



FORTIFY
RIGHTS



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FORTIFY RIGHTS
ANNUAL
REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Matthew Smith
Chief Executive Officer

2017 was historic in Southeast Asia for all the wrong reasons. Just a few months after we welcomed the creation of a United Nations Fact-Finding Mission to look into atrocities in Myanmar—an effort we worked on with civil society partners—the Myanmar military struck again. In August, it renewed its attack against Rohingya civilians, committing massacres and mass rape, and razing hundreds of villages in northern Rakhine State, forcing an unprecedented exodus of more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh.

Our team met with survivors and documented the atrocities shortly after the attacks, and we continue to work in partnership with Rohingya community leaders and activists for accountability and protection.



Amy Smith
Executive Director

Beyond the Rohingya, we also worked with other communities under threat in Southeast Asia. In Thailand, environmental defenders are persecuted for speaking truth about harmful business practices. In Malaysia, the law prevents university students from exercising basic freedoms. In Myanmar, displaced ethnic Kachin face avoidable deprivations of humanitarian aid while civil war rages. What's more, survivors of human trafficking in Thailand and Malaysia face arrest, detention, and exploitation.

Thankfully, there is hope. In the last year, our team and partners helped ensure that governments sanctioned perpetrators of serious human rights violations. We contributed to the establishment of accountability mechanisms. We supported the amendment of problematic laws and policies in line with international standards, and we helped free detained human rights defenders.

But still, too many human rights violations continue without notice. When this happens, violations become the norm and rights erode. There needs to be more voices, more defenders for rights, and more change-makers.

This is why we started Fortify Rights—to create sustainable change by not only investigating violations and advocating for solutions but also by supporting leaders and communities to do the same. Together, we can ensure that the horrors we witnessed during this past year are never repeated.

Thank you for standing with us.

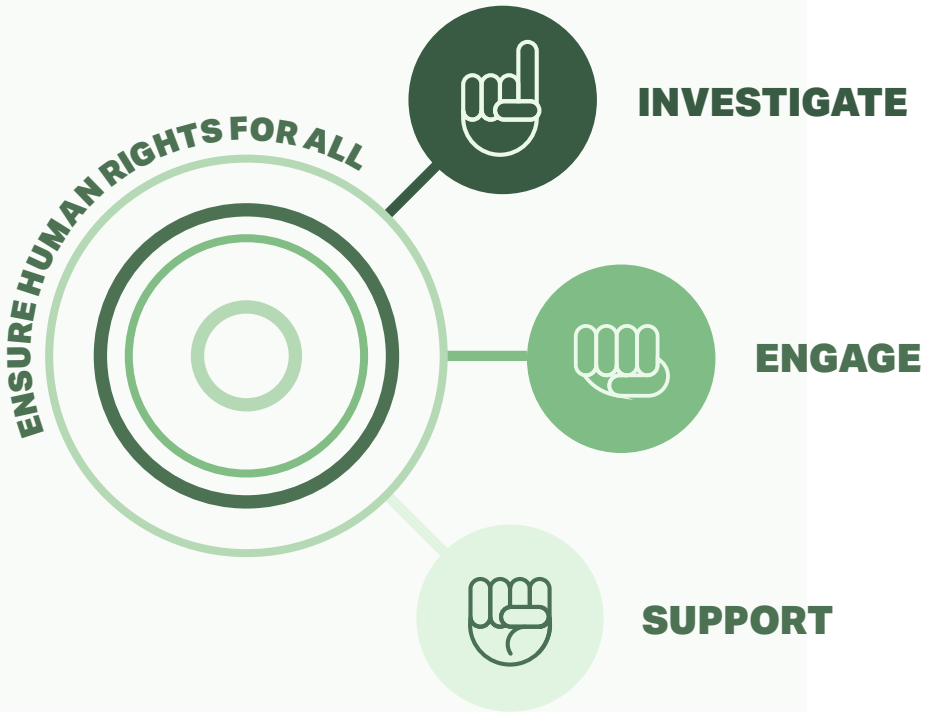


Rohingya refugee
children in Kutupalong
refugee camp,
Cox's Bazar District,
Bangladesh.
©Fortify Rights 2017

MISSION & VISION

Fortify Rights works to ensure human rights for all. We believe in the influence of evidence-based research, the power of strategic truth-telling, and the importance of working in close collaboration with individuals, communities, and movements pushing for change. Fortify Rights envisions a world where human rights and fundamental freedoms are recognized, respected, and realized for all people.

WHAT WE DO





Thailand Human Rights Specialist
Puttanee Kangkun interviewing
Rohingya refugees in Songkhla
Province, Thailand.
©Fortify Rights, 2017

INVESTIGATE



02 full-length
reports



59 news releases
and other
publications



14 short films



Responding to human rights violations requires an accurate understanding of the facts. We conduct in-depth, independent investigations. We produce detailed advocacy materials, including public and private reports, statements, briefings, and multimedia materials that provide rights-based analyses and concrete, realistic solutions. We work closely with human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and affected communities to ensure their documentation and truth-telling is meaningful, accurate, and impactful.



*Rohingya survivors of Myanmar military-led attacks against Rohingya civilians in northern Rakhine State. Fortify Rights met survivors and conducted a comprehensive investigation into atrocity crimes.
©Fortify Rights 2017*



*Thailand Human Rights Specialist Sutharee Wannasiri interviewing human rights defenders facing arbitrary criminal charges for their involvement in peaceful activism.
©Fortify Rights, 2017*



*ABC News Anchor Bob Woodruff interviewing Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, which contributed to a two-part, award-winning documentary film. Fortify Rights coordinated closely with the producers of the film and accompanied them to the camps in November 2017.
©Fortify Rights 2017*

Thailand Human Rights
Specialist Sutharee
Wannasiri speaking at
the Asia-Pacific Feminist
Forum, Chiang Mai,
Thailand.
©APWLD 2017



ENGAGE



92 private meetings
with policy-makers



09 published op-eds



02 public testimonies
before government
bodies



4200+
mentions of Fortify Rights
in the media

We conduct strategic advocacy, sharing our research findings and recommendations for solutions with senior government officials, high-level U.N. representatives, and members of the international community to increase awareness and influence policy decisions. We also engage the news media and general public to ensure an accurate reporting of the facts and create truthful understanding of human rights more widely.



Malaysia Human Rights Specialist Henry Koh presenting a talk entitled "Employing Effective Measures: LGBTI Advocacy in Challenging Environments" as part of the Advocating Gender & Status in Law panel during the Human Rights in Asia: Gender & Sexuality conference, March 25, 2017, University of Essex, UK
©Fortify Rights 2017

Fortify Rights' Executive Director Amy Smith and Thailand Human Rights Specialist Puttane Kangkun, as well as Rohingya and Bangladeshi partners speaking about the regional Rohingya refugee crisis during a Refugee Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in August 2017. Fortify Rights arranged for partners from Myanmar and Bangladesh to contribute to the event.
©Fortify Rights 2017



Myanmar Human Rights Specialist Nickey Diamond Nickey Diamond contributing to a live, nationally televised debate by the Democratic Voice of Burma on the situation in Rakhine State, Myanmar. ©Fortify Rights 2017



Chief Executive Officer Matthew Smith testifying before the U.S. Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on violations perpetrated against Rohingya civilians in Myanmar. ©Fortify Rights 2017.



Environmental defenders calling for environmental protections in Loei Province, Thailand. Fortify Rights worked to monitor attacks on environmental defenders in Thailand.
© Fortify Rights 2017



We supported collective responses to human rights violations by partnering with human rights defenders, affected communities, and civil society organizations while providing international support or backing on locally-led responses. We facilitate skill-building workshops and trainings, expand opportunities for partners to directly engage people in power, coordinate strategies and messaging among diverse actors, and increase protections for human rights defenders at risk.

SUPPORT



11 trainings to increase partner knowledge and skills



15 coordination activities to align strategies and messaging among diverse advocates



28 opportunities for partners to access people in power



\$14,647

in emergency support to human rights defenders at risk.



Myanmar interfaith human rights defenders Zaw Latt and Pwint Phyu Latt walk free after the Myanmar government granted them amnesty in May 2017. Fortify Rights actively called for the release of these human rights defenders and continues to monitor their security situation.
©Fortify Rights 2017



Rohingya participant discussing options to obtain legal status in Thailand during a workshop facilitated by Fortify Rights in May 2017. ©Fortify Rights 2017

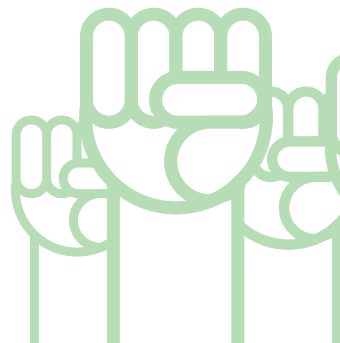


Member of Khon Rak Ban Kerd Group Rotjana Kong in Geneva where she presented community concerns about gold mining to the U.N. Human Rights Committee during a review of Thailand's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in March 2017. ©Fortify Rights 2017

OUR IMPACT

THAILAND TRAFFICKING TRIAL

In July 2017, a specialized court in Thailand for human trafficking cases convicted and sentenced 62 defendants, including senior military officials, involved in trafficking Rohingya and Bangladeshi men, women, and children. These convictions marked an unprecedented victory in the region to hold perpetrators of trafficking to account.





Defendants accused of trafficking Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar and Bangladeshi nationals enter a Bangkok courtroom prior to their conviction. ©Fortify Rights 2017



We Investigated:

We documented the trafficking of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals and Fortify Rights was the only consistent international monitor of the two-year long trial.



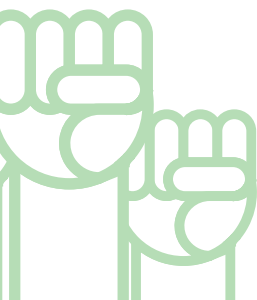
We Engaged:

We engaged senior Thai government officials on the issue, highlighting the need for accountability and raising due process concerns throughout the trial.



We Supported:

We facilitated a security training for Rohingya who served as interpreters during the trial.



Our Impact

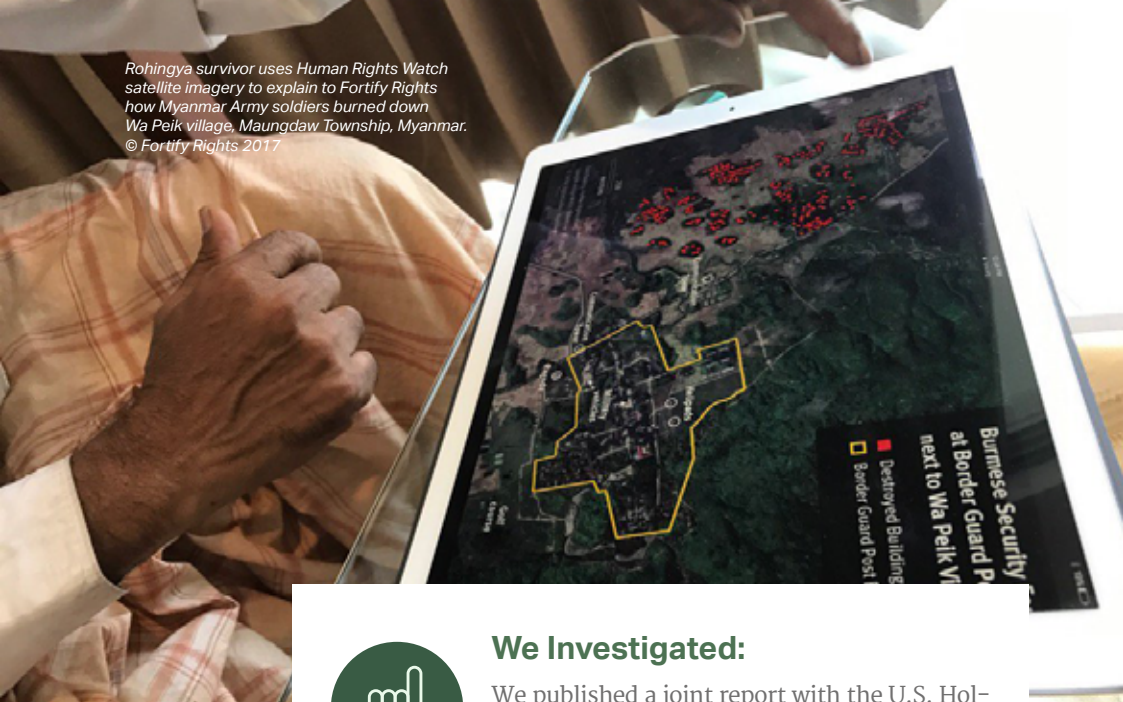
U.N. FACT-FINDING MISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR

The U.N. Human Rights Council passed a resolution on Myanmar in March, creating a Fact-Finding Mission to investigate “recent human rights violations... with a view to ensure full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims.”

Rohingya survivor of Myanmar military-led attacks in Rakhine State's Maungdaw Township now living as a refugee in Bangladesh.
© Fortify Rights 2017



Rohingya survivor uses Human Rights Watch satellite imagery to explain to Fortify Rights how Myanmar Army soldiers burned down Wa Peik village, Maungdaw Township, Myanmar.
© Fortify Rights 2017



We Investigated:

We published a joint report with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, documenting widespread and systematic attacks on Rohingya civilians as crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and as “mounting evidence” of genocide. The report is based on more than 200 eyewitnesses and survivor testimonies collected on the Myanmar–Bangladesh border.



We Engaged:

We engaged policy-makers on the need for an independent investigation, including testifying before the U.S. Congress, briefing the E.U. delegation to the U.N., and contributing language to the drafters of the Human Rights Council resolution.



We Supported:

We coordinated discussions among affected communities and international allies on potential solutions to address atrocity crimes against Rohingya. We facilitated high-level access for our Rohingya partners to engage the international community, regional leaders, and domestic actors.

Our Impact

BRINGING LAWS AND POLICIES IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

- In January, Thai authorities adopted Cabinet Resolution No. 01, B.E. 2560, calling for the creation of a Committee to develop refugee eligibility criteria and a mechanism to screen migrants in need of international protection. To achieve this, Fortify Rights consistently engaged the Thai government—publicly and privately—to develop full, effective, and fair procedures to evaluate claims for refugee status.
- The U.S. Government announced targeted sanctions against Myanmar military General Maung Maung Soe for his role in atrocity crimes against Rohingya. This followed from weeks of strategic advocacy by Fortify Rights, Rohingya colleagues, and others, including meetings with the U.S. State Department, Vice-President Mike Pence's staff, and other senior officials.



Meeting with U.S. Congress Representative and Chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee Ed Royce before a key debate on a resolution on the situation of the Rohingya in December 2017. © Fortify Rights 2017

Our Impact

INCREASING PROTECTIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

- Myanmar authorities released at least 16 human rights defenders and wrongfully detained individuals after we monitored and brought attention to their cases
- We secured emergency relief to support the physical and mental well-being of human rights defenders in Myanmar and Thailand and their families.
- The Thai justice system dismissed a legal case brought against a human rights defender who exercised his rights to protest alleged environmental impacts of mining in northeastern Thailand. We monitored his case, routinely observed court hearings, and ensured human rights concerns were considered in the proceedings.



Seven members of Khon Rak Ban Kerd Group—a women-led community-based organization working to defend the environment from harmful mining practices in Thailand's Loei Province—outside the Loei Province Court in September 2017. The women faced criminal defamation charges for their activism.
© Fortify Rights 2017



OUR VISUALS

In 2017, we began producing short films or “FortiFilms” to spotlight human rights concerns and increase the visibility of our community-based partners:

- We produced 14 Forti-Films in 2017, which received more than 780,000 views on Facebook.
- Our FortiFilm documenting the torture of ethnic men in northern Shan State, Myanmar and calling for an investigation received more than 724,000 views within a week of publication. Three days after posting the film, the State Counselor’s office and the Myanmar military issued statements agreeing to investigate the incident.
- We also delivered a workshop on multimedia production and digital security for members of the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand (SPFT), a group of farmers who advocate for land rights and food security. The training improved SPFT’s basic reporting, photography, and social media skills so they are better able to tell compelling stories of land struggles from their communities.





Multimedia Specialist Taimoor Sobhan facilitating a multimedia training with the Southern Peasants Federation of Thailand in Surat Thani, Thailand. ©Fortify Rights 2017

OUR PEOPLE

FORTIFY RIGHTS TEAM

Matthew Smith

Co-founder and Chief
Executive Officer

Henry Koh

Malaysia Human Rights Specialist

David Baulk

Myanmar Human Rights Specialist

Nickey Diamond

Myanmar Human Rights Specialist

Puttanee Kangkun

Thailand Human Rights Specialist

Sutharee Wannasiri

Thailand Human Rights Specialist

Amy Smith

Co-founder and Executive Director

John Quinley III

Associate Human Rights Specialist

Iuri Kato

Graphic and Digital
Design Associate

Taimoor Sobhan

Multimedia Specialist

Jillian Tuck

Partnerships Manager

GOVERNANCE BOARD

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Board Vice President

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Board Secretary

Gerald Bourgeois,
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Pilkyu Hwang,
Human rights lawyer with Gonggam
Human Rights Law Foundation and
Human Rights Committee Coordinator
of the Korean Bar Association

Kerry Kennedy,
President of the Robert F. Kennedy
Center for Justice & Human Rights

Tomas Ojea Quintana,
Former UN Special Rapporteur
on the Situation of Human
Rights in Myanmar

Phil Robertson,
Deputy Asia Director at
Human Rights Watch

2017 FINANCIALS

FY17 OPERATING REVENUE

Contributions from individuals

\$118,703

11%

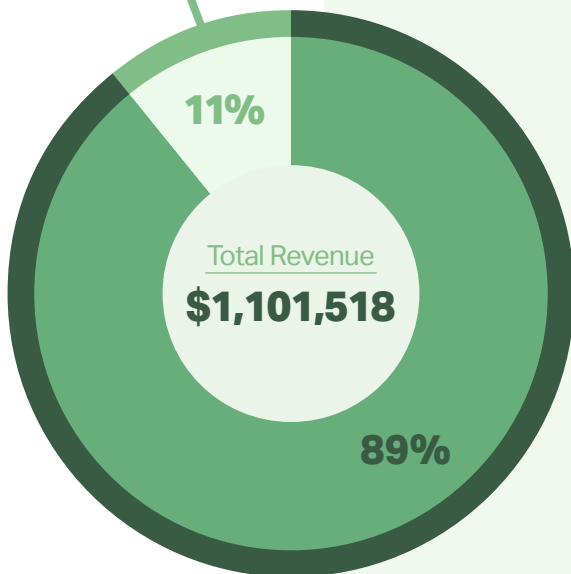
Total Revenue

\$1,101,518

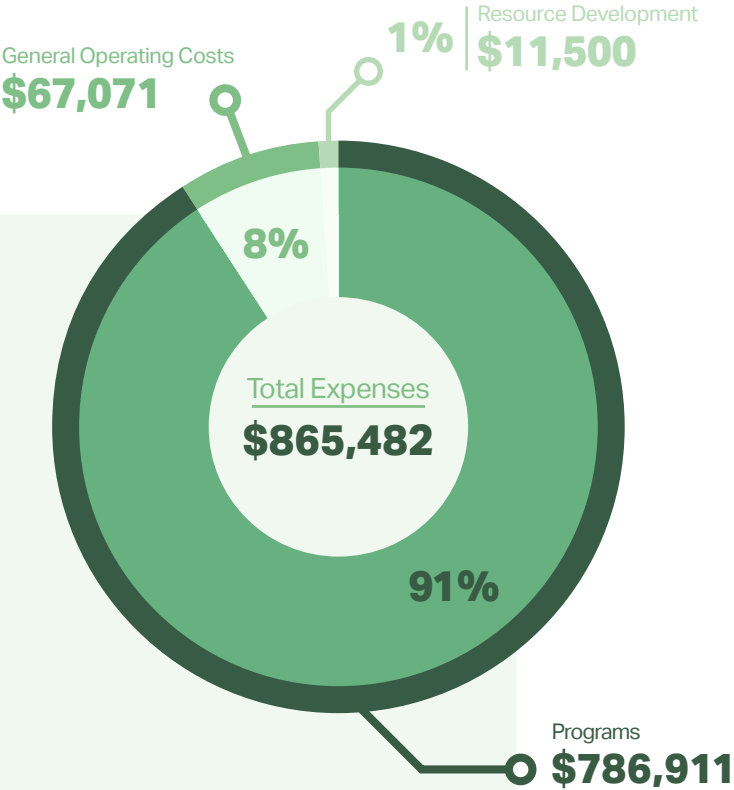
89%

Foundation and Government Grants

\$982,815



FY17 OPERATING EXPENSES



OUR PARTNERS

Our ability to ensure human rights depends on our global community of partners. Thank you for your support!



Kingdom of the Netherlands



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FOUNDATION*



RATHMANN
FAMILY FOUNDATION



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