How targeted sanctions strengthen democracy

Human Rights First, in partnership with the Jackson Foundation, recently held a conference about expanding and implementing Global Magnitsky sanctions globally.

Sergei Magnitsky was a Russian lawyer who exposed Russian government officials’ fraud, and was subsequently killed in a Moscow prison. Initially, the U.S. leveled sanctions against individuals in the Magnitsky case, then expanded this concept to take action worldwide. The resulting Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act created a sanctions program to hold human rights abusers and kleptocrats accountable around the world. This program prevents individuals from obtaining visas to the U.S. and freezes their assets in U.S. financial institutions. The act is the successor to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which tied the Soviet Union’s economic trade status to Soviet Jews’ freedom to emigrate.

Global Magnitsky sanctions have become an increasingly widespread tool for human rights accountability. Since 2016, other countries have followed the United States’ lead, with Canada, the United Kingdom, and the European Union adopting sanctions, and other countries such as Australia and Japan currently developing legislation. As more countries adopt Magnitsky-style sanctions and act jointly, the effects of these sanctions can multiply.

This conference series explored lessons learned from implementing the sanctions and assessed how these tools could improve. During panel discussions with international advocates, implementors, and legislators, the experts emphasized the sanctions’ effectiveness and called for its expanded, multilateral use.

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a former opposition leader in Russia who survived two assassination attempts and who facilitated the discussion, called these sanctions “revolutionary.” He commented, “What was revolutionary about the Magnitsky sanctions…(was) the central concept of personal, individual accountability.” He added, “Apart from being right on principle, apart from being very just…these targeted Magnitsky sanctions are also extremely effective.”

Kizito Byenkya from Open Source Foundations noted that, “We see the potential here to help support and build a global infrastructure for human rights and anti-corruption, as a new multilateral model for accountability against rising authoritarianism and kleptocracy.”

“Why do we get engaged in human rights?” asked Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), who played an instrumental role in passing this legislation. “That’s our values – the values of democratic states, that’s our strength. And if we yield to the immediate economic issue, we weaken our democracy.”

You can catch the whole series through these video recordings of the conference. We are proud to have partnered with Human Rights First on this timely conference.
Welcoming the 2022 Jackson Leadership Fellows

We are excited to introduce our seventh class of the Jackson Leadership Fellows! The Foundation developed this values-based leadership program to empower civic leaders using the principles modeled by Senator Jackson. This program builds skills, awareness, and connections among Fellows to tackle challenges in a variety of fields.

The 2022 cohort includes Fellows working in government, education, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations. We believe this variety of expertise, experience and viewpoints will help generate new ideas and innovative ways to solve problems. Their tremendous commitment—coupled with a desire to give back to the community—has already made these individuals stand out, and we look forward to learning together.

This nine-person group joins a growing cadre of over 50 Fellows in the Jackson Network, which formed to continue their professional development and community building. The Jackson Network has committed to further the Foundation’s mission through collaboration, events, and participation in the Foundation’s governance.

We are eager to engage with this new class and offer support as they contribute to our region—and beyond—in the years ahead. Please visit our website to learn more about these outstanding leaders.

Fellows on the Move

Matthew Combe recently became the Sustainability Buildings Manager for Physical Stores at Amazon.

Brandon Hersey joined Professional & Technical Employees Local 17 as its Political Director.


Kiana Scott moved to CareerWork$ as Director of Development. Also, she moderated a virtual discussion with renowned economic historian Dr. Claudia Goldin at Town Hall Seattle on October 6.

Christina Sciabarra received a 2021 Faculty & Staff Excellence Award at Bellevue College.

Lacie West now leads Friends of the Children - Seattle as its Executive Director.

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