The Democracy Programs safeguard freedom by providing outreach and aid to those on the frontlines of democracy worldwide.

**American Democracy**

The McCain Institute launched the American Democracy Project with the aim of fostering a vibrant and flourishing society, where respectful debate and civility are not just upheld, but embraced and normalized. John McCain envisioned a nation where every citizen, regardless of their differences, felt empowered to contribute to our democratic process. While democracy is often messy, it remains the most effective system for safeguarding freedom and liberty. However, the United States finds itself at a pivotal juncture, with the outcome of this election cycle potentially determining the fate of our democratic institutions—whether they will be fortified or weakened. The institute is committed to fortifying our democracy by countering misinformation and prioritizing support for those Americans who tirelessly uphold our fundamental democratic principles.

- **The Task Force on Defeating Misinformation Attacks on the United States**
- **Democracy Dialogues on the Future of U.S. Democracy**
- **American Democracy and Technology Policy Fellowship**

**Frontline Democracies**

Frontline democracies are nations where democratic principles face dire threats—whether they are in their nascent stages, fragile, or at risk of regression—and where the repercussions of democratic deterioration extend globally. In pursuit of safeguarding these values, the McCain Institute is dedicated to providing policymakers with crucial insights into the challenges faced by such nations and facilitating the connections necessary for effecting meaningful change. The recent full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the pervasive autocratic influence wielded by China on a global scale underscore the urgent need for these initiatives.

- Connecting private/public entities to support Ukraine through the McCain Institute’s UKRAINE BUSINESS ALLIANCE
- Supporting Democracy in the Republic of GEORGIA
- Advocating for the release of Russian prisoner VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA
- WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY PROGRAM
- REAFFIRMING AMERICA’S TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCES
- Hosting Frontline Democracy WORKING GROUPS, including the UKRAINE WORKING GROUP & the RUSSIAN WORKING GROUP
The Democracy Programs at the McCain Institute stands firmly committed to protecting freedom, democracy, and the inherent rights of all individuals. Echoing this commitment, the Human Rights Defenders Program offers crucial transitional support to those advocates who face the perilous choice of fleeing their homes or continuing their vital work amidst risks due to harassment or threats of violence. This program serves as a lifeline for dedicated and courageous activists around the world. To date, the Human Rights Defenders Program has supported over 100 advocates from 50 countries, consistently aiding Russian and Ukrainian activists who are passionately engaged in the pursuit of accountability and justice. Priorities for the Human Rights Defenders Program include:

- Supporting HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS in exile

“What began as a small group of activists has grown into a team of nearly 30 specialists working to prevent human rights abuses and create greater accountability for the perpetrators of international crimes. Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine has only intensified the need for this critical work and has increased the pressure felt by our team members in the field. This funding from the McCain Institute will help support our work and bring justice for more Ukrainians and victims around the world.”

ROMAN AVRAMENKO
Truth Hounds Executive Director
Truth Hounds received 30k from the McCain Alumni Club in 2022 for this organization’s work.

Jamila Afghani received 30k from the McCain Alumni Club in 2022 for her organization’s work. The Human Rights Defenders Program supported Jamila Afghani, a women’s rights and education activist from Afghanistan, in 2017 after narrowly surviving a targeted Taliban bombing attack. Jamila, a recipient of the McCain Institute’s first-ever Human Rights Defender Grant, fled Afghanistan and received medical treatment in Lithuania before returning to Kabul three months later. Her work continued uninterrupted, and she has since been honored with the prestigious global humanitarian award, the Aurora Prize—the award that came with a one-million-dollar award to continue her activism. She has taken that $1M and equipped other activists in Afghanistan to fight repression.

Jamila Afghani, a women’s rights and education activist from Afghanistan, was forced to flee Afghanistan in 2017 after narrowly surviving a targeted Taliban bombing attack. The McCain Institute provided her with funds for medical treatment in Lithuania until she decided to return to Kabul three months later, becoming the first human rights defender the McCain Institute supported. The Taliban struck again, killing her niece and several family members. Knowing she was the target, Jamila fled but ultimately returned to her mission in Afghanistan. When the Taliban came to power in 2021, Jamila escaped one more time, with the support of the McCain Institute, as she continued her advocacy work from abroad. Now living in Canada, she received the prestigious global humanitarian award, the Aurora Prize—which came with a one-million-dollar award to continue her activism. She has taken that $1M and equipped other activists in Afghanistan to fight repression.

Scan here to see more about the program.

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