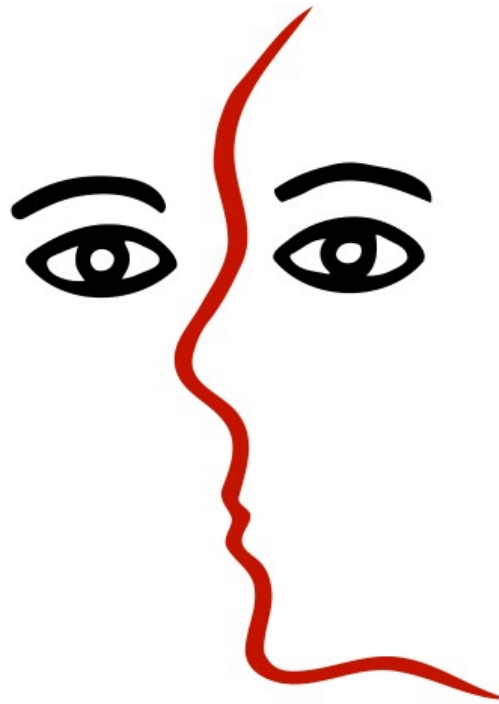


Annual report 2017/2018



**THE SWEDISH FOUNDATION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

1. Reflections from the secretary general

”Are you a part of Sida?”, I was asked, not long ago. I was taken aback. ”No, we are a civil society organisation, and Sida is a governmental agency! In fact, on the other side you could say, the duty bearer, part of the machinery that we hold accountable when it comes to the fulfilment of human rights”. The person asking the question had lost interest before I even finished the answer.

It is clearly not easy to understand. We are very close with many Swedish governmental agencies. We strive for the same things, we often share an agenda. We appreciate and we are grateful for the Swedish government’s support of human rights. We are mainly financed through Swedish governmental agencies. However, we play different roles in the societal web of human rights, and this is crucial.

We are not Sida, and this is important. It is important for us, for our partners and for human rights. We can access areas that governmental agencies cannot, we can work with partners that cannot work with governmental agencies. We value and are valued for our independence. All of us working to promote and protect human rights are important and we are important because we are different and because we have different jobs to do, because we represent different voices, different sides, different ways of doing things.

You may ask what difference a human rights organisation of a handful of people can do. When I look back at 2017 and 2018 – just two years out of many – I think: a lot! And this handful of people are not alone. Alongside with us we have our Board, a principal organisation, numerous interns who are starting out on their careers as human rights defenders, our partner organisations across three continents, our allies in the regional and global human rights systems, our donors, Swedish tax payers...

I invite you to read a bit more about what we – together – have done during 2017 and 2018, in this activities report.

Ulrika Strand, secretary general

2. About SFHR and its thematic areas

The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights is a politically and religiously independent organisation that was set up in 1991 promoting human rights internationally and in Sweden. The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights’ aim is to strengthen the work of civil society to promote and protect human rights. The work of the secretariat in Stockholm is overseen by an independent board. Sensus studieförbund is the principal organisation since 2008.

Although the SFHR’s aim is to promote human rights generally, for the strategic period of 2016-2021 we focus particularly on two areas: promoting economic, social and economic rights (ESCR) and promoting redress for human rights violations, the latter mainly through the lens of transitional justice, meaning the building of democracy, peace and justice after a period of armed conflict or severe human rights atrocities. This focus applies to the activities in Sweden as well as internationally. We see these focus areas as interlinked. Over the last years we have seen human rights defenders working on areas related to ESCR – land rights,

the right to housing, the right to health, the right to education, and so on – increasingly being targeted. And amongst these, women, community leaders and those from minority groups are especially affected. That these groups, working for this particular set of rights need access to justice and redress seems obvious. Therefore the two areas have been chosen as our target areas during this period.

In Sweden, the organisation focuses on increasing the knowledge of human rights through education and information activities as well as monitoring the Swedish government's fulfilment of its human rights obligations. On the international level, an important part of the work of the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights consists of cooperation with and support to local human rights organisations. This with the aim to contribute to a sustainable development of civil society's capacity to protect human rights.

4. Achievements

Promoting the rights of victims in Colombia after the peace agreements

The SFHR has continued its collaboration with the lawyer collective José Alvear Restrepo, [CCAJAR](#) and the Movement of Victims of State crimes, [MOVICE](#). The project has made possible the identification of legal routes and actions to demand rights, build a collective reparations plan with a gender approach that addresses different ethnicities and that enables participation of groups affected by the conflict, including guaranteed follow-up of the compliance with implementation measures, identifying central issues that must be addressed by the state to get comprehensive collective and individual reparations, provide information about challenges regarding the fulfilment of victims' rights, with emphasis on indigenous peoples. The second phase of the project started in 2018 and supports the process of historical collective memory and the strengthening of MOVICE's database [Colombia Nunca Más](#) that will leave information to the transitional justice system established by the peace agreement. The project covers nine departments of Colombia.

The way to sustainable peace in Colombia

The SFHR continued to be the principal for [Colombiagruppen](#) (The Swedish Platform for Colombia). The platform includes eleven Swedish organisations. During 2017 and 2018 the platform has, through the project *The Way to Sustainable Peace in Colombia*, offered information on the challenges, obstacles and progress of the implementation of the Peace Agreements, contributed to increase knowledge about the complex issues behind the worrying security situation for human rights defenders and social leaders, as well as the urgent need for the Colombian state to protect their lives. During these two years, Colombiagruppen organised public seminars, events, meetings with Colombian representatives and Colombian organisations visited Sweden. Colombiagruppen has also been working to increase the knowledge of Swedish policy makers of the importance of the Swedish support for Colombian civil society. In addition, Colombiagruppen supported the advocacy work and release of the parallel report for the Universal Periodic Review on Colombia and co-organised two events in London and Bogotá to follow the gender-based agreements in the Colombian Peace Accords. More than ever, in times of shrinking spaces for civil society, it is crucial to work together to implement the peace accords.

Supporting constructive change in Cuba

A new collaboration with Cuban civil society, financed by Sida, started in January 2018. Partners include a number of civil society organisations comprising ecumenical centres and news agencies. Among the achievements can be mentioned capacity building activities, strengthened actors working for constructive change and active participation in consultations regarding the new constitution.

Burma/Myanmar – redress and visibilisation of human rights

”If we don’t address impunity directly it will hinder the peace process, it will hinder national reconciliation”. (International Commission of Jurists lawyer U Hayman Oo speaking at an event in Rangoon, February 2018, p. 57.)

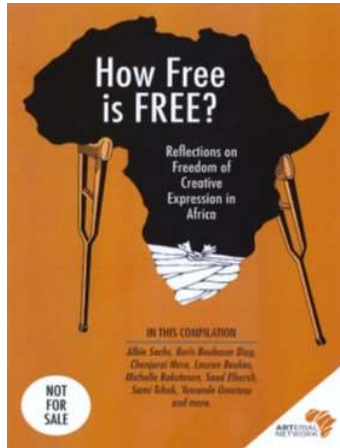
For many years SFHR has supported Burmese human rights organisations. Initially this was only possible from outside Burma/Myanmar but during the period 2017-2018 two partners were able to move their main activities to inside the country. One of them, Network for Human Rights Documentation Burma ([ND Burma](#)) is a network of Burmese organisations promoting transitional justice in Burma. SFHR supports their activities, amongst them the publication of the first report by a Burmese organisation on reparations – one of the cornerstones of transitional justice. [You cannot ignore us](#) was successfully launched in 2018 amidst increased international and national pressure on the Burmese government to live up to their human rights obligations. The report led to renewed calls also from the European Union to apply transitional justice in the country and it served as an important tool for discussions with the government highlighting the need for redress.



Bildtext: Han Gyi, Coordinator for Network for Human Rights Documentation Burma (NDB) with report.

Our other partner organisation, [Colors Rainbow](#), focuses on making Burmese society more equal by promoting the rights of LGBTI-persons. Colors Rainbow has successfully managed to advocate for legal changes regarding LGBTI-rights as well as helped hundreds of people deepen their knowledge of human rights.

Arterial Network – cultural rights are human rights

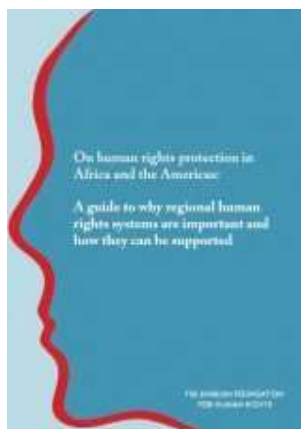


During the 2017-2018 period, SFHR was able to address one less often looked at aspect of ESCR, namely cultural rights. Through our collaboration with Arterial Network we supported African culture workers' and artists' increased understanding and application of human rights. Through the project over 100 people participated in workshops on culture and human rights. Two particular achievements can be mentioned: the production of a manual on Arts and human rights with a self-explanatory facilitation guide directed to culture practitioners. This has been used in the workshops for artists and culture workers and is adapted to people who are not in depth familiar with human rights concepts. A free e-book was also produced telling the stories of different peoples' experiences focusing on culture and

human rights. [*How free is free? Reflections on Freedom of Creative Expression in Africa*](#) gives a both inspiring and worrying perspective of the reality and human rights situation of culture workers and artists across the continent. Both publications can be accessed through Arterial's website (www.arterialnetwork.org).

Why regional human rights systems are important and how to support them

Why are regional human rights important? When we asked representatives from the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs this question at the NGO Forum before the African Commission on Human and Peoples rights in Banjul 2017, they answered "Because our African partners consider it important we have to do the same". And this is also why SFHR supports regional human rights systems. We and our partners see that they are effective for the protection and promotion of human rights, not the least when it comes to redress for human rights violations. In 2017 we produced the publication [*On human rights protection in Africa and the Americas: A guide to why regional human rights systems are important and how they can be supported.*](#)



We were pleased to mobilise Swedish decision makers in this, such as Annika Ben David, Swedish Ambassador-at-large for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Annika wrote in the Foreword to the publication:

"The regional human rights systems have a central role in building bridges between countries and strengthening human rights. They have brought incredible difference to the lives of individuals and peoples when it comes to access to justice, impunity and discrimination. They have made it obvious that the right way to go forward is not to push each other down, but by pulling each other up. Sweden is a strong supporter of regional systems that work for human rights and democracy within their own frameworks".

Coordinating the Swedish Network for Transitional Justice

The SFHR continued to coordinate the Swedish Network for Transitional Justice which we also initiated in 2015. Two seminars on the transitional justice process in Colombia were co-organised with Colombiagruppen in 2017. Both seminars counted the presence of representatives from Colombian civil society – the first one explaining the transitional justice framework in place and its challenges – and the second one focusing on transitional justice and indigenous peoples.

GQUAL - why does the equal participation of women matter?

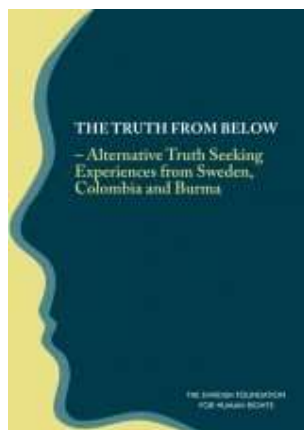
[GQUAL](#) is a global campaign aiming at achieving gender parity in the international and regional judicial bodies such as the different courts, committees and special rapporteurships of the UN. Since its launch in 2015, SFHR has been acting as a partner to, and an agent in Sweden, for the GQUAL-campaign. A concrete example of this has been facilitating access for the GQUAL-secretariat to important players in the Swedish context, such as relevant ministries and Sida.

An important milestone for GQUAL was the global conference held in The Hague in October 2017, partially financed by Sida and attended by the SFHR and the Swedish Government. The conference convened 150 participants from academia, NGOs, the UN, regional human rights systems and states. One concrete and important outcome was the design and adoption of an action plan for the coming years. The President of the SFHR board, Margareta Grape, was invited to moderate a panel *Why does the equal participation of women matter?*

After the conference, the SFHR assisted in the search for funds in order to secure financing for the action plan agreed upon by the conference.

MR-dagarna – a celebration of human rights

MR-dagarna (The Swedish Forum for Human Rights) is the biggest human rights conference in Europe. SFHR is one of the organisers of the Forum that is arranged annually in November in different Swedish cities. Target groups of the Forum are the general public, decision makers, governmental and municipal agencies, academia and – of course – civil society.



In 2017, one of the seminars that we organised explored alternative truth seeking – related to the SFHR publication on the same matter *The truth from below – alternative truth seeking experiences from Sweden, Colombia and Burma*. The seminar focused on a white book launched in 2016 by the Swedish Church – examining the role of the church in discrimination and oppression of the Sami people. It also provided for a forward-looking part, discussing the possibility of a coming Sami truth commission in Sweden. On the panel was a representative from the Sami Council of the Swedish church and the former vice chairman of the Sami parliament.

In 2018, the SFHR together with [Colombiagruppen](#) (the Swedish Platform for Colombia) arranged a seminar on *The Truth Commission's Importance for Sustainable Peace* with Carlos

Beristain from the Colombian truth commission and Soraya Gutiérrez from the Colombian lawyer collective [CCAJAR](#). The second seminar *Applying transitional justice in repressive societies - challenges and possibilities* offered a discussion between SFHR's Fredrik Svensson and Fabian Salvioli, UN special rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. We were delighted to host the UN Special Rapporteur's first visit to Sweden. One of the aspects of transitional justice in Sweden that surprised the Special Rapporteur is the situation of the Swedish indigenous population, the Sami. The visit allowed him to interact with Sami representatives.

Outside of the meeting room, there was an exhibition to highlight other side of Colombia's history. The wave of violence against social leaders and human rights defenders that steadily increased during the first three years of implementation of the peace agreement. Colombia's ombudsman documented 343 murders between 2016-2018. With the exhibition, the SFHR and the Colombian network showed their support for social leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia and spread knowledge about the problems of human security in the country. Their work is a prerequisite for achieving peace and the Colombian state must investigate all attacks, protect and give guarantees to those who, with their work, will contribute to the transition from conflict to peace.



Carlos Beristain and Soraya Gutiérrez



Fabian Salvioli and Sami representatives



Soraya Gutiérrez and Fabian Salvioli



Fredrik Svensson and Fabian Salvioli



Soraya and timeline in SFHR's stand

Report on the links between human rights and sustainable peace



Funded by Sida, the SFHR made a desk study on the links between human rights and sustainable peace in the Swedish government's policy documents and strategies for international development cooperation. The study was published in October 2018 and discussed at a round-table seminar counting the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and civil society organisations. This seemingly dry topic has in fact a far reaching impact on the implementation of human rights.

“There is no sustainable peace without peace and no peace without sustainable peace and none without respect for human rights”.¹

Showing how economic, social and cultural rights connect with racism and similar intolerance

During the second half of 2018 the SFHR began a one year project on ESCR and racism and similar intolerance, financed by MUCF (The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society). The planned output of the project was a half-term follow up report aiming to fill a void in the reporting cycle, namely a follow up of recommendations given to Sweden by the CESCR in 2016. The idea was to scrutinise the implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) through a lens of racism and similar intolerance in order to highlight the relationship between access to ESCR and racism and similar intolerance and how marginalised groups have lesser access to their rights compared to others.

5. The Chair's comments

In 2017 I took over as Chair of the board for the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights. It is an honour to have been asked to take on the task to lead the work of the board. The Foundation has over the years played and continues to play an important role in the Human Rights community. The Foundation might not be one of the largest actors, but it is well equipped to contribute to the defence of indivisible and universal Human Rights, both by supporting Human Rights defenders in the South and by active advocacy in the public space in Sweden. In times when the principle of indivisibility and universality are challenged by arguments based on cultural, religious or traditional values, it is pivotal to maintain and straighten Human Rights related work nationally and internationally. All organisations in civil society have to deal with financial challenges. Even though public financing of the work of the Foundation still remains at a reasonable level, there are reasons to take measures to secure funding in a longer perspective, not least to diminish the risk of sudden shifts in priorities for public funding. The board has decided to apply for a special fundraising account controlled by the Swedish Fundraising Control. This will oblige the Foundation to develop a policy for communications aiming at inviting the general public to contribute. It is a challenge, but a necessary challenge both to make the Foundation better known by the public and to eventually diversifying the financing of the Foundation.

Margareta Grape, Chair of the Board

¹ Policyramverk för det svenskt utvecklingssamarbete och humanitärt bistånd, s. 8.

Board members 2017-2018

Peter Weiderud, Chair person, - 2017
Margareta Grape, Chair person, 2017 -
Peter K. Sjögren, board member
Marika Fahlén, board member
Fredrik Hedlund, board member, - 2018
Ulrika Jonsson, board member, 2018 -
Anders Kompass, board member, 2017 -

Secretariat

Charlotta Göller, programme manager & advisor international law
Ylva Lennartsson Hartmann, programme manager & expert international law
Claudia Polo, project manager & coordinator Colombiagruppen
Ulrika Strand, secretary general
Fredrik Svensson, programme manager & advisor international law

Thank you!

We want to thank our indispensable interns during these two years. Thank you Cecilia Frilund, Frida Lockner, Felicia Granath and Daniel Wickström for your important contributions and professional work.

Thank you Sensus studieförbund, our principal organisation. You make our every day work so much easier and connect us with the far-most placed municipalities in Sweden.

Our work would not be possible without the support of our donors, many of which have supported us for several years: Sida, Folke Bernadotte Academy, MUCF, Swedish Institute Creative Force and Forum Syd.