Human Rights Begin at Home

2019-2020 Impact Report
Dear Friends,

It’s my privilege to present highlights from our work in this 2019/2020 impact report. Much has happened over the past two years. We filed a new case to help bring an end to fifty years of impunity for a perpetrator of Argentina’s Trelew Massacre. We won our third victory for survivors of Somalia’s brutal Siad Barre dictatorship, the only cases in the world that have sought accountability for the regime’s abuses. We filed seven amicus briefs, including at the U.S. Supreme Court and the International Criminal Court. And we've continued to work on cases ranging from accountability for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge to seeking justice for victims of Colombia’s paramilitaries.

Our community has also experienced loss. Last year, our co-founder Gerald Gray passed away. Jerry was a champion of survivors. As a therapist, he understood how important justice and recognition can be in the healing process. He was a tenacious fighter for the rights of the most marginalized, and we dedicate this impact report to him.

We have faced challenges, from human rights crises at home in the United States to a global pandemic that has profoundly impacted everyone in the CJA community. Over the past year, COVID-19 restrictions have given us all new perspectives on the importance of home. But at CJA, we have always known that home is where human rights begin, take root, and flourish. Our work is intimately tied to the idea of home – of grounding responses to atrocity in the places and communities most impacted.

We work with civil society in the United States to address human rights violations here at home. When protests broke out around the world against the extrajudicial killings of Black Americans by U.S. law enforcement last summer, CJA took action. We partnered with a coalition of organizations to petition the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for a hearing on police brutality and systemic racism in the United States. The hearing centered on voices at the heart of this crisis: mothers and Black activists long engaged in the struggle for racial justice.

We partner with advocates around the world to empower them to fight human rights abuses in their home countries. Beginning in 2019, we undertook an ambitious project to support lawyers and human rights defenders investigating atrocity crimes committed in Syria and Iraq. Our peer-mentoring approach supports grassroots advocates in their efforts to document abuses committed against their communities, preserve evidence of serious violations, and play an integral role in accountability processes.

We collaborate with local human rights defenders to support international accountability. When a former member of Gambian dictator Yahya Jammeh’s notorious Junglers death squads was arrested in Colorado, we worked with Gambian and international organizations to ensure that he wasn’t simply returned to the Gambia where the prospect of accountability was uncertain. We called on the United States to investigate the credible allegations of grave international crimes committed by Michael Sang Correa. On June 11, the U.S. Department of Justice announced Correa’s indictment on six counts of torture and one count of conspiracy to commit torture. This is the first prosecution of a Jungler anywhere in the world, and we will be representing victims of his crimes as this case moves forward.

Our transnational cases also amplify local activism. Three years ago, we worked with Liberian human rights defenders to bring a case in the U.S. against a former commander of the Armed Forces of Liberia. He’s alleged to be responsible for the Lutheran Church Massacre, one of the most horrific events in Liberia’s back-to-back civil war. Cases like ours fuel ongoing demands from Liberian civil society for domestic accountability. And as our litigation proceeds, we continue to support the work of local activists seeking justice for war crimes, from advocacy before the United Nations to calling on the Liberian government to protect human rights defenders.

As we look back on these past two years, it is clear that we are living in extraordinary times. But we also have an extraordinary community. We remain connected with activists, partners, and supporters in ways we never thought possible just months ago. Thanks to all of you, we’ll continue to seek truth, justice, and redress for survivors of atrocity in 2021 and beyond.

In solidarity,

Carmen Cheung
From Argentina to Syria, to right here in the United States, we partner with survivors and their communities in pursuit of truth, justice, and redress.

We deter torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other severe human rights abuses through impact litigation and innovative transitional justice strategies. CJA was founded in 1998 on a principle developed in the Nuremberg trials after World War II: that certain crimes are so egregious that they represent offenses against all humankind. For the past 22 years, we have worked tirelessly to achieve our vision of a world in which justice thrives – where every nation can provide meaningful avenues for accountability to survivors of atrocity and the marginalized.

For the past 22 years, we have worked tirelessly to achieve our vision of a world in which justice thrives.
What is Accountability?

Accountability starts by telling the truth.

Too often, atrocity crimes are covered up and narratives are shaped by the powerful. Telling the true story of what happened and why is a key component to accountability.

It allows survivors to give a firsthand account of what they experienced and how it affects them and their communities. CJA’s litigation creates opportunities for a formal recognition of these truths by a court of law and a finding of responsibility. Our cases bring together survivors, experts, and the community to create a shared narrative and understanding of pivotal events.

But accountability goes beyond consequences for wrongdoers – it is also redress for everyone harmed. That means amends to those who are direct victims of human rights abuses. It also means reparations for communities, and recognizing societal and intergenerational harms.

Ultimately, accountability is about non-recurrence – ensuring that atrocity does not beget atrocity.

It means breaking the cycle of impunity and violations that we have seen play out over the course of our work around the world. When human rights abusers are not held to account, they are emboldened to carry out more abuses. Accountability is essential to preventing the atrocities of tomorrow.

Photo by Ron Cogswell, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice-Montgomery (AL), March 2019
Ahimsa’s Story

I’ll never forget the day we served the man responsible for my father’s murder.

I first heard the news from CJA Senior Staff Attorney Nushin Sarkarati. When she called to tell me that former Sri Lankan Secretary of Defense Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa had been served in a Southern California Trader Joe’s parking lot, I couldn’t believe it.

I had been trying in vain for eleven years to secure justice for my father, and I was nearly out of hope. At times, I felt unable to cope with life anymore. Everyone knew Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa was untouchable, but finally, we got him. Finally, I had something to believe in. As I hung up with Nushin, I knew I’d always remember April 7, 2019 as one of the most victorious days of my life since my father died.

Though she didn’t tell me at the time, Nushin had just found out she was pregnant when CJA learned Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who had orchestrated widespread and systematic violence against journalists like my father, was in the United States. She and the CJA legal team worked around the clock for the next two weeks as though she was seeking justice for her own family.

That’s how I knew the CJA team would be different from the countless lawyers I’d previously discussed my father’s case with. They were so invested from the very beginning because they instinctively knew what a case like this could mean for Sri Lankans and for journalists everywhere. My father wasn’t the only person killed for speaking out against the Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime. CJA and I together are giving the families of other victims hope, too.

Our case was stalled in November 2019 when Rajapaksa became President and protected by head of state immunity. But Nushin and I didn’t give up our pursuit of justice. On the 12th anniversary of my father’s death, we filed a complaint with the United Nations Human Rights Committee against the government of Sri Lanka for its role in his assassination. That’s exactly the kind of action my father would have taken. And now, I’m continuing his fight to hold the world’s worst human rights abusers accountable.

Thanks to CJA, I’m no longer just the “murdered journalist’s daughter.” People view me now as an agent of change. The people of Sri Lanka now see hope. We see the prospect of accountability.

Thank you for supporting CJA’s mission to seek justice for my father. May his dual legacies – one as a journalist who uncovered corruption and spoke for marginalized groups, and another as my loving, affectionate, heroic dad – live on.

Learn more about CJA’s work with Ahimsa Wickrematunge and our advocacy for an end to impunity in Sri Lanka at cja.org.
Early one morning in 1987, Farhan Warfaa was taken to the headquarters of the Fifth Brigade of the Somali National Army, where Colonel Yusuf Adbi Ali (aka “Tukeh”) held command. A water tanker had gone missing and Col. Tukeh was determined to find it. Farhan – only a teenager at the time – was interrogated and tortured. Col. Tukeh and his troops bound Farhan’s hands and feet tightly behind his back until his body was arched backward in a tilted U-shape. They then beat Farhan while he was in this unbearably painful position. Finally, after almost two months of torture, they shot Farhan multiple times and left him for dead. Miraculously, Farhan survived.

Farhan lived through what has been called the “Isaaq genocide.” The systematic, state-sponsored massacre of members of the Isaaq clan took place under the brutal dictatorship of Said Barre, who ruled over Somalia from 1969 to 1991. When Barre’s regime finally collapsed in 1991, Somalia was plunged into a chaotic internal conflict from which it has never recovered. To this day, there is no functional justice system where a case against Col. Tukeh can be brought.

That is why it was so extraordinarily important that we took Farhan’s case. We’d already won cases against the former Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Mohamed Ali Samantar, and the former Chief of Investigations of the infamous National Security Service, Abdi Aden Magan. These three cases represent the first and only form of legal accountability for Barre-era crimes anywhere in the world.

For fifteen years, we traveled to Somaliland to work with civil society activists, interview witnesses, and collect evidence. Our attorneys spent 400 hours in the field in July 2018 alone. In the end, we presented evidence that Col. Tukeh participated in a violent campaign against Isaaq civilians in northwestern Somalia.

In May 2019, after years of litigation, Farhan finally faced his torturer and found justice.

A Virginia jury found Col. Tukeh responsible for Farhan’s torture and awarded Farhan $500,000 in damages, including $100,000 in punitive damages. Though Tukeh has appealed the judgment, CJA is fighting to preserve Farhan’s victory at the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. In the meantime, we are working with the University of Hargeisa to archive materials from our three Somali cases to create a lasting historical record – one that not only tells the truth of what happened during the Barre dictatorship, but also reflects the stories of survivors.
Our Impact

175 clients represented
18 countries
24 cases & investigations
40+ partners seeking justice in their home countries

$8,320,751 in pro bono lawyer and researcher services.*

*Amount is over the course of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 fiscal years.

Photo by Elena Hermosa
CJA’s approach to transitional justice recognizes that justice and accountability for human rights violations are key pillars to rebuilding strong and stable societies.

Our transitional justice projects support our partners in the pursuit of legal accountability for atrocities by building legal investigation skills through collaborative case-building. We recognize the expertise of local actors and their deep knowledge of their country’s political, historical, and cultural situations, and seek to supplement that with our extensive experience in survivor-centered accountability and human rights litigation. Although each country’s transitional justice process is unique, the skills needed to investigate and develop case files on war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other international human rights violations are similar across different systems.

In 2019, we began an initiative to develop litigation-ready cases with local lawyers and advocates on atrocities committed by ISIL in Iraq and Syria.

Through engagement with ethnic and religious minority groups, we leverage documentation held by NGOs and civil society groups to develop a better understanding of ISIL’s structure and operations. The evidence is transmitted to international justice mechanisms, including the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on Syria (IIIM) and national war crimes prosecutors. Our goal is to ensure that prosecutions of ISIL members go beyond simply their membership in a terrorist organization. Prosecutions must reflect the full gravity of their conduct, including their participation in genocide, enslavement, and torture.
Strengthening Tools for Human Rights Accountability

2020 Amicus Briefs

Lawyers have a saying—there is no right without a remedy. Accountability means that our courts and our law have to recognize the right of survivors to seek redress for their abuses. CJA’s amicus strategy is to support and advance the international and US framework for accountability so that survivors of atrocity will always have an opportunity to seek justice.

Situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

In November 2019, CJA filed an amicus brief with international and Afghan human rights organizations in support of an investigation by the International Criminal Court into war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the conflict in Afghanistan, including the US torture program. We argued that the victims of these abuses had a right to a remedy, and that required allowing the investigation to proceed despite U.S. opposition. The Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court agreed and in March 2020 ruled that the investigation could move forward.

D.J.C.V. v. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

In 2020, CJA joined international human rights organizations and former U.N. Special Rapporteurs on Torture in filing an amicus brief in support of a two-year-old Honduran child and his father. They were detained and separated for over six months under the Trump administration’s family separation policy. They sought to hold the United States accountable for torture, but the government claimed that it could not be sued. We argued that international law guarantees the right to a remedy for breaches of fundamental norms, such as the universal prohibition against torture. The United States cannot declare itself immune from responsibility when it violates international human rights law.

Doe v. Nestlé and Doe v. Cargill

Perpetrators of gross human rights abuses do not act in a vacuum – their actions are made possible through the assistance and support of numerous others. Last October, we wrote an amicus brief for the Supreme Court of the United States in support of former child slaves from Mali, trafficked into forced labor on cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast. Nestlé and Cargill – two US chocolate companies – allegedly supported and maintained this system of child slavery. Our brief argued that aiders and abettors to atrocity can and should be held accountable in US courts.
Board of Directors

Board of Directors 2020-2021
William Aceves, Chair
Donovan Andrews
Farah Brelvi, Vice Chair
Robert Flynn, Treasurer
Tyler Giannini
Rochelle King, Secretary
Ajay Krishnan
Mina Titi Liu, Governance Chair
Vijay Padmanabhan
Jane Rocamora, Audit Committee Chair
Dr. William F. Schulz
Caroline L. Scullin
Beth Van Schaack

Board of Directors 2019-2020
Farah Brelvi, Chair
William Aceves, Vice Chair
Robert Flynn
Tyler Giannini
Rochelle King, Secretary
Ajay Krishnan
Mina Titi Liu, Governance Chair
Jane Rocamora, Audit Committee Chair
Dr. William F. Schulz
Caroline L. Scullin
Beth Van Schaack

Board of Directors 2018-2019
Farah Brelvi, Chair
William Aceves, Vice Chair
Robert Flynn
Tyler Giannini
Joan Haratani
Rochelle King, Secretary
Ajay Krishnan
Mina Titi Liu, Governance Chair
Jane Rocamora, Audit Committee Chair
Dr. William F. Schulz
Caroline L. Scullin
Beth Van Schaack

Current Staff

Carmen Cheung, Executive Director
Jennifer Rasmussen, Deputy Executive Director
Sareta Ashraph, Senior Legal Advisor
Sally Littlefield, Development Officer
Ela Matthews, Staff Attorney
Daniel McLaughlin, Senior Staff Attorney
Roza Qaidi, Program Officer
Nushin Sarkarati, Senior Staff Attorney
Claret Vargas, Senior Staff Attorney
Cristina Yim, Development and Operations Coordinator

Fellows

Lindsay Bailey, Legal Fellow (Aug. 2019–Aug. 2020)
Monica Castillejos-Aragon, Visiting Fellow (Sept. 2020–Dec. 2020)
David Cornell, Legal Fellow (Sept. 2019–Sept. 2020)
Sasha Filippova, Senior Fellow (Nov. 2019–Mar. 2020)
Katerina Siefkas, Simpson Thacher Public Service Fellow (May 2020–May 2021)

In-Kind Support

Elliot Burg
Gayle Donsky & Morton Stein
Davis Family Vineyards
Lisa Hammond
Google
J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines
Seema Mathur
MP Nunan
Whole Foods

Interns & Volunteers

Laith Aqel
Salam Awwad
Anoush Baghdassarian
Gilian Berkowitz
Brynna Bolt
Bryan Carlen
Cindy Cho
Chloe Connolly
Camilla Damato
Emilia Diaz-Magalone
Alev Erhan
Paul Grant-Villegas
Mara Gonzalez Soto
Taylor Hadnot
Lara Hakki
Michael Hissey
Vanessa Hofman
Christie Ho Lam Wan
Lindsay Johnson
Neema Jyothiprakash
Sara Kaufhardt
Andrea Maddox
Iury Muci de Lima
U.D. Nnamdi
Leah Paisner
Adi Radhakrishnan
Leena Sabagh
Mark Stevens
Daniella Stoltz
Elisa Vari

Photo courtesy of Alejandra Guerra
**Pro Bono Legal Support**
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP  
Baker McKenzie  
Blank Rome LLP  
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP  
Debevoise & Plimpton LLP  
Dentons US LLP  
DLA Piper  
Durie Tangri LLP  
Everlaw  
Fenwick & West LLP  
Foley Hoag LLP  
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP  
Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic  
Hogan Lovells US LLP  
Jackson Lewis P.C.  
Kerrigan Estess Rankin McLeod & Thompson, LLP  
Kluk Farber Law PLLC  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
Leigh Day  
Mintz Group  
Morgan, Lewis & Brokhius LLP  
Morrison & Foerster LLP  
National Security Archive  
Orick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP  
Schonbrun Seplow Harris Hoffman & Zeldes LLP  
Shearman & Sterling  
Stanford Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Trauma Mental Health Lab  
Stanford Law School International Human Rights Clinic  
University of California Berkeley Human Rights Center  
University of Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic  
University of Washington, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies Center for Human Rights  
White & Case LLP  
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP  
Wilson Elser Moskowitz Edelman & Dicker LLP  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

**Justice Circle Members**

**Gold**
- Maja Kristin  
- Robert Flynn  
- Rochelle & Warren King  
- Oak Foundation  
- Open Society Foundations  
- United States Department of State Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

**Silver**
- The A.M. Fund  
- Medea Benjamin  
- Kathleen Blamey & Jack London  
- Debevoise & Plimpton LLP  
- Firedoll Foundation  
- Molly & Scott Forstall  
- Joan Haratani  
- Coleen Higa & Gerald Gray  
- Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP  
- Keke, Van Nest & Peters LLP  
- Mina Titi Liu & Eric Rosenblum  
- Morrison & Foerster LLP  
- Sally & William Neukom  
- Samuel Rubin Foundation  
- Shearman & Sterling  
- Deborah A. Stewart & James Mintz  
- Colette & Joseph Parsons  
- Beth Van Schaack & Brent Lang  
- Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati  
- Lee & Peggy Zeigler

**Bronze**
- William & Seema Aceves  
- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP  
- Alice H. Ball  
- Anonymous  
- Douglas Bender  
- Billy Boughton  
- Farah Breli & David Ball  
- Syed Breli  
- Carmen Cheung & Hirohisa Tanaka  
- Anne Corcos  
- Mary Patricia Davis & Wesley Callendar  
- Dentons US LLP  
- Kathryn DeRiemer  
- Lokelani Devone & Annette Brands  
- DLA Piper  
- Dominican Sisters of San Rafael  
- Ethneogen Fund  
- Mary Fabri & David Goldberg  
- David Fischer  
- Nicole & Michael Fishman  
- Lee FitzGerald & George Kohn  
- Ruth Ford & Richard Owens  
- Fox Rothschild LLP  
- Michelle & Brett Galloway  
- Milan Gamble  
- Genentech  
- Tyler Giannini & Ang Thilatham  
- Jennifer Glaudemans  
- Susan & Gary Halling  
- Lisa Honig  
- Lorraine & Victor Honig  
- Susie Hwang & Matt Glickman  
- Phyllis Hatfield  
- William Kissinger  
- Ajay Krishnan & Annie Redding  
- Holly Laurent & David Crane  
- Carey Lifschtuz & David Steipleman  
- M. Brinton Lykes  
- Linda Matthews  
- Agnes & Alan Mendelson  
- Pamela Merchant & Kirby Sack  
- Paul Merrill  
- Paulette Meyer & David Friedman  
- Mintz Group  
- Morgan, Lewis & Brokhius LLP  
- Elizabeth Nielsen  
- Lucy & Joey Neugart  
- Andrea Neves  
- John Obrien  
- Nancy Pemberton  
- Pinpoint Foundation  
- Kathy Roberts & Aaron Loeb  
- Jane Rocamora  
- Andrew Rosenblum  
- Prentice & Paul Sack  
- Donna Scarboro & Ralph Steinhardt  
- Betty & Jack Schafer  
- Douglas Schmidt & Stephen Martin  
- Karen & Steven Schneebaum  
- Dr. William Schulz & Rev. Beth Graham  
- Carlos Siderman  
- Miranda Sissens & Nigel Snoad  
- Strategy Lab Fund  
- Kassie & Luke Stone  
- Donald P. Sullivan & R. Steven Taylor  
- Shirley & Michael Traynor  
- Union Bank  
- Kate & Philippe Villers  
- Hon. Rebecca Westerfield & Mrs. Ivy Fine  
- David Walker  
- Christopher Wolf  
- Wool Family Charitable Fund

---

The Center for Justice & Accountability

2019-2020 Impact Report