

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





Our Generalissimo

Headless North Koreans in drab clothing pay tribute to a statue of their "Great Leader," Kim Il Sung.



Song Byeok,

*North Korean defector
and international artist*

For seven years, Song Byeok painted propaganda posters for the North Korean regime, depicting utopian scenes while simultaneously experiencing famine, torture, and abuse. Since escaping North Korea in 2002, he now uses art to draw attention to the dark realities of the country. In October, HRF organized an exhibition at the South Korean National Assembly displaying Byeok's work.

See page 58 for more information.

Twenty years ago, in a Venezuelan hospital waiting room, Thor Halvorsen anxiously awaited news while his mother, Hilda Denham, underwent surgery. She had been shot by a member of Hugo Chavez's security forces.

It was in that hospital that Thor first had the idea of creating a new human rights organization, one that would not be politicized, one that would not engage in the sorts of political bias that were so obvious in the treatment of, for example, Venezuela by the world's academy and NGO elite. It took many years for the two globally known human rights groups to acknowledge, let alone do something significant, about Venezuela's gradual, sustained, and preventable slide into authoritarianism (it actually took four additional years after Hilda Denham's shooting for them to even call Venezuela a "dictatorship").

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) was established to provide a principled, unpoliticized perspective in the field of human rights – a perspective once cherished but now often lost – addressing inconsistencies and biases present in existing organizations. With \$15,000 from an elder donor in Pennsylvania, a board of advisors made up mostly of former political prisoners who survived fascist and communist regimes, a one-window office on the 8th floor of the Empire State Building, and a mission statement that spoke with no moral ambiguity, we saw a void and got to work, initially focusing on Latin America, which we saw as fertile ground for an upsurge of authoritarianism.

Since the fall of 2005, HRF has led creative campaigns and innovative advocacy efforts with a strategic focus on countries ruled by autocrats. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and donors, we expanded our efforts, and our focus went from Latin America to a global approach on tyrannies. Our research overwhelmingly shows that authoritarianism is the largest obstacle not just to political freedom but to the realization of every other basic individual right and societal aspiration. Unfortunately, today, 5.7 billion people – 72% of the world – live under the rule of a hybrid regime or fully authoritarian state.

In 2023, as you will read in our report, we used international legal avenues, sound research methods, artistic and cultural platforms, and new technologies to expose the world's worst tyrants, shift public attitudes, and directly support those on the frontlines of the struggle for freedom and democracy. This past year, we celebrated the release from prison of two community members, the Nicaraguan democracy activist Félix Maradiaga and the real-life "Hotel Rwanda" hero Paul Rusesabagina.

Through unique investigations, op-eds in top news outlets, and well-publicized reports, we shed light on global atrocities like Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and the use of Uyghur forced labor in the fashion industry. We took cases to the United Nations and other international judicial and semi-judicial bodies and won all ruled-upon cases we have filed. We provided essential funding to software developers, human rights defenders, and educators in closed societies. We helped produce the award-winning documentary "Beyond Utopia," which follows the harrowing journeys of several North Korean defectors and is nominated for a British Academy Award (BAFTA). In addition, we held the 15th annual Oslo Freedom Forum and satellite events in both New York and Taiwan.

As dictators grow more empowered, expanding and deepening their global influence, HRF's work is more critical than ever – activists need to know they are not alone. HRF is enormously grateful for the generosity of its donors. With ongoing support, we can build upon our achievements in 2024 and, ultimately, realize our vision of a more peaceful, prosperous, and freer world.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thor".

Thor Halvorsen,
Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Céline".

Céline Assaf-Boustani,
President

"My freedom demonstrates that when you stand up for what you believe in, when you come together in solidarity and are guided by the principles of human rights and democracy, you win."

Paul Rusesabagina

A Rwandan human rights activist and real-life "Hotel Rwanda" hero, Rusesabagina was kidnapped by the Rwandan regime in 2020 and arbitrarily detained for two and a half years. He was released in March and appeared virtually at the Oslo Freedom Forum in Norway.



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01

HRF MISSION

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies.

Grounding its work in a deep commitment to individual liberty, HRF aims to raise awareness about the nature and vulnerability of freedom worldwide while strengthening the work of grassroots activists in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.

Tibetan activist Chemi Lhamo on stage at the 2023 OFF in Taiwan.

STRATEGIES

Policy Research & Legal Advocacy

HRF produces legal and policy reports, public letters, and impact litigation briefs to defend prisoners of conscience, bring attention to serious human rights violations, and ultimately influence institutions and policymakers.

Global Advocacy & Campaigns

HRF develops and executes innovative campaigns, using new technologies and creative mediums to advocate for democracy and human rights around the world.



Public Education & Events

HRF popularizes the struggle for freedom and democracy through the Oslo Freedom Forum conference series, global events, and educational efforts, bringing human rights into the mainstream of public discussion.

Direct Support

HRF provides human rights advocates with the resources, skills, contacts, and attention they need to make a difference in their countries.

02

HRF IN THE NEWS

HRF brings attention to the threat of authoritarianism through extensive media coverage, original op-eds, and social media advocacy.

In 2023, HRF's work was showcased across top international media outlets, including CNN, CNBC, The Atlantic, POLITICO, Newsweek, and the BBC, among others.

17.8K

Media Mentions

\$772M

Earned Media Value

23M

Social Media Impressions



Host of "Oh My World!," Hagar Chemali, interviews Swazi lawyer Mzwandile Masuku at the 2023 OFF.

HRF OP-EDS

HRF's original op-eds shed light on human rights issues and the struggle for liberal democracy around the world.

NEW YORK POST



Bolivia's jailing opposition leaders on absurd 'terrorism' charges

Jan. 13, 2023 | By Jhanisse Vaca Daza and Javier El-Hage

Newsweek



Your Favorite Fashion Brand Is Using Slave Labor. Wake Up!

Sept. 8, 2023 | By Claudia Bennett

CNN



Russia Has Stifled Another Putin Opponent. Here's How The West Might Help Him

April 28, 2023 | By Casey Michel

The Washington Times



Social media's importance in authoritarian run countries

Oct. 23, 2023 | By Hannah Van Dijke

The Atlantic



Make Russia Pay

May 28, 2023 | By Casey Michel

POLITICO



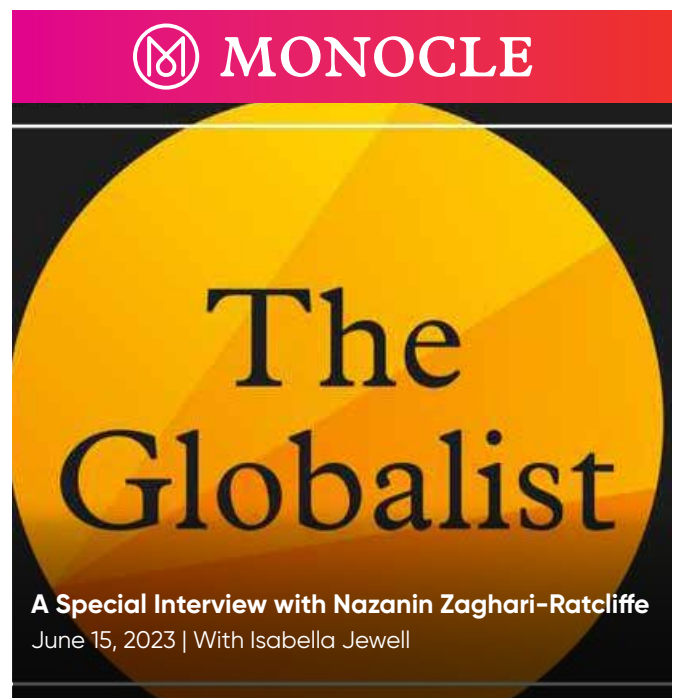
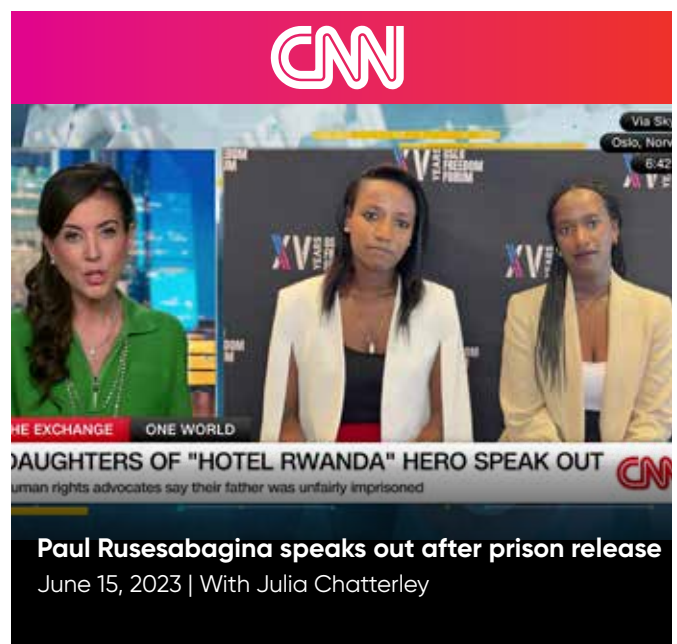
Russia's Slaughter of Indigenous People in Alaska Tells Us Something Important About Ukraine

Oct. 27, 2023 | By Casey Michel

MEDIA COVERAGE

“The Oslo Freedom Forum’s goals include connecting dissidents and activists so they can both trade ideas and know that they aren’t alone in their fights.”

- POLITICO





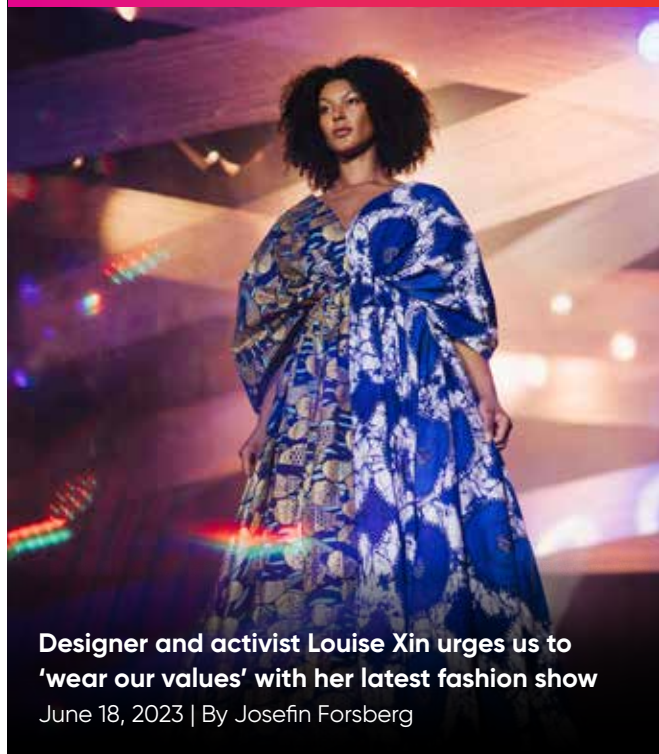
CNBC covers Financial Freedom track at Oslo Freedom Forum
June 15, 2023 | With MacKenzie Sigalos



Masih Alinejad continues the fight against the Iranian regime
June 17, 2023 | With Martin Roalsø



Profile of the Oslo Freedom Forum
June 18, 2023 | By Nahal Toosi



Designer and activist Louise Xin urges us to 'wear our values' with her latest fashion show
June 18, 2023 | By Josefin Forsberg



The 'manual of repression' shared by modern tyrants
July 19, 2023 | By Patricia R. Blanco

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



Satire a Casualty as Arab Nations Clamp Down on Free Speech
 Aug. 8, 2023 | By Humza Jilani and Dion Nissenbaum

BBC WORLD SERVICE



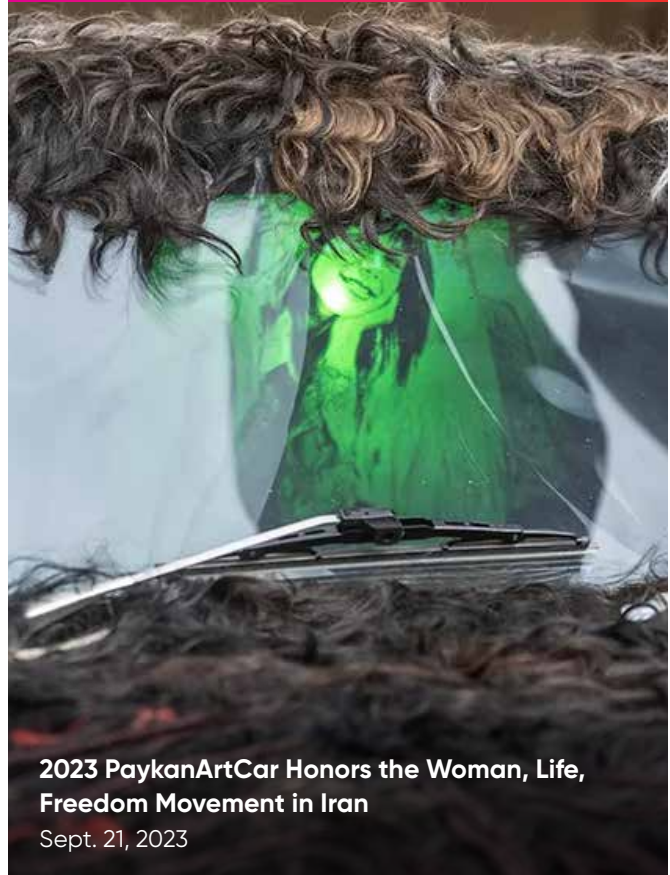
Human Rights Group Projects Human Costs of the Fashion Industry
 Sept. 20, 2023 | With Victoria Uwonkunda

Bloomberg



Google Axes Bad Reviews of Tracker Exposing Uyghur Forced Labor
 Aug. 24, 2023 | By Margi Murphy

ARTnews



2023 PaykanArtCar Honors the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran
 Sept. 21, 2023

Forbes



Bitcoin And Human Rights: A Common Ground For Activists Worldwide
 Aug. 30, 2023 | By Javier Bastardo

TAIPEI TIMES



Democracies tied to Taipei: rights head
Oct. 17, 2023 | By Yang Yao-ju

news1



Kim Young-ho meets with a delegation from the U.S. Human Rights Foundation and agrees on cooperation in resolving China's 'forced repatriation to North Korea'
Oct. 23, 2023 | By Lee Seol

FOCUS TAIWAN



Oslo Freedom Forum founder recounts clash with KMT over China criticism
Oct. 18, 2023 | By Joseph Yeh

YONHAP NEWS



Kim Young-ho meets with U.S. human rights organization to "Strengthen cooperation in preventing forced repatriation to North Korea"
Oct. 23, 2023 | By Lee Sang-hyeon

TAIWAN T+^W



Oslo Freedom Forum, What's Up Taiwan
Oct. 18, 2023 | With Jaime Ocon

The New York Times



'Beyond Utopia' Review: Exit Strategies
Nov. 2, 2023 | By Ben Kenigsberg

03

POLICY RESEARCH AND LEGAL ADVOCACY

HRF's policy and legal work serves as the foundation for the organization's advocacy efforts.

Regional policy experts observe and analyze developments in the 97 countries HRF considers authoritarian. Their research takes the form of reports, policy notes, and blog posts, informing the public of systematic human rights abuses perpetrated by authoritarian regimes.

HRF's team of international attorneys identifies and represents activists, journalists, and other civil society leaders unfairly targeted by authoritarian regimes. The team works *pro bono*, submitting emblematic cases to judicial and semi-judicial bodies to achieve justice and accountability.

NOTES ON POLICY

HRF's **Notes on Policy** series provides insight and commentary on today's most pressing human rights issues.

Read HRF's notes on hrf.org.



An Afghan Woman's Crime to Learn
| Jan. 12, 2023



Authoritarian Alliances: Russian and Chinese Influence in Latin America
| May 12, 2023



Two Years After the Coup, Burma's Struggle for Democracy Continues
| Feb. 1, 2023



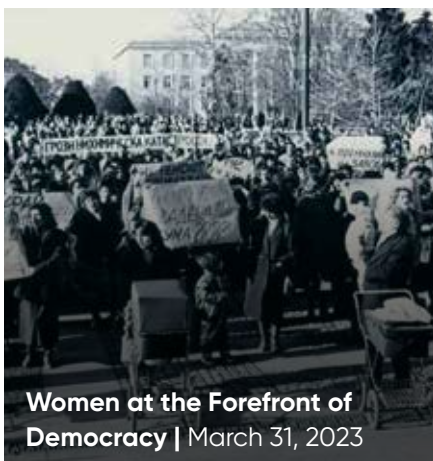
All Fabricated: Shein's Influencer Trip to a Guangzhou Factor
| July 12, 2023



Threats Against Journalists
| July 31, 2023



Crisis Compounded in a Forgotten Dictatorship | Feb. 15, 2023



Women at the Forefront of Democracy | March 31, 2023



Like, Tweet, & Torment
| April 7, 2023



The Dictators' Toolkit: Disguised Judicial Attacks
| Aug. 24, 2023

POLITICAL REGIME PROJECT



HRF monitors and measures political freedom in more than 200 countries and territories in the world.

Currently an internal research effort, the organization expects to launch a “Tyranny Tracker,” the first public-facing version of this global classification, by 2026. Under this project, HRF’s in-house research team evaluates to what extent electoral competition, freedom of dissent, and judicial independence exist in each country. Their unique qualitative methodology classifies countries as either democratic, hybrid authoritarian, or fully authoritarian.

Democracies

103 countries and territories | 2.2 billion people

Governments that largely guarantee free and fair elections, the freedom to dissent, and an independent judiciary.

Hybrid Authoritarian Regimes

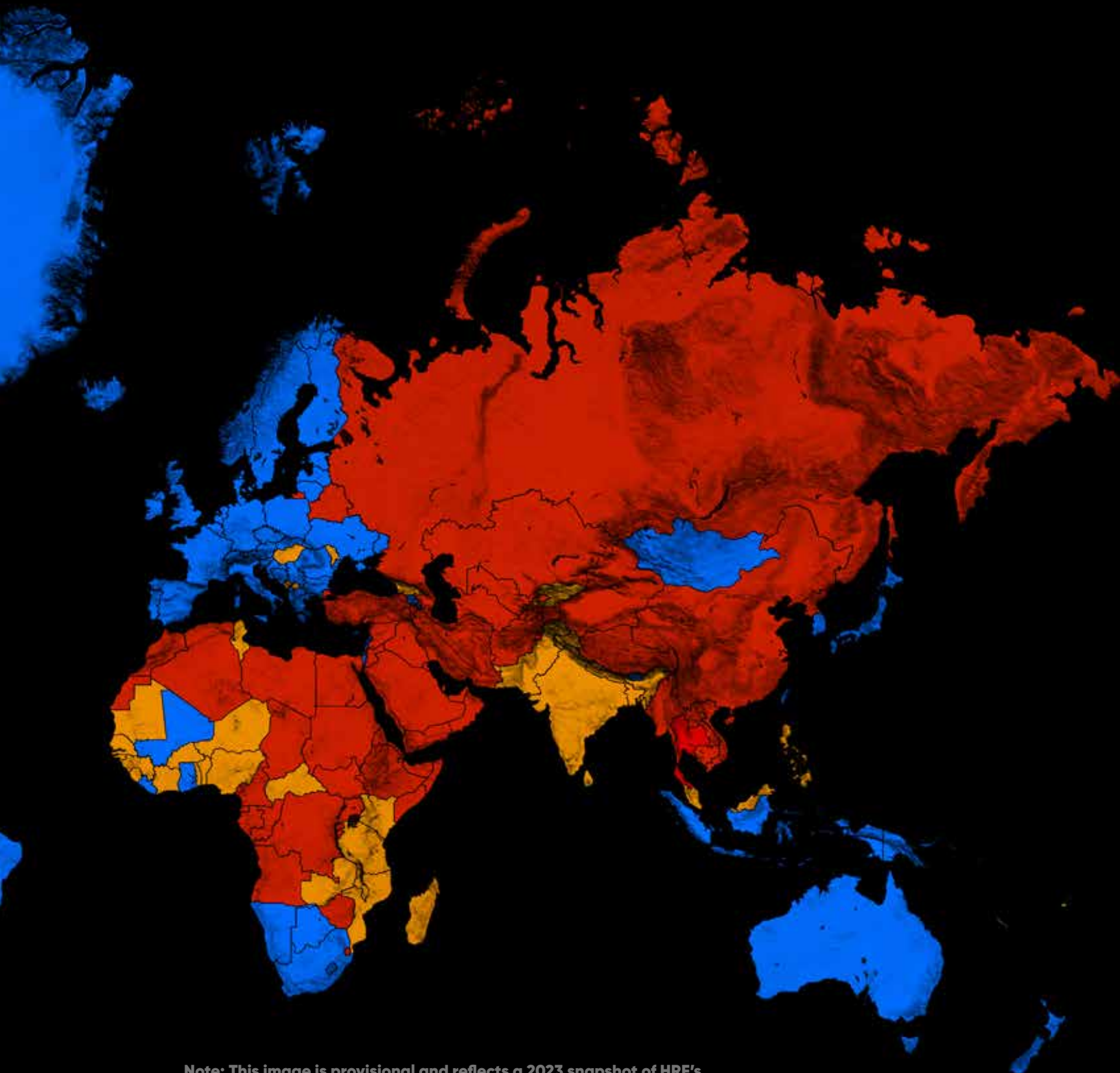
40 countries and territories | 2.7 billion people

Regimes that generally allow for a non-trivial degree of electoral competition or basic political freedoms but use public institutions to systematically repress critics and political opponents, making a democratic leadership change difficult.

Fully Authoritarian Regimes

57 countries and territories | 3 billion people

Regimes that systematically deny citizens meaningful electoral competition, basic political freedoms, and an independent judiciary.



Note: This image is provisional and reflects a 2023 snapshot of HRF's internal political regime classification map, showing the preliminary results of an HRF internal research project.

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS

HRF conducts advocacy work through **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** submissions to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). UPRs allow NGOs and civil society groups to call for assessments of member states' human rights situations. To date, HRF has submitted 41 UPRs.



2023 UPRs

HRF completed 17 UPRs in the 2023 sessions of the UNHRC.

44TH SESSION

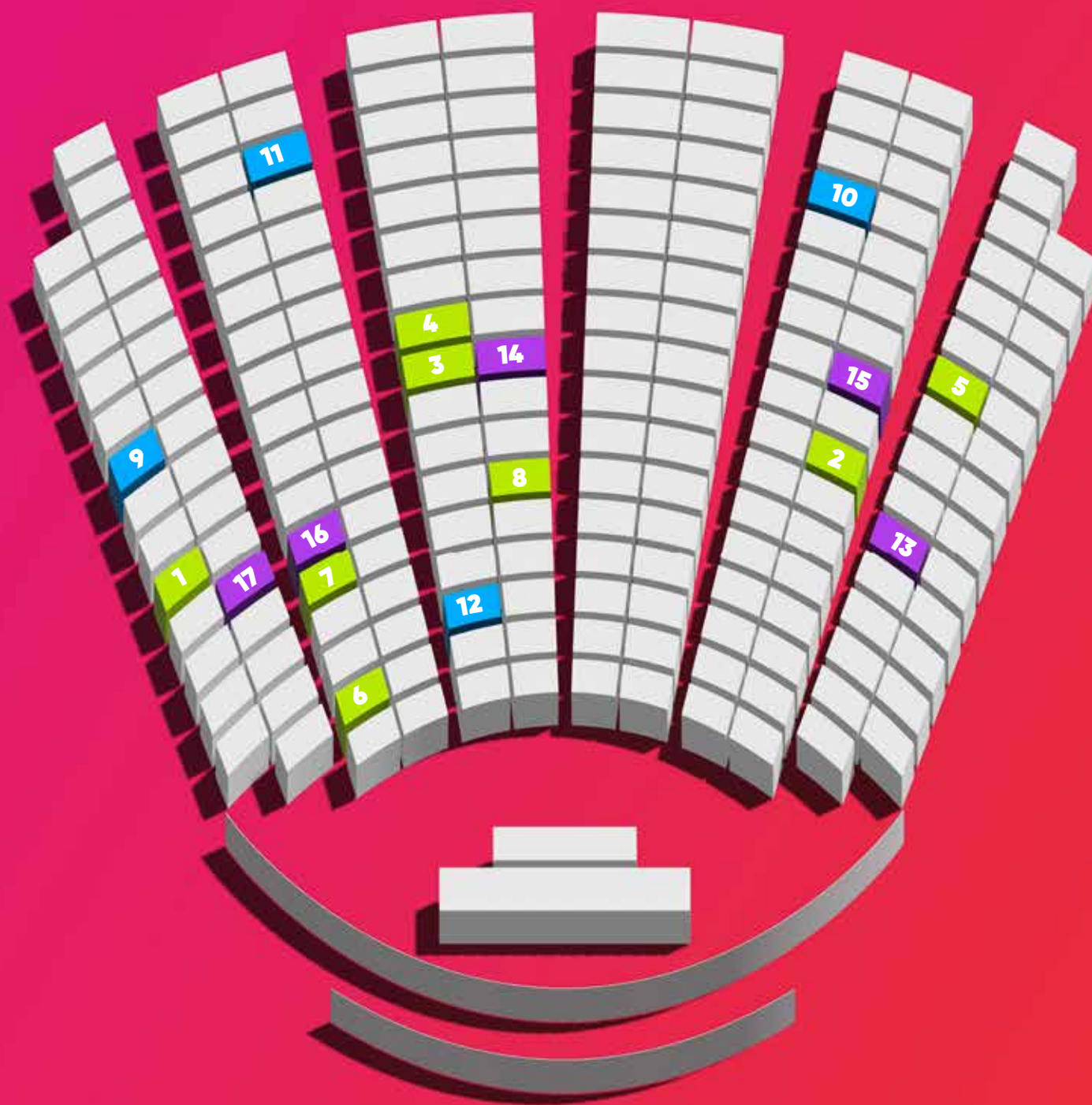
- 1 Azerbaijan
- 2 Bangladesh
- 3 Cameroon
- 4 Cuba
- 5 Djibouti
- 6 Russia
- 7 Turkmenistan
- 8 Uzbekistan

45TH SESSION

- 9 Republic of Congo
- 10 Jordan
- 11 Malaysia
- 12 Senegal

46TH SESSION

- 13 Afghanistan
- 14 Cambodia
- 15 The Comoros
- 16 Vietnam
- 17 Yemen



UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

SEATING ARRANGEMENT

The countries for which HRF submitted UPRs sit on the UN Human Rights Council.

IMPACT LITIGATION

In authoritarian countries, judicial independence does not exist. Legal proceedings are a mere formality, and courts are, in practice, enforcers of arbitrary rules used to harass, jail, and convict critics of the regime.

HRF's **Impact Litigation** program addresses the lack of judicial independence under authoritarian regimes. A team of international lawyers litigates on behalf of prisoners of conscience before international courts and semi-judicial bodies, such as the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD), and they provide legal representation by submitting urgent appeals to the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council.

2023 Submissions & Successes

Jan. 25 | Swaziland

HRF filed a submission to the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, calling for an investigation into the assassination of **Swazi human rights lawyer and democracy advocate Thulani Maseko**, which was connected to the Swazi regime.

Feb. 9 | Saudi Arabia

HRF filed a joint submission to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances for **Saudi national Hassan Al-Rabea**, who was extradited by Moroccan officials after fleeing Saudi Arabia. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Feb. 17 | Bolivia

HRF submitted a petition to the UNWGAD on behalf of **Luis Fernando Camacho, a prominent Bolivian opposition leader** and democratically elected governor of Santa Cruz. Camacho was violently arrested in December 2022 and remains detained pre-trial in a maximum security prison.

July 7 | Saudi Arabia

The UNWGAD issued an opinion deeming the detention of **Saudi women's rights activists Salma al-Shahab and Nourah al-Qahtani** arbitrary and calling for their immediate release. HRF and its partners filed a petition in December 2022 after the women were arrested for tweeting about women's rights.

Oct. 23 | Rwanda

HRF submitted an individual complaint to UNWGAD against Rwanda, demanding the release of **nine individuals, many of whom attended an online training on nonviolent resistance** and denounced extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detention in Rwanda.

A Closer Look:

The Case of Vladimir Kara-Murza

Since his arbitrary arrest in April 2022, HRF’s impact litigation team joined an international coalition that has tirelessly advocated for the release of **Vladimir Kara-Murza**, a Russian opposition leader, democracy advocate, and longtime HRF community member.

Raised in a family with a rich history of political dissent, Kara-Murza served as a top campaign adviser to Russian opposition candidates in the early 2000s, and he was a driving force behind the passage of the 2012 US Magnitsky Act. He was also the founding chairman of the Nemtsov Foundation and served as vice president at Open Russia and the Free Russia Foundation.

Kara-Murza has long been a target of the Russian government. He has spoken on many international stages, criticizing Vladimir Putin’s regime, including the 2016 Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF). He survived two near-fatal poisoning attempts by Russian officials, once in 2015 and again in 2017. Both attempts failed to intimidate Kara-Murza, as he again took the OFF stages in New York in 2017 and Taiwan in 2018.

In April 2022, he was arrested by Russian officials for his criticism of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. One year later, he was handed the maximum sentence for “high treason”: 25 years.

Throughout 2023, HRF worked closely with Kara-Murza’s wife, Evgenia Kara-Murza, and other prominent human rights organizations to

advocate for his release. Through letters, petitions, legal collaborations, and media coverage, HRF garnered crucial attention and international support for his case. Kara-Murza remains imprisoned in Moscow, his health deteriorating each day.



Evgenia Kara-Murza speaks at the 2023 OFF.



OFF attendees contribute to a paint-by-numbers portrait of Vladimir Kara-Murza.

The Case of Vladimir Kara-Murza

TIMELINE

APRIL 11

Russian officials arbitrarily arrested Kara-Murza.



JANUARY

10TH HRF co-signed a letter urging US President Joe Biden to impose Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible for Kara-Murza's detention.

MARCH

3RD The US Treasury Department sanctioned six Russian individuals involved in Kara-Murza's case.

28TH HRF sent a letter to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken asking him to declare Kara-Murza wrongfully detained.



APRIL

17TH Kara-Murza is sentenced to 25 years in prison for high treason.

19TH HRF and a coalition of human rights groups hosted lawmakers on Capitol Hill to call for Kara-Murza's release.

28TH HRF's head of Combating Kleptocracy, Casey Michel, published a CNN op-ed denouncing Kara-Murza's long sentence.



2022

2023

JUNE

1ST HRF sent a letter to US President Biden, requesting that he direct the State Department to declare Vladimir Kara-Murza unlawfully detained.

14TH Kara-Murza's wife, Evgenia Kara-Murza, spoke at the 2023 OFF.

Evgenia Kara-Murza and HRF Chairman Garry Kasparov appeared on CNN's flagship global affairs program, "Amanpour."



HRF submitted an urgent appeal to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on Kara-Murza's case.

HRF filed a submission to the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, human rights defenders, and independence of judges and lawyers.



JULY

28TH The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in the Russian Federation called for Kara-Murza's immediate release.



JULY 31

A closed court in Moscow rejected Kara-Murza's appeal, but his courage in the courtroom did not falter.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING & AUTHORITARIANISM

While many organizations study human trafficking, HRF takes a unique angle: examining trafficking within the context of authoritarianism.

Research shows that authoritarian regimes are more likely to perpetuate human trafficking because of major structural issues like corruption, repression, and the lack of rule of law. Throughout 2023, HRF investigated the correlation between authoritarianism and human trafficking through policy briefs, legal petitions, op-eds, blog posts, panel discussions, and more.



Complicity in Trafficking: How Corruption Drives Modern Slavery

HRF hosted a panel at the 2023 OFF on the nexus between human trafficking and corruption.

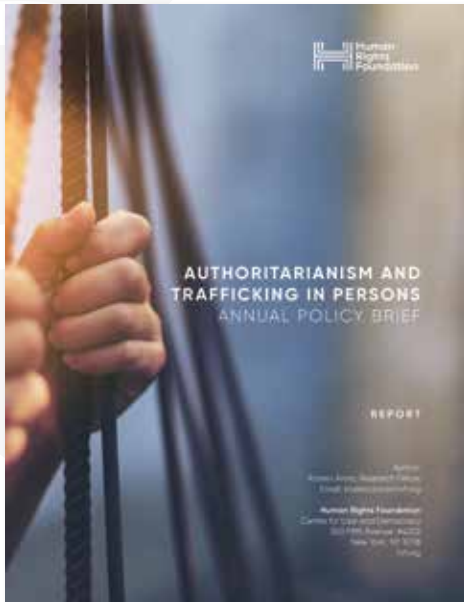
Pictured, left to right: Jestina Mukoko, Ben Skinner, Jennifer Sarvary, and Malcolm Bidali.

American Woman and Children Return Home

In April, an American woman named Stacy and her two children returned home to California after years of entrapment under Saudi Arabia's male guardianship and kafala system. HRF began supporting Stacy in February 2022, conducting congressional outreach and providing legal guidance.

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

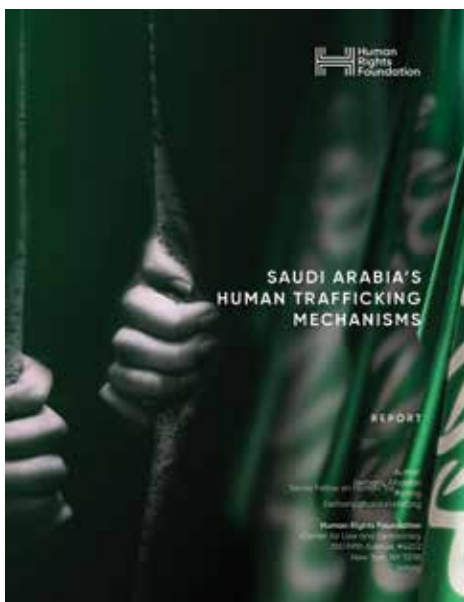
On July 30, HRF honored World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, a global campaign to raise awareness of human trafficking developments and trends, with a blog post on the connection between corruption and human trafficking under authoritarian regimes.



Authoritarianism and Trafficking in Persons

ANNUAL POLICY BRIEF

This policy brief explored the global state of human trafficking and the connection between trafficking and authoritarianism, using case studies in China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Saudi Arabia. HRF found that authoritarian regimes, which are prone to political instability and conflict, often fail to implement the legal mechanisms and institutions to prevent and prosecute trafficking. Meanwhile, democratic regimes are more likely to comply with international trafficking standards.



Saudi Arabia's Human Trafficking Mechanisms

POLICY BRIEF

This policy brief investigated the role of Saudi Arabia's strict labor laws, kafala system, and male guardianship system in facilitating human trafficking. These systems create a cycle of oppression that exploits foreign workers and women, reinforcing the regime's hold on power. In this policy brief, HRF exposes the Saudi regime's lack of protection for trafficking victims and inadequate punishments for perpetrators.

COMBATING KLEPTOCRACY

If there is one prominent characteristic of every authoritarian regime, it is corruption. These regimes turn to illicit finance and transnational money laundering to hide their ill-gotten wealth and target enemies. They often rely on the financial tools provided by democracies, which have opened up their doors to dictatorial forces and dirty money.

HRF's **Combating Kleptocracy Program** studies the threats of transnational money laundering and illicit wealth to expose and disrupt these corrupt networks. Casey Michel, a writer, analyst, and investigative journalist, joined HRF in 2023 to direct the program and has since provided policy and sanction recommendations and commentary in top news outlets, such as CNN, The Atlantic, and the Financial Times.

HRF submits cases under the US Global Magnitsky sanctions program as part of its work to disrupt corruption and hold human rights abusers accountable. These sanctions target foreign individuals and entities involved in serious human rights abuse or corruption by revoking their visas and blocking their US-based property and interests.

Throughout 2023, HRF met with several activists to discuss Global Magnitsky sanctions submissions. In April, it co-signed a letter condemning a lawsuit brought by Dan Gertler against the anti-corruption initiative "The Congo is Not for Sale" (CNPAV). Gertler was sanctioned by the US in 2017 for his corrupt activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



Exposing the Kleptocrats: How to Counter the Corrupt Networks Propping Up Modern Dictators

HRF hosted the panel, "Exposing the Kleptocrats: How to Counter the Corrupt Networks Propping Up Modern Dictators," at the 2023 OFF.

Pictured: HRF Combating Kleptocracy Program Director Casey Michel.

SUBMITTING GLOBAL MAGNITSKY CASES



STEP 1

HRF meets with partner activists and organizations to collaborate on a case under the US Magnitsky Act.



STEP 2

HRF collects evidence on perpetrators committing human rights abuses or corruption.



STEP 3

HRF drafts and submits the case to the US State and Treasury Departments with its partners, following up as needed with new evidence.



STEP 4

The US blocks and freezes the US-based property of the perpetrators involved.



STEP 5

Sanctioned individuals and entities cannot participate in the US financial system, limiting their influence.

04

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

Confronting tyranny requires the support of communities and industries across the world.

Through various public education initiatives and events, including the Oslo Freedom Forum conference series, HRF aims to engage and unite a global audience in the struggle against tyranny.

Belarusian journalist and OFF speaker Hanna Liubakova with a group of Belarusian students in exile at the 2023 OFF.



HRF AT GLOBAL EVENTS

HRF spoke at in-person events and conferences attended by more than 320,000 people worldwide.



LibertyCon

Lisbon, Portugal | April 22-23, 2023



South by Southwest (SXSW)

Austin, Texas | March 14-15, 2023



Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy

Geneva, Switzerland | May 17, 2023



Forum 2000's Solidaridad Democrática

Sao Paulo, Brazil | March 14-16, 2023



Bitcoin Miami

Miami, Fla. | May 18-20, 2023



Latin America Atlas Liberty Forum

Punta Del Este, Uruguay | March 23-24, 2023



27th Forum 2000 Conference

Prague, Czech Republic | Oct. 15-17, 2023

XV YEARS OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

The **Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF)** is a global conference series that brings together the world's most prominent human rights advocates, journalists, artists, technologists, entrepreneurs, and world leaders to share their stories and brainstorm ways to expand freedom globally.

HRF celebrated the 15th edition of OFF, honoring the unity, mentorship, and community fostered since 2009. The Forum's theme, "Celebrating Solidarity," recognized that only together can tyranny be unraveled. HRF called on the attendees in Norway, New York, and Taiwan to unite with the brave dissidents and human rights defenders challenging authoritarianism worldwide.

SUPPORT POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BELARUS



VIASNA
SPRING96.ORG/EN

DISSIDENTBY
DISSIDENTBY.COM/EN

OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

Belarusian journalist Hanna Liubakova on stage at the 2023 OFF.

OSLO, NORWAY



From June 13 to 15, activists, innovators, and creatives took the OFF stage to share their stories and raise the profile of their causes. More than 1,300 attendees witnessed how seemingly ordinary citizens can challenge the world’s deadliest tyrants. Panel discussions, fireside chats, and workshops encouraged participants to think more critically about the issues presented during theater talks and create practical, innovative solutions to advance freedom worldwide.



The 2023 Havel Prize

The 2023 Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent was awarded to Ugandan novelist Kakwenza Rukirabashaija; Nicaraguan political cartoonist Pedro X. Molina; and the third prize was shared by four Ukrainian artists: the late conductor Yuriy Kerpatenko, illustrator Mariia Loniuk, the “Art Residency in Occupation” project, and the “Stand Up for Ukraine” performance project.

Pictured above: Elizaveta Izmalkovam, singer in “Stand Up for Ukraine.”



Interactive Programming at SALT

On the third and final day of the 15th Forum, attendees enjoyed immersive, festival-style programming at the fjord-side outdoor venue, SALT. Programming included music performances, panels and workshops, interactive partner booths, and health and well-being spaces.

OSLO, NORWAY

The Thulani Maseko Human Rights Lawyer Prize

At the 2023 OFF, HRF launched the Thulani Maseko Human Rights Lawyer Prize in honor of the late Swazi human rights lawyer, renowned democracy advocate, and former OFF speaker, **Thulani Maseko**.

Maseko first gained prominence in 2009 when he was arrested and charged for his “seditious” remarks at a public rally. Immediately after his release, he launched a legal petition challenging the country’s Sedition Act. In March 2014, Maseko was again imprisoned for criticizing the kingdom’s chief justice. He was released after 15 torturous months in prison.

In 2016, Maseko spoke at OFF. That same year, he won a landmark legal battle when the High Court ruled that key provisions of two repressive laws were unconstitutional. In 2018, he filed a pending lawsuit challenging the monarch’s decision to rename Swaziland “Eswatini.”

On Jan. 21, 2023, Maseko was shot through an open window at his home in Luhlako, 30 miles southwest of Swaziland’s capital, Mbabane, while he watched television with his wife, Tanele Maseko, and two children.

Maseko embodied the peaceful struggle for democratic reform in Swaziland, Africa’s last absolute monarchy. The Thulani Maseko Human Rights Lawyer Prize recognizes brave human rights lawyers risking their lives to defend the rule of law and democracy.

HRF posthumously awarded Thulani Maseko the first award, and Tanele Maseko accepted the prize on his behalf. Several months later, Thulani Maseko was awarded the 2023 Magnitsky Award for Outstanding Human Rights Lawyer.





Tanele Maseko and HRF Senior Policy Officer Mohamed Keita announce the Thulani Maseko Human Rights Lawyer Prize at the 2023 OFF.

"We will not be intimidated. We will never surrender. We will achieve a free democracy for Swaziland and a free world for all."

Tanele Maseko

Activist and widow of Thulani Maseko

NEW YORK, NEW YORK



On Sept. 28, HRF hosted the fifth OFF in New York at The Town Hall theater, followed by a special Speaker Gala at Rockefeller Center’s historic Rainbow Room.

Pictured above, left to right: Tobias Rose-Stockwell, Kristen Ulmer, Sanaa Seif, Victor Navarro, Pastor Seungeun Kim, Céline Assaf-Boustani, Gulbahar Haitiwaji, Kalbinur Sidik, Kevork Mourad, Nazanin Boniadi, and Chris Turner.



Theater Talks

Attendees heard the stories of global freedom fighters and dissidents, including an award-winning Iranian actress, survivors of China’s concentration camps, a top American technologist, and an Egyptian filmmaker, among others.

Pictured above: Nazanin Boniadi, Iranian actress and activist.



Speaker Gala

At the Speaker Gala, attendees connected with OFF speakers and HRF leadership while enjoying remarks from community members. HRF successfully hosted its second annual Silent Auction, offering exclusive experiences and events.

Pictured above: Berta Valle, Félix Maradiaga, and their daughter, Alejandra.

TAIPEI, TAIWAN



Amid growing regional tensions, HRF returned to Taipei to host the fourth OFF in Taiwan. On Oct. 18, attendees gathered at the W Taipei Hotel to hear from top human rights advocates and learn more about HRF's advocacy campaigns.

Pictured above: Joey Siu, Hong Kong activist.



The theater program included keynote talks from a Tibetan community organizer, a former migrant worker in Qatar, a leader of a modern Korean underground railroad, and a Venezuelan nonviolence advocate, among others.

Pictured above: Wu'er Kaixi and Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian.



HRF hosted more than 100 journalists at a pre-event press conference, elevating the organization's presence in Taiwan and the speakers' work among local audiences.

Pictured above, left to right: Omar Alshogre, Tanele Maseko, Pastor Kim, Chemi Lhamo, Thor Halvorsen, Joey Siu, Gustavo Tovar-Arroyo, Malcolm Bidali, Sakdiyah Ma'ruf, and Wu'er Kaixi.



While in Taipei, an HRF delegation of staff and activists met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Legislative Yuan, and the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission.

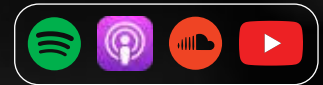
Pictured above: an OFF delegation with Legislative Speaker You Si-kun and other legislators.

COLLEGE FREEDOM FORUM

The **College Freedom Forum (CFF)** is a series of one-day events produced by HRF and designed to educate students about individual rights and democracy around the world.

On March 10, HRF hosted the sixth edition of the CFF at Universidad Francisco Marroquín (UFM) in Guatemala. Students had the opportunity to learn about the work, challenges, and personal stories of activists and civil society leaders from Syria, Cuba, Gambia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Tibet. The auditorium was filled with more than 600 students and faculty, making it the most successful CFF at UFM yet.





DISSIDENTS & DICTATORS

Dissidents & Dictators is a podcast series and storytelling platform for some of the world's bravest activists, artists, policymakers, business leaders, and technologists.

Each episode raises awareness of pressing human rights issues and the important work being done to address them. Dissidents & Dictators allows HRF to educate new audiences worldwide, bringing human rights into the mainstream of public discussions. New episodes are available every week on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud, and YouTube.

2023 Reach

4

Streaming
Platforms

117

Episodes
to Date

260K+

Total
Listeners

FEATURED EPISODES



BEYOND UTOPIA

In January, "Beyond Utopia," a film documenting the harrowing journeys of several North Korean defectors, premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. The film, produced with the help of HRF, received wide praise and earned the Audience Award for US Documentary. Most recently, it was shortlisted for the 2024 Oscar for Best Documentary Feature Film and the 2024 BAFTA for Best Documentary.

The documentary follows Pastor Seungeun Kim, a trailblazer in a modern-day underground railroad, which has rescued more than 1,000 defectors since 2000. Pastor Kim shared his story firsthand at the 2023 OFF. The film's producer, Jana Edelbaum, also joined HRF CEO Thor Halvorssen on stage to promote the film.





"A REAL-LIFE GEOPOLITICAL THRILLER... IT HAS TO BE SEEN TO BE BELIEVED."

- INDIEWIRE

"A STAGGERING ACHIEVEMENT. GRADE: A."

- THE PLAYLIST

"★★★★★ BEYOND INCREDIBLE."

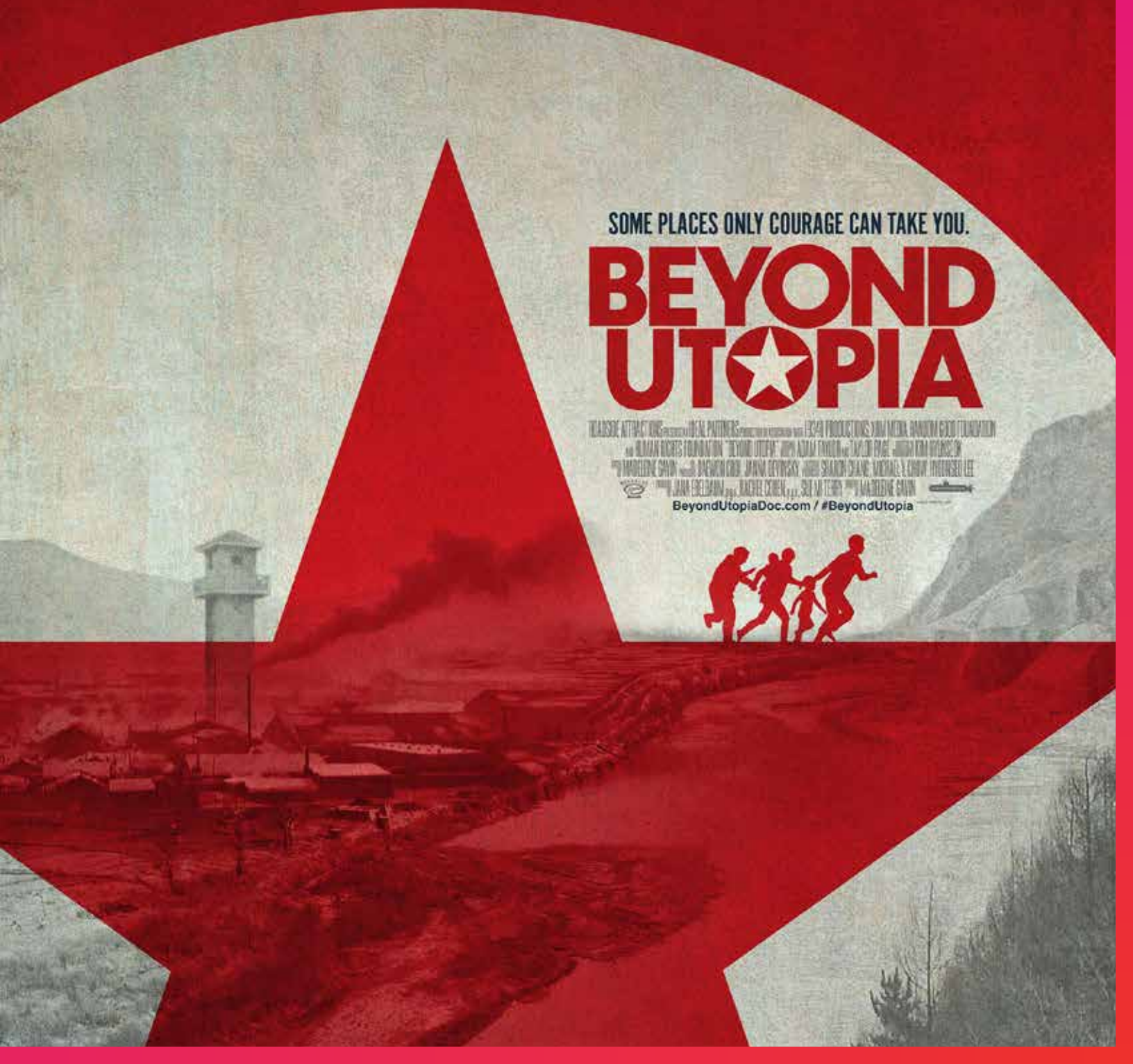
- DEADLINE

SOME PLACES ONLY COURAGE CAN TAKE YOU.

BEYOND UTOPIA

TELESCOPIC ATTRACTIONS PRESENTS LOCAL PATTERNS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ESCAPÉ PRODUCTIONS YOUNG FACTORY HANSON GOOD FOUNDATION
AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION "BEYOND UTOPIA" WITH ADAM FRYDSON AND TAYLOR PAGE JORDAN KIM BYRONSON ON
"IMMIGRANT SAVIOR" WITH JACQUELINE COHEN JARINA BEVRSKY WITH SHARON STANE VIKTORIA V. KONIKI IYERUSSEI LEE
© 2021 JANA ERLEBMAN PROD. KATRINE COHEN, EXEC. PROD. SUE M. TERRY PROD. VANDERLIVE GAVIN

BeyondUtopiaDoc.com / [#BeyondUtopia](https://twitter.com/BeyondUtopia)



05

GLOBAL ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

HRF exposes and confronts authoritarian abuse through innovative and multi-faceted campaigns.

Several initiatives target specific industries, like fashion or finance, and others use creative mediums and channels, like art and technology. HRF also partners with industry leaders to devise new strategies for evading authoritarian repression.

HRF projects an image on New York City's Hyatt Tower highlighting the fashion industry's complicity in Uyghur forced labor.

ART IN PROTEST

Art is a powerful tool for dissent in closed societies, provoking constructive dialogue and creating space for debate beyond mainstream discourse. Authoritarian regimes recognize art can be a conduit of change, so they often persecute, repress, or censor artists.

HRF's **Art in Protest** program seeks to elevate and support artists in their struggle for democracy and human rights. The program offers dissident artists various opportunities and platforms to enhance their work and expand their reach.

Art in Protest Residency

HRF partnered with **Fountainhead**, a preeminent residency and artist studio in Miami, Fla., for the 2024 cohort of HRF's Art in Protest Residency.

The one-month program empowers dissident artists to explore and expand their work while cultivating a supportive community of curators, gallerists, photographers, financial professionals, and business consultants.





Voices of the New Belarus

HRF partnered with Belarusian playwright Andrei Kureichik to produce “Voices of the New Belarus,” a documentary highlighting the fate of several Belarusian political prisoners and the scale of repression since the fraudulent elections of August 2020. The film premiered at the 2023 OFF.

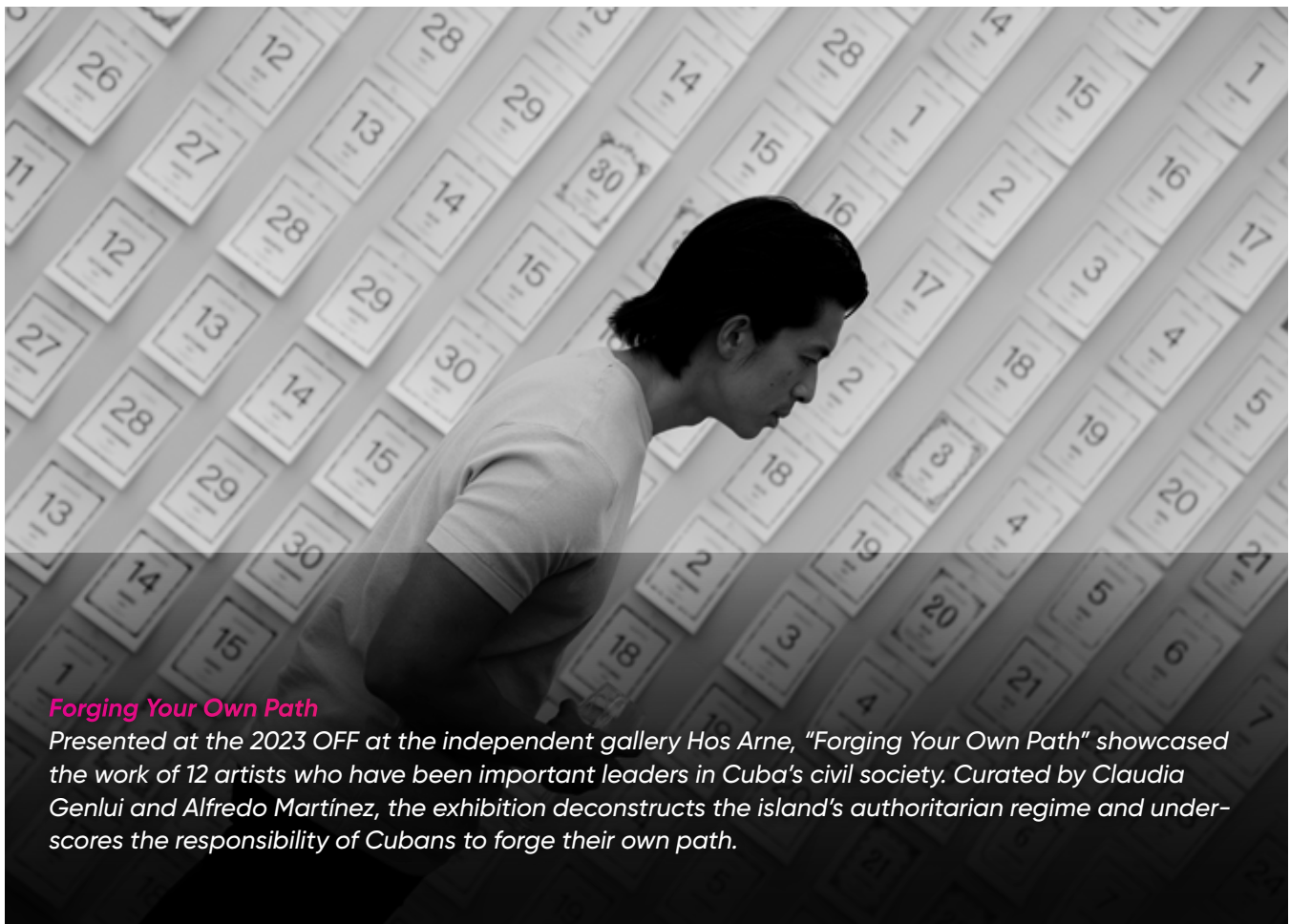
VOICES OF THE NEW BELARUS

Experience the extraordinary courage and resilience of ordinary Belarusians in this documentary art installation.

In August 2020, hundreds of thousands of Belarusians took to the streets in what became the nation's biggest pro-democracy movement. They were peacefully protesting the rigged presidential elections of Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country since 1994 and committed grave human rights abuses.

The Belarusian security forces responded to the protesters with extreme violence. Nine were killed, 50,000 were arbitrarily detained, and 1,000 cases of torture were documented.

Part art installation, part play, “Voices of the New Belarus” features the stories of brave individuals who stood up in the face of oppression. The play is outlined and directed by Andrei Kureichik, a Belarusian playwright, director, and producer in exile, and translated by John F. Reardon.



Forging Your Own Path

Presented at the 2023 OFF at the independent gallery Hos Arne, “Forging Your Own Path” showcased the work of 12 artists who have been important leaders in Cuba’s civil society. Curated by Claudia Genlui and Alfredo Martínez, the exhibition deconstructs the island’s authoritarian regime and underscores the responsibility of Cubans to forge their own path.



The PaykanArtCar

The second edition of the PaykanArtCar automobile, amplifying the voices of Iran's Women, Life, Freedom revolution, was unveiled in a special ceremony at the 2023 OFF. Simin Keramati, an Iranian-Canadian multidisciplinary artist, was commissioned for the design. The first edition of the PaykanArtCar earned the Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent in 2022.



Silenced Voices: Artists Defying Repression

In partnership with Freedom House, HRF hosted an exclusive art exhibition at New York City's Blue Gallery during the 2023 United Nations General Assembly. The public event featured the work of notable artists and human rights defenders, honoring political prisoners and victims of repression in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.



Music at the Oslo Freedom Forum

Several musicians took the 2023 OFF stage, including Iranian-American singer-songwriter Rana Mansour, exiled South Sudanese musician Manasseh Mathiang, Egyptian singer Ramy Essam, Ukrainian chorus Stand Up for Ukraine, Swedish pop singer Zara Larsson, and innovative string ensemble Oslo Strings.

WEAR YOUR VALUES



The fashion industry is one of the world’s largest economies, employing millions globally. The most labor-intensive stages of production are often done in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, where workers’ rights are continuously violated without recourse.

Since 2017, HRF’s **Wear Your Values** (WYV) program has shed light on the hidden social costs of the fashion industry. Through creative advocacy campaigns and educational exhibitions, WYV has promoted transparency in global supply chains and encouraged ethical shopping among consumers.



Uyghur Forced Labor Checker in Times Square

In March, HRF launched an ad campaign in New York City’s Times Square to promote its Uyghur Forced Labor Checker, a Google Chrome extension that informs consumers when they visit a website of a brand that may be linked to Uyghur forced labor, prompting them to reconsider their purchase. To date, the Checker has received eight awards.

Discounted Lives Installation



At the 2023 SXSW conference, HRF and creative agency Le Truc premiered the Discounted Lives installation, displaying two racks of identical white T-shirts – one made in China and priced at \$4.99 and the other made in a democracy and priced at \$44.99. Receipts reveal the reasons behind the price difference, including forced labor and other human rights violations, and feature portraits of Uyghurs detained in China's concentration camps.



NYC & London Fashion Week Projections

During the New York and London Fashion Weeks, HRF projected versions of its Discounted Lives installation on iconic landmarks across the city, spotlighting the fashion industry's complicity in Uyghur forced labor. The projections included portraits of Uyghurs currently detained in China's concentration camps. Onlookers were urged to consider the human costs of their heavily discounted clothing and to think twice about their purchases.



Tate Modern, London



Tower Bridge, London



Louise Xin Fashion Show

Award-winning Swedish designer Louise Xin hosted a fashion show at the 2023 OFF, calling attention to the fashion industry's complicity in the Chinese Communist Party's systematic efforts to eliminate the Uyghur people. Xin's 3D floral appliqués, enticing prints, and powerful message earned the show a feature in *Vogue Scandinavia*.

"The Human Rights Foundation's 'Wear Your Values' program ... encourages difficult dialogues in the fashion industry, promoting transparency and human rights in global supply chains."

VOGUE
SCANDINAVIA



CELEBRITIES & DICTATORS

HRF's **Celebrities & Dictators** program leverages the power of celebrity influence to bring attention to human rights issues around the world.

Authoritarian regimes often exploit celebrities, social media influencers, entertainment brands, and professional sports institutions to push their corrupt agenda and to cultivate a false appearance of progress in mainstream popular culture. Through social media advocacy and interactive installations, HRF urges celebrities to, instead, stand up to dictatorships and use their influence for good, choosing morals over money.

Celebrities & Dictators Expo Booth

At the 2023 OFF Expo, attendees voted for which celebrity they believe is the biggest advocate for human rights. Amal and George Clooney won with 38% of the votes.



10:45



For you

Following



Nazanin Boniadi, an Iranian-born, SAG and AACTA Award-nominated actress, has long used her public platform to advocate for youth, women, and prisoners of conscience in Iran. In 2022, she became a leading voice in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, and in 2023, she spoke at the OFF in Norway and New York.

Yolande Makolo @YolandeMakolo

This HRF tantrum proves Rwanda is absolutely on the right track with our #VisitRwanda partnerships to promote tourism & young football talent - ultimately generate wealth & wellbeing for Rwandans. We're doing business with the world. A hall monitor is upset. Too bad. Twagiyee!

1/ Human Rights Foundation @HRF · Aug 28
1/ HRF condemns the sponsorship deal between top German club FC Bayern Munich and #Rwanda as a shameful and regressive example of the club lending its prestige to another brutal dictatorship seeking to whitewash its murderous abuses with sports. [twitter.com/FCBayernEN/sta...](https://twitter.com/FCBayernEN/status...)

Rwandan government spokeswoman Yolande Makolo responded to HRF's tweet condemning a Rwanda sponsorship deal with top German club FC Bayern Munich.

Human Rights Foundation @HRF

1/ HRF condemns @Beyonce's latest concert in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a dictatorship where freedom of expression is nonexistent and the LGBTQ+ community is particularly at risk of facing the death penalty.

Human Rights Foundation @HRF

1/ HRF condemns boxing legend Floyd Mayweather's shameful praise of #Zimbabwe's corrupt and brutal dictator, Emmerson Mnangagwa, and his sycophantic appeal to Zimbabweans to vote for the repressive ruler in August presidential elections.

The Herald Zimbabwe @HeraldZimbabwe · Jul 14
RETIRED American boxer Floyd Mayweather speaks to the media after meeting President Emmerson Mnangagwa at State House in Harare this afternoon. [@Nyakudjara](https://twitter.com/Nyakudjara)

Human Rights Foundation @HRF

1/ HRF condemns Andy Warhol Museum's agreement with Saudi Arabia's new arts center in AIUla to organize an exhibition in the Kingdom that will highlight some of Warhol's most iconic artwork.

hyperalergic.com

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Billions of people living under authoritarianism lack financial freedom.

Dictators frequently debase, manipulate, demonetize, and surveil currencies, confiscate property, and hinder business opportunities abroad. Activists and NGOs, in particular, face enormous obstacles just to receive donations and pay bills.

To counter these tactics, HRF's **Financial Freedom** program provides education and hands-on training to activists and invests in efforts to make Bitcoin a better tool for human rights defenders.



HRF's **Bitcoin Development Fund** supports software developers in making the Bitcoin network more private, decentralized, and resilient so it can better serve as a financial tool for human rights activists, civil society organizations, and journalists.

Throughout 2023, HRF granted a total of \$2,000,000 to 50 projects focusing on censorship-resistant donations, core development, open-source self-custody, Chaumian e-cash, global education, and privacy technology.

2023 Impact

50

Grants

50

Projects

\$2M

Total Granted

To join HRF's new weekly newsletter about financial freedom worldwide, e-mail Financial Freedom Specialist Ayelen Osorio at ayelen@hrf.org.

Public Education

HRF aims to educate activists and the wider public on how decentralized finance, privacy technology, and decentralized communications can be important, life-saving tools in the face of financial repression. In particular, HRF believes Bitcoin shows the most potential as a tool that can achieve these goals.



HRF at Global Conferences

HRF staff attended and participated in financial freedom conferences around the world, including events in Washington, D.C., Miami, Austin, London, Costa Rica, Vietnam, Accra, Nashville, Berlin, Sao Paulo, Nairobi, Bali, Bangalore, and Latvia.

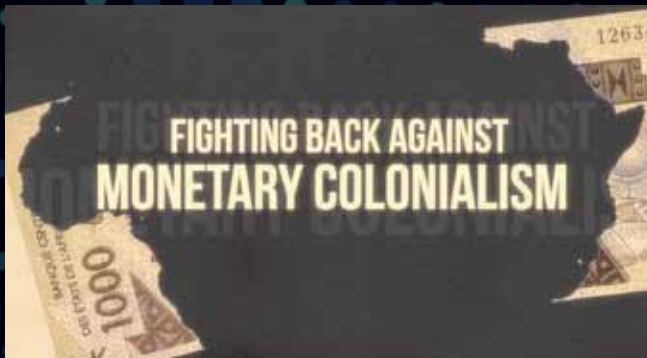
Pictured: HRF Chief Strategy Officer Alex Gladstein on stage at Bitcoin Miami.



Africa Bitcoin Conference

From Dec. 1 to 3, HRF co-sponsored the second Africa Bitcoin Conference in Accra, Ghana, bringing together hundreds of activists, developers, investors, and advocates of financial freedom.

Pictured, left to right: Raphael Adebayo, Katrogi Nhang Lwamba, Felix Agbor, Rania Aziz, Mohamed Keita, Alex Gladstein, Fatma Karume, Jack Dorsey, Jestina Mukoko, Tibusio Maluli, Malcolm Bidali, Vanessa Tsehaye, and Lucy Kassa.



Fighting Back Against Monetary Colonialism

At the 2023 SXSW conference, HRF premiered a short animated film, "Fighting Back Against Monetary Colonialism," featuring activists using open-source code to challenge decades of dictatorship and monetary repression. The film has received over 250,000 views.

LAUNCH OF



On Nov. 14, HRF's Financial Freedom team launched the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Tracker at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. This new online tool tracks the global development and implementation of CBDCs, or digital national currencies, with a focus on their rollout in authoritarian regimes and their threat to civil liberties.

Hands-on Training

Through interactive workshops and educational retreats, HRF aims to show human rights activists how to safely and securely use financial freedom technologies to escape authoritarian control.



Financial Freedom Track at OFF

At the 2023 OFF, HRF hosted over a dozen financial freedom workshops. Topics included securely accepting donations of digital assets, overcoming currency devaluation and bank account closures, and growing alternative economies under dictatorships.

New Partnership with CANVAS

HRF has partnered with the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) to incorporate financial freedom tools and strategies into their training, workshops, and fellowship programs with activists and civil society leaders from around the world.

Pictured above: CANVAS Executive Director Srđa Popović.



Global Bitcoin Summit

From Sept. 14 to 16, HRF held the inaugural Global Bitcoin Summit in Nashville, Tenn. The Summit brought together 100 Bitcoin community leaders, software developers, NGO adopters, activists, human rights defenders, and educators from more than 55 countries. Delegates shared their victories and challenges while building Bitcoin communities and driving Bitcoin adoption.

RESPONSIBLE FINANCE

HRF's **Responsible Finance** program aims to counter the influence of authoritarian regimes in the world's most important financial systems. It researches and proposes solutions so global business transactions can help advance, not hinder, democracy and human rights.

Defund Dictators Expo Booth

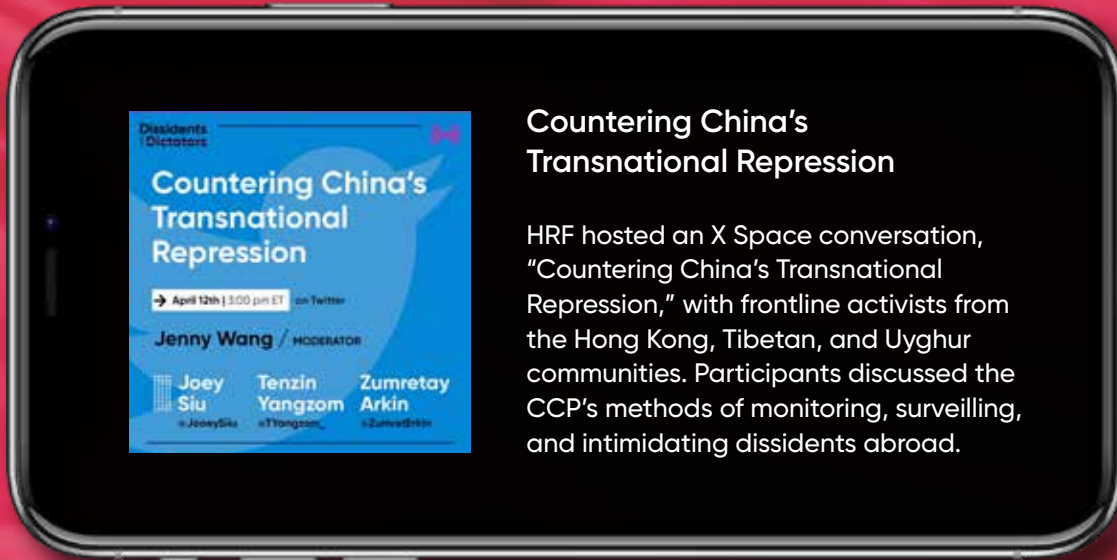
The Defund Dictators tool was featured at the 2023 OFF Expo. Attendees identified which of their investments may be inadvertently helping authoritarian regimes. The tool, also available on defunddictators.org, allows the public to make informed, democracy-promoting investments.





CCP Disruption Initiative

HRF's **CCP Disruption Initiative** aims to increase awareness of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) ongoing attacks on civil liberties and alter public attitudes toward Xi Jinping's dictatorship. The program focuses on corporate intimidation, digital surveillance, repression of Chinese human rights defenders, the Uyghur genocide, and the stifling of freedoms in Tibet and Hong Kong, among other pressing issues.



Countering China's Transnational Repression

HRF hosted an X Space conversation, "Countering China's Transnational Repression," with frontline activists from the Hong Kong, Tibetan, and Uyghur communities. Participants discussed the CCP's methods of monitoring, surveilling, and intimidating dissidents abroad.



Q&A with HK Activist Sunny Cheung

HRF published an interview with Hong Kong activist Sunny Cheung on the CCP's suppression tactics in Hong Kong. Cheung reflected on the case of the HK 47, a group of pro-democracy politicians, lawyers, scholars, and journalists currently on trial for their participation in primary elections.



Uyghur Survivors Visit the HRF Office

In April, Kalbinur Sidik and Gulbahar Haitiwaji, courageous survivors of China's genocide, visited the HRF office to share their stories. Haitiwaji was detained in the concentration camps for two years, and Sidik was forced to work as a Chinese language instructor.



How China's AI is Powering Global Authoritarianism

HRF hosted a panel at the 2023 OFF examining China's far-reaching influence in the realm of artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and Internet censorship technology.

Pictured above, left to right: Garry Kasparov, Steven Feldstein, Nathan Law, and Sascha Harnig.



Son of HK Dissident Jimmy Lai at the HRF Office

In September, HRF welcomed Sebastien Lai, the son of Hong Kong dissident Jimmy Lai. A successful entrepreneur who devoted his life to Apple Daily, Hong Kong's main pro-democracy newspaper, Lai was arrested in 2020 on national security law charges and is currently on trial. His international legal team met with HRF staff to discuss his case and their current advocacy efforts.

KOREA DESK

AMOUNT GRANTED IN 2023

\$100,000

With the growing threat of North Korea, HRF expanded its activities in the region to combat Kim Jong-un's oppressive dictatorship.

Throughout 2023, HRF formed new partnerships with local activist groups and government representatives, secured local and international media coverage, provided grants to like-minded civil society organizations in South Korea, and worked to expose North Koreans to life outside the Kim regime's totalitarian "utopia."

Working Retreat & Visiting Delegation

On Friday, Oct. 13, HRF hosted a working retreat with Korean activists and civil society leaders in Seoul, South Korea.

Together, they assessed the current state of the North Korean human rights movement, identified priority areas for supporting human rights in North Korea, and strengthened HRF partnerships with local activist groups. A few weeks later, senior HRF staff visited Seoul to assess the needs of the top human rights organizations so HRF can better deploy resources and support.

Meeting with the Minister of Unification

The Minister of Unification, Kim Yung-ho, hosted HRF's delegation for a 90-minute meeting, making national news and top headlines. The Minister and HRF discussed how to increase the flow of outside information into North Korea and address the Chinese government's ongoing forced repatriation of defectors. The Minister expressed his "deepest appreciation" for our cultural advocacy approaches.



Singing About North Korea: Heaven on Earth

HRF held an art exhibition at the Republic of Korea's National Assembly featuring the work of North Korean defector and artist Song Byeok. The exhibition was organized in partnership with former OFF speaker and defector-turned-legislator Ji Seong-ho.



Flash Drives For Free-Dom

Flash Drives for Freedom

Launched in 2016, **Flash Drives for Freedom** is a multi-award-winning program that aims to expose North Koreans to information about the outside world and combat the dictatorship's propaganda. Using creative methods and channels, HRF partners send content-loaded flash drives, hard drives, and SD cards to the towns and cities of North Korea.

Achievements

135K+

Flash drives donated since 2016

1M+

North Koreans reached

2.5M

Hours of footage smuggled into NK

60M

Hours of reading materials disseminated



Media Coverage

On March 25, HRF's efforts in the region were recognized during a CBS Saturday Morning program, "How South Korea is trying to win the war of information against North Korea."

06

DIRECT SUPPORT

The efforts of individual activists and civil society organizations in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes are often far more impactful than those of large intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

For this reason, HRF provides direct support to those on the frontlines of freedom and democratic reform. This support can take various forms: mentorship programs, networking opportunities, technical support, and financial assistance.



MICROGRANTS

HRF's **Microgrants** program provides financial support to activists actively challenging tyranny.

Microgrants are given to select human rights activists and civil society leaders with demonstrated financial need. HRF tracks the impact of each microgrant and assists recipients in leveraging their funds to achieve the greatest change possible.

Supporting Sudan's Democracy



In 2019, HRF held its first-ever OFF Working Retreat for the Arab World to discuss the obstacles activists from the region face, as well as prospective opportunities to advance their respective causes. In February, HRF sent out a call for proposals to Retreat attendees, offering up to \$15,000 to support initiatives that resulted from or were inspired by the Retreat.



HRF has since provided former OFF speaker and Sudanese activist Mohamed Nagi Alassam a microgrant for his research project, "Enhancing the Role of Resistance Committees in the Democratic Transition in Sudan." This project examines the role and strategies of resistance committees in the democratic transition of Sudan. Alassam will analyze interactions between resistance committees and the Sudanese government, opposition groups, civil society organizations, and other political actors. He aims to schedule discussions with relevant stakeholders and ultimately produce a report.

2023 Grantees

In 2023, HRF provided grants to activists and civil society organizations in 14 countries around the world.

“The Human Rights Foundation’s microgrant has been a game-changer for my work as a human rights activist. It provided vital financial support, allowing me to dedicate more time and energy to the cause of freedom and human dignity. Their unwavering commitment is not just financial; it’s a driving force that empowers us to stand strong against oppression and injustice. Their support is a lifeline, amplifying our efforts to promote democracy and human rights. I’m deeply thankful for their support in this critical mission.”



Nicaragua’s Pro-Democracy Movement

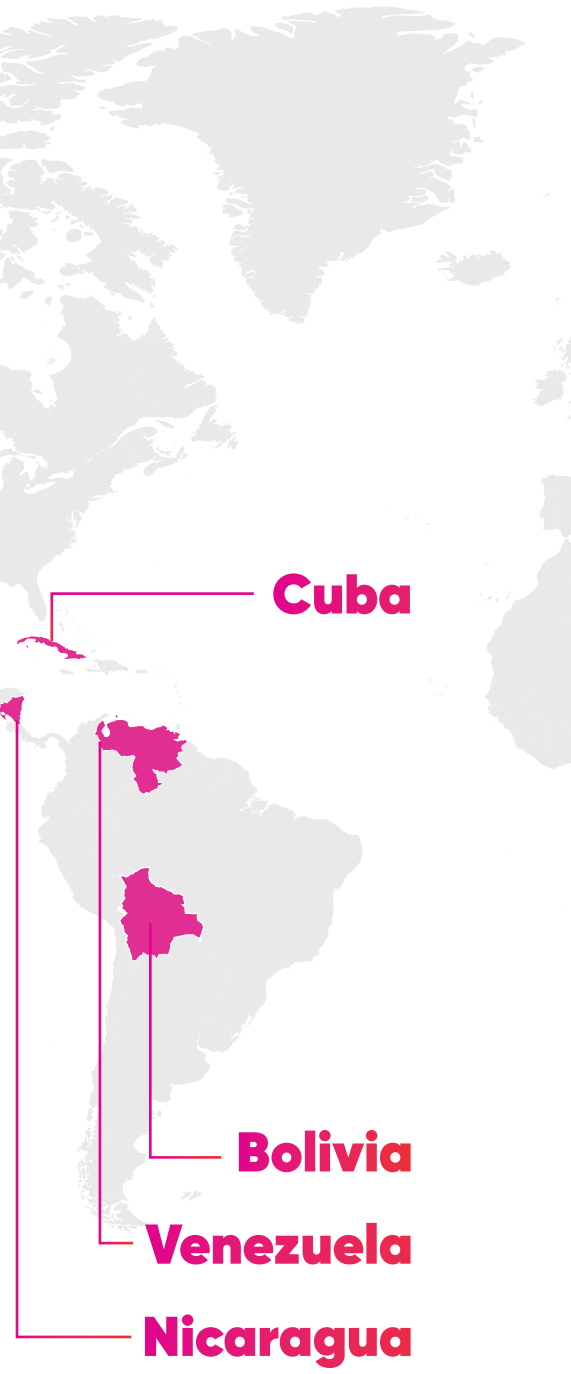
Berta Valle
Human Rights Activist

“Thanks to HRF’s grant, we were able to optimize the Helicoide VR experience. Our work was featured at OFF, and the improvement has had a positive impact in raising awareness and enhancing the activism related to the torture centers in Venezuela. By allowing the users to experience the conditions of torture in a virtual environment, we have raised awareness and mobilized civil society to take action to promote justice and the protection of human rights.”



Voces de la Memoria

Víctor Navarro
Executive Director

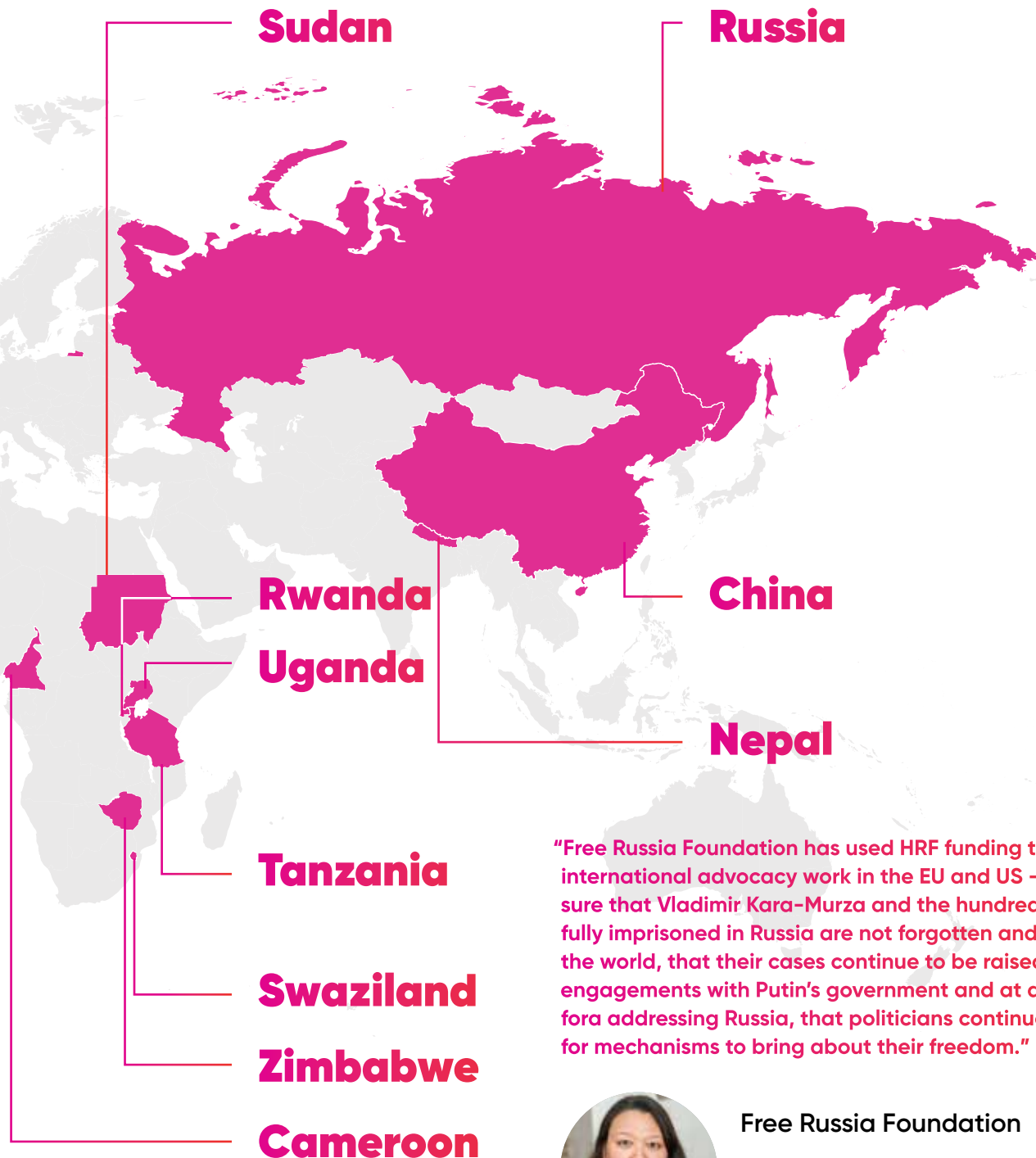


Cuba

Bolivia

Venezuela

Nicaragua



“Free Russia Foundation has used HRF funding to conduct international advocacy work in the EU and US – to make sure that Vladimir Kara-Murza and the hundreds of wrongfully imprisoned in Russia are not forgotten and forsaken by the world, that their cases continue to be raised during all engagements with Putin’s government and at all political fora addressing Russia, that politicians continue searching for mechanisms to bring about their freedom.”



Free Russia Foundation

Natalia Arno

President

FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

The **Freedom Fellowship** awards up to 10 human rights advocates, social entrepreneurs, and nonprofit leaders from authoritarian regimes the unique opportunity to increase the impact of their work. Through mentorship and hands-on seminars, fellows develop critical skills and join a growing community of human rights activists.

Freedom Fellow Retreats

HRF organizes yearly Freedom Fellowship retreats designed to forge impactful connections and collaborations, brainstorm strategies for their advocacy efforts and campaigns, and develop essential skills. Fellows receive mentorship on movement building, digital security, fundraising, mental health, and marketing.



San Francisco, Calif.

From Feb. 11 to 18, the 2022–23 class of Fellows gathered in San Francisco, Calif. for the Fellowship's first post-pandemic, one-week capacity-building trip in the Bay Area.

Pictured above: Freedom Fellows and HRF staff at Stanford University.



Atenas, Costa Rica

From Sept. 15 to 22, the 2023–24 class of Fellows gathered in Atenas, Costa Rica, for a week of intensive mentorship sessions.

Pictured above: CANVAS program director and Freedom Fellowship fundraising mentor Breza Race instructs the Fellows.

Ignite Talks

In April, HRF partnered with Ignite Talks to teach Fellows essential skills in messaging, public speaking, and pitching.

The seven-week program culminated in an Ignite Talks session at the 2023 OFF, during which each Fellow presented a five-minute Ignite Talk about their work.



Tibetan human rights and climate campaigner Pema Doma at the 2023 OFF.



Iraqi environmentalist Salman Khairalla at the 2023 OFF.



Belarusian human rights activist Volya Vysotskaia at the 2023 OFF.

FREEDOM FELLOWS

CLASS OF 2023-2024



Program manager for the Uyghur Human Rights Project



Nigerian human rights activist and author



Hong Kong activist and organizer



Cuban human rights defender and artist

OSLO SCHOLARS

The **Oslo Scholars Program (OSP)** offers students with a demonstrated interest in human rights the opportunity to spend their summer interning with leading human rights defenders and activists.

Since its inception, the OSP has generated over 100 human rights internship opportunities for university students. In the 2023 cycle, HRF matched 10 students from Harvard University and Tufts University with mentors.



Film Screening at Tufts University

HRF helped organize an on-campus screening of "A La Calle," a documentary on Venezuela's pro-democracy movement, at Tufts University, with video remarks from the documentary's director, Maxx Caicedo, and Venezuelan activist Leopoldo López.



Oslo Scholars at OFF

Five Oslo Scholars from Tufts University attended the 2023 OFF to hear the stories of brave human rights activists and network with community members.

Partner Organizations



DIGITAL SECURITY FOR DISSIDENTS

Digital technologies are transforming the world, affording human rights defenders new platforms for their advocacy. However, such realities also pose great threats: government surveillance and censorship of online platforms, intimidation by Internet trolls, and hacking of personal data.

As authoritarian regimes increasingly rely on and take advantage of new technologies, HRF connects world-class technologists with activists, providing them the resources to meaningfully and safely advance their work.

Partnerships



Venezuela Inteligente

Venezuela (VE) Inteligente is an organization dedicated to defending human rights online, promoting civic technology, and empowering activists and civil society organizations to improve digital security. At the 2023 OFF, VE Inteligente taught attendees about digital security tools and offered private consultations with their team of experts.

Meta

Meta hosted office hours at the 2023 OFF, during which attendees shared their experiences on Meta platforms regarding safety, free expression, misinformation, harmful content, and advocacy. Representatives from Meta’s Africa, Middle East and Turkey Human Rights section also led workshops, discussing online safety measures during elections and how Meta can support activists in the region.

The Citizen Lab

At the 2023 OFF Expo, The Citizen Lab, a digital security lab based in Canada, provided hundreds of attendees with everyday digital security advice and offered “spyware checks,” scanning phones for Pegasus spyware. Dictators often plant Pegasus in activists’ phones, turning them into 24-hour surveillance devices.



AMOUNT DONATED IN 2023

\$12,152

Launched amid the 2020 Belarusian protests, HRF's **Belarus Solidarity Fund** supports the country's pro-democracy movement, providing a lifeline to those targeted for their political beliefs by Alexander Lukashenko's regime. HRF raises awareness of the situation in Belarus and partners with local leaders of the Belarusian diaspora, establishing fundraisers to assist and finance victims of political repression and various humanitarian initiatives.

Supporting Political Prisoners

Polityvazynka

In February, HRF partnered with Polityvazynka, a Poland-based group that sheds light on the realities of female political prisoners in Belarus, including inhumane conditions, torture, and abuse. HRF and Polityvazynka established a joint fundraiser to provide recently released female prisoners with psychological, medical, and financial assistance.

Grants

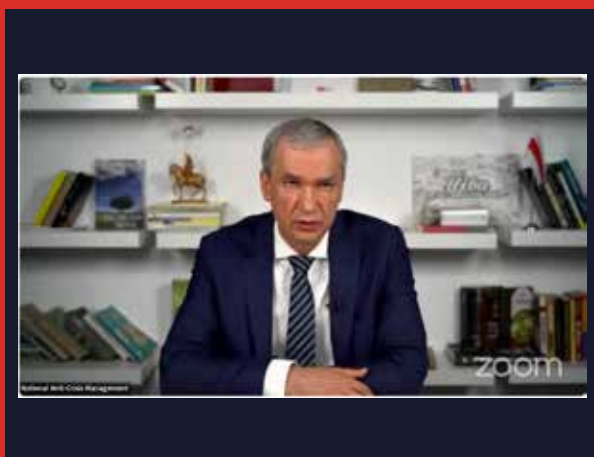
HRF distributed three grants to Belarusian organizations assisting political prisoners in Belarus.

"The HRF grant has played a pivotal role in accelerating our organization's growth and effectiveness. [...] We were able to strategically allocate resources to address critical needs and optimize our operations."


INeedHelpBy

Belarus Solidarity Fund grantee

Highlighting the Situation in Belarus



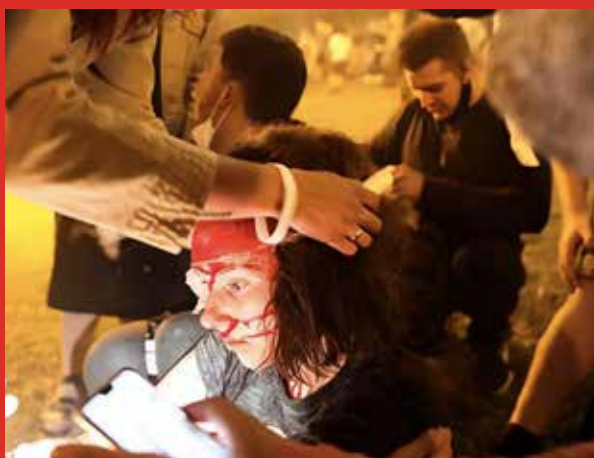
Lukashenko’s Role Aiding Putin’s War in Ukraine

In August, HRF hosted an online panel with sanctions expert Pavel Latushka, former senior US official David Kramer, and prominent Belarusian journalist and 2023 OFF speaker Hanna Luibakova. Panelists discussed domestic repression, Lukashenko’s role in the war in Ukraine, and how the democratic community can hold Lukashenko accountable.



Trials in Absentia: Lukashenko’s Latest Act of Repression

This HRF blog post explores the country’s change to criminal legislation, allowing it to hold trials in absentia for Belarusians who participated in “extremist activity” and now live abroad. It is yet another attempt to exert repressive power beyond Belarusian borders to target those who have fled the country.



How Alexander Lukashenko Targets the Women of Belarus

This HRF blog post examines Lukashenko’s repression campaign, targeting women who participated in the 2020 pro-democracy demonstrations or spoke out against the regime. It details accounts of women who were detained, imprisoned, or suffered from ill-treatment while behind bars.



AMOUNT DONATED IN 2023

\$1,787,469

On Feb. 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine, launching missile strikes on Ukrainian cities, shelling military and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine, and advancing across the country to overthrow the democratically elected Ukrainian government. One year and 11 months later, major Ukrainian cities continue to suffer attacks by the Russian military, and tens of thousands have been killed or injured.

HRF established the **Ukraine Solidarity Fund** days after Russia's full-scale invasion to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainians trapped in the conflict zone and expose Putin's global war on democracy and freedom.

Humanitarian Partnerships



Renegade Relief Runners

In October, HRF partnered with Renegade Relief Runners (3xR), an international team of volunteers that delivers food, water filters, generators, medical supplies, and hygiene products to recently liberated areas in Ukraine. In 2023, HRF raised €10,000 for 3xR, and at the 2023 OFF, attendees wrote messages of solidarity on a water filtration system, which 3xR delivered to Ukraine.



Razom

HRF continued to work with Razom, a nonprofit Ukrainian human rights organization established in 2014, to distribute over 200 tons of humanitarian aid and supplies, including generators and heaters, throughout Ukraine.



Ocean of Hope

HRF provided a grant to the Ukrainian aid organization Ocean of Hope, helping fund the restoration of a damaged school in the Kyiv Oblast, 16 electric generators for medical facilities across Ukraine, a trauma and rehabilitation program for Ukrainian soldiers and veterans, and various food products and humanitarian supplies.

Shedding Light on Putin's War



Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine

Renegade Relief Runners co-founders Julia Abratańska and Chris Tiller appeared on HRF's podcast series *Dissidents & Dictators* to discuss Ukraine's current humanitarian needs, the challenges local aid groups face, and what the international community can do to support aid work.



February 24, One Year Later

HRF honored the one-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine with a blog series, "February 24, One Year Later," examining humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, Putin's wartime tactics, and repression in Russia.



World Humanitarian Day

HRF Program Officer Elle Ota published an op-ed in *The Washington Times* on World Humanitarian Day, calling for international support of smaller Ukrainian grassroots and civil society organizations rather than the United Nations and larger NGOs.

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1945 - 2022



Palden Gyatso
1933 - 2018



Eduardo Mendoza
1917 - 2009



Ramón José Velásquez
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Harry Wu
1937 - 2016

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HRF is a great place to begin or advance your career in human rights. Apply today at hrf.org.



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If you believe you have a unique set of skills or abilities HRF could utilize in the global struggle for freedom, please e-mail info@hrf.org with "Volunteer Opportunities" in the subject line.



Internships

HRF offers paid in-office and remote internships with flexible schedules to students and recent graduates. These positions allow students to engage in human rights work and gain hands-on experience in the nonprofit world. Inquire via e-mail at interns@hrf.org.



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