



ANNUAL REPORT 2014



WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear Reader

As chair of René Cassin's board of trustees, I am often asked – 'Does human rights need a Jewish voice'? The work of this small charity, as highlighted in this report, answers that question emphatically. **Yes** – because modern human rights law was born out of the terrible events of the Holocaust. **Yes** – because the present-day suffering of many minorities – asylum-seekers; Gypsies, Roma and Travellers; victims of human trafficking and modern slavery – so closely resonates with Jewish experience. **Yes** – because Jewish religion and culture demands a humane and active engagement in social issues.

In this report you will read about René Cassin's work – as the 'Jewish voice for human rights', speaking loudly and clearly for those who are too often silenced or ignored. A determination to apply the lessons of the past to present informs that work. And we are also looking to the future – by cultivating and inspiring the next generation of human rights defenders through our educational programmes.

To our supporters – a heartfelt thank you. Without you, the vital work outlined here would not have been possible, and the lives of many vulnerable and disadvantaged people would have been even more blighted.

If you are new to René Cassin – once you have read the report, I hope you will agree that this inspirational charity is worthy of your support – both moral and practical.

Danny Silverstone

Chair of Trustee Board

THIS YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

This year René Cassin:

- *Challenged the endemic racism and stereotyping of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers through our innovative series of interfaith workshops*
- *Brought the horror of the genocide in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile to the attention of over 60 000 people in the #StandforSudan Campaign*
- *Educated 30 young professionals to become experts in human rights through a Jewish lens, via our year-long René Cassin Fellowship Program*
- *Gave a strong Jewish voice to the Save Legal Aid campaign*
- *Helped families, schools and synagogue congregations learn about the experiences of refugees and modern-day slaves, via our interactive 'Haggadah Companion'*
- *Analysed the costs and alternative of indefinite immigration detention in the UK and briefed policy makers*
- *Recommended a number of improvements to the Modern Slavery Bill as it passed through Parliament*
- *Emphasised the importance of the Human Rights Act for protecting vulnerable minorities in the UK*
- *Promoted human rights through a series of five highly successful events with topics including discrimination and human trafficking*

Why 'Rene Cassin'?

We are proud to take our name from Nobel Laureate and French Jurist Monsieur René Cassin, who was one of the principal drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and served as President of the European Court of Human Rights.

He was a lifelong advocate of international human rights protection and understood that, because of the Holocaust, it was vital that there was a strong and clear Jewish voice for human rights.

"...there is no task of safeguarding human rights more urgent than that of foreseeing such outrages and preventing them."

Monsieur René Cassin, Nobel Lecture, 1968

Our vision and mission

Our **Vision** is of a world where everyone fully enjoys all their human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and members of the Jewish community are actively engaged in promoting and protecting these rights.

Our **Mission** is to promote and protect the universal rights of all people, drawing on Jewish experiences and values. We achieve this by campaigning for change in defined human rights areas through a combination of advocacy, policy analysis, public campaigning and education and building the capacity of activists and lawyers to promote and protect human rights.

How we work

As 'the Jewish voice for human rights' René Cassin works:

- within the **Jewish community** – building support for human rights values amongst British Jews
- in the **wider community** – bringing a Jewish perspective to human rights debates, especially on issues affecting vulnerable minorities

"The Jewish community has a strong connection with [the Universal Declaration of] Human Rights. The first draft was prepared by Eleanor Roosevelt. Its second draft and the underlying structure were prepared by René Cassin, a French jurist and the son of a Jewish family. There is an organisation named in his honour, which continues his work today, promoting and protecting universal rights, drawing on Jewish experience and values. So, from the start, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was embraced by Jewish people."

Lord Haskel, House of Lords debate, 24 July 2014

OUR WORK

At René Cassin we are building on Monsieur Cassin's unique legacy – by promoting and protecting universal human rights through advocacy, policy analysis, public campaigning and education.

Our campaigning work currently focuses on four key issues which strongly resonate with the Jewish experience:

- **Asylum and detention**
- **Discrimination against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers**
- **Modern slavery and human trafficking**
- **Genocide**

CAMPAIGNS

Asylum and Detention

There is increasing concern about whether immigration detention is being used fairly and proportionately. Currently, the UK is the only country in Europe that has no time limit on how long immigrants can be held. There is no requirement for such detention to be sanctioned by a court, which effectively means that asylum seekers – although innocent of any crime – can be locked up *indefinitely*.

René Cassin, as part of the Detention Forum (a network of organisations concerned about this issue), has worked tirelessly this year – calling for the introduction of a time limit so that people cannot be held for more than 28 days in immigration detention.

A victory for open justice – greater accountability in judicial decision-making

In late 2013 René Cassin, through our participation in the Detention Forum, achieved commitment on our two major aims – securing agreement from the Home Office to have proper recording of:

- Bail hearings; and
- The judge's reasoning behind a decision to refuse bail

Without such records, it is impossible to effectively monitor the conduct of hearings and challenge judges' decisions.

'Time for a Time Limit' campaign

René Cassin achieved further success through our contribution to the first ever parliamentary inquiry on immigration detention, which was launched in July 2014 (for more information visit <http://detentioninquiry.com/>)

Not only did we make our own detailed submission to the inquiry, we ensured that parliamentarians heard directly from people who had experience of immigration detention. We did this by working with Jewish community drop-in centres to collect first-hand testimonies from former detainees.

"I can't tell exactly where I have been detained. I just know that I spent three years in detention and that I was in numerous detention centres. I can't tell exactly because it works like this: one day they just pick you up, put you in a van and take you to another place, without previous warning, without information on where you are going."

Survivor of slavery in Ghana, trafficked to UK – testimony to parliamentary inquiry, interview conducted by René Cassin.

Fighting the 'last bastion of acceptable racism' – discrimination against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to suffer overt discrimination in many areas of UK public life, such as education and access to healthcare, and prejudice within the criminal justice system. Europe's largest ethnic minority, Roma, shares with the Jewish people a history of racist hostility, persecution and genocide. This year, René Cassin has sought practical ways to counter this corrosive prejudice, bringing together leaders from across the faiths and members of the UK Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in our 'interfaith roundtable'.

René Cassin believes that faith leaders are in a unique position to speak out against this discrimination, as many religions have a history of suffering some form of marginalisation, and so can relate to the detrimental affect it has on communities.

"We commit to erasing what has been described as the 'last form of acceptable racism' from our society through working together and to bring about lasting change and equality for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma"
from 'An Interfaith Challenge to Racism', René Cassin's joint statement from faith leaders, July 2014

"René Cassin, a Jewish human rights NGO and one of the hidden jewels in the crown of our community"

Student rabbi attending the interfaith roundtable

Genocide

After the Holocaust the civilized world said 'never again!' will we allow such an outrage against humanity. But history is repeating itself in South Sudan with thousands of people being systematically displaced and murdered by Janjaweed militia and Sudanese forces. This year René Cassin strove to bring this largely hidden genocide to the attention of the Jewish community and the wider public. We were a key partner in a campaign that reached more than 60,000 people through newsletters, social media and events.

Crisis in Sudan – laying the groundwork for an effective response

In January 2014 the René Cassin and Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust event *Is Genocide Occurring in Sudan?* at the University of Law, considered the crisis from a legal perspective. Chaired by our director Shauna Leven, the panel of distinguished and expert speakers including Iain Morley QC, Lord Alton, Gaafer Ali and Baroness Cox, laid the groundwork for the campaign that was to follow.

#StandforSudan campaign

To highlight the dire humanitarian situation in the Nuba Mountains, Abyei, and Blue Nile regions of Sudan, René Cassin launched the #StandforSudan campaign, in partnership with the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust. Our publicity campaign was designed to support our call to the UK government and relevant human rights institutions to put pressure on the Sudanese government to provide humanitarian aid in affected areas.

As part of 'Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month' in April 2014, we launched a global #StandforSudan petition at a public meeting at the House of Lords. It created a collective voice to call for an end to the genocide in Sudan and allow unhindered humanitarian access to civilians.

Modern Slavery and Trafficking

Slavery is not history – in its many modern forms, such as bonded labour and human trafficking, it is still a global scourge. According to the Global Slavery Index 2013, there are nearly 30 million people currently in slavery. This shocking statistic strongly resonates with the Jewish narrative of Moses leading the Jews to their freedom out of slavery in Egypt, and with more recent Jewish experience of forced labour – a perspective that formed the basis of our widespread educational work on this issue. We backed this up with a call for legislative change with the aim of closing the gaps that allow modern slavery to persist today.

The Modern Slavery Bill

The Draft Modern Slavery Bill was introduced to the House of Commons in June 2014. René Cassin played an active role in the legislative process, providing written evidence to the bill's parliamentary committee. Among our recommendations was our view that it was vital that the legislation should allow victims of modern slavery to be appropriately compensated.

Teaching the teachers about slavery

To supplement our campaigning work on this issue, René Cassin developed a 'curriculum supplement' on slavery and human trafficking for teachers and informal educators. It analyses the roots of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and examines Jewish perspectives on how modern slavery manifests itself in both developed and developing worlds.

The 2014 Passover Haggadah Companion

This interactive resource connects human rights concepts with the Jewish experience of the Exodus – through a series of case studies, graphics and interactive quizzes. Developed in partnership with Tzedek and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, the companion was distributed to a range of audiences from families, to school groups and synagogue congregations – encouraging discussions about slavery and refugee issues at Seder tables.

"It was a great interactive tool and helped raise some stereotypes and assumptions about refugees and led to an interesting discussion"

Recipient of Haggadah Companion

You can download the Haggadah Companion from

<http://www.renecassin.org/resources-and-reports/social-justice-haggadah-companion/>

Defending human rights protections in the UK

In response to the Conservative Party's plan to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998, René Cassin has begun the campaign to preserve it in its present form. The Act is particularly important in protecting vulnerable people and minorities such as our campaign beneficiaries – asylum-seekers; Gypsies, Roma and Travellers; and those subjected to slavery and human trafficking. That vital protection could be seriously limited if the Act is repealed, amended or replaced.

'Equally Ours' campaign

Launched in 2014, this campaign stressed the importance of human rights and the positive impact they have on people from all walks of life. The campaign saw us working in a wide-ranging partnership with six other charities and NGOs including Age UK, Mind and the Disability Rights UK.

As part of the campaign, and in partnership with the Board of Deputies and other Jewish organisations, René Cassin began collecting 'Jewish human rights stories,' powerful personal accounts of how human rights protections have made a difference in the lives of Jewish people.

"You can't have human rights unless they're for everybody ... I am trying to raise awareness in the community of the appalling way that Roma and Travellers are treated in a very similar way to the way they were treated by Nazis. People are blind to this."

Ruth, Holocaust survivor speaking on the 'Equally Ours' website.

Policy briefings

This year René Cassin made two detailed submissions, advocating the importance of the Human Rights Act:

- A briefing paper to the Conservative Party, warning of possible dangerous repercussions if the Act were to be repealed
- A position paper to the Commission on a Bill of Rights consultation rejecting such a bill as an inadequate substitute for the Act

Holocaust Commission – recognising the importance of modern human rights law

The Prime Minister's announcement of a Holocaust Commission gave us the opportunity to stress the fact that modern human rights laws – including the Human Rights Act – are the direct legacy of the civilized nations' determination that such horrors should never happen again. So, in June 2014, René Cassin worked with Liberty on a campaign that called on the Prime Minister to recognise the Human Rights Act as 'part of a fitting memorial to our past and continuing fight against discrimination and persecution'. We produced and distributed more than 16,000 campaign postcards and urged the Commission to ensure that education around the Holocaust stresses the need to respect human rights and the legal mechanisms that protect them.

Defending legal aid – vital for access to justice

Without access to justice, rights are meaningless. For many vulnerable and often penniless people, legal aid is the only viable means of enforcing their rights. This year, as part of the SaveJustice campaign, René Cassin was an influential voice against changes in legal aid. We sent out 800 postcards highlighting the problems that cuts in legal aid would cause for some of the UK's most disadvantaged minorities. As a result, a fifth of the people we contacted became SaveJustice 'Justice Ambassadors'.

René Cassin's contribution to the legal aid debate was commended as unprecedented by the SaveJustice campaign organisers.

"I have never seen such a great response from the Jewish community..."

Convener of the SaveJustice legal aid campaign

EDUCATION

Education is a vital part of René Cassin's mission. Our programmes on human rights and Judaism cater for all ages and levels of experience. We work with schools, community organisations and synagogues, often creating bespoke educational materials.

René Cassin Fellowship Programme (RCFP)

The RCFP is a year-long initiative that brings together 30 young professionals from London, New York and Israel, to explore human rights issues through a Jewish lens. In this its second consecutive year, the programme has been a huge success in providing a unique platform for young Jewish professionals to develop knowledge, skills and contacts through:

- Intensive interaction between the three centres of Jewish life
- Hands-on internships in institutions working on human rights and social justice issues
- Monthly evening study sessions that explore human rights through the lens of Jewish values and historical experience
- A study tour to Israel

Israel study tour

In June 2014 we took 26 RCFP participants on a nine-day study tour to Israel. The trip was led by Rabbi Sid Schwarz, director of the RCFP, Shauna Leven, director of René Cassin in London and Elan Ezrachi, the Israeli regional director of RCFP. Speakers included the renowned Israeli human rights activist Natan Sharansky.

Each day of the tour focused on a different issue, explored from a variety of perspectives.

The issues we addressed included:

- Human Rights – Israel as a case study
- Jerusalem – a city of walls and bridges
- Arab and Bedouin minorities in Israel
- State religion and human rights
- African refugees
- Disputed territories – peace, security and human rights
- Understanding Zionism

"I came away from the trip with a renewed sense of my life's purpose – a commitment to advance social justice and human rights. I was inspired by the work that we heard about and witnessed."

2014 RCFP Fellow

René Cassin goes to school

This year we continued our work to introduce London school students to human rights – via the United Jewish Israel Appeal's 'Jewish Activities in Mainstream Schools (JAMS)' programme. JAMS fulfills an important part of our mission to provide education to all strands of the community, raising awareness of current human rights abuses and the importance of a Jewish voice in advancing this dialogue.

Human rights speaker series

René Cassin put on a number of well-attended events over the year, with expert speakers on topics ranging from an overview of human rights to detailed discussions of contemporary issues such as discrimination and modern slavery. Two particular examples are:

- *'Do Religious Courts Protect Human Rights?'* – a lively and informative discussion at JW3 in Finchley Road – with speakers Rabbi Chaim Weiner (Av Bet Din of the European Masorti Bet Din) and Dr Iyad Zahalka (Head of the Shari'a Court in Jerusalem), chaired by human rights barrister Adam Wagner.
- *'Monsieur René Cassin's contribution to human rights'* – an event commemorating our namesake's crucial role in the development of modern human rights thinking, timed to mark the centennial of the start of the First World War.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

René Cassin relies entirely on its supporters for the funds to carry on its vital work. Please help ensure our voice is heard loudly and clearly by supporting us:

- Make a donation – you can make a one-off or regular gift through our website at <http://www.renecassin.org/donate/>
- Get involved in our campaigns – visit our website for more details <http://www.renecassin.org/category/campaigns/>
- Volunteer with us – email info@renecassin.org
- Sign up for our newsletter at <http://www.renecassin.org/>
- Follow us on Twitter https://twitter.com/Rene_Cassin
- Like us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/renecassin>
- Tell your friends, family and colleagues about our work

FINANCE

<u>Revenue and Support</u>	<u>2014</u>
Donations	77,100
Gift Aid	1,898
Investment income	23
Total revenue and support	79,021

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2014</u>
Costs of raising voluntary income	28
Charitable activities	57,813
Governance costs	1,650
Other resources expended	12,054
Total expenditure	71,545

Many thanks to our supporters

Bluston Charitable Trust
 Doughty Street Chambers
 Humanitarian Trust
 JHub
 Mishcon de Reya
 Pears Foundation
 Shoresh Charitable Trust
 Sigrid Rausing Trust
 Thomas Paine Initiative
 UJA Federation of New York

OUR PEOPLE

Our Staff

Shauna Leven	Director
Sam Grant	Campaigns and Programmes Officer (from June 2014)
Penelope Marles	Programme Officer (until February 2014)
Sam Watson	Development Manager (from July 2014)
Aviva Carnell	Development Manager (until December 2013)

Our Trustees

Daniel Silverstone	Chair (From January 2014)
Maya Jaffe	Chair (until December 2013)
Simone Abel	(From April 2014)
Caroline Cassin	
Laura Forster	
Caren Gestetner	
Alexander Goldberg	
Keith Kahn-Harris	
Judy Peritz	
Victoria Prais	

Our Advisory Council

Sylvie Bacquet	Rabbi Danny Rich
Rabbi Tony Bayfield	Sir Nigel Rodley
Rabbi Dr Naftali Brawer	Rabbi David Rosen CBE
Professor Geraldine van Bueren	Professor William Schabas
Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner	Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon
Professor Francesca Klug OBE	Yael Weisz-Rind
Sir Gavin Lightman	Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg
Dr Noam Lubell	Dr Reuven Ziegler Esq
Rabbi David Mason	
Clemens Nathan	

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

René Cassin is a UK charity registered on 5 January 2007 (number 1117472 as CCJO ReneCassin) and governed by a constitution amended 9 September 2013. Our office is located at JHub, 152 West End Lane, London NW6 1SD.

The charity is governed by the board of trustees listed on the previous page. Our constitution stipulates that there must be a minimum of three trustees at any time. There is no maximum limit to the number of trustees.

René Cassin complies with all applicable UK law in recruiting and selecting new trustees to join its board. Trustees are normally elected by the members (who are the current trustees) of René Cassin at a general meeting. Trustees are appointed on the basis of specific skills, experience and knowledge that will enable them to make a contribution to the management of the charity. These skills, experience and knowledge are first identified in the annual skills audit. When there is a specific gap identified, or a trustee with specific skills, experience and knowledge is approaching retirement, then a posting seeking to recruit a new trustee will be placed on a variety of independent voluntary sector websites, print or online publications. During the recruitment and selection process, René Cassin will ensure that prospective new trustees are eligible to act, do not have any conflicts of interest, and understand their responsibilities and René Cassin's work. In particular, René Cassin pays heed to Charity Commission Guidance CC3: *The Essential Trustee: What You need to Know, What You Need to Do*.

René Cassin's board meets every two months to oversee the work of the charity, which the board delegates to its small staff team.

The Jewish
voice for
human rights



René Cassin
JHub
152 West End Lane
London
NW6 1SD

Registered charity number: **1117472**

Telephone **020 7443 5130**
Email **info@renecassin.org**
Website **www.renecassin.org**