



# FREEDOM HOUSE

## 85TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

Investing in Freedom's Future



## 85 YEARS OF FREEDOM HOUSE: MEETING THE MOMENT

A nonpartisan organization with long-standing support across party lines, Freedom House began with the unlikely duo of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, the man who ran against her husband for president on the Republican ticket in 1940. The cause of freedom was too great for political differences to get in the way. In its early years, Freedom House confronted threats to civil liberties in the United States, opposed McCarthyism, and joined the fight for civil rights.

In 1973, *Freedom in the World* was launched. Today it is the world's longest-running, most comprehensive documentation of political rights and civil liberties in every country and territory. *Freedom in the World* has had real impact: it remains the gold-standard source on global freedom. It informs public debate and reporting and guides policymakers, governments, educators, scholars, and students.

In 1997, Freedom House expanded direct support for frontline defenders and built a reputation for working in some of the world's most repressive environments. We provide emergency relocation, legal aid, medical care, secure technology, and other lifesaving support to tens of thousands of people who face arrest, harassment, and violence for their work.

Freedom House counters the threat of authoritarianism through high-level advocacy. We are proud of what this work has achieved—including helping secure bipartisan passage of the Global Magnitsky Act, which authorizes the president to sanction serious human rights abusers. We also work with democratic governments to stop cross-border attacks on dissidents and to win the release of political prisoners. We are a key partner to those on the front lines of freedom across the globe seeking to transition their countries to democracy.

Eighty-five years after our founding, the stakes remain high—and the demand for freedom has not dimmed. Around the world, people still risk everything for basic rights and accountable government. Freedom House stands with them by exposing authoritarian tactics, defending democratic values, and helping turn courage into lasting change.



**Freedom House is America's oldest organization dedicated to supporting and defending democracy and freedom worldwide. Founded in 1941 to promote American involvement in World War II and the fight against fascism, Freedom House has stood at the vanguard of protecting and promoting liberty for 85 years.**

**COVER:** Iranian people in Izmir protest the death of Jina Mahsa Amini while in custody of the morality police in Iran. (Photo: İdil Toffolo/Alamy)  
**ABOVE:** Berlin Wall memorial Potsdamer Platz. (Photo: Yair-haklai/Wikimedia Commons)



A protester carries a version of the Belarusian flag favored by the democratic opposition during a demonstration in Minsk against the fraudulent August 2020 presidential election. (Photo: Sergei Bobylev/TASS via Getty Images)

## Dear Champions of Freedom,

I took this role because Freedom House pairs analysis with action in a way few organizations can. In my first months as CEO—and as Freedom House marks its 85th anniversary—I'm asking you to recommit to global freedom by **Investing in Freedom's Future**.

This campaign will raise \$85 million over five years to endow and strengthen our flagship research, expand direct support for human rights defenders, and invest in new work to push back against authoritarian abuses. Reversing global democratic decline requires a renewed commitment across party lines, international borders, and traditional divides between public and private entities.

Freedom House was born from an uncommon partnership. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie—President Roosevelt's Republican opponent in 1940—worked together to help launch the organization and model a simple standard: defend freedom on principle, not on party. Since then, Freedom House has confronted totalitarianism in all its forms and has affirmed that the United States must lead the global pursuit of democracy and freedom.

Our *Freedom in the World* report found that global freedom declined for the 20th consecutive year in 2025, as authoritarians refine the tactics they use to amass power and silence dissent. Autocratic governments coordinate more closely to project influence and suppress critics at home and abroad. Yet democracy deepens in some places, where citizens, journalists, and civic leaders take sustained risks to claim the right to determine their own future. Freedom House documents this landscape and supports those on the front lines of freedom.

Over the next five years, this campaign will strengthen our capacity to meet this moment—by sustaining trusted analysis, expanding direct support to rights defenders, and investing in new work to push back against authoritarian abuses.

If you already support this work, please stay with us. If you're new to Freedom House, I invite you to join **Investing in Freedom's Future**—to spotlight emerging threats, confront authoritarian abuses, stand with democracy's bravest defenders, and help reverse global democratic decline.

With gratitude,



Jamie Fly  
CEO, Freedom House



**LEFT:** Eleanor Roosevelt holds a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Photo: FDR Library)



**RIGHT:** A bust of Wendell Willkie is unveiled at Freedom House on the 75th anniversary of his birth. Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, attended and praised Willkie as “one of the first political crusaders in this country to declare forthrightly for equality.” (Photo: Freedom House)

## A Message from the Founding Families: Carrying the Torch Forward

Eighty-five years ago, in 1941, totalitarian forces were aggressively advancing across the world. To address this challenge, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, her husband’s Republican opponent in the previous election, came together to lead the formation of Freedom House, a philosophically and professionally diverse group of prominent citizens committed to the cause of liberty. At that pivotal moment in American history, when isolationism was prevalent, Roosevelt and Willkie set aside partisan differences in the shared belief that American leadership would be essential in the approaching global struggle for freedom.

And indeed, it was. After World War II, when Nazi Germany and its aligned powers were vanquished and Soviet communism emerged as a new totalitarian threat, Freedom House campaigned for the institutions and ideals that defined the modern democratic order, including the Marshall Plan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the NATO alliance. The organization also worked to advance the realization of the United States’ own democratic ideals, standing in steadfast opposition to McCarthyism and joining the fight for civil rights for all Americans.

Today, our liberal democratic heritage, both abroad and at home, is once again at risk, and Freedom House needs your support.

According to the latest edition of Freedom House’s widely cited flagship report, *Freedom in the World*, global freedom has declined for the 20th consecutive year. Democratic institutions have come under increased pressure from authoritarians, and civil liberties are under ever greater assault. The need to resist and reverse these trends has never been more urgent. Overseas, the brave activists on the front lines of the struggle for democracy must not be abandoned.

After 85 years, Freedom House continues to meet the moment, informing the world through its celebrated reports about threats to freedom, mobilizing global action, and supporting democracy’s defenders in repressive environments. But the endurance of this work depends on the strength and commitment of all those who believe in it.

Freedom House remains the oldest and most prominent US organization dedicated to advancing and defending human rights worldwide. For more than eight decades, Freedom House has worked with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to strengthen American support for principled leadership on the global stage and to stand with those risking their lives for freedom.

As the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, we are proud to support Freedom House at the time of its 85th anniversary and we invite you to join us in marking this milestone year by making a meaningful gift to Freedom House in honor of these two great Americans who fought for our freedoms.

Wendell Willkie once said, “Freedom is an indivisible word. If we want to enjoy it...we must be prepared to extend it to everyone.” Eleanor Roosevelt reminded us, “Our obligation to the world is, primarily, an obligation to our own future.”

Your support will help sustain Freedom House’s global impact—defending journalists and political prisoners, strengthening democratic institutions, and ensuring that the vision set forth in 1941 continues to guide the world toward a better future for our next generations.

With our utmost gratitude,

### The grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, Co-Founders and Honorary Co-Chairs of Freedom House

#### Descendants of Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (first child and only daughter):

Eleanor Roosevelt Seagraves  
John Roosevelt Boettiger  
Anna Eleanor Fierst

#### Descendants of James Roosevelt (first son):

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt  
James Roosevelt Jr.  
Michael A. Roosevelt

#### Descendants of Elliott Roosevelt (second son):

Elliott Roosevelt Jr.  
Laura Roosevelt  
Elizabeth Roosevelt Kelly  
Isabel Rebecca Roosevelt

#### Descendants of Franklin Roosevelt Jr. (third son):

Christopher Roosevelt  
Nancy Roosevelt Ireland  
Laura Delano Roosevelt

#### Descendant of John Roosevelt (fourth son):

Nina Roosevelt Gibson

#### Descendants of Philip Herman Willkie (only son):

Wendell L. Willkie II  
David Willkie  
Benjamin J. Willkie  
Hall F. Willkie (nephew)  
Alexandra Willkie Pasanen  
Diana Willkie Hamilton  
Caroline Heffelfinger Willkie



## OUR IMPACT: FREEDOM HOUSE'S ANALYSIS AND ACTION

---

Highlights from Freedom House's recent work toward achieving our vision of a world where all people are free.

Cyclist with sign in Russian reading "freedom is stronger than fear" during peaceful protests in Minsk, Belarus. (Photo: Shutterstock)

## Freedom House informs the world about threats to freedom.

**Analyzing global freedom.** *Freedom in the World 2026* tracked the 20th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. We identified the drivers of that decline and showed where democracies still meet challenges—and where people keep demanding the right to live in freedom.

**Revealing dissent within China.** Freedom House's China Dissent Monitor analyzes protests inside China, explains what drives dissent, and tracks how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) responds. In 2025, we documented more than 5,000 protests—an increase from 2024—amid the country's economic slowdown.

**Tracking internet freedom.** *Freedom on the Net 2025* found a 15th consecutive year of decline in global internet freedom. We documented how authoritarian regimes control online information and laid out steps governments and companies can take to protect a free and open internet.

**Leading the fight against transnational repression.** Freedom House maintains the world's most comprehensive database of physical transnational repression incidents—when governments reach beyond their borders to assassinate, assault, kidnap, detain, deport, or threaten critics. We advise democratic governments on how to confront this growing menace.



## Freedom House supports democracy advocates and human rights defenders.

**Supporting freedom's bravest champions.** Despite recent funding challenges, Freedom House continued delivering emergency assistance. Over the last 18 months, we supported more than 640 at-risk rights defenders and organizations in 56 countries with relocation, legal representation, and technical equipment.

**Defending religious freedom.** Freedom House works with policymakers and partners to confront threats to religious freedom worldwide. Since 2025, we have documented more than 96 instances of religious persecution and assisted 396 persecuted individuals across 14 countries and diverse faith communities.

**Fighting back against harmful surveillance.** Freedom House launched a new reporting tool to document and deter abuse of spyware and other surveillance technologies. Activists can report abuses directly to the US and UK governments, supporting targeted responses, including sanctions.

A woman holds a Venezuelan flag at protest against Nicolás Maduro.  
(Photo: MyriamB/Adobe Stock)



Bernardo Arévalo supporters cheer after his presidential victory in Guatemala. (Photo: Camilo Freedman/Sipa USA/Alamy Live News)

## Freedom House mobilizes policymakers, advocates, and leaders to act.

### Supporting human rights and democracy in the AI era.

Freedom House tracks how the AI boom affects global freedom. We urge governments to regulate AI in ways that protect free expression and privacy, and we push AI companies to build safeguards so their products do not fuel human rights abuses.

### Urging a sustainable democratic transition in Venezuela.

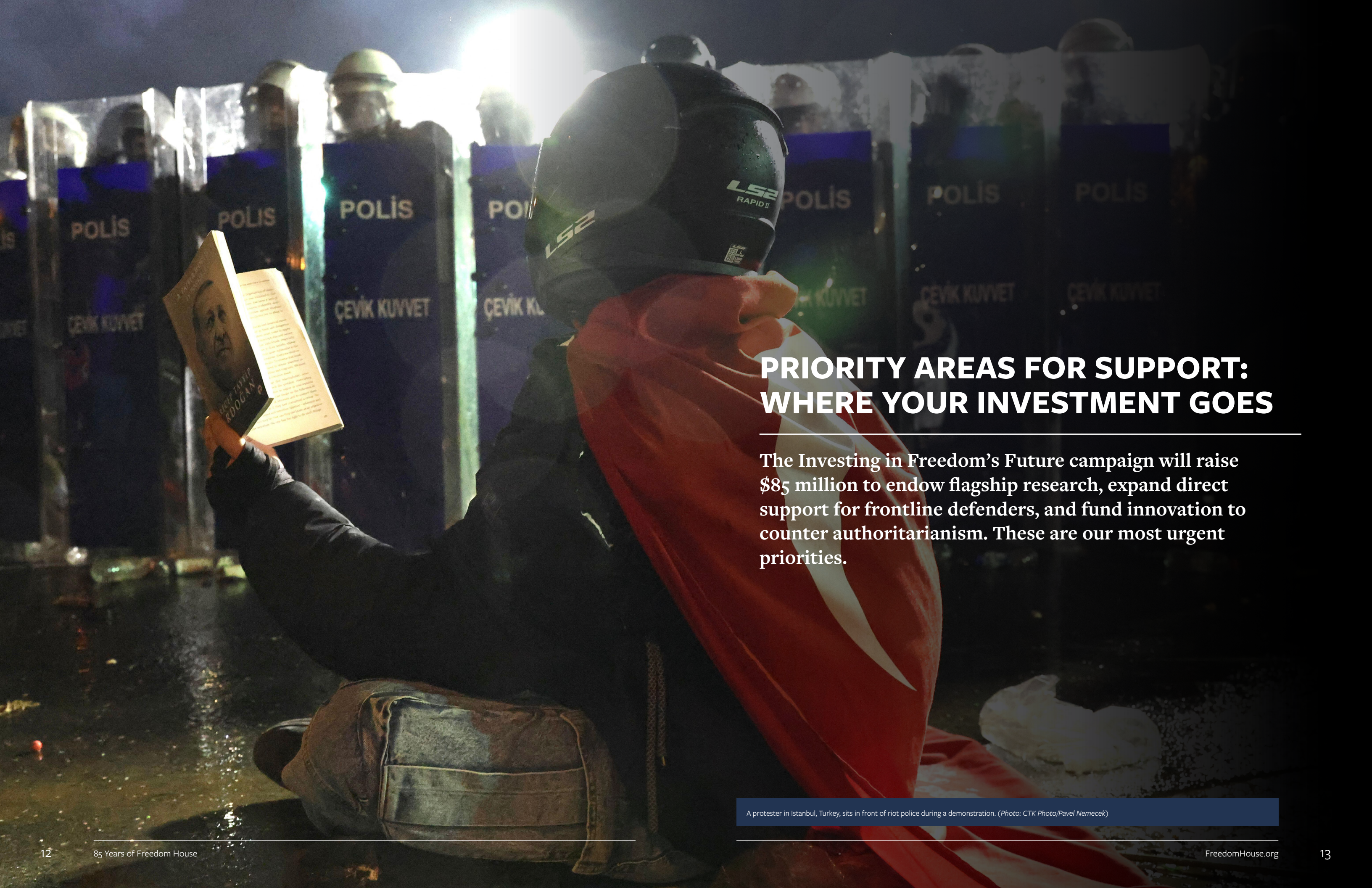
Venezuela faces a pivotal opportunity to pursue democratic transition. Our recent policy brief examined how the United States can support democratic reform, transitional justice, and free and fair elections so Venezuelans can chart their future.

### Calling for renewed solidarity in support of the Iranian people.

Freedom House led a joint statement affirming that Iran's future belongs to its people. Amid continuing conflict in the Middle East, democracy experts urged international support for a future grounded in freedom, security, and the rule of law.

### Revitalizing democratic momentum.

Freedom House convened the inaugural Global Freedom Summit at Sea Island, Georgia, bringing together leaders from government, business, civil society, and philanthropy to accelerate democratic renewal. A Declaration of Principles proposed a multibillion-dollar public-private partnership fund to invest in and strengthen global freedom and democracy.



## PRIORITY AREAS FOR SUPPORT: WHERE YOUR INVESTMENT GOES

The Investing in Freedom’s Future campaign will raise \$85 million to endow flagship research, expand direct support for frontline defenders, and fund innovation to counter authoritarianism. These are our most urgent priorities.

A protester in Istanbul, Turkey, sits in front of riot police during a demonstration. (Photo: CTK Photo/Pavel Nemecek)



### 1. FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

For 53 years, *Freedom in the World* has delivered the world's most widely cited independent assessment of political rights and civil liberties, covering more than 200 countries and territories. It informs diplomacy and foreign policy, sanctions decisions, investment strategies, academic research, and journalistic inquiry. Endowing this report offers one of the field's defining philanthropic opportunities.

### 2. DIRECT SUPPORT TO FRONTLINE ACTIVISTS

Since 2007, our emergency assistance programs have supported more than 63,000 activists and survivors across 170 countries with relocation, legal aid, medical care, and secure technology. We have also supported more than 5,000 human rights organizations working in restricted civic spaces. Your gift can help a family flee religious persecution, equip journalists with tools to stay safe, or fund the lawyer standing between a rights defender and a prison cell.

### 3. COUNTERING AUTHORITARIANISM AND FREEING POLITICAL PRISONERS

Freedom House convenes coalitions, advises governments, and exposes how autocrats use political imprisonment to silence democracy's defenders. Free Them All: The Fred Hiatt Program to Free Political Prisoners elevates urgent cases and fights for activists, journalists, and rights defenders unjustly detained worldwide.

### 4. EXPANDING WORK TO DEFEND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religious communities—from Christians in China to Bahá'í in Iran to Muslims in Myanmar—face grave abuses worldwide. Since 2025, Freedom House has addressed more than 96 instances of religious persecution and assisted 396 persecuted individuals across 14 countries and diverse faith communities. Expanding this work offers a compelling opportunity for donors motivated by faith, conscience, and the universal right to worship freely—or not at all.



Demonstrators protesting in Caracas against the government of Nicolás Maduro while a police helicopter flies overhead. (Photo: Agustín García via Alamy)



A rally defending freedom and rights in Hong Kong. (Photo: Alex Gavrikov via Alamy)

## 5. ASSESSING AND STRENGTHENING US DEMOCRACY

The United States cannot credibly champion democracy abroad if it fails to defend democratic values at home. Our work on US democracy—including the rule of law, civic space, and America’s role as a democratic leader—has never been more urgent. Donors who believe the United States must lead by example can make a powerful impact by supporting this work.

## 6. HARNESSING AI TO FIGHT AUTHORITARIANISM

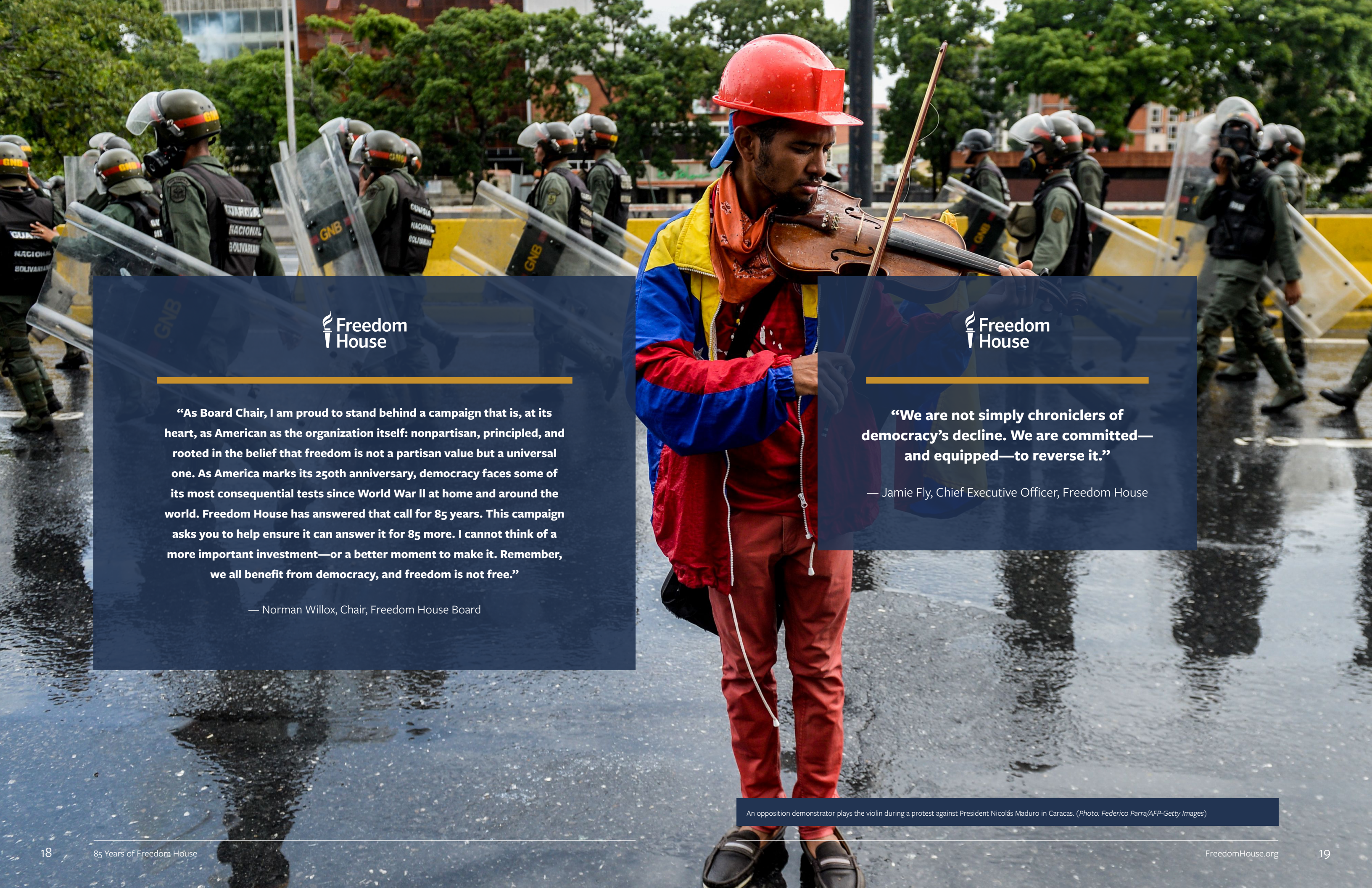
Authoritarians use AI to surveil activists, censor the internet, and manipulate information. Freedom House is exploring AI-powered tools to expose disinformation networks, protect activists through advanced digital security, and build early-warning systems that detect democratic backsliding before it becomes irreversible. Supporting this work means investing in technology that protects freedom’s future.

## 7. A PERMANENT HOME AND BASE FOR OPERATIONS

A permanent Freedom House headquarters in Washington, DC, would anchor our presence in the nation’s capital as the leading US organization dedicated to defending global democracy. A stable base would strengthen our convening power, preserve institutional knowledge on resisting autocracy, and signal permanence to partners, donors, and the authoritarian leaders we confront.

## 8. 85TH ANNIVERSARY RESERVE FUND

An unrestricted gift to this fund supports operating costs, strengthens long-term financial stability, and reinforces our ability to spotlight emerging threats, counter authoritarianism, and support journalists, activists, and rights defenders worldwide.



“As Board Chair, I am proud to stand behind a campaign that is, at its heart, as American as the organization itself: nonpartisan, principled, and rooted in the belief that freedom is not a partisan value but a universal one. As America marks its 250th anniversary, democracy faces some of its most consequential tests since World War II at home and around the world. Freedom House has answered that call for 85 years. This campaign asks you to help ensure it can answer it for 85 more. I cannot think of a more important investment—or a better moment to make it. Remember, we all benefit from democracy, and freedom is not free.”

— Norman Willox, Chair, Freedom House Board



“We are not simply chroniclers of democracy’s decline. We are committed—and equipped—to reverse it.”

— Jamie Fly, Chief Executive Officer, Freedom House

An opposition demonstrator plays the violin during a protest against President Nicolás Maduro in Caracas. (Photo: Federico Parra/AFP/Getty Images)

## How to Give: Join the Investing in Freedom’s Future Campaign

Freedom House welcomes gifts of all kinds and partners with donors to structure commitments that match philanthropic goals, tax planning needs, and timelines. Our development team can discuss any opportunity in this booklet.

### WAYS TO GIVE:

**Outright Gift:** Cash, wire transfer, check, or publicly traded securities.

**Multiyear Pledge:** Fulfill a transformational commitment over three to five years. Naming recognition granted upon pledge execution.

**Qualified Charitable Distribution:** Donors aged 70½+ may give tax-free directly from an IRA, satisfying required minimum distributions.

**Donor-advised Fund:** Grants from donor-advised funds (DAFs) are welcome. Please reference “Campaign for Freedom’s Future” in your recommendation.

**Estate and Legacy Gift:** A bequest, trust designation, or beneficiary designation on an IRA or life insurance policy is welcome. All naming opportunities may be secured through a testamentary commitment. Legacy donors are recognized immediately upon communicating their intent as part of the Willkie Roosevelt Legacy Society.



## Contact Our Development Team:

FREEDOM HOUSE, INC

Attn: Development Department  
1225 I St NW, Suite 1200 | Washington, DC 20005

202.520.8406

[development@freedomhouse.org](mailto:development@freedomhouse.org)  
[freedomhouse.org/donate](https://freedomhouse.org/donate)

*Freedom House is a 501(c)(3) organization. EIN: 13-1656647.  
All gifts are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.*

Protest leaders giving a speech in front of government headquarters during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong. (Photo: Shutterstock)



CELEBRATING 85 YEARS

Freedom House, Inc  
1225 I Street NW, Suite 1200  
Washington, DC 20005

[freedomhouse.org](http://freedomhouse.org)  
[facebook.com/FreedomHouseDC](https://facebook.com/FreedomHouseDC)  
[@FreedomHouse](https://twitter.com/FreedomHouse)  
[info@freedomhouse.org](mailto:info@freedomhouse.org)  
202.296.5101