

**Bruno Stagno-Ugarte, Deputy Executive Director, Human Rights Watch**  
**Acceptance Speech: Four Freedoms Award Ceremony**  
**20 April 2016 Middelburg, The Netherlands**

It is both a privilege and humbling to be here today and to accept this award on behalf of Human Rights Watch at a time when fear stands behind most of the worst human rights situations of the past year. And an honor to do so in the company of the other laureates, all of whom we have had the privilege of working with to further the cause of freedom.

As an independent, international human rights organization, Human Rights Watch has, since 1978, been a witness to tyranny and dedicated to confronting the fear that it creates: be it the fear of being killed, maimed, raped, tortured, imprisoned, displaced.

We hold all governments to account- those that commit human rights abuses and those who turn a blind eye to them. We practice an innovative and aggressive methodology to investigate abuses scrupulously, expose the facts widely, and relentlessly pressure those with power to bring about real change. Our investigate-expose-change methodology is tried and tested and behind our reputation of speaking truth to power that is second to none.

While deeply honoured to receive this award and proud of our record of achievement, we and the human rights movement continue to face tremendous odds and many of our partners and human rights defenders are under increasing threat as the space for civil society shrinks in different parts of the world.

Many governments that pride themselves for upholding human rights, have subordinated human rights and concluded modern-day Faustian bargains for the sake of stability and security with the very same governments that are shuttering civil society. In doing so, they are forgetting that human rights violations played a key role in spawning and aggravating most of the crises that haunt the international community today. They are also forgetting that rebuilding the moral fabric that underpins social and political order requires that human rights be an essential compass for political action.

Given the tumult in the world today, meeting these changes is hardly easy. But surrendering the fight against fear or the wisdom enshrined in international human rights law is definitely not a wise option. On the contrary, it is high time to give new life to the one fear that we do not take exception to for reasons of deterrence and justice: the fear of accountability.

Thank you.