"There will never be peace on this planet as long as human rights are being violated in any part of the world"

-René Cassin
Introduction

The release of our 2011 Annual Report is an opportunity for us to highlight the tremendous changes our organisation has undergone in the past 12 months, as we have strived to become more efficient and effective in the face of a challenging funding environment.

This is a critical time for protecting and promoting the human rights of others, as we witness the push to repeal the Human Rights Act; the on-going use of indeterminate detention; the resurgence of slavery; and continued discrimination against Gypsy and Traveller Communities (to name but a few current hurdles). It is also a challenging time for all of us financially, as many charities struggle to find the resources they need to run valuable projects and programmes.

René Cassin has introduced some significant strategic, structural and programmatic changes over the past year in order to ensure that the organisation continues to be effective in promoting and protecting human rights. These changes include increasing our advocacy efforts by working in coalition with other charities, developing new and exciting educational resources in all of our campaign areas for students of all ages, developing a US presence, re-launching our new and improved website, holding more frequent events focused on awareness-raising and fundraising and continually trying to raise our public profile through the media and a rebrand.

Jewish historical experience and positive Jewish values have an important role to play in the international human rights landscape. It is our responsibility to utilise our experience to defend the human rights of all people, in spite of the challenges we face.

We would like to express our appreciation for your ongoing support of our work over the course of the past decade and ask that you join us in creating a brighter future by assisting us to further our human rights campaigns and initiatives over the upcoming year.

Best wishes,

Vicki Prais and Maya Jaffe,
Co-Chairs of René Cassin
**CASE STUDY Human Rights in Tibet**

Marc Bergen, a graduate of René Cassin’s inaugural Activist Enrichment Programme class, now sits as a trustee on the board of Tibetan Jewish Youth Exchange (TJYE). TJYE is a small UK charity founded to facilitate cultural exchanges between the Tibetan and Jewish communities in the diaspora, especially youth movements with the goal of preserving identity in exile. As part of this year’s AEP training sessions, René Cassin worked with Marc and TJYE to host an evening talk entitled ‘Human Rights in Tibet.’

The panel included Yael Weisz-Rind, the former head of Free Tibet and a René Cassin Board Advisor, Ivan Constantino of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford, and Chonpel Tsering, the Secretary and Press Information Officer from the Office of Tibet. Topics discussed included lack of religious freedom in China, threats to Tibetan cultural identity in Tibet, and the future of Tibetan advocacy on the international stage after the Dalai Lama formally retires.

---

**René Cassin’s Vision**

A world where everyone fully enjoys all their human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**René Cassin’s Mission**

To use the experience of the Jewish people, and positive Jewish values, to campaign and educate on universal human rights issues such as discrimination, detention, and genocide.

**René Cassin’s Aims:**

To promote and protect universal human rights through legal advocacy and campaigns.
To raise awareness of human rights and foster activism within the Jewish community.
To bring a Jewish voice to the international promotion of human rights.

**Who was René Cassin?**

The organisation is named in honour of René Cassin, a French Jew and Nobel Laureate who was one of the principal co-drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Cassin founded the Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations (‘CCJO’), which is the parent body of René Cassin. Cassin was also the Chair/President of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Arbitration at The Hague.
CASE STUDY: Joint letter to the JCHR

On 14 April 2011, René Cassin joined 35 other NGOs in addressing the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) to reopen the 2007 Treatment of Asylum Seekers Report by the JCHR and scrutinise the use of administrative detention as part of the asylum system in the UK. The joint letter emerged from the coordinated work of the Detention Forum, a coalition of NGOs opposing various elements of the detention estate that René Cassin helped to form in 2010. The 2007 report identified many issues with the asylum system that persisted or deteriorated over the next four years. The unified voices of so many organisations pressured the Government to respond in a way that separate solicitations could not. The Government is expected to respond by autumn 2011 but René Cassin and the Detention Forum will continue to advocate for reform at the June and November 2011 Parliamentarians’ Meeting.

Aim 1: To promote and protect universal human rights through legal advocacy and campaigns.

Protecting Vulnerable Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Detention of asylum seekers and migrants in the United Kingdom (UK) is a widespread but opaque process. Thousands of vulnerable adults, children, and families are detained for indefinite periods of time in sites across the country, affecting their long-term physical and psychological wellbeing. The general public knows little about the detention of asylum seekers. Unfortunately, as René Cassin and its coalition partners have discovered, neither do the statutory groups and oversight bodies charged with managing the detention estate.

In 2010, René Cassin helped form the Detention Forum, a coalition of approximately 40 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at uniting organizations to send a joint letter to Damien Green and Theresa May calling for urgent review of the immigration detention system. This spring, we collaborated with 36 organizations on the Detention Forum in order to draft and send a joint letter to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights requesting it reopen the case on detention. René Cassin participated in the Parliamentary Meeting on Detention Reform held last winter chaired by Julian Huppert MP and attended by several Lords and MPs in addition to NGOs. Another Parliamentary Meeting took place on the 15th June 2011. René Cassin, in conjunction with the Detention Forum, will present the Parliamentarians with specific questions (MPQs) concerning immigration detention. Proof of the effectiveness of the Detention Forum is the pressure that it generated in its recent campaign to end child detention, which culminated in the UK Government officially announcing its intention to end this practice by May 2011.

We continue to build momentum on our Asylum Seekers and Migrants Campaign. Through distribution of our Detention Toolkit, generously funded by the Allen Lane Foundation, René Cassin educates our supporters on the facts around current detention policy and empowers them to act. Our role on the Detention Forum, a goal from 2009 that reached fruition this year, presents a unified voice to the Government demanding reforms to: eliminate indefinite detention, provide increased access to legal aid, end the detention of vulnerable persons including torture survivors and the mentally ill, overhaul the Detained Fast Track System, ensure greater legal oversight of the detention and bail process and curtail the planned expansion of the detention estate. René Cassin is currently developing a project to connect our network of volunteers to offer legal advice and observe asylum bail hearings in conjunction with the Bail Observation Project. We are also planning to commence a project to develop a toolkit for our legal supporters, to provide them with the necessary context, knowledge, practical instructions and more in order to facilitate the provision of pro bono legal assistance to asylum seekers.

As part of our mission, René Cassin is committed to raising public awareness and informing the Government about the high costs underpinning the current detention system. Beside the monetary costs of detaining, housing, and processing asylum seekers and paying remunerations for illegal detentions – an increasingly common occurrence - the detention estate also exacts a human cost on the health and dignity of those detained. René Cassin’s legal advocacy and campaigns have yielded many positive outcomes for asylum seekers in the UK over the past 12 months. We expect to continue to build on those successes in the coming year.
CASE STUDY: Dale Farm

Discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers garnered much media attention during the summer of 2011, as a battle between a local council and a Traveller settlement came to a head. On July 4th, local authorities served the residents of Dale Farm with eviction notices. A Traveller campsite in Essex, Dale Farm was home to more than four hundred residents and was the largest Traveller site in Europe. The eviction notice stipulated that all residents leave Dale Farm by the end of August; failure to do so meant annihilation of the campsite, leaving many people (including children and the elderly) homeless. This action will be funded and supported by Basildon Council, using taxpayer funds (up to £8m – a quarter of its annual budget). Those unable to obtain new accommodations will find themselves homeless.

René Cassin was deeply concerned about the proposed eviction of the inhabitants of Dale Farm, and more broadly, the use of the Localism Bill to introduce proposed legislation that will make it harder for long-term inhabitants of sites to continue living on those sites.

René Cassin demonstrated its support for the local Gypsy and Traveller community at Dale Farm by visiting the site and engaging local inhabitants in its campaign, providing free legal assistance to site residents, as well as working with politicians and lawmakers to try and influence the current position. René Cassin employees and volunteers also attended the hearings and joined in the protests outside the court house, and published an article in Open Democracy on the institutionalized racism inherent in the Dale Farm decision.

Combating Discrimination Against Roma, Gypsy, and Travellers

René Cassin is campaigning to end discrimination against Gypsies and Travellers in the UK and, ultimately, throughout Europe. Although newly introduced, this has become a core campaign for René Cassin. Gypsies and Travellers face widespread discrimination in areas including healthcare, education, employment, and property rights. Such inequities perpetuate their alienation from society and prevent future integration.

2011 witnessed the launch of the hit show, My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding. The show perpetuates stereotypes and trivialises the plight of Gypsies and Travellers. Reaching millions of viewers, My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding has become Channel 4’s most popular documentary ever.

René Cassin has taken measures to increase awareness of and advocate for the rights of Gypsies and Travellers. To that end, we have analyzed relevant cases heard by the European Court of Human Rights and investigated the UK’s compliance with those judgments. Our research has illustrated that Gypsies and Travellers face particular discrimination in the realm of planning and policy. Accordingly, we have obtained the assistance of law firms that specialize in property law, and are formulating a strategic advocacy plan to combat discrimination.

To generate change at a grassroots level, René Cassin is working to raise awareness in the general community. We have formed a coalition with Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT), an NGO that seeks to end racism against Gypsies and Travellers. In addition, René Cassin has worked collaboratively with FFT to design an informative programme for students and parents at local schools throughout London and Brighton. We hope to launch that programme jointly in the latter part of 2011.
René Cassin runs a campaign to end Slavery and Human Trafficking, which we introduced in early 2011. Of the estimated 27 million persons currently enslaved in the world, 5,000 to 6,000 are in the UK. The number of slaves in Israel is unclear; some NGOs estimate as much as twenty percent of the 200,000 foreign workers in the state are trafficking victims, and the Government states 3,000 women are trafficked into Israel each year for the purposes of sex slavery. Because of our niche mission and aims, René Cassin is uniquely positioned not only to campaign and raise awareness in the UK, but also to raise awareness and make a positive difference to the state of human rights in Israel.

The campaign was launched with a series of presentations given by our organization’s director, Simone Abel, at synagogues, universities, and community forums, including the GA Summit in France and the Siach Conference in North America. While drafting our policy paper on human trafficking and modern slavery, René Cassin has reached out to form partnerships with Rabbis for Human Rights, Anti-Slavery International, the Human Trafficking Foundation (the charitable wing of the APPG on Human Trafficking), Free The Slaves and Atzum, among others.

Through presentations at the Paris Limoud and Manchester Limmud, René Cassin has engaged with the European Jewish community on the issue of modern slavery. We also prepared and published the Passover Haggadah Companion in 2011 and distributed it to coincide with Passover. In March 2011, René Cassin solidified its reach in the community and its impact in Israel by joining with a core of three activists under the umbrella of the Human Trafficking Coalition. The role of this coalition is to liaise with organizations on the ground in Israel that are working to combat human trafficking and address related human rights issues and are willing to provide information and expertise to the René Cassin head office in London. Through the Coalition, we are connected with Atzum, Isha l’Isha, and Machon Toda’a in Israel.

René Cassin plans to continue building on the partnerships we have formed in just four short months. These partnerships included running a joint awareness-raising initiative with an international anti-slavery organisation on 18th October 2011 to coincide with the UK’s Anti-Slavery Day, and further collaborations with Anti-Slavery International regarding the subject of a slavery-free London 2012 Olympic Games.

The Government launched a policy review of Slavery in the UK to be conducted by the Centre for Social Justice over the next 15 to 18 months. René Cassin attended the announcement of the review and signed on to join the alliance of contributors. We intend to influence the outcome of the review by publishing articles on issues affecting human trafficking and slavery in the UK, meeting with sympathetic MPs, working with our partners to offer a united voice on the topic, and responding to any requests for comment by the Centre for Social Justice. We will continue to campaign around the issue of modern slavery in the UK and Israel and design projects to provide support to our partners and the Human Trafficking Coalition in the upcoming year.

The Jewish voice for human rights...
CASE STUDY: Passover Haggadah Companion

In April 2011, René Cassin took its first official step in the area of campaigning against slavery and human trafficking through the publication of our Passover Haggadah Companion, prepared jointly with JCORE and Tzedek.

The Companion was distributed to synagogues during Passover to be used to educate the Jewish community on the continuing existence of slavery and human trafficking around the globe. Not only was it well received by synagogues, our trustee Alex Goldberg had an article published in The Guardian focusing on modern slavery and raising awareness of René Cassin’s Passover Haggadah Companion and campaign.

Aim 2: To raise awareness of human rights and foster activism within the Jewish community.

Activist Enrichment Programme

After introducing the Activist Enrichment Programme (AEP) in 2009 with a class of 15, René Cassin built upon its successful launch in 2010, expanding the AEP’s roll to include 18 dynamic young people seeking a future as human rights activists. The AEP is designed to give participants the skills, knowledge, and encouragement to pursue a lifetime of human rights and social justice activism. Participants attend a series of workshops and seminars given by leading human rights and legal practitioners. This year-long preparation culminates in an international delegation to engage in human rights advocacy first-hand.

René Cassin is the only United Nations-accredited Jewish human rights organization in the UK*. We take that responsibility seriously. AEP participants are young, enthusiastic, and determined individuals who explore the relationship between their Jewish values and their commitment to the values of universal human rights. René Cassin facilitates their education by inviting notable experts in the field of human rights and campaigning, speakers such as Jonathan Cooper OBE, Professor Francesca Klug OBE, Steve Miller, Rabbis Danny Rich and Naftali Brawer, and Ben Jackson, the UK Director of Crisis Action. Our goal is to create the next generation of human rights leaders, a group inspired to act by and through their Jewish social justice values.

Our UN-accreditation under the umbrella of the CCJO allows René Cassin to speak before international human rights bodies constituted under the umbrella of the UN. We utilize the accreditation to offer a unique opportunity to AEP participants. Once they complete their classroom instruction, participants then travel in delegations to one of Geneva, Strasbourg, or The Hague where they experience international human rights advocacy and are given the opportunity to raise the particular concerns of the organisation in a uniquely global setting.

The success of the AEP led René Cassin Director Simone Abel to consider the possibility of expanding the programme. While at the Siach conference in the summer of 2011, Simone and Rabbi Sid Schwarz, the founder of Pannim, began discussing this possibility and developing a proposal. The result is an exciting new collaborative proposal for a programme which will capitalise on the large number of Jews who are pursuing careers in the fields of law, politics, international relations, social justice and human rights and involve a study trip with Jewish counterparts from across the world to explore these issues through a Jewish lens. René Cassin is seeking funding for the programme and hopes to launch it in 2012.

*This accreditation exists under the umbrella of the Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations
René Cassin introduced the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) education project in 2010 in conjunction with Jewish Social Action Forum and Tzedek. Our goal was to bring the benefits of the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund’s RRSA to the Jewish community by implementing the curriculum in Jewish schools in the UK. The project uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRoC) to embed a climate and culture of respecting the rights of others and leadership by encouraging pupils to actively participate in decision-making throughout the school. We tailored the curriculum for Jewish children and focused on issues of discrimination, racism, fear of the other, and social integration.

The RRSA crafts an environment on school campuses that meets the four key categories of needs identified by the CRoC that children need to thrive: to survive as a fit and healthy person; to be protected from harm and abuse; to develop physically, mentally, and socially; and to participate as an active citizen. Rights are of little use to children if they do not know about how to avail themselves of those rights. René Cassin helps educate children and foster these values in line with Article 42 of the Convention’s requirements.

Many benefits are associated with the RRSA. Monitoring by UNICEF reveals improved results; incidents of bullying, suspensions, and exclusions are reduced; students understand the importance of respecting each others' rights and use rights-respecting language to resolve conflicts; children develop as global citizens; exam results improve; and pupil self-esteem increases. Also, Jewish schools attaining this prestigious award send a strong positive message about the environment in Jewish schools to prospective parents and the wider community.

Six schools participated in the initial launch of the RRSA. Before the school year started, René Cassin held sessions with parents and staff at the schools and commenced its training programme on the RRSA values, goals, framework, and lessons. We continued the programme during the school year. René Cassin employees entered the schools with a UNICEF representative to conduct various workshops with the children.

In 2011, René Cassin intends to advance the six pilot schools towards Level One certification under the RRSA with an eye to achieving Level Two certification in 2012. We are also working to expand the number of Jewish schools of all levels participating in rights-respecting education.
Aim 3: To bring a Jewish voice to the international promotion of human rights.

International Advocacy

René Cassin continues to bring a Jewish voice on human rights to the United Nations and the Council of Europe using our UN Accreditation. In addition to our analysis of recent case law from the European Court of Human Rights pertaining to our campaign areas, René Cassin highlighted inequalities facing Gypsy and Traveller communities in UK and Europe at the European Union Fundamental Rights Platform in Vienna.

Detention Toolkit

The experience of asylum seeking resonates deeply within the Jewish community. It is the common story of people needing someone to help, to extend a hand and pull them to safety. Asylum seekers flee persecution in the hope of finding a new home where they do not have to fear being killed, raped, jailed, or denied employment or education because they are perceived as different from the people who hold the reigns of power. Their story engages an ethical obligation for Jews rooted in justice and the Torah. It is for this reason that so many Jewish lawyers, including many members of René Cassin’s community, donate their time on a pro bono basis to help asylum seekers navigate the complexities of a foreign legal system and find sanctuary.

Unfortunately, detention is a growing part of the asylum process in the UK. René Cassin actively campaigns around immigration detention issues as one of our four core campaign areas. Not everyone moved by an ethical objection to the unjust aspects of detention can offer legal assistance. With the preparation and distribution of the Detention Toolkit in 2010, we are reaching out to the wider community and empowering them to become human rights activists around any or all three of our aims in the area of asylum*. The Toolkit is primarily targeted at university students but is accessible and useful to potential activists at all stages.

The Toolkit provides simple, straightforward information to educate the reader about asylum seekers and the detention estate and provides a blueprint of tactics and strategies to carry out a human rights campaign about asylum in the UK from start to finish. In addition to being available online, René Cassin has distributed the Toolkit at varying forums including synagogues, schools, and universities in conjunction with our presentation on immigration detention. Commented on and edited by our coalition partners in the Detention Forum, the Toolkit has been mentioned repeatedly by the Forum and widely circulated among NGOs and MPs alike.

René Cassin recently completed updating the Toolkit to note the recent change in Government policy concerning child detention and other changes to immigration law in the UK, and is in the process of creating a Toolkit for our legal supporters who want to devote pro bono time to assisting asylum seekers. Once complete, we plan to hold training sessions for CPD credit in partnership with the Law Society, where this resource will be distributed; it will also be available on our website.

As part of an internal audit to gauge the effectiveness of our distribution channels, we will systematically track the number of printed and electronic copies we distribute of the revised Toolkit, including recording the number of downloads from our newly launched and redesigned website.

*Thank you to the Allen Lane Foundation for supporting the Asylum Activist Toolkit and bringing this project to life.
Organisational Development

People
René Cassin is able to achieve results that go well beyond its official size and financial resources because of the active involvement of a large network of committed volunteers and members. We are extremely grateful to these people, who give tirelessly to our campaigns and programmes, and help us to remain the Jewish voice for human rights. Some examples of recent projects in which volunteers played a significant role include: the preparation and publication of the Passover Haggadah Companion, the editing and publication of the Detention Toolkit, and the conducting of research on discrimination facing Gypsies and Travellers in the media.

We have recently launched a formalised internship programme in conjunction with Emory University (in the USA), the University of New South Wales (in Australia), Malmö University (Sweden) and Nottingham University (in the UK). This has resulted in an influx of highly qualified interns to our organisation, who are making invaluable contributions to our work and bringing an international perspective to our campaigns and programmes.

This year René Cassin also added two consultancies to help manage its expanding number of programmes and activities. Shannah Devoe and Shauna Leven came on board to assist René Cassin in developing its educational programmes, events, and expanding its activities to the United States. Shannah is a New Zealand qualified lawyer with programme and event experience that she developed while working in the private sector in New York. Shauna is an American lawyer who previously worked for the Carter Center in Liberia and is now based in London. She is advising the organisation on seeking tax exempt status in the US.

Events
In an attempt to diversify our funding sources, René Cassin hosted its first fundraising event in February 2011 at the London Jewish Museum. The event featured a line-up of prestigious speakers and excellent refreshments, and we are happy to report that we sold out and raised valuable funds.

Building on our February success, we hosted our First Annual Autumn Gala in September 2011 in the BT Tower Restaurant, which has been closed to the public for over thirty years! Our guests enjoyed the sit-down dinner, interesting speakers, silent auction and of course the dazzling view of London.

The organisation also continued to hold its regular Human Rights Speaker Series evenings in venues that included Freshfields and Doughty Street Chambers. Speakers of particular note in 2011 were Anthony Julius and Philippe Sands. We thank the law firms and chambers that generously provided us with a space to host our Human Rights Speaker Series.

Governance Review
Following on from the Governance Review conducted in 2010, René Cassin’s Board has devolved some responsibilities to committees in order to ensure that the organisation runs as effectively as possible. To date, we have an active Strategy Committee, Management Committee, Projects Committee and Events Committee. The Finance Committee is scheduled to convene in the near future.

The Strategy Committee has made significant progress by preparing a Vision Statement for the organisation and commencing work on identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) that correlate to the various aspects of the Vision Statement. The Events Committee was an integral part in the success of the Autumn Gala, and will reconvene again in 2012 to begin planning the next large-scale fundraising event.

Partners
René Cassin is grateful to our valued partner organisations. It has been a particular pleasure to work with:

- The Detention Forum to explore new strategies to challenge the detention of asylum seekers in the UK
- The Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations, René Cassin’s parent body, and particularly Clemens Nathan
- The Equality and Diversity Forum to gain information, expertise and an understanding on tackling religious and racial discrimination
- Friends, Families and Travellers to collaborate with the UK Gypsy and Traveller communities in combating discrimination
- The Human Rights Lawyers Association to educate on the history of international law and human rights, and to hold awareness raising events
- The UKAJLJ, to educate on international law and human rights, and to hold awareness raising and educational events with a legal focus
- The Jewish Social Action Forum to coordinate and raise the profile of social justice work in the Jewish and general communities
- The Fundamental Rights Agency to raise the profile of René Cassin in the European Union and to provide an opportunity for René Cassin to present its campaigns on the international stage
- Siach to raise the profile of human rights and social justice within the international Jewish community and to provide an opportunity for René Cassin to participate in the conference Steering Committee
- The Protect Darfur Coalition to participate in the Sudan365 campaign
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP
- Doughty Street Chambers
- Tzedeck and JCore to produce the Passover Haggadah Companion
Finance [See attached copy of income and expenditure]

In the last financial year, René Cassin has seen a drop in income from institutional donors, but have largely made up for this with an increase in support from individuals.

René Cassin has taken and is continuing to take significant measures to improve its financial position by leveraging its membership, holding fundraising events, working with a communications expert to increase its public profile, and making its educational programmes self sufficient. We have also sourced new institutional donors with success, and set specific fundraising targets for Trustees. In addition, René Cassin’s new Director and its International Consultant have spearheaded a strategy around diversification and internationalisation of fundraising, including expanding the organisation’s presence in the Unites States.
“Human rights are an integral part of the faith and tradition of Judaism. The beliefs that man was created in the divine image, that the human family is one, and that every person is obliged to deal justly with every other person are basic sources of the Jewish commitment to human rights.”

René Cassin, Declaration on Judaism and Human Rights, April 23, 1974