Campaign Highlights:
• Organized and presented more than 60 refugee-related events.
• Sent 300 messages via email, Twitter and phone calls to U.S. senators urging them to vote against the American Safety Against Foreign Enemies Act (HR4038) through the HRW Digital Advocacy Action.
• Wrote to 31 U.S. governors opposing their efforts to keep Syrian refugees out of their states and asked them to reconsider their positions.
• Met special guest speakers including teenage refugees (photo above), a genocide survivor and human rights advocates protecting refugees.
• Developed a “Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your Community” survey for Darfuri refugee camps in Chad with i-Act.
• Presented the refugee tent exhibit at STF reception before the annual HRW Voices for Justice Dinner.
• Hosted genocide awareness activities on 9 campuses, including die-ins, art installations and classroom and all-school presentations.

STF High School Chapters:
• Academy of the Canyons, Santa Clarita
• Canyon HS, Santa Clarita
• Carson HS, Carson
• Crossroads School, Santa Monica
• Golden Valley HS, Santa Clarita
• Hart HS, Santa Clarita
• Harvard-Westlake, Studio City
• New Roads School, Santa Monica
• Oakwood School, North Hollywood
• Palisades Charter HS, Pacific Palisades
• Santa Monica HS, Santa Monica
• Sierra Canyon School, Chatsworth
• Valencia HS, Santa Clarita
• Wildwood School, Los Angeles

Children in the World Refugee Crisis

We are in the midst of the worst refugee crisis the world has ever seen. Worldwide displacement has reached an all-time high as war and persecution continue to ravage many parts of the world. Half of all refugees are children, who are being robbed of their development and education, and are in danger of becoming a lost generation. In 2015-16, the Human Rights Watch Student Task Force (STF) advocated for children and all refugees fleeing for their lives.
A Year in the Life of STF: Children

JULY
Educators gathered for a two-day Human Rights Education Institute at Palisades Charter HS, led by HRE expert Nancy Flowers, to develop curricula and school-wide plans for incorporating human rights into coursework and campus life.

OCTOBER
Palisades Charter HS STF led the development of a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (SBRR), a product of the July HRE Institute. Representatives from on-campus clubs discussed Pali’s culture and identified need for improvements based on the “Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your School” survey. Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, participants took a human rights-based approach to identifying their rights and responsibilities as students.

SEPTEMBER
Chapters made calls to the White House to advocate for refugee rights as anti-refugee rhetoric grew in the U.S.

DECEMBER
On Universal Children’s Day (Nov. 20) and Human Rights Day (Dec. 10), STF chapters hosted events to raise awareness of the global refugee crisis. STF screened the Syrian refugee documentary, “Salam Neighbor,” presented a refugee tent exhibit and hosted educational tables. STFers also collected petitions urging the U.S. to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and contacted their US Senators, pressing them to defeat efforts to bar Syrian and Iraqi refugees from entering the U.S.

STF learned about the refugee crisis at the Fall Leadership Workshop. Participants heard from friends at i-Act, who work in Darfuri refugee camps in Chad, and from an STF leader who fled from Afghanistan.

NOVEMBER
At the annual Human Rights Watch Voices for Justice Dinner, STF leaders set up the refugee tent exhibition to educate guests about the global refugee crisis. They described human rights violations faced by refugees fleeing around the world and asked participants to share what they would bring in their “backpack” if they had to leave home forever.
Caught in the World Refugee Crisis

JANUARY
Rodi Youssef, a 16-year-old Syrian refugee, spoke at the STF Winter Workshop. After serenading the group with his oud (a Middle Eastern stringed instrument), Rodi shared about his life in Syria, fleeing to Turkey and working 15 hours a day, 7 days a week, and finally winning the UNHCR lottery to come to the U.S. with his widowed mother, brother and sister in October 2015. Rodi joined STFers as they developed personal advocacy networks in breakout groups.

FEBRUARY
STF delegations met with Congress members Ted Lieu, Brad Sherman and Janice Hahn staff to express concern for the global refugee crisis and urged them to press the U.S. to do its fair share to protect refugees.

MARCH
STF chapters continued to host educational events on campus. Students tried on refugee life vests and thermal blankets, shared refugee stories and discussed news images of the crisis. Participants were outraged by the dangers and obstacles refugees face trying to reach safety.

APRIL/MAY
For the second year, Dr. Henry Oster, Holocaust survivor and former teenage refugee, helped STF commemorate Genocide Awareness and Prevention month by tying his story of tragedy and triumph to the current global refugee crisis.

Participants at the Spring Workshop reviewed STF campaign advocacy, including outreach to elected officials and how to talk to an Islamaphobe.

Letters to the Governor

- Individually sign the petition to Kansas Governor Sam Brownback
- As a group/in pairs/individually
- Draft a message to any of the 51 governors who have made statements barring Syrian refugees from their states
- Use the petition to Governor Brownback as inspiration as needed
- Have everyone in your breakout group sign your hand written message
- Give your signed petition and messages to Kristin, Pan, Nancy or STF intern before you leave today
Since my involvement with STF, I received a B.A. in Architecture with a Minor in Sustainable Design from UC Berkeley. I moved back to Los Angeles to pursue a career in graphic design. STF provided me with my first professional design experience as a Graphic Design Intern during my senior year of high school, which has opened many doors for me.

Brooke Greenberg
Palisades Charter ‘10
UC Berkeley ‘14

This fall, I will begin teaching English and strategic communications at Da Vinci Communications in Hawthorne. I am excited to bring my experience working with HRW and International Justice Mission, and in public relations, to help my students be change-makers in their communities. I am thankful to STF for sparking my interest in education, specifically, human rights education, and look forward to incorporating HRE into my curriculum and class culture.

Deepti Immaraju
Intern ‘10-’11
UC Los Angeles ‘11
Teaching Credential CSUN ‘16

I study Molecular and Cellular Biology at Harvard. I am a student-teacher with the Harvard CIVICS program, where I teach civics topics like the Constitution, fundamental rights and legislative procedures once a week at a Boston public school. I’m spending summer 2016 in Botswana, working at the Botswana-Harvard AIDS Institute Partnership, researching topics related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa.

Austen Needleman
Sierra Canyon ‘14
Harvard University ‘18

Upon graduating from Tufts, I began working at a boutique immigration law firm that handles a variety of immigration cases. We work with clients seeking asylum and protection in the U.S., immigrants who have assisted in law enforcement investigations to obtain legal status, and we also help victims of human trafficking and domestic violence establish protective networks.

Abraham Bran
New Roads ‘11
Tufts University ‘15

At Barnard College, I am majoring in History with a concentration in Human Rights, Laws and the State, and minoring in Anthropology. Recently, I helped develop human rights and genocide educational curriculum for public high school standards in NY. This summer I am interning with the Immigrant Rights Project at Public Counsel, working with attorneys to help refugees and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the U.S.

Linda Gordon
Santa Monica HS ‘14
Barnard College ‘18

This fall, I will begin teaching English and strategic communications at Da Vinci Communications in Hawthorne. I am excited to bring my experience working with HRW and International Justice Mission, and in public relations, to help my students be change-makers in their communities. I am thankful to STF for sparking my interest in education, specifically, human rights education, and look forward to incorporating HRE into my curriculum and class culture.

Heather Odell
Intern ‘15
Pepperdine University ‘16

I recently graduated from Pepperdine University and am interning this summer at the Peres Center for Peace in Tel Aviv, Israel. As a part of their Business Department, I support projects that work to increase trade and business partnerships between Israel and Palestine. Since working on the refugee crisis with STF, I visited Holot Detention Center in the Negev Desert of Israel for World Refugee Day.

Abdiel Lopez
Palisades Charter HS ‘14
Grinnell College ‘18

Through my work on the Youth Leadership and Healthy Study, I travel across CA to conduct in-depth interviews with youth to identify how their community organizations help them access resources that promote health and well-being in their communities. I am also developing my two-year research project on how community-based organizations employ restorative justice and healing practices to include their LGBT+ populations.

Sarah Bessell
Intern ’05-’06
Mount Saint Mary’s ‘06
M.A. Georgetown University ‘08
J.D. George Washington ‘15

Upon spending time at the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Human Rights First, and George Washington’s Human Rights Clinic, I traveled to Cambodia to work with the Khmer Rouge Tribunal in the office of the Co-Prosecutors. Recently, I passed the NY Bar and am working as a Legal Fellow at the Human Trafficking Pro Bono Legal Center.

For More STF Alumni Updates:
www.hrwstf.org “Our Alumni”

Photo credit: Patricia Williams (p. 1, 2, 3); Maya Myers (p. 2); Ashley Fumiko Dominguez (p. 3); Susie Han (p. 3)