fact-finding to counter the backlash to human rights internationally. She researched international threats to women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and the safety of human rights defenders. Veronica received The Advocates Volunteer Award for her work on women's human rights in 2020.

When asked what her favorite part about working with The Advocates was, Clark responded modestly, "feeling like I have a small part in positive change." Rose Park, Women's Rights Director, said, "Veronica had a tremendous impact on human rights internationally and in the United States. We will miss her passion, commitment, and understanding of complex human rights issues."



In Memoriam

The Advocates remembers friends we have lost through the year and those remembered through in memoriam gifts in 2025.

Penney C. Bernier

Thomas Bloss

Connie Cameron

Veronica Clark

Fran Davis

Phillip J. Eide

Mary Ellingen

Elena Esterov

Donald Fraser

Ann Frisch

Edward J. Hayward

Marlene B. Kayser

Margaret M. Keating

Rita Koss

Richard Luis

Kathleen Murphy

Bob Parr

Juliette Van Hatten

David S. Weissbrodt

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead



International Advocacy's Critical Role Today

In 2025, The Advocates mobilized staff, partners, and volunteers to advocate for critical human rights protections at the United Nations in Geneva—and achieved meaningful impact on death penalty abolition, violence against women, and LGBTIQ+ rights across multiple continents. Volunteers joined The Advocates' staff in Geneva. They worked alongside human rights defenders from Croatia, Kenya, the Maldives, Mongolia, Malawi, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turkey.

The teams engaged with UN Human Rights Council delegates to share information about the death penalty, violence against women, and LGBTIQ+ rights in 23 countries undergoing their Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the Human Rights Council this year.



Staff and human rights defender partners at the UN in Geneva, March 2025

The busy schedule also included delivering oral statements at the Human Rights Council, briefing UN treaty bodies, meeting with colleague non-governmental organizations, and briefing UN Special Procedures mandate holders.

Death Penalty Abolition

At the Human Rights Committee, we successfully advocated for proper resentencing procedures for people previously on death row in Zimbabwe and raised urgent concerns about death penalty practices in Burkina Faso. We also brought an intersectional lens to abolition advocacy through two panel presentations

at the UN, documenting the compounded discrimination faced by women on death row across more than a dozen countries on three continents. This advocacy reinforced global momentum toward abolition and ensured that gender-based vulnerabilities in capital cases receive the attention they deserve.

Violence Against Women

Working alongside human rights defender partners, we delivered oral statements to the Human Rights Council and met with the Working Group on discrimination against women. At the Human Rights Committee, we pressed for stronger protections against

gender-based violence in Montenegro. Our International Women's Day panel, hosted at Cargill's Geneva office, further amplified the on-the-ground realities facing women at risk of violence and discrimination.

LGBTIQ+ Rights

Both the September and March delegations advocated for LGBTIQ+ rights protections during UPR country reviews, meeting directly with countries' missions to the UN Human Rights Council, as well as Special Procedures staff who communicate with governments on these issues. The delegations also met with other staff members of the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights that specialize on LGBTIQ+ rights to see how The Advocates and partners can access the different UN human rights mechanisms to advocate for change.

Migrant Rights in the United States

Our September delegation—strengthened by staff with U.S. migrant rights expertise—brought violations affecting asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and trafficking survivors directly to UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights staff monitoring the United States and to the Special Rapporteur on migrants.

The human rights defenders who joined us—including those experienced with international advocacy—called this the most impactful UN engagement they'd experienced. Our past UN advocacy has already changed laws protecting women from violence and accelerated death penalty abolition efforts. We're watching closely for the results of our 2025 advocacy to materialize in 2026.



UN September 2025 team



*Verónica Cadavid González, Genell Lemley,
Lily Ansel, and Francesca Ceravolo*

*“The Advocates
opened so many
doors and really
made my advocacy
easier.”*

*— Human Rights
Defender Partner*



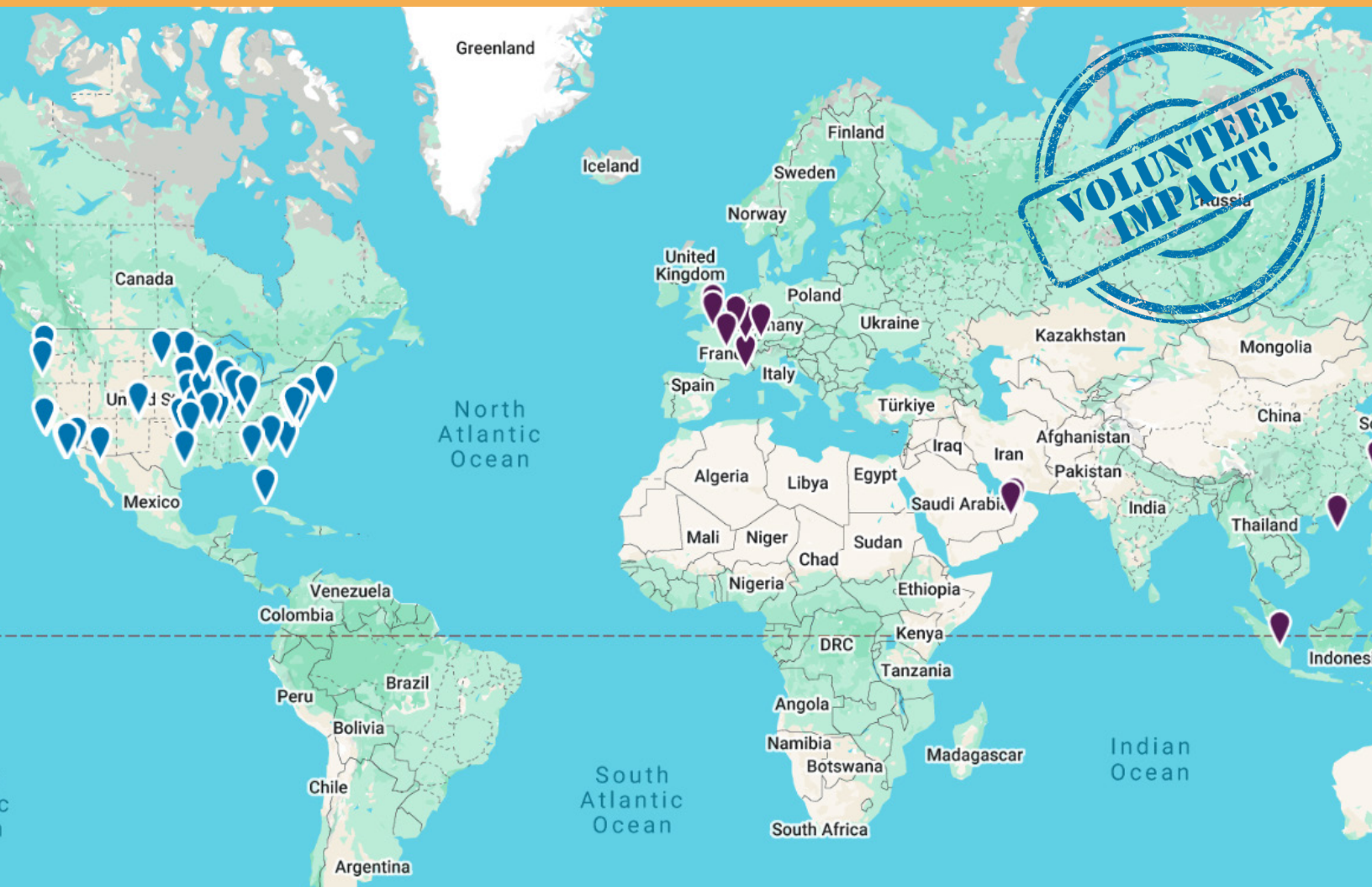
Rebecca Bernhard and Gayle Appelbaum



Lindsey Greising and Hanne Sandison

1600+

Volunteers in 2025



Locations in the USA

Atlanta
Baltimore
Bismarck
Boston
Boulder
Cambridge, MA
Charlotte
Chicago

Dallas
Delaware
Denver
Des Moines
 Fargo
Florham Park
Fort Myers
Fort Wayne
Indianapolis
Jefferson City

Kansas City
Los Angeles
Madison
Minneapolis
New York
Omaha
Philadelphia
Phoenix
Portland
Princeton

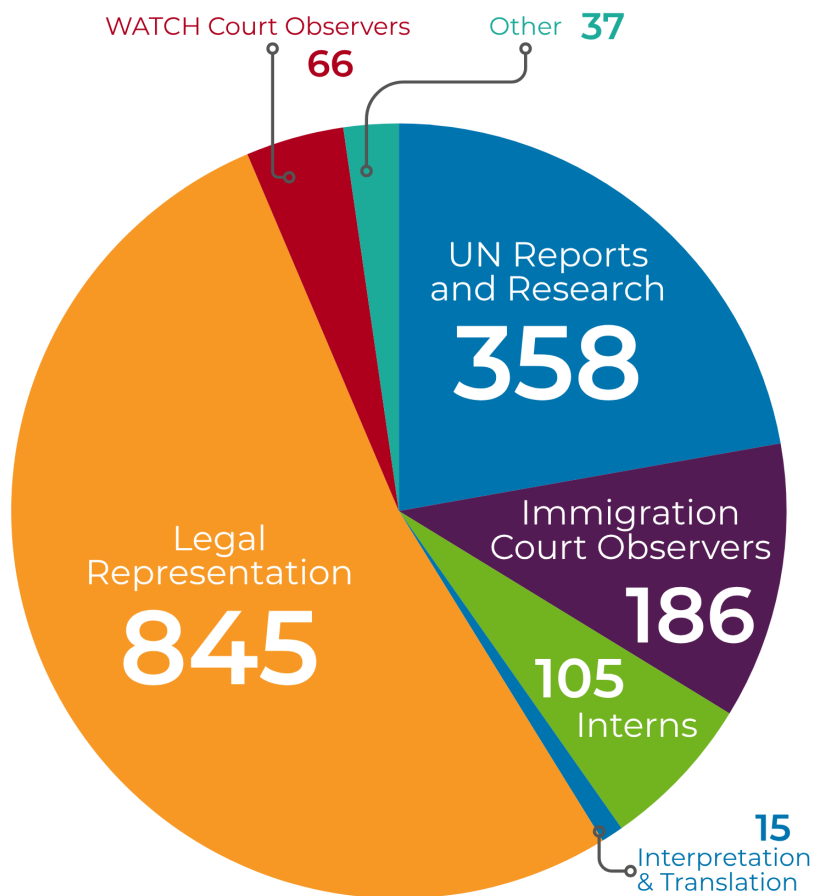
San Francisco
Santa Monica
Seattle
Silicon Valley
Sioux Falls
Southern California
St. Cloud
St. Louis
Washington, D.C.
Wichita

Wilmington

Locations outside the USA

Abu Dhabi
Brussels
London
Cambridge, England
Dubai
Frankfurt

Geneva
Hong Kong
Luxembourg
Paris
Shanghai
Singapore



Thank you to all of our volunteers this year! We are so grateful that you have contributed your talents, time, and experience to the human rights movement. You are the driving force of our human rights work.



Volunteer with
The Advocates

Defending Immigration Justice in Challenging Times

The landscape of asylum has never been more challenging. New executive orders, skyrocketing detention capacity, and prohibitively high filing fees which took effect in July 2025 have created unprecedented barriers for people seeking protection from persecution or torture. **Yet in the face of these obstacles, The Advocates for Human Rights' immigration legal services programming continues to grow stronger and more resilient.**

This year brought cascading challenges to the U.S. asylum system. **"We must constantly monitor and help our pro bono attorneys navigate shifting asylum eligibility requirements,"** said Zack Albus, The Advocates for Human Rights' legal director. "We're seeing immigration judges pretermit

asylum cases, ruling against people without hearing testimony or receiving all the evidence on the merits of the case. They are also dismissing proceedings outright, even when asylum applications are pending." Meanwhile, new fees to file and maintain asylum applications now force people to choose between pursuing the protection guaranteed by international and federal law and meeting basic needs.

In the face of these formidable challenges, legal representation has become even more critical to securing protection. **"Our pro bono attorneys play a more vital role than ever before, and they are winning cases,"** said Hanne Sandison, who directs The Advocates' immigration legal services team. In 2025, The

Advocates provided legal help in more than 2,800 matters for people seeking asylum or protection from trafficking, children facing deportation, and people detained by ICE.

Another key to the resilience: a new partnership between Minnesota's immigration legal services organizations. **"We recognized that we needed to not just do more work, we needed to do our work differently if we were going to ensure Minnesotans have access to immigration justice,"** said Michele Garnett McKenzie, The Advocates' Executive Director. "Our multi-agency initiative has built new capacity to respond to ever-changing enforcement in our region, just when we most need it."

Defending Women's Rights In A Hostile Environment

The Advocates for Human Rights is rising to the challenges created by the current U.S. administration and the growing global anti-rights movement. Our Women's Human Rights team is working hard to build coalitions, document attacks, and strengthen a coordinated response in defense of women's rights.

Countering the Far-Right Movement

Women's rights are under attack, and we are facing a global backlash. Well-connected and well-funded far-right movements are dismantling the protections we once thought secure. For the last decade, The Advocates has been at the forefront of investigating the global far-right movement. We work with human rights defenders to document the attacks on women's protections, gender equality, and reproductive rights. We have also provided a secure communications channel for activists worldwide to share developments and strategies to counteract far-right attacks on women's rights.

In March, The Advocates attended the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): Beijing+30 at the UN General Assembly building. Our team participated in discussions on how the Political Declaration on Beijing +30 must be a catalyst for achieving global gender equality in a moment when the backlash jeopardizes the rights of all women and gender-diverse persons. In the fall, the work continued at the annual WAVE (Women Against Violence Europe) Network conference, where The Advocates for Human Rights trained women's human rights defenders in collaboration with

our Italian partners D.i.Re Donne in Rete contro la violenza, Rete Resistente, and Semia Fondo delle Donne. The workshop focused on building unusual allies and how to navigate through the discomforts of working with new alliances.

Analyzing Gender-Based Violence in Minnesota

The fight for women's rights begins at home. The Advocates' WATCH Project sends trained volunteers into courts to observe proceedings with a view to transforming Minnesota's criminal legal systems and building a world

that respects the rights of all survivors of gender-based violence. We seek to promote trauma-responsive legal systems that foster healing and community-based approaches to combat gender-based violence. Through monitoring and collaborating with survivors and local partners, we can keep eyes on our legal systems to ensure they appropriately address harms while remaining trauma-responsive.



Linda Foreman leads a workshop at WAVE



The Fallacy Driving the Death Penalty's Revival in the USA

On day one, the second Trump administration issued an executive order calling for “Restoring the death penalty and protecting public safety.” I chair the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty’s working group for its annual World Day Against the Death Penalty, marked every October 10th, and it’s fitting that this order came out just as we were gearing up to plan our second year focusing on the theme of “The Death Penalty Protects No One.”

Contrary to the executive order’s bald-faced assertions, the death penalty neither has a unique deterrent effect on crime nor supports victims of violent crime.

An August 2025 report by the UN Secretary-General confirmed this point, concluding that “[t]here is **no conclusive evidence to support the theory that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than any other punishment.**”

Facts and evidence, however, have never deterred the Trump administration. The January 20 executive order lashes out at “politicians and judges” for imposing constraints on the death penalty and directs the Attorney General to “seek the overruling of” Supreme Court precedents limiting the use of the death penalty, under the pretext of “prioritiz[ing] public safety.”

State lawmakers swiftly took note. Idaho and Oklahoma passed laws authorizing the death penalty for non-lethal sexual assault of a child, expressly defying a 2008 Supreme Court precedent prohibiting the death penalty for crimes in which the victim did not die and the offender did not intend to kill. Florida adopted a mandatory death penalty for “unauthorized aliens,” directly contravening a Supreme Court precedent dating back to 1976 prohibiting mandatory death penalty statutes.

As The Advocates sees in working with Coalition partners around the world, **politicians often invoke the death penalty as a simplistic response to complex issues relating to public safety and criminal behavior.** Effective solutions include addressing the root causes of crime and dedicating resources and training to ensure that authorities can apprehend offenders and gather sufficient evidence to secure convictions.

Rather than building respect for the rule of law, however, the Trump administration undermines it by thumbing its nose at long-established Supreme Court precedents.

Standing in solidarity with Coalition members in other “backsliding” countries, The Advocates continues

to bring international attention to the United States’ death penalty practices. In 2024, the United States ranked seventh globally for executions, keeping company with countries like China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen, and it may move up in the ranks, with 2025 executions on pace to increase by over 35%. Yet as a record-breaking 130 countries voted in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for global a moratorium on the death penalty in December 2024, we know the United States is becoming increasingly isolated in its embrace of capital punishment. The Trump administration’s empty rhetoric is fooling no one.

Author: Amy Bergquist



Read The Coalition's Detailed Factsheet.

No Longer Invisible: UN Shines a Spotlight on the Reality of Women Sentenced to Death

It was an early celebration of the October 10 World Day Against the Death Penalty. On October 8, 2025, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the “question of the death penalty” by a vote of 31 to 7, with 8 abstentions.

The Council adopts this resolution every other year, but the 2025 text, for the first time, recognizes at the highest levels of the international human rights system the work The Advocates and its Coalition partners have been doing over the past four years to shine a spotlight on women under sentence of death.

Since 2021, The Advocates and its partners have submitted 45 reports on gender and the death penalty to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The 2025 resolution highlights the impact of this work by “noting the increasing attention paid to [the death penalty] in the most recent work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.”

Amy Bergquist, Associate Program Director for International Justice, who attended the Council’s informal consultations on the resolution in September, observes, “during discussions of this paragraph, Singapore pushed back, insisting that there was no evidence that the CEDAW Committee was paying ‘increasing attention’ to the death penalty.”

In fact, the Committee had reviewed Singapore’s human rights record in 2024. Thanks in part to two reports from The Advocates and its Coalition partners the Anti Death Penalty Asia Network, the Capital Punishment Justice Project, and the Singapore-based Transformative Justice Collective, the Committee experts grilled Singapore’s delegation on the country’s death penalty practices and how they affect women.

“We had the receipts,” Bergquist added. “I reminded Council delegates that The Advocates had documented 14 times since 2024 when the Committee had raised death penalty issues with a country under review.”

The 2025 resolution also includes for the first time a paragraph “[e]xpressing concern at the specific type of discrimination affecting the sentencing of women and girls, and recalling the importance of their full, equal and meaningful access and participation in defence and their ability to seek legal redress in cases of the death penalty.” This language, in turn, arises out of the UN Secretary-General’s August 2025 report on the question of the death penalty, which relied heavily on several submissions from The Advocates and its partners.

Recognizing that The Advocates and its Coalition colleagues often struggle to obtain accurate data about women sentenced to death, the resolution also calls on countries that retain the death penalty to publish complete information about their death penalty practices, “disaggregated by gender” and other factors.

“Not just the final text of the resolution, but also the entire negotiation process, shows that we are influencing international human rights policy. Bolstered by our advocacy with the CEDAW Committee, the Committee has been leveraging the information in our reports to make hard-hitting recommendations to countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore, and the Secretary-General has used our reports to underscore the gender dimension of the death penalty. The resolution is concrete proof that we are making a difference,” concluded Bergquist.

GIVE NOW

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help victims of human rights violations find safety and create bright futures

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build the capacity of human rights defenders to change systems in their countries

\$1,000

help us mobilize interns, volunteers and pro bono lawyers

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help organize and conduct one pro se clinic

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educate a child at our Sankhu Palubari Community School

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help respond rapidly to the next human rights crisis



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Sankhu Palubari Community School Students Are Thriving

Recent political violence and floods have created challenges for Nepal, but students at the Sankhu Palubari Community School (SPCS) continue to thrive! Twenty students graduated from 10th grade this year and all received outstanding results on the mandatory examination. Nationally, almost half of all 10th graders do not pass this exam, which is required for Nepali students to continue their education through 12th grade. **SPCS Principal Anoop Poudel reported, “This outstanding achievement is not only a source of pride for the students and teachers but also a reflection of the supportive and conducive learning environment that our school provides.”** Twenty-five new students were also admitted to the pre-K class in April; more than 50% were girls.

SPCS students are now able to explore and experiment in the brand-new science lab that was recently added to the school. Thanks to all who contributed to the special 25th anniversary fundraising campaign that made the new science lab and expanded computer lab possible and multiplied opportunities for SPCS students to gain practical hands-on experience with science and technology.

See more
on the SPCS
Facebook!





Facing: SPCS students getting practical hands-on experience with science and technology.

Top Left: SPCS students celebrating the International Day of the Child. The teacher on the right is a SPCS alum.

Bottom Left: 10th grade graduates.

Top Right: Twenty-five new students were also admitted to the pre-K class in April; more than 50% were girls.

Bottom Right: By providing a completely free, high-quality education, as well as a daily meal, the school



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