



2011 ANNUAL REPORT

Promoting
vibrant
civil
society

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Arseh Sevom (Third Sphere) is a non-governmental organization established in 2010 in Amsterdam, aiming to promote peace, democracy, and human rights. The organization's objective is to help build the capacity of organizations and encourage the development of a vigorous third sphere of civil activities. Cooperation among civil society organizations is key to building a strong and coherent civil rights movement that can thrive and succeed. Arseh Sevom aims to become a hub for organizations and individuals working together towards the common goal of free, open, and peaceful Persian-speaking communities. Arseh Sevom seeks partnerships with existing organizations and also seeks to increase the vibrancy of civil society by encouraging its development

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LETTER OF PRESIDENT

Dear Readers,

What does it mean to have a vibrant civil society? For us at Arseh Sevom it means giving voice to women, minorities, people on the margins of society. It's about organizing your neighbors to get a stop sign placed on a dangerous corner, selling cookies to support a local school. It's about advocating for the rights of prisoners, pushing for better labor conditions, getting children out of the labor market and into the schools. When citizens participate in the public life of their communities, they help to reign in the excesses of unchecked power. In so doing, even the marginalized gain a place at the table.

It can be easy to become despondent and pessimistic when focusing on civil society in Iran, especially in the light of the high number of reported abuses against human rights. Over the past year, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran released two reports. Those reports documented a shocking disregard from the Islamic Republic of Iran for the basic human rights of its citizens.

They also showed something more positive. They showed the great spirit of people who continue to struggle for their rights and the rights of others despite the odds. And despite everything, individuals and organizations in Iran manage to do important work. They might not all make political or human rights demands, but they do contribute given their limitations. Other organizations and civil society actors have been attacked. Their licenses to operate have been revoked or denied. Their members imprisoned, tortured, and harassed.

These efforts, however quiet, represent a society asserting itself and struggling to break free of the oppressive government rule of the past. The only way to bring the government of Iran more in line with its people is to push for more freedom in the civil sphere and to support the efforts of civil society to improve its democratic communication, its openness, and its efforts to give voice to those on the margins.

Although Arseh Sevom faced several challenges over the course of 2011, we remain dedicated to our mission to promote vibrant civil society in Iran and related communities.

With the help of our partners and network, we look forward to a 2012 filled with exciting projects such as training in communications and message development, a report on the effects of economic penalties and sanctions on civil society in Iran, and the start of a project to synthesize lessons learned from civil society actors all over the world (Civil Society Cookbook).

We look forward to more engagement with our readers and our audience and welcome comments.
Thank you,

[Bert Taken](#)
President of the Board

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INTRODUCTION

The past year was filled with small successes, partnership development, and further strengthening of Arseh Sevom governance. The year of 2011 was one of growth, structure, development, and preparation for the programs and campaigns to be implemented or further revved up in 2012. Though Arseh Sevom has not had the smoothest progression towards organizational success, it has faced and resolved conflicts along the way and maintains a strong foundation for its sustainability and governance. The decisions and clarifications made, as well as the structures built and put in place, throughout 2011 are the reason Arseh Sevom will have a future and the potential to positively impact and support civil society.



Arseh Sevom has strived to break the culture of secrecy often found in Iranian society by ensuring the organization is as transparent and democratically governed as possible. Arseh Sevom has done this by making available its annual report. It remains in Arseh Sevom's bylaws and its internal policy to guarantee transparency in as many systems as possible: operations, hires, programs, financials, and others. Arseh Sevom strives to balance transparency and security, and is pragmatic in its approach to security issues faced by civil society activists. Arseh Sevom considers its most basic role to be similar to that of medical professionals: First, do no harm.

Civil society and Iranian human rights organizations are perpetually accused of not being transparent about operations, governance, or systems. The fact remains that the public has the right to know how an organization working for the betterment of society is endeavoring to do so. The public has the right to understand the Arseh Sevom process of decision-making, how the organization is using its funds, who exactly is working for Arseh Sevom, and more. Arseh Sevom strives to remain open, honest, and transparent with its staff as well, and ensures it does so by sharing important information and keeping them up to date regarding Arseh Sevom's financials. Arseh Sevom has built and continues to develop and work towards its long-term plans; however, it has not been able to successfully secure the resources and funding to ensure all goals and programs can be realized in 2012.



Introduction > **Arseh Sevom's Mission**

Arseh Sevom aims to promote a vibrant civil society in Iran and related communities. The organization's activities are in service to goal. Arseh Sevom is Persian for "third sphere," referring to the endeavors taken on by civil society. Civil society actors amplify the voices of all of aspects of society, including and especially the voices of those forced into the margins. They highlight difficult, even unpopular issues, attempt to curb the excesses of power, and inspire passion. Arseh Sevom was formed to address the needs of civil society actors.

In order to be more precise about the mission of the organization, Arseh Sevom's board agreed to change the tagline from "Peace. Democracy. Human Rights" to "Promoting a vibrant civil society." The tagline was rewritten in order to be more precise about what the core work of the organization entails. In the wake of Iran's disputed 2009 presidential elections, many civil society actors faced increasingly restricted measures imposed by the state. These include travel limitations, sanctions against associations, as well as the harassment, arbitrary detentions, and unfounded charges against organizations and individuals comprising Iran's civil society.

Arseh Sevom supports the endeavors of civil society actors in various ways, including by creating reports on abuses against the third sphere, providing information and undertaking exchanges with other NGOs and the international human rights community, as well as by developing materials, best practices and standards, and other resources that can be used to build capacity among individuals and groups. Arseh Sevom strives to build key partnerships to further evolve the concept of civil society and further develop the links and relationships needed to sustain a strong and future-focused community of civil society actors.



Introduction > **Challenges Faced by Iranian Civil Society in 2011**

The human rights crisis in Iran continued to rapidly deteriorate in 2011. Iran holds the distinction of having the world's most journalists imprisoned and of executing more people per capita than any other country in the world, with 2011 being a record breaking year for Iran in the number of executions. Many of these executions were carried out in secret, often without the prior notification of the individual's family or legal team, and are not officially confirmed. Many of the secret executions took place at Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison, with Amnesty International estimating some secret 300 executions having been carried out through December 2011. Public hangings from cranes also remain common.

Iranian authorities increasingly detained arbitrarily and sentenced unjustly a number of human rights defenders, imposed bans on workers unions, and systematically violated the basic rights of the country's ethnic and religious minorities (including Baha'is, Christians, Kurds, Baluchis, Azeris, and more). Iran is only one of a handful of countries in the world that continues to criminalize homosexuality – for which the death penalty is possible. Women continue to suffer from state-sanctioned discrimination, while universities have increasingly been forced to relinquish their independence to the regime.



Iran's last big round of demonstrations took place on **February 14** and on **February 21, 2011** and were held in solidarity with the protests raging across the Arab World, in particular with the rallies across Egypt and Tunisia. Both protests, called for by Iran's opposition members, Mousavi and Karoubi, were squashed brutally by Iranian authorities, with at least three protesters killed. Mousavi and Karoubi were placed under house arrest on February 13, 2011, a day before they planned protests. They remain **under house arrest** to this day.

One Iranian student who took part in the February 2011 protests **said**: "What I saw in the streets today was very promising. It showed that the green movement is quite alive in spite of all crackdowns and arrests and people are still striving for freedom."

Other persistent abuses include impunity for officials complicit in rights abuses against the Iranian people, a failure to uphold due process of law or the rights of detainees, including arbitrary detentions, forced confessions, torture, solitary confinement, untenable prison conditions, and allegations of sexual abuse, violations to the freedom of expression, assembly, and association, and restricting information including by Internet and telecommunications censorship, monitoring, and tracking and by moving forward with a "National Internet." Other forms and venues for expression, including for example, Iran's House of Cinema and various publishing houses, have come under further attack by the government for acting as forums for expressions of opinions that do not align with the conservative frame of the state.

Arseh Sevom published a report in 2010 entitled *Attack on Civil Society in Iran*, which details another major human rights concern ever present in Iran: the systematic repression of and government sanctioned limitations imposed on Iranian civil society organizations. This particular violation has been ongoing, and as noted in the report, has only further become a pattern of the Iranian government in restricting the development of civil society, while undermining the democratic development of Iran as a whole.

Pushing the Limits of the State:

The most recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights, Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, presented at the March 2012 session of the UN Human Rights Council, detailed other human rights issues of concern.

Among the report's many calls, the report most urgently appealed to the Iranian government to release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, establish an independent commission to investigate allegations of human rights abuses following post-election protests, put a halt to executions, including against juveniles, respect the freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and show genuine cooperation with the UN Human Rights Council. The fact that there are a high number of human rights violations in Iran reflects the state's fear of dissent and lack of tolerance. It also presents a picture of a population pushing back on the limits of state control – one that is not complacent, but active.

Introduction > **Top 10 human rights violations in Iran**

- “ Excessive use of death penalty (including secret executions and those of juveniles)
Treatment of prisoners (torture, cruel and unusual punishments, poor prison conditions etc.)
- 1 Oppression of women, religious, and ethnic minorities
 - 2 Lack of freedom of expression, association, and assembly
 - 3 Censorship, communications monitoring, and the creation of a “National” Internet
 - 4 Arbitrary, politically motivated detentions and lack of due process
 - 5 Impunity for officials complicit in human rights abuses
 - 6 Systematic repression of perceived opposition, including human rights activists, students,
 - 7 journalists, filmmakers and artists, human rights defenders, union workers, and more
 - 8 Restrictions on Iranian civil society organizations
- Violations to academic rights and the right to education, including attempts to strip
- 9 universities of independence from the state and systematically excluding minorities from
 - 10 higher education ”



PROGRAMS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Programs & Accomplishments > Civil Society Watch

Civil Society Watch is a collection of articles from various trusted sources highlighting the issues impacting civil society actors in Iran, across the Middle East & North Africa, and around the world. More than forty pieces were published, mostly covering civil society issues specifically related to Iran. By examining past pieces, Arseh Sevom was able to determine the patterns that emerged over the year on topics that need to be further pursued. This includes such topics as cyber attacks against the Dutch security company Diginotar that led to the security breach of the emails of hundreds of thousands of Iranians, Iran's plans for a "clean National Internet," and the difficulties involved with environmental activism, among other issues. The value in this project is found in monitoring civil society, its developments, its strengths, and its weaknesses. The value is further ensured by pushing issues addressed in the Civil Society Watch to the top of the agendas of civil society actors and policy makers.



Programs & Accomplishments > Advocacy

Arseh Sevom joined with partners on a number of advocacy campaigns. In addition, the organization led two efforts. The first was to prevent the passage of a bill curtailing independent society in Iran. Nine civil society organizations and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi issued a joint statement which called on Iran's parliament to reject the bill and prevent its acceptance as law. The groups that signed the statement were: Amnesty International, Arseh Sevom, Education International Education (EI), HIVOS, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), accomplished in the framework of their joint program to oversee the support of defenders of human rights affiliated with FIDH, the Iranian League for the Defense of Human Rights (a member of FIDH), and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran.

Parliament did send the bill back for revision without taking a final vote on it, which was good news. Unfortunately, it was later passed with some revisions.



Arseh Sevom joined with United4Iran to create a letter writing campaign protesting the passage of Iran's Islamic Penal Code. Over 1000 letters were sent. As part of this effort, the organization led the preparation of a joint letter to the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, Dr. Ahmad Shaheed, which outlined the human rights issues with the Islamic Penal Code. The letter was sent privately and signed by four organizations and one prominent human rights defender.

Arseh Sevom issued a statement on the massacre of prisoners at **Ghezel Hesar Prison** and the dearth of institutions to defend prisoners' rights.

Programs & Accomplishments > Civil Society Zine

The **Civil Society Zine** is published two to three times a year, with each issue focusing on a specific theme. The aim of the online magazine is to create a knowledge-based platform to share with civil society organizations. Submissions are welcome and range from 400 words to 4,000 words. Pieces included are provocative, insightful, and not necessarily about Iran or the Middle East/North Africa. The open platform affords the potential to hear from and share the voices of people with a wide variety of perspectives and experiences.

Arseh Sevom is looking at the magazine as an opportunity to learn from, and share with Iranians, the best practices, strategies, opportunities, and issues faced by international civil society organizations: particularly those who have operated or operating in repressive societies. It is by examining the strengths and weakness of other civil societies that a strong, sustainable, and smart Iranian civil society can stay emerged. The online magazine is devoted to bringing issues related to civil society to a wider audience. The objective is to share experiences and research with a Persian-speaking and English-speaking audience.

At present, Arseh Sevom does not have funding for translations into Persian but the Arseh Sevom editor is working to translate a number of the articles from English to Farsi. A selection of the best-received and/or most provocative pieces is currently being translated into Persian. Between 8–10 articles are to be in every issue, totaling about 60 pages per issue. The issues are available both on the web, in a PDF print format, and on Lulu.com. All of the contributors have allowed use of their work, articles, and pieces for free. The first issue, **Networks, Networking, and Change**, was published in Spring 2011 with thirteen contributors, including former New York Times reporter Nazila Fathi, Holder of the **PaVEM** Chair at Free University in Amsterdam, Halleh Ghorashi, as well as a number of prominent activists and PhD candidates. The second issue, **What Comes Next?**, was published in Spring 2011 and had a total of eight contributors, including South African activist Jasmine Nordien, Amal Hamidallah-van Hees, director of Bridging the Gulf, and author and human rights activist Antonia Bertschinger.

Programs & Accomplishments > Civil Society Cookbook

The Civil Society Cookbook (coming soon) will encompass lessons, insights, and overall mentoring collected from various civil society actors all over the world. Over the course of 2011, Arseh Sevom planned and began the implementation of the project in an effort to increase the capacity and knowledge of, and to generally further inform Iranian civil society actors and related communities, including the Iranian Diaspora.

Arseh Sevom has coined the term Civil Society Cookbook because the project is just that: a step-by-step distillation of all aspects of civil society. The collection of the stories, experiences, and lessons of civil society actors all over the world will provide the everyday activist, budding human rights communities, and various other audiences with guidelines for effective civil society practices, while preserving the complexity and nuances that amount from sharing individual stories.

The cookbook will be disseminated with the help of key partners and Arseh Sevom's budding social media army. It will also be made public using a variety of platforms, including PDF web documents, printed publication, interactive quizzes, and multimedia promotion. Despite being termed a "cookbook," this project will also incorporate face-to-face trainings, public conferences geared toward various audiences, and strategic meetings. The objective of using so many different platforms is to create a vibrant conversation within the activist community, to connect to the widest, most diverse possible audience, and to ensure the cookbook itself bypasses censors, filtering, and bandwidth restrictions.

Programs & Accomplishments > Exploring Personas

Why a Cookbook? Arseh Sevom used an analysis process borrowed from the world of digital product design to describe our target audience and identify their needs. These personas are based on actual people that we have met and interviewed in the course of conducting research. Unlike these people, however, personas are fictional. They are archetypes that can represent huge groups of people.

Personas guide the development of content and products. The use of personas allows us to anticipate the needs of people we are targeting. What are their motivations? What do they need to accomplish? Next we need to know the outside factors they face. For example, outside factors can include regulations, economic factors, and political machinations. This exercise resulted in the idea for the Civil Society Cookbook briefly discussed above.

Programs & Accomplishments > Simple Internet Security

The ever-increasing use of social networking tools among activists and the general public in Iran and the region is a double-edged tool. The same social networking sites that can help activists communicate with each other and the public can be used to trace their connections and networks. Some respond by going completely offline, losing a valuable source of communication. Others unnecessarily expose themselves and others. Arseh Sevom received 25,000 euros to promote the smart use of this happy medium of technology and social networking. The first post was published in August 2011 and was part of the special series of articles focusing on managing online security and privacy. The series can be found in Persian here: <http://bit.ly/n19Pzk>.

Arseh Sevom also used some of the funding to investigate the implications of the cyber attacks on the Dutch company DigiNotar, collect information from experts that will be a part of the Civil Society Cookbook, and to follow the story of Iran's plans for a national intranet/internet, leading to a position paper on the subject published in 2012.

Programs & Accomplishments > Partnerships

Throughout 2011, Arseh Sevom became known as one of the foremost civil society organizations with which to partner, as evidenced by the sheer number of partnerships and collaborations undertaken. Partnerships vary in collaborative nature, and one of the biggest challenges facing the international human rights community is a lack of streamlining and amplification that combined efforts and partnerships can afford. Arseh Sevom looks at its partners and potential partnerships strategically, choosing to collaborate when it aligns with Arseh Sevom's work plans and the needs of Iranian civil society.

In order to sustain and enhance Arseh Sevom's capacity, the organization has eagerly sought out partnerships with other organizations with overlapping missions and goals. The most important accomplishments for the organization are building partnerships with organizations that share Arseh Sevom's goals and building an effective organization with a good foundation in effective management and communication.

The partnerships Arseh Sevom is building lead to sustainable actions that build the capacity of Iran's human rights defenders and civil society organizations and have a benefit for all involved stakeholders and the target population. These partnerships are a direct result of building relationships over a long period of time (pre-dating Arseh Sevom in some cases) and small "trial" activities. In addition, Arseh Sevom is working to create clear partnership agreements that define the expectations of each side of the partnership.

Among others, Arseh Sevom worked with Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi and nine human and labor rights organizations to protest parliamentary proceedings in Iran to consider a bill that would effectively eliminate independent civil society. After the protest, the bill was tabled.

Partnerships > **Article 19**

Arseh Sevom and Article 19 (a UK-based organization focusing on free speech all over the world) have entered into a partnership agreement to support joint activities surrounding issues of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and Internet security. Arseh Sevom and Article 19 will share research and information and contribute to the reporting each group undertakes. Arseh Sevom focuses its efforts on civil society and freedom of assembly. These issues often overlap. When they do, the organizations will share information and research. Article 19 has agreed to share the results of its power mapping (mapping civil society organizations inside and outside Iran and their successes and failures).

> **Article 19 and United4Iran-London**

Arseh Sevom has also been working with these groups on a proposal for a media/communications and online security training. The proposal is to bring experienced activists together for training and network building. The facilitators would include documentary filmmakers who work for Al Jazeera, a human rights lawyer, a security expert, and a couple of others. Most organizations have committed a 5,000-euro contribution. Arseh Sevom is currently looking to supplement funds by approaching other donors.

> **United4Iran**

Arseh Sevom worked with United4Iran to advocate against the passage of the Islamic Penal Code. A letter writing campaign was launched on their site in conjunction with our efforts. Another letter campaign, this time sending letters to Dr. Shaheed, was also coordinate by United4Iran and Arseh Sevom, in conjunction with the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, and Dr. Mehrengiz Kar.

> **Partnership Investigations**

Arseh Sevom representatives met with a number of organizations in the previous year, even going so far as to write project proposals together. Grants were written with women's rights activists, the Transform Centre in Berlin, and a youth-based organization located in the Middle East. These proposals were not funded, but the organization maintains informal contacts with these organizations.

Programs & Accomplishments > Partnerships > Arseh Sevom Online > Website

The Arseh Sevom websites were never meant as news sites, but to cover issues related to civil society and offer toolkits. Arseh Sevom has a creative commons share-alike with attribution license, which was implemented to encourage the general public to effortlessly disseminate and share the organization’s information and materials. Arseh Sevom is less focused on traffic – much of which can often be meaningless if the visitor does not act to the intent of the site. Arseh Sevom is much more focused on sharing information, and has been doing so via partners, social media, like-minded organizations, and web re-postings.

Some of the most popular post topics were related to Tor, the use of circumvention tools, and the Diginotar hack that led to a massive security breach for Iran’s Internet users, allowing even secure internet traffic to be intercepted.

The primary focus has always been on the Persian site and as a result the visitor numbers are steadily climbing on the Persian site. In the last six months of 2011, the Arseh Sevom website was blocked in Iran, which decreased the numbers of visits tracked from inside Iran significantly. Arseh Sevom continues to receive visits from locations in Iran, most likely showing from inside government offices or using circumventors. Such tools, however, are not fully secure and do show up in the site’s metrics and analytics. Though the number of visitors from Iran definitely dropped, visits from an unknown location rose, suggesting more and more visitors using proxies and/or torrents to access the site. A total of 84 articles were published on the Arseh Sevom Persian website. The articles covered a range of topics related to the Arseh Sevom mission, including UN reports, various human rights and social movements, women’s emancipation, the rights of children, homosexuals, and ethnic and religious minorities, environmental issues, and Internet security.

WEBSITE METRICS – 2011	
Number Visitors – 2011	30,211
Average Number Views 2011	2.8 pages per visit
Avg. Time on Site	2 minutes 39 seconds
Top Referrers	1. Google 2. Facebook 3. Direct traffic 4. Balatarin 5. Feedburner
MOST POPULAR POSTS – 2011	
Post	Views
The Danger of Man in the Middle (fa)	1719
How to Use Tor (fa)	1298
Statement Against the NGO Law (fa)	874
About Us (En)	816
The Death of the “Twitter Revolution” and the Struggle over Internet Narratives (Zine)	796
Man in the Middle (En)	555
The Networked Diaspora (Zine)	523



[Programs & Accomplishments > Partnerships > Arseh Sevom Online > Media Presence & Coverage](#)

Arseh Sevom's posts are being picked up more frequently, and were picked up by a number of media outlets in 2011, including Global Voices, The US's Public Broadcasting Services, Tehran Bureau, and the Dutch broadcaster NOS. Kamran Ashtary was interviewed for NOS about the security breach on DigiNotar, which led to hundreds of thousands of compromised Gmail accounts in Iran and Tori Egherman was interviewed by reporters from the Trouw and Tehran Bureau on the same.

It is worth noting that despite a lack of capacity in PR over 2011, materials from Arseh Sevom have been sourced, promoted, published, and re-posted on various NGO websites, major blogs, foreign-language new sources, and more. This is a testament to the concept that good work will always find an audience. Even more notable is that Arseh Sevom has begun to be used as a primary source across the Internet, including on Wikipedia's entries for Iran's House of Cinema and Deep Packet Inspection.

Over the last year, the Persian site – which has been rapidly growing due to quick content translation – have been re-posted (with attribution) on a number of Persian-language sites, including that of former regime supporter turned dissident Mohammad Nourizad. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, Arseh Sevom has not fully explored using a PR strategy and media sources. This is a primary goal moving forward in 2012. Another major goal is to identify the targets and audience most in need of Arseh Sevom's deliverables, as well as identify and connect with those with web presences – be it individuals, media, or organizations – to ensure that Arseh Sevom's materials have the widest reach possible.

[> Media Coverage:](#)

Amnesty International
Arab Network for Human Rights Information
Article 19
Economic Times/India Times
Enduring America
FIDH
Global Information Society Watch
Global Voice Online
Gooya
International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran
Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre
Iran Rooyan
Mideast Alliance
Payvand
PBS / Tehran Bureau
RadioZamaneh
Roos Online
Tavanna.org
The Boroumand Foundation
The Holland Bureau
The International Centre for Non-for-Profit Law
Third Sphere School
United4Iran
Voice of America

[Programs & Accomplishments > Partnerships > Arseh Sevom Online > Social Media Presence](#)

Arseh Sevom has continued to build its web presence throughout 2011 and taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by social media platforms to harness the power of the global Internet community. Arseh Sevom mainly uses Facebook and Twitter as the social media platform through which it both disseminates information, and looks for return. The instant nature of these tools make them auto-feedback machines that can help better guide an organization in reaching its targets and audience.

ORGANIZATION

In addition to producing several projects in accordance with its mission, Arseh Sevom has continued to work diligently to ensure a well-functioning organizational structure. A strong internal operational performance is necessary to provide the highest quality support, capacity building, and training to civil society actors. The Arseh Sevom structure is changing so the organization holds a better functioning, broader structure that does not rely solely on person, but on a team of individuals, each with their own responsibilities. In 2011, Arseh Sevom decided to hire more staff and explicitly detailing the tasks for which each staff will be responsible. Arseh Sevom has also begun to pursue freelancers in order to meet various staffing needs.

Organization > Board of Directors

The board holds quarterly meetings to discuss matters related to Arseh Sevom. Due to a lack of funding, the board – and in particular the executive team – has taken on more responsibility for the day-to-day work than is optimal. The board has the ultimate responsibility for the activities of Arseh Sevom. It has legal responsibilities based on both the constitution of the organization and Dutch law. All of the actions taken by individuals within the organization have consequences for board members. The Arseh Sevom board is diverse and comprises individuals from all backgrounds, political ideologies, and more. Arseh Sevom believes it is integral to bring in a wide range of views, experiences, and insights in order to create an international-oriented community, learn from the international community, glean best practices, and learn about building democracies from those from countries with built or emerging civil societies.

Organization > Organization Development

As the organization currently has no director, the Board implemented measures to remedy various structural challenges. Substantial steps were taken to ensure improvement in operations, including by strengthening the general board and advisory council, as well as by setting clear guidelines for the organization and cooperation between the general board and the executive board. The board unanimously selected Bert Taken as President of the Board and agreed to find a replacement for Bert's former position as Board Treasurer. The Board further appointed Bert and Kamran as the Executive Board responsible for daily operations between board meetings. The Executive Board met with staff to clarify expectations and to let them know more about the evaluation process. The Executive Team is required to put in an average of 20 hours a week supporting the staff.

The organization will report to Bert and Kamran, who are in turn to report and be responsible to the board monthly. Kamran will remain Secretary of the Board. The board appointed Annie as the ombudsman and first point of contact with the organization's personnel. The Board agreed that any problems must first be addressed within the organization, and only if there is an unsatisfactory result should it be taken up with the board. Based on Arseh Sevom's constitution, the President of the Board remains the final decision maker even after Arseh Sevom acquires an Executive Director. The executive board continues to act voluntarily as the Executive Director until funding for the position is secured and the position can be filled.

Organization > Operations

The organization looked into the registration of the Arseh Sevom name. A company was contracted to do a study to determine whether or not we could trademark the Arseh Sevom name. The report stated that Arseh Sevom would likely be successful in its pursuits of a trademark claim in the EU.

Organization > Board of Directors

**Kamran Ashtary:**

Artist, human rights defender, and researcher brings years of project management experience to Arseh Sevom. He has worked on complex projects for both small and large businesses and organizations. In 2003, he returned to Iran for four years, where he managed his own business. Ashtary recently organized the United4Iran July 25th and December 12th events in the Netherlands. Ashtary is the designer and editor of the 2010 book, [Hope, Votes and Bullets](#), a co-author of the blog [View from Iran](#) and the book [Iran: View from Here](#). His photographs of Iran were recently published in the book, [Iran Ist Anders](#), which was released in Switzerland.

**Hajo Funke:**

[Chair on Politics and Culture at the Otto-Suhr-Institute of Free University Berlin](#) (until retiring in 2010). Main Research: Authoritarianism and Democracy. Right wing Extremism. Studies on Mideast. Studies on Political Culture of Post-Holocaust-Germany. Funke reconstructed and analyzed the ideology of the right-wing oriented German political party the "Republicans," particularly in reference to its hatred of foreigners, its anti-Semitism, and its ultra-nationalism. He also analyzed the ideas and roots of ethnocentricity within German nationalism. Funke has written widely on the neo-Nazi networks and the effect on them of [radical revisionism](#) and social prejudices, especially anti-Semitism and a hatred of foreigners. Funke earned his Ph. D. on the political sociology of work-conditions [summa cum laude].

**Scott Lucas:**

Professor of American Studies at the University of Birmingham since 1989. Lucas is a specialist in US and British foreign policy and has written and edited seven books, more than 30 major articles, and a radio documentary and co-directed the 2007 film [Laban!](#). Formerly a journalist in the United States, Lucas has written for newspapers including [The Guardian](#) and [The Independent](#) and was an essayist for [The New Statesman](#). He appears regularly on British, American, and international radio and television as a specialist on current affairs, politics, and history. He is the founder and editor of the online news and analysis site, [EA Worldview](#).

**Fred Andon Petrossians:**

Iranian journalist, researcher and blogger. He is the online editor in chief of [Radio Farda](#), Iran editor of Harvard [Global Voices](#), and co-founder of the award winning [March 18 Movement to protect bloggers](#). Petrossians has commented frequently on Iranian media and civil society in international media and delivered speeches on this topic in media and academic centers such as Yale University. He has also contributed to various digital projects such as [Digiactive](#). Petrossians has an MA in European Politics, Cultures and Organizations.

**Bert Taken:**

Lecturer on Philosophy at Rietveld Academy. Taken is carrying out PhD research into the philosophical basis of art and design education. He is examining the foundation of art education and contributing to a national and international discussion on its future. Bert Taken has visited Iran three times, twice for study with students and professors of the Rietveld. The travel resulted in a book of images and essays done by the group entitled [Heartbeat Iran](#).



Annie van de Pas:

Political scientist and historian who has conducted research and written about the Middle East and North Africa. She is experienced in political development cooperation and worked as a political advisor for a Dutch democracy support organization. Please see <http://www.nimd.org> for her publications on the Middle East/North Africa region and beyond. At present she is project leader at the GroenLinks research office in Utrecht.

Organization > Organization Development > **Advisory Board**

An Advisory Board was assembled to support staff with program advice and their experience. The advisory board includes:



Antonia Bertschinger:

PhD in philosophy from the University of Basel, Switzerland, former Human Rights Advisor for the Embassy of Switzerland in Iran, currently Head of Membership & Activism at the Swiss section of Amnesty International. Bertschinger is the co-author of the book *Iran ist Anders* in which she seeks to explain Iran's history and culture to a general public. She has written on Iran and human rights for several Swiss newspapers.



Kamran Hashemi:

Director of Risk Management at State Street Bank, with a long history of involvement in charitable organizations related to Iran and the Iranian community. Hashemi was founding member and member of the Management Board of Iranian Community Centre (ICC) established in 1983 to provide legal advisory service to the growing population of asylum seekers in London, worked with charities devoted to education and technology in Iranian schools, and is a founding member of United4Iran-London.



Steven Loyst:

Specialist in leading international humanitarian responses and organizational transition in conflict, post-conflict and development contexts. Loyst is currently Head of Operations for North Africa with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Tunis, Tunisia and serves as a Guest Lecturer at the American University in Kosovo.

Building on a background in civil-military cooperation, Steven has provided consultancy services to non-governmental organisations, donors and directed the country offices and interventions of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Kosovo, Pakistan, Indonesia, Madagascar, Niger, Haiti, Russia, Guinea, Serbia and Rwanda. He lived in Iran for three years.



Maryam Pasha:

Network and Innovation Manager at the Migrants' Rights Network. Maryam engages in training and advocacy with overworked, understaffed NGOs, helping them make their voices heard more effectively. She is a founder of Young Professionals in Human Rights and a member of United4Iran-London. Maryam is also the coordinator of the TedX East End conference: Society without Borders.

“ LESSONS LEARNED

That Arseh Sevom was able to successfully finish out the year 2011 without access to all its resources is a testament to the organization's strong, efficient, and sustainable pillars. Arseh Sevom has emphasized laying a strong foundation with solid procedures in place. Arseh Sevom is set-up to avoid any chance of the organization become a personality driven one that is dependent on charismatic leadership rather than good policies and governance. Though this can slow the amount of exposure Arseh Sevom receives in the short term, it also means Arseh Sevom is much more sustainable, reliable, and legitimate in the long term.

Another major consideration illuminated through 2011 was the difficulties that arise from collaboration between various organizations. Arseh Sevom, for example, drafted a statement with nine different organizations. The challenge became that every organization has its own clear agenda and mandate the joint efforts must fit within, which is also the case with Arseh Sevom, but a lack of time and resources for all similar organizations often holds up and prolongs the efforts needed to complete a major collaborative effort.

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2011
SEVOM

ARSEH SEVOM IN 2012

> Programs & Goals for 2012

> Content & Website Development

Freelance writers have been selected and will contribute to Arseh Sevom website in 2012. The first 2 freelancers are Iranian journalists now residing in Kuala Lumpur. Arseh Sevom wants to continue to expand and will select more freelancers if funding allows. Final editing will remain an in-house task, and it is of prime importance that all texts reflect Arseh Sevom mission and principles.

> Social Media & Web Presence

Arseh Sevom will continue to work to build an audience for the website, Twitter account, and Facebook page. Since everyone works part time, Arseh Sevom does not have the capacity or resources to dedicate to promotion via online dissemination channel. The Arseh Sevom Twitter account has been rarely used for more than the occasional promotion of an article. Arseh Sevom is working on a more effective strategy for social media in the coming year.

> Traditional Media & PR

Arseh Sevom is dedicated to building its presence among traditional media, and developing and implementing a PR strategy to best disseminate the organization's deliverables.

Arseh Sevom in 2012 > Overview of Programs for 2012

Civil Society Watch	Continue highlighting civil society news; add weekly review to English site and later, to Persian site.
Civil Society Zine	The 2012 issues will deal with the topics of security and human rights and truth, justice, and reconciliation. Instead of publishing the pieces all at once as we did in 2011, we will release pieces individually, creating a single pdf of both themes by December of 2012.
Civil Society Cookbook	Begin development using research from 2011
Training Programs	Communications, messaging, and network building
Ongoing Partnerships	United4Iran –London, Article 19, network of activists
Conferences	Attend and host

Arseh Sevom in 2012 > Main Goals for 2012

- Acquire funds to ensure the sustainability and future of Arseh Sevom
- Look for new partnerships and further develop existing relationships
- Network and online community building
- Develop and implement a social media and PR strategy

Arseh Sevom in 2012 > **Potential Challenges**

A major challenge remains a lack of executive director. Because Arseh Sevom did not receive full funding, the board (particularly the executive team) has taken on more responsibility for the day-to-day work than is optimal. Another of the biggest challenges has been securing funding. The primary goal for 2012 is to ensure Arseh Sevom of sufficient funding to be able to hire an executive director. Further funding is necessary to ensure a smooth operation and high standard execution of ongoing and future projects. Arseh Sevom therefore requested Hivos to help us identify other possibilities for funding and to assist with additional fundraising via other organizations. Arseh Sevom explicitly wants to thank Hivos for the ongoing support and hopes to continue to positive cooperation in 2012.

Arseh Sevom in 2012 > **Financials** > **Fundraising**

Several proposals for project-specific funding were submitted in 2011. Most funding organizations do not consider proposals from organizations with less than two years of accomplishments. Even so, Arseh Sevom made a number of proposals and is following up in 2012 with additional fundraising efforts.

> **2011 Financials & Statements**

Please see the Appendices for related documentation.



Arseh Sevom in 2012 > **Conclusions**

In conclusion, Arseh Sevom as an organization has gained confidence as it takes on each obstacle presented. It has not always been easy. Receiving partial funding actually forced the organization to create stable and sustainable processes, better define its core mission, and develop efficient and sustainable work processes.

2012 promises to be a transformative year for Arseh Sevom as the outreach and partnership development take shape. The organization looks forward to offering its first face-to-face training, creating content for the Civil Society Cookbook, and expanding its coverage of civil society.

In addition, Arseh Sevom will further refine its core message and focus its efforts. This will be reflected in the content published, a new design for the site that makes the mission more apparent, and the activities taken on.



APPENDICES

General > Foundation

The foundation was founded on the 25th of February 2010 and bears the name Arseh Sevom.

General > Governing body

As of 31 December 2011 the governing body of the association according to the Chamber of Commerce is as follows:

Name:	Function:
Mr. A.T.J.M. Taken	President
Mr. K. Ashtary	Secretary
Mr. D. Bakker	Treasurer
Ms A. van de Pas	Member
Mr. F. Andon Petrossians	Member
Mr. S. Lucas	Member

General > Registration Chamber of Commerce

The Foundation is registered at the Chamber of Commerce in Amsterdam under number 34383076 and is established under Dutch Law.

Financial report 2011**> Principles of balance sheet valuation and determination of results****General:**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in The Netherlands. Assets and liabilities are stated as nominal values, unless indicated otherwise.

Balance sheet valuation:

The receivables, cash and liabilities are entered at nominal value; in the valuation of receivables, a provision for recoverability is subtracted, based on individual appreciation of the receivables.

The results are recognised in the year they are realised; losses are recognised when foreseen. The expenses and losses are attributed to the financial year to which they pertain.

Financial report 2011

> Balance sheet as at december 31, 2011

ASSETS	2011	2010
	€	€
Current Assets:		
Receivables, prepayments and accrued income	1.800	1.800
Cash at bank and in hand	58.665	53.388
	60.465	55.188
Total Assets	60.465	55.188
LIABILITIES		
Capital:		
Foundation capital	212	106-
Short term liabilities:		
Liabilities, accruals and deferred income	60.253	55.294
Total liabilities	60.465	55.188

Financial report 2011

> Profit and loss account 2011

INCOME	2011	2010
	€	€
Contributions	179.101	49.512
Total income	179.101	49.512
EXPENSES		
Staff- and office costs	115.212	26.600
Other expenses	63.386	22.912
Total expenses	178.598	49.512
OPERATING RESULT		
Interest and similar expenses	503	-
	185-	106-
NET RESULT	318	106-

Appropriation of result:

It is proposed to add the result to the capital of the foundation

Financial report 2011

> Principles of balance sheet valuation and determination of results

General:

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in The Netherlands. Assets and liabilities are stated as nominal values, unless indicated otherwise.

Balance sheet valuation:

The receivables, cash and liabilities are entered at nominal value; in the valuation of receivables, a provision for in recoverability is subtracted, based on individual appreciation of the receivables.

The results are recognised in the year they are realised; losses are recognised when foreseen. The expenses and losses are attributed to the financial year to which they pertain.

Financial report 2011

> Notes to the balance sheet

ASSETS	2011	2010
	€	€
Current assets		
Receivables, Prepayments and accrued income:		
Other debtors	1.800	1.800
Balance as of 31 December	1.800	1.800
Other debtors:		
Guarantee deposit	1.800	1.800
	1.800	1.800
Cash at bank and in hand:		
ING Bank 5006341	58.287	53.388
Internal transfers / receivables	150	-
Petty cash	228	-
Balance as of 31 December	58.665	53.388
PASSIVA		
Capital:		
Foundation capital		
Balance as at 1 January	106-	-
Result financial year	318	106-
Balance as of 31 December	212	106-
Short term liabilities:		
Liabilities, accruals and deferred income		
Amounts owned to credit institutions	4.450	116
VAT + income tax	2.740	-
Other liabilities	53.063	55.178
Balance as of 31 December	60.253	55.294

Financial report 2011
> Notes to the balance sheet

Other liabilities	2011	2010
	€	€
Advance payments received	46.387	50.488
Payable auditor's costs	2.100	2.290
Reservation holiday payments	545	–
Salary payments	3.531	–
Payable staff and office costs	500	2.400
	53.063	55.178

Off balance sheet commitments:

The foundation accepted a rental agreement as of 1 November 2010, for office space at De Wittenstraat 25, in Amsterdam. The agreement was made for a period of two years, with a possible continuation of three years. The total sum of rental costs amounts to € 7.344 a year after the start of the agreement.

Financial report 2011
> Notes to the profit and loss account 2011

INCOME	2011	2010
	€	€
Contributions:		
Contribution Hivos	154.101	49.512
Anonymous donor	25.000	–
	179.101	49.512
EXPENSES		
Staff- and office costs		
Salary costs	63.940	–
Other personnel expenses	51.272	26.600
	115.212	26.600
Other expenses		
Office costs	5.241	2.519
General expenses	48.341	18.633
Housing expenses	9.804	1.760
	63.386	22.912

Office costs

Printed matter	1.791	518
Telephone	1.215	–
Small expenses	2.235	2.001
	5.241	2.519

General expenses

Administrative expenses	5.381	340
Audit expenses	3.352	1.950
Legal expenses	1.087	–
Preliminary and formation expenses	–	1.074
Website + Projects	11.871	–
Traveling and staying expenses	25.835	11.696
Not deductible sales taxes	–	1.989
Other general expenses	815	1.584
	48.341	18.633

Housing expenses

	2011	2010
	€	€
Rent	7.356	1.260
Utilities	2.432	400
Other housing expenses	16	100
	9.804	1.760

Financial income and expenses

Financial costs and interest	185	106
	185	106

Arseh Sevom is Primarily Sponsored by: Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation



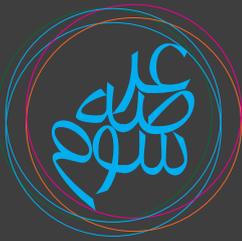
A fair, free and sustainable world – that is what Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation, wants to contribute to. Together with local organisations in developing countries, Hivos strives for a world in which all citizens – both men and women – have equal access to resources and opportunities for development.

Mission

Hivos is a Dutch development organisation guided by humanist values. Together with local civil society organisations in developing countries, Hivos wants to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world. A world in which all citizens – both women and men – have equal access to opportunities and resources for development and can participate actively and equally in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future.

Hivos trusts in the creativity and capacity of people. Quality, cooperation and innovation are core values in Hivos' business philosophy. Hivos is committed to poor and marginalised people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A lasting improvement in these people's situation is the ultimate measure for the work and efforts of Hivos. One of the guiding principles of our philosophy is strengthening the social position of women."

www.hivos.com



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What does it mean to have a vibrant civil society? For us at Arseh Sevom it means giving voice to women, minorities, people on the margins of society. It's about organizing your neighbors to get a stop sign placed on a dangerous corner, selling cookies to support a local school. It's about advocating for the rights of prisoners, pushing for better labor conditions, getting children out of the labor market and into the schools. When citizens participate in the public life of their communities, they help to reign in the excesses of unchecked power. In so doing, even the marginalized gain a place at the table.

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