

# 2022 year in review HRDAG

Human Rights Data Analysis Group

[hrdag.org](http://hrdag.org)

## Truth Before Reconciliation

This year, as HRDAG has concentrated on projects in Syria, Colombia, and the United States, I have been reminded once again that human rights violations can occur in any country. There's nothing unique that makes a nation immune to populists, fascists, or discriminatory policies that result in such abuses.

The human rights community has been watching, and warning, as authoritarianism continues to rise all over the world and extremists come to power in many countries. Community organizers will always be on the frontline resisting these trends, and data analysis is a powerful tool we can put in their hands.



When we work with truth commissions in South America, or count casualties in the Middle East, or assess police

abuses in the United States, we use statistics to help our partners uncover the truth.

Only then can we begin to reconcile, as we move toward justice and accountability.

We are deeply grateful to our funders and individual supporters who help HRDAG fulfill our mission. With your continued support, we will remain a resilient, persistent force in 2023.

*Megan*

Megan Price, Executive Director

A digital version of this report is available at [hrdag.org/report/2022-review/](http://hrdag.org/report/2022-review/)

## Truth in Colombia

In June 2022, the **Colombian Truth Commission** (CEV, in the Spanish acronym) released its long-awaited Final Report, which is the result of a multi-year collaboration among the Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the Commission, and HRDAG. We led the data integration and statistical estimation on the magnitude and patterns of violence in the context of the Colombian armed conflict.

Our analysis enabled the Commission to publish a consistent set of quantitative answers to questions about the five-decade armed conflict. For example, we estimated that between 1985 and 2018, 813,707 people were killed in the armed conflict (with a 95% credible interval of (777,852, 852,756).

Informe metodológico del proyecto conjunto JEP-CEV-HRDAG

Paramilitary groups committed the largest proportion of homicides, bearing responsibility for approximately 45% of all conflict-related homicides. In addition, we estimated that more than 30,000 children and adolescents were recruited as soldiers.

Although the official truth commission work has concluded, much remains to be done. Our estimate of the number of child soldiers is contributing to an active JEP investigation into that issue. And we

are working with Colombian researchers to prepare a public release of data and software necessary to replicate and expand on our analyses.

## Ten Years of Conflict in Syria

Also in June 2022, Michelle Bachelet, the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** presented her report on civilian deaths in Syria to the Human Rights Council. Her report included statistical analysis carried out by our team, in close consultation with our Syrian partners and UN experts. In her presentation the commissioner reported that an estimated 306,887 direct civilian deaths occurred during the ten years of conflict in Syria (with a 95% credible interval of (281,443, 337,971)).



As far as we know, this is the first time that the High Commissioner has presented this kind of statistical estimate to the Human Rights Council, including estimates of what is missing from ongoing documentation efforts.

## Police Misconduct in the U.S.

Transforming physical and digital piles of documents into searchable, structured information, such as a database, is a valuable tool in our partners' advocacy work. Here are some examples of ways that our partners have relied on the databases we build with them:

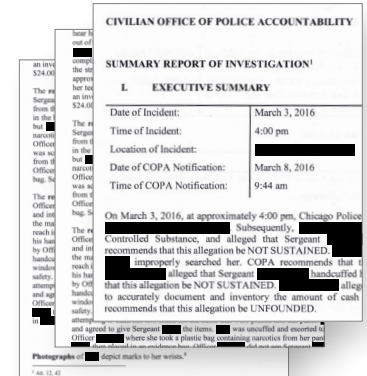
During our long partnership with the **Invisible Institute** in Chicago, we've developed machine learning models to process and organize hundreds of thousands of complaint records involving interactions with the Chicago Police. In March 2022, a reporter asked Trina Reynolds-Tyler, the Invisible Institute's Director of Data, about the deaths of two Black queer women in Chicago police custody. Trina was able to use the collaboratively-built models to identify 75 different complaint records related to police mistreatment of queer people. She shared those records with the reporter to provide further details about the experiences of queer community members when they interact with Chicago police.

The **San Francisco Public Defender's Office** (SFPDO) typically gains access to thousands of documents during the discovery phase of a trial. We work with the SFPDO to create usable, classifiable information from these previously unsearchable files. In April 2022, for example, the SFPDO was able to use our database to identify at least thirteen cases that involved two San Francisco police officers who had been arrested and charged with destroying evidence. This allowed them to proactively review those cases for evidence of similar misconduct in order to mount a rigorous defense of their clients.

When a court settlement provided access to official police "use of force" records in Puerto Rico to our partners at **Kilómetro Cero** (Km0), we worked with them to build a database that contains all reports of police use of force and their outcomes.

In July 2022, when video of a violent police intervention against an elderly man went viral, Km0 was able to use the processed database to find documentation of several previous uses of force, including lethal ones, committed by the same officer. They presented these documents to reporters and the public.

In October 2022, our partners at the Innocence Project New Orleans released the **Louisiana Law Enforcement Accountability Database**, or LLEAD, a statewide public-facing database of police and prosecutorial misconduct. LLEAD compiles allegations of police



Document image from the Citizens Police Data Project, created by the Invisible Institute

and court misconduct, internal affairs reports, disciplinary appeals hearings, and other data sources to construct career histories of police officers and prosecutors accused of misconduct throughout the state. HRDAG contributes to LLEAD by extracting and labeling content from unstructured sources like news articles and disciplinary appeal hearings. ●

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## HRDAG by the numbers

HRDAG's fiscal year is July 1–June 31	2021–22	2020–2021
Beginning cash balance	<b>\$ 314,106</b>	\$ 339,583
<b>Income</b>		
Foundation grants	\$ 1,247,432	\$ 1,008,334
Revenue from contracts	246,722	145,643
Direct public support	83,637	123,099
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$ 1,577,792</b>	\$ 1,277,075
<b>Expenses</b>		
Salaries and consultants	\$ 1,014,775	\$ 1,134,809
Travel and conferences	30,011	1,129
Rent, utilities, and technology	62,193	38,432
Supplies and other direct costs	10,711	10,549
Administration <sup>1</sup>	146,505	117,634
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,264,195</b>	\$ 1,302,553
Ending cash balance <sup>2</sup>	<b>\$ 627,702</b>	\$ 314,106

<sup>1</sup> HRDAG operates as a fiscally sponsored project of Community Partners (communitypartners.org), a nonprofit organization that helps community leaders build and sustain effective programs that benefit the public good. Administrative fees to Community Partners support their back-office services and the legal framework that allows HRDAG to focus on our mission.

<sup>2</sup> We strive to close every fiscal year with a non-zero cash balance. A portion of this balance constitutes our reserves which we maintain year-to-year for financial stability and programmatic agility. The majority of this non-zero cash balance is meant to be spent over a specific period of time and/or on a specific project. The size of this balance varies year-to-year, depending on when grant funds are received.

## The HRDAG Team

In the twelve months since accepting the *Rafto Prize*, which is awarded every year to human rights activists, HRDAG has reflected on how we can continue to live up to the honor. To better serve the programmatic work described in these pages, we have grown our team, adding two new staff members, hosting a new cohort of interns and fellows, and expanding our Advisory Board.



Our current team includes executive director Dr Megan Price, director of research Dr Patrick Ball, data scientists Tarak Shah and Bailey Passmore, data processor Michelle Dukich, operations coordinator Suzanne Nathans, as well as dedicated consultants, interns, and fellows.

We are based in San Francisco, and our partners are located in countries around the world. We are supported by an advisory board composed of Julie Broome, Margot Gerritsen, William Isaac, Alex Hanna, Paul Wesson, and Naomi Roht-Arriaza.

Photo: Marit Hommedal/EPA

The Human Rights Data Analysis Group works closely with human rights advocates to analyze and understand data. We build scientifically defensible evidence-based arguments that have been used by truth commissions and international criminal tribunals on five continents. We are a global resource and welcome your support.

# HRDAG

Statisticians  
for human rights

# 30

years and  
counting

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