



Media Highlights 2023 Q1



Cover: The "CCP Virus"
by Weiming Chen

The Human Rights Foundation's (HRF) work is covered by the world's top media outlets, reaching millions of people worldwide and ultimately

inspiring change.

In this media booklet, you'll find some of the most noteworthy articles authored by or written about HRF in the last quarter.

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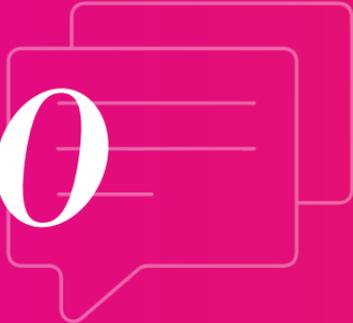
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Explore HRF's broadcast and TV coverage in the first quarter of 2023.

BY THE NUMBERS

 **24 Billion**

Global Impressions

4,950 

Media Mentions

45



Languages

112



Countries

\$228 Billion



Earned Media Value

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

Outlet
Op-Ed
New York Post

Authors
Javier El-Hage,
HRF Chief Legal Officer
Jhanisse Vaca-Daza,
Activism Outreach
Specialist

Date
Jan. 13, 2023

Supporters of opposition leader and governor of Santa Cruz Luis Fernando Camacho, hold a Bolivian flag and Santa Cruz flag as they protest at a roadblock in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. AP



A Dec. 28 police operation involving over 40 heavily armed officers – most of them in plain clothes and wearing masks – [violently arrested Luis Fernando Camacho](#), one of Bolivia's most important opposition leaders and governor of the region with the country's largest city, and swiftly moved him to La Paz in a military helicopter.

It seemed more like the arrest of a drug kingpin than of a democratically elected governor driving back home for lunch from a day in the office.

Twenty-four hours later, Camacho, 43, was preliminarily sentenced to at least four months' pretrial detention in Chonchocoro – Bolivia's notorious maximum security prison in El Alto – as he awaits trial on charges of "terrorism."

The arrest has spurred country-wide demonstrations and police repression against his base in Santa Cruz, and set another terrible precedent for the political persecution of high-level government critics in a country with a judiciary notorious for doing the bidding of authoritarians.

Videos of Camacho's arrest shared by local media showed the politician handcuffed on the side of the road; the windows of the car in which he was traveling smashed.



The arrest has spurred country-wide demonstrations and police repression against his base in Santa Cruz. AFP via Getty Images

He's charged over taking part in the "Coup d'Etat I" – as the government calls the case – in November 2019 against then-President Evo Morales, who actually resigned (and fled the country) after nearly 14 years in power.

International observers from the Organization of American States concluded that the results of the 2019 presidential election – where Morales was illegally seeking his fourth consecutive term – were largely fraudulent, saying he tampered with vote tallies to avoid a run-off vote and thus secure the presidency. The European Union concurred.

But divisions among the opposition allowed Morales' party to regain power in the next election, in less than a year.

Camacho did play a key role in the massive country-wide nonviolent protests that led to Morales'

resignation, by tapping into Santa Cruz's long-held regionalist sentiment against the overbearing La Paz-based central government, galvanizing the country's regional opposition and coordinating with country-wide civil society groups who were equally tired of Morales' authoritarianism.

As then-president of Santa Cruz's Civic Committee, Camacho openly promised the beleaguered national police force better working conditions after Morales's corrupt rule came to an end – a move that, atop a month-plus of civil disobedience, helped spur a police mutiny vital in forcing Morales's hand.



Camacho was preliminarily sentenced to at least four months' pretrial detention. REUTERS

He also brokered alliances with indigenous Potosi-based miners (whose leader, Marco Pumari, is now also arbitrarily imprisoned) and the historic La Paz-based "Central Obrera Boliviana."

None of this comes close to making him a "coup plotter" or a "terrorist." He and millions of Bolivians were just audacious in exercising what was left of freedom of expression

and association in a strongman-weary country.

Yet [the “Coup d’Etat I” case](#) is also the pretext to imprison transitional President Jeanine Áñez, [sentenced in June to 10 years](#) for making “decisions contrary to the constitution” and for “dereliction of duty.” (She was initially charged with terrorism, sedition and conspiracy.)

Ambiguous offenses like “terrorism” or “sedition” are often used to persecute the opposition. Bolivia’s judicial system is one of the world’s worst. This year, the World Justice Project ranked it as 130th out of 140 countries in its Rule of Law index.

Bolivians know President Arce Catacora’s Movimiento Al Socialismo Party won’t be afraid of using the country’s subservient judiciary to enact revenge. It’s closely allied to Cuba’s totalitarian regime, the kleptocratic dictatorships in Venezuela and Nicaragua as well as Iran and China.



Camacho’s charged over taking part in the “Coup d’Etat I” in November 2019 against then-President Evo Morales. REUTERS

MAS seeks to avenge the international embarrassment of having crumbled over proven allegations of fraud and the abuses suffered at the hands of Áñez’s government (led by authoritarian government minister Arturo Murillo), which was itself notorious for persecuting MAS leaders for “terrorism.”

For truth and justice to prevail in the region, and to have free and fair elections, Latin American countries must have some semblance of the rule of law.

Opposition leaders can’t be thrown arbitrarily into jail on vague charges because the powers that be decided so.

Pumari, Áñez and Camacho are but the latest examples of the lawlessness and ruthlessness with which the Arce regime is handling high-profile political opponents. Consider it just the beginning.

Jhanisse Vaca Daza is the co-founder of Rios de Pie, a Bolivian nonviolent citizen movement and an activism outreach specialist at the Human Rights Foundation. Javier El- Hage is HRF’s chief legal officer.

Don't Fear Putin's Demise

Outlet

Op-Ed

Foreign Affairs

Authors

Garry Kasparov,
HRF Board Chairman

Mikhail

Khodorkovsky

Date

Jan. 20, 2023

Victory for Ukraine, Democracy for Russia

The regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin is living on borrowed time. The tide of history is turning, and everything from Ukraine's advances on the battlefield to the West's enduring unity and resolve in the face of Putin's aggression points to 2023 being a decisive year. If the West holds firm, Putin's regime will likely collapse in the near future.

Yet some of Ukraine's key partners continue to resist supplying Kyiv with the weapons it needs to deliver the knockout punch. The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden in particular seems afraid of the chaos that could accompany a decisive Kremlin defeat. It has declined to send the tanks, long-range missile systems, and drones that would allow Ukrainian forces to take the fight to their attackers, reclaim their territory, and end the [war](#). The end of Putin's tyrannical rule will indeed radically change Russia (and the rest of the world)—but not in the way the White House thinks. Rather than destabilizing Russia and its neighbors, a Ukrainian victory would eliminate a powerful revanchist force and boost the cause of democracy worldwide.

Pro-democracy Russians who reject the totalitarian [Putin](#) regime—a group to which the authors belong—are doing what they can to help Ukraine liberate all occupied territories and restore its territorial integrity in accordance with the internationally recognized borders of 1991. We are also planning for the day after Putin.

The Russian Action Committee, a coalition of opposition groups in exile that we co-founded in May 2022, aims to ensure that Ukraine is justly compensated for the damage caused by Putin's aggression, that all war criminals are held accountable, and that Russia is transformed from a rogue dictatorship into a parliamentary federal republic.

The looming end of Putin's reign need not be feared, in other words; it should be welcomed with open arms.

UNFOUNDED FEARS

Putin's effort to restore Russia's lost empire is destined to fail. The moment is therefore ripe for a transition to democracy and a devolution of power to the regional levels. But for such a political transformation to take place, Putin must be defeated militarily in Ukraine. A decisive loss on the battlefield would pierce Putin's aura of invincibility and expose him as the architect of a failing state, making his regime vulnerable to challenge from within.

The West, and above all the United States, is capable of providing the military and financial support to hasten the inevitable and propel [Ukraine](#) to a speedy victory. But the [Biden administration](#) still hasn't coalesced around a clear endgame for the war, and some U.S. officials have suggested that Kyiv should consider giving up part of its territory in pursuit of peace—suggestions that are not reassuring. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has made it clear that the Ukrainian people will never accept such a deal. Any territorial concessions made to Putin will inevitably lead to another war down the road.

At the root of Washington's unwillingness to supply the necessary weapons lies a fear of the potential consequences of decisively defeating Russia in Ukraine. Many in the Biden administration believe that Putin's downfall could trigger the collapse of

Russia, plunging the nuclear-armed state into chaos and potentially strengthening China.

Putin's aggression has exposed the inherent instability of his model of government.

But such fears are overstated. The [risk](#) of a Russian collapse is, of course, real. But it is greater with Putin in office—pushing the country in an ever more centralized and militarized direction—than it would be under a democratic, federal regime. The longer the current regime remains in power, the greater the risk of an unpredictable rupture. Putin's aggression has exposed the inherent instability of his model of government, which is built on the need to confront foreign enemies. The Kremlin Mafia, having turned Russia into a staging ground for its military plans, has already threatened to use [nuclear weapons](#) in Ukraine. It is not the collapse of Putin's regime that Washington should fear, therefore, but its continued survival.

For nearly two decades, some Western pundits have claimed that the Russian people will never accept democracy and that Russia is doomed to revanchism. Indeed, Putin's propaganda has managed to instill in a sizable segment of Russian society the view that Western values are entirely alien to Russia.

But economic integration with the West has enabled other countries to overcome a fascist heritage. And deeper integration with Europe, coupled with the conditional easing of Western sanctions, could help Russia do the same.

In the aftermath of Putin's military defeat, Russia would have to choose: either become a vassal of China or begin reintegrating with [Europe](#) (having first justly compensated Ukraine for the damage inflicted during the war and punished those guilty of war crimes. For the majority of Russians, the choice in favor of peace, freedom, and flourishing would be obvious—and made even more so by the rapid reconstruction of Ukraine.

HOPE OVER FEAR

[Putin's](#) military defeat would help catalyze a political transformation in Russia, making it possible for those seeking a brighter future to dismantle the old regime and forge a new political reality. The Russian Action Committee has laid out a [blueprint for this transformation](#), aiming to reestablish the Russian state "on the principles of the rule of law, federalism, parliamentarism, a clear separation of powers and prioritizing human rights and freedoms over abstract 'state interests.' » Our vision is for Russia to become a parliamentary republic and a federal state with only limited centralized powers (those necessary to conduct foreign and defense policy and protect citizens' rights) and much stronger regional governments.

Getting there will take time. Within two years of the dissolution of Putin's regime, Russians would elect a constituent assembly to adopt a new constitution and determine a new system of regional bodies. But in the short term, before that assembly could be seated, a transitional state council with legislative powers would be needed to oversee a temporary technocratic government. Its nucleus would be composed of Russians committed to the rule of law, those who have publicly disavowed Putin's war and his illegitimate regime. Most have been forced into exile, where we have been free to organize and create a virtual civil society in absentia. Such preparations will enable us to act swiftly and work with the Western powers whose cooperation the new Russian government will need to stabilize the economy.

Immediately after assuming power, the state council would conclude a peace agreement with Ukraine, recognizing the country's 1991 borders and justly compensating it for the damage caused by Putin's war. The state council would also formally reject the imperial policies of the Putin regime, both within Russia and abroad, including by ceasing all formal and informal support for pro-Russian entities in the countries of the former Soviet Union. And it would end Russia's long-running confrontation with the West, transitioning instead to a foreign policy based on peace, partnership, and integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Putin's military defeat would help catalyze a political transformation in Russia, making it possible for those seeking a brighter future to dismantle the old regime and forge a new political reality.

- Garry Kasparov & Mikhail Khodorkovsky



*Russian President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg, Russia, January 2023
Ilya Pitalyov / Sputnik / Pool / Reuters*

The United States cannot let its fears stand in the way of Ukraine's hopes.

On the home front, the state council would begin to demilitarize Russia, reducing the size of the armed forces and by extension the cost of their maintenance. It would also dissolve the organs of Putin's [police state](#), including the repressive Federal Security Service and Center for Combating Extremism, and repeal all repressive laws adopted during Putin's rule. All political prisoners would be released and fully rehabilitated, and a broader amnesty program would be adopted to reduce the overall number of prisoners in Russia.

At the federal level, the state council would pursue lustration, conducting open and thorough investigations of former officials to disqualify those responsible for the prior regime's abuses. In addition, it would liquidate all political parties and public organizations that supported the invasion of Ukraine, so that they cannot interfere with the construction of a new [Russia](#). At the same time, the council would liberalize electoral laws, simplify the process for registering political parties, and scrap Putin-era restrictions on rallies, strikes, and demonstrations.

The state council would also begin the process of decentralizing the country, transferring broad powers to the regions, including in the

budgetary sphere. Such reforms would weaken Russia's all-powerful imperial center: if the federal government does not have total control over state finances, then it won't have the means to wage military adventures.

Finally, the council would ensure that war criminals and senior officials from Putin's regime were held accountable. Those responsible for the worst war crimes would be tried in an international tribunal, and Russia itself would try the rest. To do so, it would need to draw a clear line between war criminals and former regime operatives - offering various forms of compromise with the latter to better assure a peaceful transition.

This is a make-or-break moment for Ukraine. Biden can turn the tide in Kyiv's favor by backing up his declarations of support with the delivery of tanks and long-range weaponry. He can also hasten the demise of Putin's regime, opening up the possibility of a democratic future for Russia and demonstrating to the world the folly of military aggression. The United States cannot let its fears stand in the way of Ukraine's hopes.

GARRY KASPAROV is Chair of the Human Rights Foundation, Co-Founder of the Russian Action Committee, and a former world chess champion.

MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY is Co-Founder of the Russian Action Committee and a former political prisoner in Russia.

Beyoncé makes controversial live return at exclusive Dubai concert

Outlet
The Guardian

Author
Laura Snapes

Date
Jan. 22, 2023

US singer plays first full concert for more than four years to audience of invited influencers and journalists



Beyoncé has given her first full concert in more than four years, at a luxury resort in Dubai, for an audience of invited influencers and journalists.

The US music website Pitchfork originally reported that the musician would perform for the unofficial opening of the Atlantis the Royal hotel on 21 January, and had invited select guests to “a weekend where your dreams become your destination.”

The invitation mentioned a “once-in-a-lifetime performance” but did not specify by which artist. That turned out to be Beyoncé, who played a 19-song set, including a collaboration with her oldest

daughter, 11-year-old Blue Ivy, on the live debut of *Brown Skin Girl*, from Beyoncé's soundtrack to [Disney's 2019 photorealistic remake of *The Lion King*](#).

While the performance included similar live debuts for songs from that album, [Stereogum reported](#), it did not contain any material from Beyoncé's [highly acclaimed 2022 album *Renaissance*](#). That album purported to be a love letter to Black and queer dance music pioneers and communities.

As many fans have noted, homosexuality is illegal in the United Arab Emirates and considered a crime punishable by death. It is not always enforced: [researchers at the London School of Economics](#) have found that western gay men in the UAE are able to "use their economic, social and cultural privileges to create communities where they can meet and socialise."

Fans have long lobbied artists to cancel concerts in the UAE and Saudi Arabia over the countries' respective serious human rights violations.

In 2019, Nicki Minaj pulled out of playing Jeddah World Fest in Saudi Arabia after the Human Rights Foundation asked that she withdraw.

In 2021, Justin Bieber performed at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix despite campaigners and activists calling on him to cancel.

The Guardian has contacted representatives of [Beyoncé](#) about her decision to perform in the country.

People at the concert were asked to put their phones in locked pouches to prevent footage from the event circulating. Nevertheless, footage is appearing online and shows the musician backed by the Lebanese dance all-female troupe the Mayyas.

Following the show, a publicist for Beyoncé circulated professional footage of the show. A press release said there was "[more to come](#)."

General access live dates for *Renaissance* are yet to be announced. Billed as Act 1, the album is expected to be the first in a duo or trilogy.

Statues of Liberty

Outlet
National Review

Authors
Jay Nordlinger

Date
Feb. 6, 2022

On the Liberty Sculpture Park, decrying the Chinese dictatorship and celebrating Chinese freedom strugglers



Tank Man, by Weiming Chen, photographed on January 17, 2023 (Jay Nordlinger)

Yermo, Calif.

Sculpture parks are rare enough – certainly as compared with art museums – but the Liberty Sculpture Park is rarer still. It has a theme: the oppression of the Chinese government and the heroism of Chinese people who actively oppose it.

The park is in Yermo, Calif., in the Mojave Desert, about twelve miles from the town of Barstow. Yermo is known as “the Gateway of the Calicos,” i.e., the Calico Mountains.

There is a Marine base here – specifically, the Yermo Annex of the logistics base at Barstow.

And next to the park is EddieWorld: a gas station, but not just any gas station. This one has been called “the Disneyland of Gas Stations.” EddieWorld is, in fact, the largest gas station in California. There are many eateries inside, including Jedediah’s Jerky. Also, the place boasts “the cleanest restrooms on I-15.”



From the highway – and from EddieWorld – what stands out in the park is a huge bust, in the shape of the coronavirus molecule. On inspection, the bust is half Xi Jinping (the boss of the Chinese Communist Party, and therefore of China) and half skeleton. This artwork was unveiled on June 4, 2022.



Photo by Jonas Yuan



The date June 4 is not accidental. That is the date of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. It is a date very important to dissidents.

Weiming Chen is the sculptor of the coronavirus bust and of virtually all of the other works in the park. He has done more than one coronavirus bust. The first was unveiled in the park on June 4, 2021. Several weeks later, it was burned to the ground. Chen and his friends said that this crime was committed by agents of the Chinese government. Dissidents would say that, wouldn't they? Yes, but . . .

In March 2022, the U.S. Justice Department charged five people with "stalking, harassing, and spying on U.S. residents on behalf of the PRC

secret police." Three of those people are connected with machinations against Chen. One of them has pleaded guilty, and the other cases are pending.

It took seven months to produce the first coronavirus bust. It took another seven months for Chen and his helpers to produce the second – identical to the first, except in one respect: It is made out of steel, the better to thwart arsonists. The bust weighs ten tons. (Its predecessor was of fiberglass.)

For Jonas Yuan, a young intellectual who assists Weiming Chen, I have a question. "Forgive me, but why would the Chinese government – the mighty Chinese government – care about a little sculpture park in a faraway desert?" Yuan answers, "They're so petty."

A perfect answer. In addition to monstrous – genocidal – the Chinese Communists are petty.

Chen maintains a studio about nine miles from the sculpture park. This morning, he and his team are welding a wave, which is to be part of a sculpture commemorating the "freedom swimmers": people –



Weiming Chen at work

thousands of them – who swam from mainland China to Hong Kong during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Many of them, of course, did not survive the effort.

For lunch, Chen takes his team and me to Peggy Sue's 50's Diner. Did these Chinese-born people ever think they would be eating hamburgers in the California desert? Life is convulsive that way.



After lunch, we visit the park. Next to the coronavirus bust, Chen has left the first one – the ruins of it. In a way, the ruins make as powerful a statement as the second, and intact, bust.

One of Chen's other sculptures depicts Li Wangyang, a Chinese democracy activist. He was

arrested at Tiananmen Square, then imprisoned for 21 years. A year after his release, he was found hanged in a hospital room. The authorities said, naturally, "Suicide." But they changed their line to "accidental death." Dissidents have little doubt he was murdered.

On a plaque, Chen has a quotation from Li: "Everyone is responsible for the fate of the nation, and I will not yield, even if I am to be beheaded."

Another of Chen's sculptures is a giant "64" – just that number, silver, rising in the sky. It stands for "June 4."



Still another shows the "Tank Man," that unidentified yet iconic person who, on June 5, 1989, stood in front of a column of tanks.

For Jonas Yuan, I have another possibly rude question. "Isn't the park a little remote?" Yes, but the land out here is affordable. Moreover, says Yuan, we are roughly midway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas – a busy corridor. There's EddieWorld. Plus a Tesla Supercharger.

An increasing number of people are visiting the park, says Yuan, with a "big proportion" of them Chinese, or



There is an aspect of the park that comes from visitors. On a fence, they hang various artworks, or signs – humble, homemade things. The signs speak of the visitors’ personal experiences or feelings. For instance, one sign decries the sexual violence of the Hong Kong police.

Another sign shows what purports to be the logo of the Hong Kong Jockey Club (a world-famous institution). Instead of a horse, there is a deer, a buck. Jonas Yuan explains. There is an old saying in China: “This is a horse.” You are looking at a deer – an animal that is plainly a deer – but your mouth says, “This is a horse.” Why? Because the political authorities demand that a deer be a horse. Up is down, black is white – and a deer is a horse.



This is the culture of the lie, into which the whole population is coopted.

Back at the studio, I have a leisurely talk with Weiming Chen. He was born in Hangzhou, in 1956. Hangzhou is a city in east-central China, about 100 miles southwest of Shanghai. Chen’s birthday is December 28. So was Liu Xiaobo’s, he points out. Liu was a year older than Chen, born in 1955.

Liu Xiaobo was a leader of the Chinese democracy movement and a political prisoner. In 2010, he received the Nobel Peace Prize, in absentia. He had been in prison since 2008. He died in 2017, surrounded by Red Guards.



Behind Weiming Chen, as we are sitting, is a bas-relief, sculpted by him. It shows Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Prize medal, and an empty chair. Such a chair was present at the Nobel ceremony, to symbolize the absent laureate.

Chen’s mother taught art and music in a high school. “Do you like music?” I ask Chen. He does. But a piano, or even a violin, was expensive. Pencils and paper – they were cheaper. This influenced the young Weiming Chen toward art.

His father taught physical education at a university. He was taken prisoner in 1957, the year after Weiming was born. The elder Chen was a victim of Mao's "Anti-Rightist Campaign." (A "rightist," remember, was anyone suspected of having criticisms of the Communist Party. University personnel were especially suspicious.)

Weiming's father was kept in prison for over 20 years – until 1978. Two of Weiming's siblings were sent to the countryside, for "reeducation through labor." The Chens were a typical Chinese family.

Growing up, Weiming could not dream of going to a university. He was from a "bad family," you see. But when Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, loosened the country, Weiming had a chance. He took it, to go to the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing.

Why sculpture, and not some other medium? Because, in books, Chen saw the Sphinx. And ancient statues of Buddha. And the Statue of Liberty. And Mount Rushmore. He was excited by these monumental works. *This is much better than oil painting*, he thought.

His sculptor heroes are Michelangelo and Rodin. How about political heroes? "Reagan," he says – and all the great dissidents who have arisen in China.

After graduation, Chen taught art, and then he worked in a sculpture studio. Unlike Western cities, he says, Chinese cities have sculpture studios – official ones. Chen worked in one

of these. Employees of such a studio make pieces for squares and parks, serving the party – celebrating Mao, for instance.

Chen wanted to go to America but could not obtain a visa. He applied to many, many countries – and the country that took him was New Zealand. He left China for New Zealand in 1988. Did he think he was leaving China forever? He did think that, yes. In 2007, he was able to come here to America.

Shortly after he arrived in New Zealand, he was commissioned to make a brass sculpture of Edmund Hillary, the great mountaineer, born in Auckland. Sir Edmund himself attended the unveiling.

Chen's catalogue is large, but I will mention a few other pieces. He made a sculpture of the Goddess of Democracy – the symbol of the Tiananmen Square protesters. It was housed at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He made a bas-relief of the massacre. That was housed at another Hong Kong university, Lingnan.

He also made a sculpture called "Burning Tibet." It depicts one of the self-immolators in that country. It stands in Dharamshala, India, the capital of the Tibetan diaspora.

In recent years, Beijing has cracked down on Hong Kong, making it a PRC city like any other. It perhaps goes without saying that Weiming Chen's pieces at those universities have been removed.

I ask him, "Are you half artist, half dissident?" Not quite, he answers. He is an artist first. "But an artist always wants to be free. So a dictator is his natural enemy."

He is a very unusual fellow, Weiming Chen, and a brave one. From 2012 to 2014, he made three trips to Syria, where he worked with the Free Syrian Army. Why? He says that foreigners have supported Chinese people in their effort to break free of the Communist dictatorship. He wanted to show Syrians that not all Chinese people support the Assad dictatorship, though Beijing does. He thought it was a matter of conscience, and national honor.

It was in 2016 that Chen, with partners, purchased the property in Yermo: 36 acres. His first piece for the Liberty Sculpture Park was a bust of Crazy Horse. Yes, Crazy Horse, the Oglala Sioux leader of the 19th

century. It is the only piece in the park that is not explicitly Chinese. Chen wanted to "show respect," he says, to the pre-colonial inhabitants of America. He also admires the fighting spirit of Crazy Horse.

When I ask what his personal favorite is – his favorite piece in the park – he gives an answer I was not expecting: "Crazy Horse."

Chen plans to be working here at the park for the rest of his life. There will be more sculptures. He also hopes to raise enough money to build a museum, which will tell the stories of "people who have struggled for freedom in China," as he says.

"Why have you done this?" I say. "Is the park an act of devotion? An act of protest? An act of the heart?" Chen says, "I want to record real history – true history. Because the Chinese government tells everyone history that



is wrong. History that is not real. They say that the coronavirus comes from American soldiers. They say that no one died at Tiananmen Square. I use art – sculpture – to tell real history.”

If I know one thing about dissidents – and I have sat with a great many of them, from all over the world – it’s that, as a rule, they detest a lie.

At the end of our conversation, I ask Chen a standard question: “What should Americans know about China that they may not know?” He says, “They don’t know how evil the Chinese Communist Party is.

Many people think of evil as something that’s in a movie, not in real life.”

China’s rulers, says Chen, “care only about power. Not human beings. People are just material to them” – material to be shaped and pushed around and smashed.

Weiming Chen is a serious artist whose life has led him to activism. “Dictators always want to control you,” he says. “We should do some things, not just talk some things. Make something like a park.” He has, and a unique and bold one.

‘Women, life, freedom’: Chants of Protest in Iran

Outlet

Op-Ed
**Washington
Times**

Author

Claudia Bennett,
Legal & Policy
Researcher

Date

Feb. 9, 2023

Forty-four years after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Tehran is once again feeling the wrath of its citizenry. Then, it was the Shah and his “modern ideals” the people sought to, and successfully did, overthrow. Now, a different regime – the Islamic Republic – is in power and in the people’s crosshairs.

In the words of Grammy-award-winning artist, Lizzo: It’s about damn time. We in the free world can, and should, stand with the Iranian people as they demand some sort of accountability from the regime, especially on Saturday – the anniversary of another revolution.

Since the brutal murder of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 at the hands of the morality police, protests have taken place across Iran and the world.

Importantly, they’ve been led by women in courageous defiance.

What started with hair-cutting, hijabs-on-fire, and chants of “women, life, freedom” has morphed into an underground movement that’s sending a very clear message to the regime: The people aren’t going to stop protesting anytime soon.

If the recent demonstrations have taught us anything about Iran, it’s this: Human rights have been continuously and increasingly restricted. The most basic freedoms, particularly those to be enjoyed by women, are outright banned.

The regime has killed at least 517 people during the protests. It has so far executed four men for participating in them. Dozens and dozens of others are at risk of

meeting the same fate. More than 19,000 people have been arrested and sentenced on vague and outrageous charges; the most recent example being the 10.5-year prison sentence a 20-something, Instagram-influencing couple received for dancing near a Tehran monument.

Detainees have been placed in solitary confinement, subjected to extreme torture, and denied legal representation during sham trials.

We all know what these tactics are designed to do: Repress the protesters and instill fear. Or, at very least, try.

The Iranian people are showing great resistance despite these gross human rights abuses.

Today is our chance to re-ignite global support and solidarity with the Iranian people.

As the news cycle moves on to the "next big thing," Iranian activists like Masih Alinejad, Nazanin Boniadi, and Gissou Nia are doing their part in keeping the public informed of what's taking place in Iran and how we can help. They're calling on individuals worldwide to join Iranians by protesting. To show those in Iran risking their lives for freedom they're not alone.

"Iran's dictatorship can kill people, murder them, and put them in jail. But it cannot end this revolution," Alinejad said in October at the Human Rights Foundation's Oslo Freedom Forum in

New York. "Many women have sent me videos telling me this –they know that they may go out and may not come back alive. But the regime cannot kill the idea behind our fight – a secular, democratic Iran."

History has repeatedly shown us that while Iran is no stranger to protests, neither is the regime's response to them.

The Iranian regime has increased the frequency and gravity of human rights abuses since the Iranian Revolution 44 years ago. For each attempt to hold the regime accountable for its repression – from the 2009 Green Movement calling for the removal of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the protests of 2017 and the bloody November of 2019, initially over the price of goods – Tehran has responded with violence.

Amini's death is yet another byproduct of years living under a dictatorship that restricts basic freedoms.

Let's remember that when good people do nothing, evil triumphs.

So on Saturday, Islamic Revolution Day, let's lend our support to the new women-led revolution. Let's join Iranians worldwide in using this day to draw attention to the abuses of the regime. To support the protesters in countering the regime. To irrevocably end the grave violations of human rights. And to finally hold the regime accountable.



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Entre Dos Ríos



Feb. 22, 2023



Putin's speech was 'weak' and 'pathetic' next to Biden's, Kasparov says



Feb. 22, 2023



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