

DEMOCRACY PROGRAMS

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

GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

The McCain Institute's Global Democracy Program defends frontline democracies and advocates for the freedom of political prisoners through expert delegations, analysis and policy work, training and technical assistance, and advocacy. While autocrats are on the rise, sharing tactics and lessons with one another to subvert democracy, democrats have been slower to collaborate and build allied defenses. The McCain Institute addresses this need by providing concrete cross-country assistance to activists (including those unjustly detained), building a community of democratic allies to share best practices and innovations, and producing in-depth analyses and recommendations to influence policy change and action.

Activities include:

- **Democracy table-top workshops** for civic actors, activists, and independent journalists from frontline democracies to share best practices and lessons learned in defending democracy against rising authoritarianism.
- **Advocacy for U.S. support for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine** through expert and congressional missions and engagement in Ukrainian democratic reform efforts.
- **Defending democracy in Georgia** through in-country expert missions, risk assessments and analysis, awareness raising and advocacy, and training of Georgian democratic activists.
- **The "swing states" initiative** focuses on supporting tipping point democracies in decline and/or under threat, heavily influenced by autocratic states, and pivotal in geopolitical competition, starting with expert missions to Moldova and Armenia.

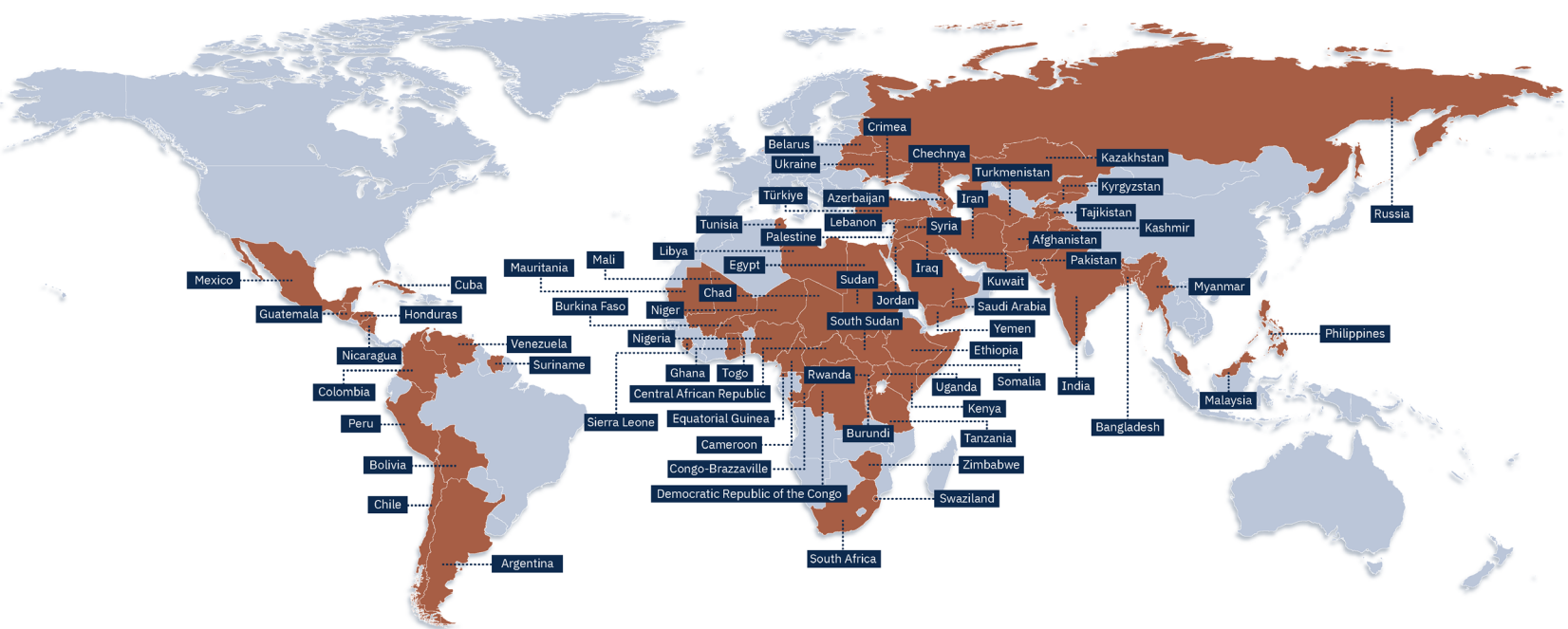
FPPI | The John McCain Freedom for Political Prisoners Initiative

The John McCain Freedom for Political Prisoners Initiative provides vital support to people who are unjustly held around the world by repressive regimes. FPPI is inspired by Senator McCain's experience as a prisoner of war and lifelong advocacy for those who are wrongfully held. The program provides critical support and assistance to individual prisoners, their families, and their representatives. FPPI conducts outreach to key decision-makers in the United States government and designs strategic communications campaigns to galvanize ongoing support for the release of prisoners and recovery efforts.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

The McCain Institute's American Democracy Program brings together experts, policymakers, and civic leaders to drive practical reforms that strengthen U.S. democracy. In partnership with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute, the Senate 2030 initiative convenes bipartisan voices to implement reforms that help the Senate function beyond gridlock. The program also advances the recommendations of the McCain Institute's Defending American Democracy in the Digital Age task force by improving public access to accurate information and building guardrails for truth in civic life. These efforts reflect Senator McCain's belief in principled leadership and a democracy resilient enough to meet today's most urgent challenges.





HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SUPPORTED

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROGRAM

Human rights work is dangerous—and often isolating. Across the globe, courageous activists risk their lives to speak truth to power, defend the vulnerable, and uphold democratic values.

The Human Rights Defenders Program provides critical financial support, protection, and training to those facing harassment, detention, and violence for standing up to injustice. It serves as a vital lifeline for those on the frontlines of human rights struggles—reminding them they are not alone. It supports those who refuse to be silenced.

To date, the program has supported more than 175 defenders from 60 countries—individuals advancing justice, accountability, and freedom in some of the world’s most repressive environments.

Spotlight: Voices of Courage



Wai Wai Nu | Myanmar

“Human dignity, it will not come easy when it is attacked. You have to fight for it.”

At 18, Wai Wai Nu was imprisoned for seven years under Myanmar’s military regime due to her family’s

activism. After her release, she became a lawyer and founded two organizations to promote women’s rights and defend the Rohingya people. When intimidation and threats escalated, she was forced into exile. The McCain Institute helped her transition safely, enabling her to continue her global advocacy.



Nicholas Opiyo | Uganda

“Programs like this make sure we are not alone—and that someone has our back.”

Nicholas Opiyo, an esteemed Ugandan human rights lawyer and advocate for civil liberties, has persevered despite facing threats, surveillance, and persecution for his work. When imprisoned in an attempt

to silence his advocacy, he continued his mission by providing legal advice to fellow inmates, helping secure the release of 68 prisoners. His remarkable dedication has earned him international recognition, including the German Africa Prize, Human Rights Watch’s Voices for Justice Award, the European Parliament’s Sakharov Fellows Prize, and the Dutch government’s Human Rights Tulip Prize.



Scan here to see
more about the program.