TOGETHER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

IPHR Annual Report 2025

IPHR International Partnership for Human Rights

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Executive Summary

2025 was a challenging and defining year for International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR).

It was a year marked by disruption, uncertainty and growing pressure on civil society across our regions of work. Russia's war against Ukraine continued to generate immense human suffering and grave international crimes. Civic space narrowed further across Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. Authoritarian practices increasingly crossed borders, affecting exiled communities, journalists, activists and human rights defenders even within the European Union.

It was also a year in which IPHR was tested institutionally. The sudden disruption of major international funding streams forced us to reassess priorities, manage risk and adapt quickly. Thanks to the commitment of our team, the trust of our partners and the support of our donors, IPHR not only weathered this difficult period but emerged more focused, resilient and strategically prepared for the years ahead.

Throughout 2025, our work remained grounded in a simple conviction: human rights protection is most effective when it is built together with local civil society. Across all regions, IPHR continued to support those who document violations, assist vulnerable communities, pursue justice and defend civic space under highly difficult conditions. We provided emergency and legal assistance to human rights defenders, supported grassroots organisations through flexible funding, strengthened documentation and investigative capacity, and helped bring local evidence and voices to international institutions.

In Ukraine, we continued to support survivor-centred accountability for Russia's crimes, working with partners to document atrocities, support affected communities and pursue legal avenues at national and international levels. Our work contributed to efforts to preserve evidence, support universal jurisdiction cases, expose the forced transfer of Ukrainian children, and investigate the economic and supply-chain dimensions of Russia's aggression.

In our Russia-related work, IPHR significantly expanded its focus on transnational repression and foreign information manipulation and interference. We documented patterns of intimidation, surveillance, legal abuse and pressure targeting exiled activists and journalists, while advocating for stronger European and international responses. At the same time, we increased direct support to exiled communities, including through security training, emergency assistance and resilience-building initiatives.

In Georgia, the sharp deterioration of the political and human rights environment required difficult but necessary operational decisions. While reducing organisational exposure on the ground, we strengthened support for Georgian civil society, including through documentation, advocacy, OSINT-based evidence preservation, and care-centred assistance for human rights defenders facing prolonged pressure.

In Armenia, we laid the groundwork for a new programme addressing foreign influence operations and democratic resilience. Through research, mapping and practical engagement with civil society and state actors, IPHR helped prepare the basis for deeper work in 2026.

In Central Asia, IPHR and its partners continued to defend civic space in an increasingly restrictive environment. Through emergency assistance, sub-granting, capacity building, research, documentation

and sustained advocacy with the EU, UN, OSCE, and other major international stakeholders, we helped ensure that human rights violations across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan remained visible and subject to international scrutiny.

2025 was also a year of renewal for our organisation. We adopted a new Strategic Plan for 2026–2030, reaffirming IPHR's mission while adapting our work to the changing operating environment. The strategy places strong emphasis on local partnerships, protection of civil society, accountability for serious violations, countering authoritarian influence operations, and addressing transnational repression. It also recognises the importance of organisational resilience, staff wellbeing and sustainable ways of working.

The opening of IPHR's Casa Vitali in Sambuca di Sicilia was a particularly meaningful milestone. Conceived as a space for rest, reflection, art and human rights, Casa Vitali embodies an important lesson from our work: resilience is not only about persistence under pressure, but also about care, community and renewal.

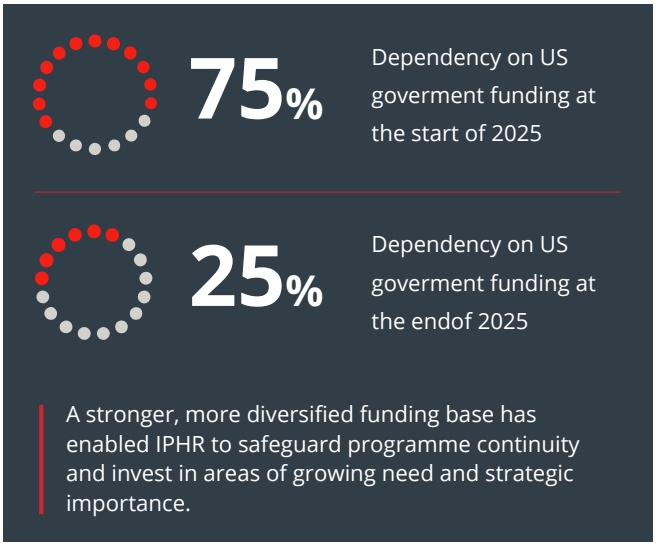
We are deeply grateful to our partners, colleagues, board members, donors and supporters who stood with us throughout a difficult year. Above all, we pay tribute to the human rights defenders, activists, lawyers, journalists, survivors and communities across our target regions whose courage, resilience and unwavering commitment to justice continue to inspire and guide our work.

As we look ahead, the challenges remain serious. But 2025 showed that principled, evidence-based and partnership-driven human rights work can adapt, endure and make a difference. IPHR enters the next strategic cycle with renewed clarity, strengthened resolve and a continued commitment to justice, accountability and solidarity.

Organisational Developments

Financial resilience and strategic renewal

The sudden suspension of US government funding at the start of 2025 marked a challenging period for civil society organisations around the world. For IPHR, it affected a large share of our funding base and created uncertainty across programmes. Although most affected projects were later reinstated, the episode demonstrated the importance of maintaining a diversified funding base and reducing reliance on any single donor. IPHR responded by rebalancing its funding portfolio, strengthening financial monitoring and prioritising programmes where continuity was particularly essential for partners and beneficiaries.



By the end of 2025, dependency on US government funding had fallen from over 75% to around 25%, supported by increased support from private foundations and a growing portfolio of EU-funded projects. This enabled IPHR to enter 2026 with a more stable financial outlook and to further develop its work in emerging and priority areas, including transnational repression and foreign information manipulation and interference.

A new strategic plan for 2026-2030

The year also triggered a wider strategic rethink. Through organisation-wide consultations, IPHR developed a new Strategic Plan for 2026-2030. The strategy reaffirms IPHR's core mission: working with local civil society in repressive environments to promote human rights, justice and the rule of law. At the same time, it reflects IPHR's institutional growth and the evolving nature of repression in our target regions. It sets out five, mutually reinforcing strategic objectives:

Strengthening of partnerships, protection and support for local civil society actors.

Amplification of local voices through targeted international advocacy.

Advancing accountability for gross human rights violations through evidence, legal analysis and strategic litigation.

Exposing and countering foreign influence operations that undermine democratic institutions and civic space.

Responding to transnational repression and supporting human rights defenders in exile.

Care-centred resilience

Through a public cultural event held in May 2025, IPHR opened Casa Vitali in Sambuca di Sicilia as a space dedicated to rest, reflection, and creative exchange for human rights defenders and allied communities. Purchased through the local OneEuroHouse scheme in 2021, the house – named in honour of Georgian human rights defender Vitali Safarov who was brutally murdered in a hate crime – underwent extensive renovations prior to its opening. The initiative reflects IPHR's broader commitment to resilience and well-being as integral components of protection for human rights defenders.

Central Asia

In Central Asia, IPHR's work focused on supporting civil society in an increasingly challenging environment characterised by restrictive legislation, government pressure, and escalating security risks combined with funding constraints. Working closely with local partners from across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, we provided emergency assistance, legal support, sub-granting, capacity-building, and other forms of assistance to help civil society organisations, activists, human rights defenders and journalists continue their vital work and strengthen their resilience. We also conducted targeted research and advocacy with international institutions to promote greater visibility of human rights violations in the region and bring local concerns to policy discussions in international forums.

Emergency and legal assistance

Demand for emergency support increased in Central Asia during the year. IPHR provided more than 25 emergency grants to human rights defenders, activists, journalists and family members, following careful needs assessments and coordination with other protection actors. Support covered urgent medical needs, psychological support, legal assistance, relocation-related needs and other immediate protection priorities.

25+

EMERGENCY GRANTS

to human rights defenders, activists, journalists and family members at risk.

Sub-granting and local initiatives

9

SMALL GRANTS

supported members of the Tajikistani Coalition against Torture and Impunity.

12+

ADDITIONAL GRANTS

supported Tajikistani organisations working on homelessness, association and expression, women's rights and disability rights.

9

ORGANISATIONS

in Kazakhstan began monitoring projects on the criminal justice system using an IPHR-supported methodology

20

GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

in Uzbekistan carried out community-based monitoring and awareness-raising in the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent.

Based on similar monitoring supported through a subgrant scheme implemented in Kyrgyzstan, *a series of analytical reports* examining different aspects of the criminal justice sector was issued

IPHR also provided fundraising assistance and worked with local partners to develop joint applications, a particularly important form of support as competition for limited resources intensified.

Capacity-building and professional skills

IPHR and partners delivered a series of tailored, practically oriented training sessions for civil society representatives in the region.

In Tajikistan, over 130 human rights defenders, bloggers and lawyers benefited from training on issues such as international protection frameworks and engagement with UN mechanisms, ethical storytelling, digital and physical security, strategic planning, and project design and fundraising. In addition, law enforcement officials and judges received training on applicable human rights standards.

In Uzbekistan, more than 150 civil society representatives were trained on project development, reporting, fundraising, monitoring UN conventions, training-of-trainers methods and volunteer management.

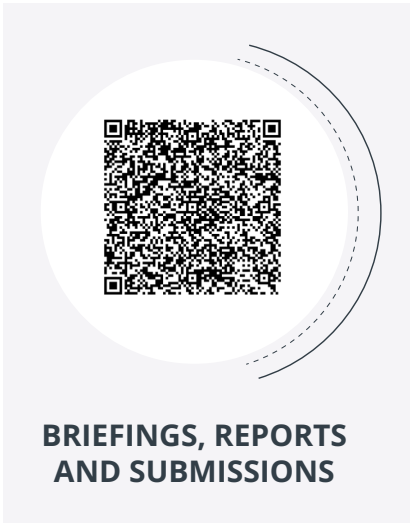
In Kazakhstan, the Rule of Law Academy brought together 40 participants from across the country to strengthen skills in justice-sector monitoring, documenting violations, preparing constitutional complaints and engaging constructively with state institutions.

Research and international advocacy

Research, publications and advocacy remained at the heart of IPHR's Central Asia work in 2025.

Together with local partners, we documented and analysed human rights developments across the region, producing regular *CIVICUS Monitor updates*; a series of tailored *briefings, reports and submissions*; and more than 20 *statements, appeals and open letters*. These outputs provided timely, first-hand information on restrictions on civic freedoms, discrimination against vulnerable groups and other pressing issues, while also setting out recommendations for action.

Drawing on this evidence base, we conducted targeted advocacy with international institutions and individual governments. At a time of increasing EU engagement in Central Asia, we maintained close contacts with EU interlocutors and provided input into high-level meetings, dialogues, missions, partnership processes and other interactions with the region's governments. We also engaged with UN human rights mechanisms reviewing the compliance of Central Asian governments with international



obligations, as well as with OSCE stakeholders working to promote human rights in the region. As part of our advocacy, we facilitated direct contacts between local partners and international stakeholders, enabling them to share local perspectives first-hand.

Through these combined efforts, we helped ensure that concerns raised by civil society in the region informed international discussions, reviews and policy processes, and were reflected in engagement with Central Asian governments. We also amplified the voices of local civil society actors and helped mobilise international attention and support in response to emerging trends and individual cases requiring urgent action.

Public outreach

Through website updates, email campaigns, social media engagement, and media outreach, IPHR drew attention to human rights issues in Central Asia and amplified messages delivered by local partners. Campaigns addressed both country-specific and regional trends and highlighted individual cases of concern. Our publications regularly generated coverage in regional and international media, extending the reach of local civil society messages.

Ukraine

In 2025, IPHR and Ukrainian partners continued documenting grave international crimes, supporting survivors and pursuing accountability for Russia's war of aggression. The programme linked field documentation, legal aid, international advocacy and strategic litigation, with a strong focus on ensuring that survivor testimony and contextual evidence are preserved in forms that can support future prosecutions.

Documentation and legal support

With IPHR support, Ukrainian partners expanded evidence collection and analysis across Crimea, other temporarily occupied territories and areas directly affected by hostilities. Crimea SOS recorded more than 200 new victim testimonies, while the Media Initiative for Human Rights produced detailed analytical reports on detention facilities in occupied territories and inside the Russian Federation. Truth Hounds prepared submissions to UN bodies on the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and enforced disappearances.

200+
VICTIM TESTIMONIES

3000+
LEGAL CONSULTATIONS

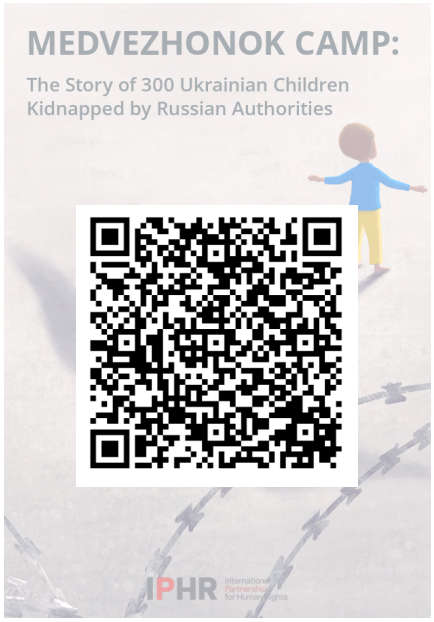
50+
EMERGENCY REQUESTS

Legal assistance remained a major pillar of the programme. Crimea SOS delivered more than 3,000 legal consultations through its Virtual Legal Aid Clinic and Legal Aid Centres, responded to over 50 emergency requests and supported cases at pre-trial and trial stages. Partners also contributed to universal-jurisdiction proceedings in Europe, including a suspect-specific investigation opened by a national prosecutor and preparation of a criminal complaint in Germany.

Children forcibly transferred by Russia

IPHR continued work with families affected by occupation and deportation policies. By 2025, IPHR had documented 14 clusters of cases involving the forcible transfer of more than 500 Ukrainian children by Russian occupying forces. In 2025, IPHR initiated a universal-jurisdiction case in the Czech Republic on behalf of six families, concerning a senior Russian official directly implicated in ongoing deportation practices.

This work was complemented by international advocacy to keep the forced transfer and indoctrination of Ukrainian children at the centre of global accountability efforts, and by support to affected families seeking justice and recognition.



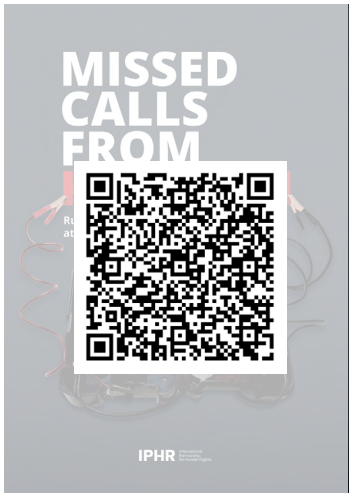
Economic pillage and weapons supply chains

IPHR expanded investigations into the economic and technological infrastructure enabling Russia's war. The report Grain Thieves: The Network Behind the Plunder of Ukrainian Grain mapped the industrial-scale theft of Ukrainian grain, identifying over 140 individuals and entities and at least 60 vessels involved in laundering looted grain from occupied territories. The findings showed how economic pillage functions as part of Russia's war effort.

Together with partners, IPHR also exposed the presence of Western-made microelectronics in Russian fighter jets used in unlawful attacks on civilians. The investigation highlighted persistent export-control gaps and diversion risks despite strengthened sanctions. These findings informed sanctions advocacy, corporate accountability work and policy debates on export-control enforcement.

Conflict-related sexual violence

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) remained a core priority. IPHR documented sexualised torture and other forms of sexual violence using trauma-informed, survivor-centred methodologies and integrated legal analysis from the outset. The report *Missed Calls from Kherson: Russian Sexualised Torture at Temporary Detention Facility No. 1*, based on 59 survivor interviews, demonstrated the systematic nature of sexualised torture and helped clarify how such acts should be recognised in law and accountability processes.



International advocacy and genocide-related legal work

IPHR intensified international advocacy to ensure that Russia's escalating atrocities and their genocidal dimensions remained on the policy agenda. In November 2025, IPHR and partners convened the conference "Intent to Destroy: Confronting Russia's Campaign to Erase Ukraine and Its People" in Washington, DC, bringing together legal, historical and security expertise. IPHR also advanced genocide-related legal strategies, including preparations for amicus curiae submissions before European courts and continued engagement with Ukrainian institutions.

Ukraine programme approach: survivor support, documentation, legal innovation and advocacy are treated as mutually reinforcing parts of a single accountability strategy.

Russia

As civic space inside Russia remained effectively extinguished, the Kremlin continued to extend repression beyond borders. In 2025, IPHR deepened its work on Russia-sponsored transnational repression and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), focusing on investigation, protection, accountability and policy change.

Investigating transnational repression

IPHR conducted country-level investigations into Russia-sponsored transnational repression in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Georgia, with further investigations in Spain and Armenia underway. The work documented patterns of harassment, intimidation, surveillance, coercion, and misuse of legal and administrative systems against exiled Russians, while identifying institutional gaps and practical recommendations for host countries.

IPHR's transnational repression documentation database now contains more than 400 recorded cases. The database informs protection responses, advocacy, and future accountability work, including sanctions submissions and enforcement-focused strategies.

Structural responses and community resilience

IPHR held more than two dozen bilateral meetings with host-country authorities and advanced regional proposals for stronger legal and policy responses. This included advocacy for a Council of Europe convention on transnational repression and a thematic EU sanctions regime targeting individuals and entities orchestrating cross-border repression.

Direct support to exiled communities also expanded. IPHR delivered intensive physical security training for Russian human rights defenders, activists and journalists in exile, trained more than three dozen security specialists through a Training of Trainers programme, and provided tailored emergency support to defenders facing acute threats. A new community support hub funding programme was launched to support exiled hubs across Europe and the South Caucasus.

Foreign information manipulation and interference

IPHR adopted a systemic approach to Russia-sponsored FIMI, looking beyond disinformation content to the networks, actors, enablers and tactics that allow influence operations to function. The work bridges investigations, legal analysis and civil society coordination, and includes practical training for CSOs and guidance for translating findings into legal, policy and accountability outcomes.

Georgia and Armenia

Georgia: adaptation under pressure

In 2025, the political and security environment in Georgia deteriorated sharply as the government intensified restrictive legislation, hostile rhetoric, and pressure on independent civil society and media. IPHR gradually wound down its physical office presence in Tbilisi as a risk-reduction measure.

Armenia: building resilience to foreign influence

Despite the termination of a major USAID-funded project, IPHR launched a new strand of work in Armenia focused on strengthening national and civil society capacity to identify, investigate and counter malign foreign influence, with a particular focus on Russian-linked networks undermining democratic resilience, governance and the rule of law.

IPHR conducted open-source analysis, mapped key actors and reviewed the Armenian civil society ecosystem to identify trusted partners and gaps where IPHR could add value. In November 2025, IPHR hosted a three-day practical workshop in Yerevan for civil society organisations and state representatives, providing hands-on training on FIMI investigative methodologies, accountability tools and risk mitigation. Comparative examples from Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia helped participants examine how findings can be translated into policy, law-enforcement and sanctions-related outcomes.

Looking Ahead

IPHR entered 2026 with a clearer strategic direction, a more diversified funding base and a stronger focus on impact. Across regions, the organisation will continue to combine protection, documentation, investigation, legal analysis, advocacy and accountability work in support of local civil society actors operating under pressure.

Priorities for the year ahead

- Sustain flexible, protection-oriented support for human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations facing acute pressure.
- Continue to provide tailored support to Central Asian civil society actors to strengthen their capacity and resilience, while advocating for human rights and civic space concerns to remain central to expanding international engagement with the region.
- Deepen documentation and legal strategies related to Russia's war against Ukraine, including survivor-centred support, universal jurisdiction and genocide-related accountability work.
- Advance structural responses to transnational repression in Europe, including legal standards, sanctions tools, protection pathways and stronger host-country accountability.
- Expand work on foreign information manipulation and interference by linking investigative findings to legal, financial and policy responses.
- Strengthen Armenia's resilience to malign foreign influence through capacity-building, mentoring, coordination and accountability-oriented investigations.

Closing message

The experience of 2025 confirmed IPHR's central strength: the ability to adapt without losing focus. In a year marked by funding disruption, war, authoritarian consolidation and cross-border repression, IPHR remained committed to partnership, professionalism and accountability. The organisation's work in 2026 will build on this foundation by supporting those most exposed to repression while pursuing practical pathways to justice and systemic change.