

Media Highlights 2023 Q2



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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BY THE NUMBERS

41



Languages

23 Billion

Global Impressions

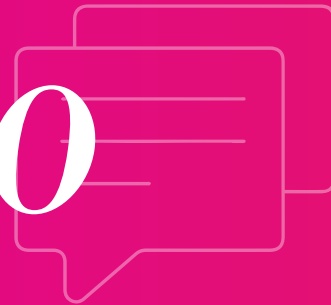
112



Countries

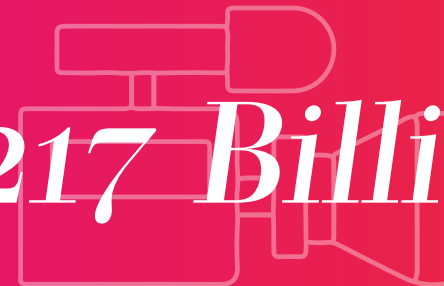
5,320

Media Mentions



\$217 Billion

Earned Media Value



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

Outlet
Op-Ed
CNN

Author
Casey Michel,
Director of Combating
Kleptocracy Program

Date
April 28, 2023



Some [70](#) US lawmakers [wrote](#) to Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week, urging the Biden administration to press Russia for the release of imprisoned dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza.

That correspondence probably won't prompt Russian President Vladimir Putin to free his longtime critic, but it just might help cast a spotlight on the plight of Kara-Murza, which deserves far more international attention than it has generally received.

Much public notice justifiably has been paid in recent months to other individuals who have been unjustly imprisoned by Putin's ruthless regime. The outrageous detention last month of [Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich](#) has prompted vocal demands for his release from his employer and from the US State Department and generated international headlines.

Meanwhile, an [Oscar-winning](#) documentary has called attention to the terrible plight of imprisoned opposition

leader [Alexey Navalny](#), whose [deteriorating health](#) is cause of grave concern. [In comments posted on Twitter](#) this week, he wrote that his situation may even be worsening, saying that Russian authorities told him they are [planning to prosecute him](#) on terrorism charges that could mean decades more in prison.

While the West must continue to call for the release of those two high-profile political prisoners, it should not overlook Kara-Murza. Although he is respected for his work as a [Washington Post columnist](#) and has been honored with the [Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize](#) – reaction to his plight as a Russian prisoner has seemed strangely muted.

Russian authorities charged Kara-Murza with treason in October 2022, after being detained in April of that year. His arrest [followed a speech](#) he gave the previous month to the Arizona House of Representatives in which he called out Western “appeasement” of Putin. After a [show trial](#), a Russian court sentenced him earlier this month to a staggering 25 years in prison, the [harshest sentence](#) meted out to a government critic since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

Since his arrest, the [US, Canada and Latvia have issued](#) fresh sanctions against Russian nationals. And last month, the US [State](#) and [Treasury](#) Departments announced a number of sanctions against those involved in Kara-Murza's prosecution and detention, accusing them of “serious human rights abuse[s].” But the

response elsewhere has been surprisingly lackluster – especially by the United Kingdom Kara-Murza is a citizen of Britain, in addition to holding a Russian passport.

Last week, after months of seeming inaction, the British government [condemned](#) Kara-Murza's conviction and sentencing. It announced [sanctions](#) against various individuals it accused of having a hand in his detention and prosecution, as well as two FSB security service agents it said played a role in his [two near-fatal poisonings](#).

“The UK will continue to support Mr. Kara-Murza and his family. I call on Russia to release him immediately and unconditionally,” Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said in a statement announcing the sanctions.

But in various public statements, including in an interview with the BBC, Kara-Murza's wife Evgenia [lamented](#) that it took a draconian prison sentence against her husband to spur London to act.

“It only saddens me that it took a year of unlawful detention, a horrific sentence of 25 years in a strict regime and a very concerning deterioration of my husband's health for the British government to move to a somewhat stronger response,” Evgenia Kara-Murza [told](#) the British broadcaster.

London's less-than-robust response points to a disheartening problem: An apparent lack of coordination among Western allies in responding to the incarceration of such a prominent

opposition figure, as Russia lurches toward totalitarianism.

The Biden administration launched its “[Without Just Cause](#)” campaign aimed at highlighting the plight of political prisoners – including Kara-Murza – around the world. US lawmakers in the US Congress have issued a range of congressional [resolutions](#) and [individual statements](#) highlighting Kara-Murza’s plight.

But efforts to call attention to the plight of those who are unjustly imprisoned and to undertake concerted action to help them have been, at best, scattershot. The disjointed Western response to Kara-Murza’s plight only works to Russia’s advantage.

After more than a year of war, certain Russian officials and various oligarchs have been sanctioned by certain Western governments while others are not – a helter-skelter response which helps only them [circumvent existing sanctions](#). And even when sanctions are applied, they don’t always seem to have the desired effect, as we learned this week amid headlines about a Russian deputy defense minister whose socialite former wife apparently is [living the high life in Europe](#) – even though her ex-husband has been sanctioned.

It’s long past time to create a coordinating body to ensure that Western sanctions packages are aligned and airtight. A [proposal](#) for a Trans-Atlantic Anti-Corruption Council lays out the perfect

framework for such a body. It would bring together officials and experts to further align anti-corruption policy on both sides of the Atlantic, and is precisely what’s needed if America, Britain, the European Union and Canada are to present a unified front on the sanctions regime.

We know that the threat of being sanctioned [still strikes fear](#) in the heart of Russian officials and oligarchs. It’s possible that they recalled a similar case from over a decade ago, after the imprisonment and death in custody of Russian figure Sergei Magnitsky. That led US lawmakers to pass the well-known and broadly successful 2012 “[Magnitsky Act](#)” sanctions program which Russians came to revile.

The law was signed by then-President Barack Obama as a retaliation against the human rights abuses suffered by Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer and auditor who discovered hundreds of millions of dollars in graft and fraud involving the Kremlin.

Somehow it seems that the West still treads gingerly with the Russian dictator, even amid his egregious human rights abuses and blatant violations of international law.

Magnitsky, who was arrested without charge after blowing the whistle, ultimately died during his detention under suspicious circumstances.

A 2016 measure, the [Global Magnitsky Act](#), expanded on the original law, and has succeeded in targeting [hundreds](#) of corrupt individuals and entities around the world since its enactment, according to the US government. A number of [European countries](#) have also passed their own versions of the Magnitsky Act.

Somehow it seems – despite all the attention Moscow has drawn over the past year for its invasion of Ukraine and the increasingly authoritarian leadership of President Vladimir Putin – that the West still treads gingerly with the Russian dictator, even amid his egregious human rights abuses and blatant violations of international law.

The US senators have gestured at least toward trying to help Kara-Murza, a man who had survived two poisonings suspected to have been carried out by the Russian regime, and who as a result has [lost feeling in both feet and one of his arms](#).

The letter by US lawmakers is a small step, but it is at very least, a start. Washington should now follow it up with more robust action, including declaring Kara-Murza “wrongfully detained.”

The US government should encourage Western allies to take similar stringent measures against Putin’s regime and to pledge to improve coordination on sanctions moving forward. It might yield results in the form of fewer detained dissidents – and could even lead to the long-overdue freedom from prison for Kara-Murza.

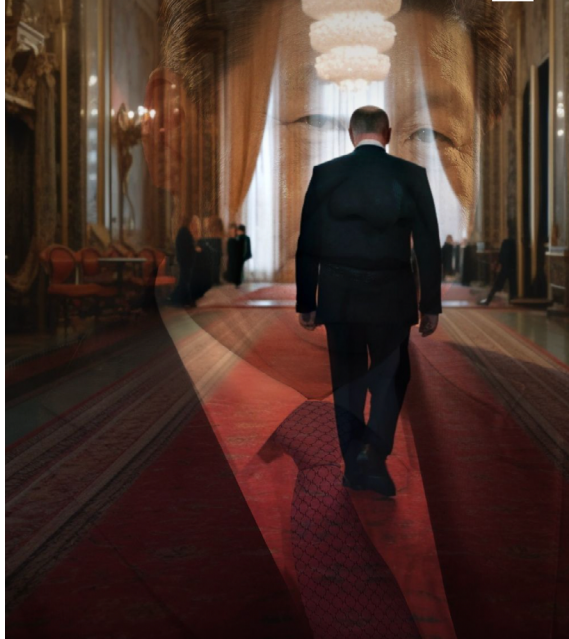
Conspiracies of Hope

Outlet
The Signal

Authors
J.J. Gould

Date
May 8, 2023

Democracy, human rights, and The Signal



Despite increasing political polarization around the democratic world—where it can now seem as though we’re living in starkly divided realities, formed by competing ideological views and media ecosystems—there’s a remarkably broad and resilient moral consensus on the foundational values of democracy and human rights.

You can see this in the global response to Moscow’s assault on Ukraine, widely interpreted not only as an illegitimate invasion of one country by another but as an attack by an autocratic power on an emerging democratic society—essentially, an attack by autocracy on democracy.

You can also see it in the global response to other challenges to democracy and human rights when they

might break into the news—whether it’s Beijing’s designs on Taiwan or ongoing oppression of the Uyghurs in northwestern China; Moscow’s imprisonment of Alexei Navalny and other political dissidents; or Tehran’s crackdown on Iranian women and their pro-democratic allies since the death of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the regime’s morality police last year.

You can see it in the global response to the standing nightmare of the North Korean prison state, at one end of the spectrum, or attempts to undermine elections in established democracies like the United States or Brazil, at the other.

This consensus on the foundational values of democracy and human rights is far from total, even within democratic societies, but it’s pervasive and powerful—almost in defiance of the partisan divisions that shape so much of contemporary life. The Signal isn’t just part of this consensus; we’re defined by it. It’s central to our mission, generating some of the biggest questions we ask as we grapple to understand what’s happening in the world.

Which is why we’re delighted to be partnering with the Human Rights Foundation on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the [Oslo Freedom Forum](#). In 2009, HRF inaugurated the OFF to pay tribute to survivors of Communism and Nazism. They’ve since developed it into an annual event that raises global awareness, gives voice to the world’s democratic dissidents, and activates a network of support for them and resistance to autocracy throughout the year.

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Over the next six weeks, we’ll be featuring conversations with participants in [this year’s Forum](#), beginning Thursday with Jason Rezaian. Rezaian is an Iranian-American journalist, a columnist for The Washington Post, and the author of *Prisoner: My 544 Days in an Iranian Prison*, about his experience in captivity in Iran.

Designer and activist Louise Xin urges us to ‘wear our values’ with her latest fashion show

Outlet
**Vogue
Scandinavia**

Author
Josefin Forsberg

Date
June 18, 2023



Photo: Emma Grann

In less than two years, Louise Xin has garnered multiple accolades, held an opening speech at the UN conference in Albania and staged the first-ever fashion show in the European Parliament in 2023 focusing on forced labour and modern slavery. Her meteorite journey was, according to the designer, catapulted by Vogue Scandinavia's article 'Louise Xin is changing the world one dress at a time' detailing her debut.

"This autumn will mark two years since my debut fashion show," says Xin, who notes that the article was an important step on the journey towards a more transparent and ethical fashion industry. "Honestly, I couldn't believe it myself," she continues. "It was the very first time a major fashion magazine spoke about Uyghur forced labour."

Now the activist designer takes to Oslo Freedom Forum to stage the next fashion show for her eponymous

Photo: Emma Grann



*“Through this
journey, I have
come to understand
that change is not
only possible
but inevitable.”*

- Louise Xin in Vogue Scandinavia





Photo: Emma Grann

rental couture brand. Hosted in Høymagasinet, the show is part of the Human Rights Foundation's 'Wear Your Values' program. The program encourages difficult dialogues in the fashion industry, promoting transparency and human rights in global supply chains. All while bringing awareness to the stunning hidden social costs of the fashion industry.

Norwegian model and climate activist Ada Martini and Uyghurian models Sano Turdiev and Ayesha Erkin took centre stage, swathed in overblown 3D floral appliqués, sculpted folds and enticing prints, at

the runway show dedicated to human rights. The soundtrack, created by renowned film music producer Eric Rosse, set the tone.

Based on the harrowing testimony of an Uyghur woman, Gulbahar, the story has been rewritten as poetry by artist XOY and was performed by celebrated Swedish actress Sofia Karemyr.

"Through this journey," Xin says, referencing her work to shine a spotlight on injustices, "I have come to understand that change is not only possible but inevitable."

El manual para derrocar dictaduras de Srdja Popovic: “Hay que encontrar los tentáculos del dinero y cortarlos uno a uno”

Outlet
El País

Authors
Patricia R. Blanco

Date
June 18, 2023



Srdja Popovic, durante el Oslo Freedom Forum.

Cuando Srdja Popovic (Belgrado, 50 años) comienza a hablar de cómo un movimiento no violento puede provocar un cambio social, desde la mejora de salarios al derrocamiento de un dictador, parece desplegar un manual de guerra. En los primeros cinco minutos pronuncia palabras como “organización”, “movilización”, “disciplina”, “estrategia” y “tácticas”. Líder de Otpor! (¡Resistencia!), el movimiento estudiantil serbio que precipitó la caída del dictador Slobodan Milosevic, dirige ahora [CANVAS \(Centro para la Aplicación de Acciones y Estrategias de No Violencia\)](#), donde lleva 18 años entrenando a activistas de todo el mundo con técnicas que nunca incluyen agresiones físicas. No es solo por ideología ni responde a una visión idealizada del mundo,

sino que es parte del plan para alcanzar la victoria final. Curtido en batallas cuerpo a cuerpo contra la policía de la dictadura serbia cuando era estudiante universitario con la no violencia como arma —“me encanta el olor de los gases lacrimógenos”, bromea—, sabe que “si los movimientos no violentos tienen más éxito que los violentos, es porque aglutinan una mayor participación”.

“El activismo ha cambiado mucho en los últimos años, desde un punto de vista físico, táctico y tecnológico, porque tiene una gran dependencia de las redes sociales”, explica Popovic durante una entrevista en Oslo, donde acaba de intervenir en el [Oslo Freedom Forum](#), la convención anual de activistas que organiza la [Human Rights Foundation](#) (Fundación de Derechos Humanos). Pero esa transformación arroja un balance agri dulce: “Los movimientos sociales son cada vez más numerosos, pero hay menos casos de éxito”.

A diferencia de lo que ocurría hace una década, las nuevas movilizaciones son “muy horizontales” en cuanto a la toma de decisiones, más difíciles de predecir y, por tanto, de suprimir, y más “espontáneas”, lo que hace que sean capaces de aglutinar a un gran número de seguidores. “Publicas un video y estás tres días acaparando la atención y sumando adeptos”, detalla el activista. Pero los números, advierte, “no lo son todo”

“Es fácil caer en la tentación de sentirse ganadores por ser muy visibles, por decir que un *hashtag*

es tendencia”, considera Popovic. Pero cuando el movimiento crece de forma horizontal, el liderazgo se diluye. “Sin líderes, es más difícil la organización, y sin organización, es más difícil la movilización; y un movimiento social es imposible sin movilización porque no es capaz de mantener una campaña a largo plazo”, añade el activista. Y subraya la importancia de la constancia: “Los cambios sociales requieren tiempo, no son una carrera, sino una maratón, son un cúmulo de pequeñas victorias con las que vas construyendo una narrativa”.

“Los cambios sociales requieren tiempo, no son una carrera, sino una maratón, son un cúmulo de pequeñas victorias con las que vas construyendo una narrativa.”

Primera parte del plan

Para torcer el brazo de los dictadores, hay un elemento, según Popovic, imprescindible en todos los movimientos, independientemente de cuáles sean sus luchas o del espacio en el que sucedan: “Necesitan una visión, un lenguaje común que ponga nombre a lo que quieres y no solo a aquello contra lo que te movilizas”. El ejemplo actual

más claro de lo que el activista no haría es Irán. [“Puedes ver a millones de personas protestando contra el régimen de Ali Jamenei](#), pero yo planteo qué ocurriría si tuviera la varita de Harry Potter y pudiera sacar a Jamenei, meterlo en un avión y mandarlo a Siria”, relata. Y se pregunta “¿Cuál es el siguiente paso? ¿Quién queremos que nos gobierne? ¿Queremos que vuelva el sha?”. Porque “quitar al malo”, advierte, “no va a solucionar las cosas”.

“Lo más importante para lograr el cambio social no es sumar a los que piensan y son como tú, sino sumar a los que no son como tú, a la gente neutral con respecto a la causa o a la que tiene sus propias afrentas.”

Por eso, el segundo pilar del manual de no violencia de Popovic es la unidad. “Lo más importante para lograr el cambio social no es sumar a los que piensan y son como tú, sino sumar a los que no son como tú, a la gente neutral con respecto a la causa o a la que tiene sus propias afrentas”, dice. Y nuevamente, huye de la idealización del mundo y aterriza en el terreno práctico: “Hay

muchos movimientos sociales que pretenden lograr apoyos apelando a la democracia y a los derechos humanos, pero muchas más personas se sumarían si sonara en el discurso la palabra corrupción, que les puede afectar personalmente”.

Esa unidad solo puede canalizarse a través de la organización. “Tienes que saber quién está haciendo qué, cuando, cómo y por qué, lo que significa tener una idea muy clara de por qué hoy hacemos caceroladas o mañana pintamos grafitis”.

Las tácticas

No hay plan posible sin planear tácticas, considera Popovic. Y para ello, es esencial entender el “sitio en el que estás”. “Si te movilizas en Argentina y ocupas las calles, es poco probable que te pase algo porque es una democracia; en cambio, en Irán, lo último que deberías hacer es reunir a la gente para que puedan matarla y facilitar así el trabajo al régimen”, recomienda Popovic.

Porque por encima de todas las reglas y pilares, el principio fundamental de todo activista no violento, por evidente que pueda parecer, es “evitar que te maten”. “El modo de mantener un movimiento no violento no solo depende de tener un programa maravilloso o líderes que hablan muy bien, sino de darle a la gente formas de participar, y habrá más seguidores cuanto menos tengan que arriesgar”, remata. “Tienes que estar seguro de que hagas lo que hagas, evitarás

tácticas que arriesguen la vida de las personas, ya que es muy ingenuo pensar que en un lugar como Irán no va a haber un castigo si participa mucha gente”.



Manifestantes en Irán protestan por el asesinato de Mahsa Amini, el 15 de octubre de 2022. STEFANI REYNOLDS (AFP)

Cuando el movimiento está organizado y tiene muy claro sus objetivos, el siguiente paso es el adiestramiento en la no violencia. “Si tú crees que las cosas se van a poner feas, tienes que entrenar a tu gente para que no realice actos violentos, y eso te hará mucho más poderoso porque los regímenes necesitan desesperadamente que uses la fuerza para tener una justificación con la que atacarte y deslegitimarte”.

Este consejo, según Popovic, es clave porque “si la gente está enfadada, puede caer en la agresión”. “En Serbia formamos una vez una cadena humana para proteger a la propia policía de un grupo de fans del fútbol que pensaron que la forma de protestar y de apoyarnos era atacar a los agentes”, recuerda. Y de nuevo, la táctica: “Esos hombres y mujeres tenían la orden de ir contra nosotros, pero al hacer la cadena cambiamos la situación y

provocamos que tuvieran la orden de ir contra la gente que les estaba protegiendo, así que le estábamos creando un gran dilema”.

Aunque para evitar la violencia, no hay mejor táctica que huir de ella. “¿Quieres mandar a la gente a ocupar un parlamento o bloquear una autopista? Son situaciones en las que es muy fácil que estalle la violencia, por lo que solo puedes hacerlo si estás completamente seguro de que tienes a toda tu gente controlada”, explica Popovic. El activista ofrece alternativas. “Si dispones de 100.000 personas que pueden marchar contra edificios públicos, quizás es más inteligente organizar 10 marchas de 10.000 personas por la ciudad”, lo que obligará a la policía a dispersarse y, probablemente, será menos eficaz.

Para determinar las mejores tácticas, “hay que estudiar al régimen contra el que te enfrentas y descubrir qué necesita para sobrevivir, encontrar los tentáculos de la hidra, que suelen ser los del dinero, y empezar a cortarlos uno a uno”, describe con crudeza. “No sirve de nada, por ejemplo, hacer manifestaciones diarias para expresar el apoyo a Ucrania, cuando Rusia sigue financiando la guerra con las exportaciones de petróleo y gas”.

La conclusión para Popovic es que “los dictadores no se mueven por ideología”, sino por mantener su riqueza. El éxito de la revolución de Sudán de 2019, que [provocó la detención y caída del dictador Omar al Bashir](#), es un buen ejemplo

de ello. “En lugar de concentrar a la gente en la calle, donde los podían matar porque tenían que enfrentarse a quienes ya habían cometido matanzas [en Sudán del Sur], los activistas dieron un paso atrás y convocaron una huelga”, recuerda. Y una vez más, subraya la importancia de la táctica: “Miras los números que tienes y piensas en cómo usarlos; y en Sudán lograron que los trabajadores de los bancos hicieran huelga, de manera que los bancos estaban cerrados y los cajeros desabastecidos... Y los militares necesitan dinero y no obtienen ninguna ventaja matándote, por lo que la acción de unos pocos fue más efectiva que poner a toda la masa en la calle”. Cuando algo así ocurre, continúa, “es porque alguien lo ha planeado previamente”.

Es la “receta” que recomienda para

[dictaduras como la de Nicaragua.](#)

“Mantener la opresión es muy caro, porque hay que pagar a los policías, y Nicaragua es la más vulnerable de todas las dictaduras de América Latina, porque depende mucho del turismo y no del petróleo”, sugiere.

Pero no hay victoria final si la transición fracasa, como ocurrió en Egipto con la llegada de Abdel Fatah al Sisi, o en Sudán con el golpe de Estado militar. “El momento más arriesgado de toda movilización social es cuando ganas”, alerta Popovic. En ese instante, es fundamental tener planeado quién va a dirigir la transición y cómo lo va a hacer. Y advierte: “La luna de miel tras el éxito de una revolución es muy breve, se crea un vacío de poder y las fuerzas más organizadas, que no son siempre las más democráticas, son las que intentarán ocuparlo”.

Activists say the human rights movement is failing

Outlet
POLITICO

Authors
Nahal Toosi

Date
June 18, 2023

Refugees from the civil war in Sudan arrive in Madrid, Spain, on April 24, 2023. | Spanish Defence Ministry via AP



OSLO, Norway – Gatherings of human rights activists tend to feature commitments to the cause mixed with a lot of gallows humor – after all, many such advocates have survived and persisted in their roles despite imprisonment, torture and surveillance by authoritarian regimes.

But on a sunlit June night in this Nordic capital, at the annual Oslo Freedom Forum last week, it was hard to avoid a more pessimistic tone.

Dissidents and human rights campaigners led toasts and implored each other to keep the faith in their quest to end tyranny. They admitted, however, that they were running short on hope amid the rise of increasingly nimble, tech-savvy adversaries.

“The state of the modern human rights movement is rather dire,” said Ramy Yaacoub, who works on Middle East issues for the Open Society Foundations, a grant-making network founded by liberal billionaire financier George Soros. “Back in the day, human rights groups were

ahead of the curve. But autocratic regimes have learned from that. They're investing in their tactics, and they're coordinating."

Conversations with more than a dozen attendees last week suggest that a global movement that flowered post-World War II, and saw major victories amid the fall of the Soviet Union, now sees itself at a crossroads. If activists fail to find new methods, they say, dictators are likely to grow even more emboldened.

For Yaacoub and 1,400 others gathered at the forum, the last 15 years have been marked by far more failures than successes. Even what seemed like initial victories often morphed into losses. Just a few years ago, for instance, [democracy campaigners in Sudan celebrated the ouster of a dictator](#); today, military leaders who took advantage of that moment have plunged [the country back into war](#).

"We can't even point to Tunisia anymore," bemoaned Andrea Prasow, executive director of The Freedom Initiative, referring to the north African country's return to autocracy after years of being the sole democratic success of the Arab Spring.

Prasow said she's having a harder time convincing funders to support the work of her organization, which focuses heavily on freeing political prisoners, as positive results feel too few and far between. "It's a long game," she tries to explain to them.

The advocates have no intention of abandoning their collective and

individual fights. But the conversation here in Oslo centered on the need to rethink the human rights movement's actions and tools at a moment when autocracy has gained strength worldwide and technology offers both promise and peril. They know that while autocratic regimes are refining their methods, the countries that say they support human rights, such as the United States, can be unreliable when their own interests are at stake.

The conversation here in Oslo centered on the need to rethink the human rights movement's actions and tools at a moment when autocracy has gained strength worldwide.

Sanaa Seif has learned from bitter experience. More than a decade ago, she joined groups who successfully called for the overthrow of Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak. But the Arab country is now under the arguably more brutal dictatorship of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the recipient of billions worth of U.S. security aid. Seif's brother, Alaa Abd El-Fattah, is a political prisoner there.

"I started with a very powerful moment. Since then, it's been defeat and degradation," Seif said. "Now, I really believe we should dream big,

but we should be very pragmatic about our expectations."

There's no solid way to quantify the reasons for the activists' frustration; no single data set captures every win or loss in a field that draws everyone from advocates for political prisoners to those crafting anti-corruption laws. One frequently cited source is Freedom House's "worldwide freedom index," a measure of democracy's strength. It has been [on a downward slide for 17 years](#).

Other [data sets are fragmented at best](#), so rights activists are left with anecdotes. Those are usually depressing: Afghanistan is back under control of the Taliban, meaning women and girls' rights are severely curtailed; Iran's Islamist regime has largely snuffed out a protest movement over the past year, partly by ramping up executions; and many voices say democracy in the United States, still a beacon of hope for this crowd, faces danger, amid moments like the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Many human rights activists applaud the United States and its European and Asian allies for supporting Ukraine as it tries to repel Russia's invasion, a major topic at this year's forum.

But some said that the war has become an excuse for Western leaders to go easy on abusive governments elsewhere in the world.

Azerbaijan's strongman, Ilham Aliyev, should face far more economic sanctions from the United States and other governments, argued Leyla Yunus, a

one-time political prisoner from the country. But, because Russia's war on Ukraine has hurt energy markets, the "West needs Azerbaijan's oil and gas, and our dictator enjoys it," Yunus said.

The State Department declined to comment on U.S. policy toward Azerbaijan or other specific cases cited in this story. And in the case of Azerbaijan, any U.S. desire to penalize the country has been further complicated by recent diplomatic efforts to resolve [a long-running conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia](#).

A State Department spokesperson, however, referred POLITICO to a recent comment from Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the issue more broadly. "Human rights are always on the agenda for the United States. It's who we are," Blinken said.

Such claims do not assuage rights activists. Democracies always put their own domestic "economics before human rights," said Victor Navarro, a journalist and former Venezuelan political prisoner who was at the conference.

In the United States, President Joe Biden is hosting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week for a state dinner, despite growing concerns about the Modi government's autocratic actions and persecution of Muslims. In the past, U.S. officials have stressed that they talk to India privately about human rights issues, but they also consider it a critical partner in the U.S. rivalry with China.

In recent years, scholars and practitioners have increasingly [questioned](#)

[whether the modern human rights movement is succeeding.](#)

Some argue that the “name and shame” tactic so often used by rights groups doesn’t sway autocrats the way it might have in the past. They just don’t seem to care that much about how they are viewed.

Scholar Jack Snyder argued in a [2022 essay for Foreign Affairs](#) that some strongmen have successfully cast promotion of human rights as the work of elitist, out-of-touch “bullies who push alien agendas to replace popular national self-determination.” (He included in the group former U.S. President Donald Trump, who praised many dictators and is seeking a second term.)

The solutions proposed by academics and activists range from

focusing more on economic fairness and inequality issues to greater cross-border collaboration among rights organizations.

At the Oslo conference, activists were also increasingly focused on the potential of using new technology to help their causes. Some are sending cryptocurrency to dissidents in authoritarian countries as a means of supplementing their resources.

But tyrants have also learned to use technology to surveil, outwit and further oppress their populations. And authoritarian regimes are collaborating with each other on the tech front – regimes in the Middle East are now [using Chinese surveillance tools](#). Iran and Venezuela have signed [a series of cooperation agreements](#) on science, technology and beyond in part to defy U.S. sanctions on both



Iranian-Canadian artist Simin Keramati sits in the PaykanArtCar during its unveiling at the Oslo Freedom Forum on June 13, 2023. The car is adorned with women’s hair, serving as a visual representation of support for the “Women, Life, Freedom” protest movement against Iran’s Islamist regime. | Fredrik Naumann/AP Images for PaykanArtCar

countries. The arrival of powerful new versions of artificial intelligence is only adding to rights activists’ worries.

Dictators also have learned to put a veneer of legality and respectability over their actions, dissidents note. More autocrats know not to win so-called elections by 99 percent anymore, but a more reasonable figure that comes [even after plenty of manipulation](#).

The activists in Norway could not think of many successes in recent years. Some pointed to growing awareness of far-right extremism, the release of some political prisoners (though that’s often accompanied by new arrests) and efforts by social media companies to prevent online radicalization.

And they stressed that raising awareness of rights abuses still matters. The Chinese crackdown on Uyghur Muslims would be even more severe were it not from the global outrage directed at Beijing, said Gulbahar Haitiwaji, a Uyghur previously detained in one of China’s internment camps.

“The criticism didn’t free everyone, but it did help some people regain their freedom,” she said.

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.

Political prisoners at the event, which is organized by the New

York-based Human Rights Foundation, bond with others who’ve endured similar experiences. Much of the program involves presentations from dissidents who’ve survived everything from solitary confinement to assassination attempts.

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.

There’s a wellness room for people who need to decompress amid trauma-triggering conversations. But there also continues to be humor in the face of adversity.

One speaker mentioned how nice it was to be in Norway and not tailed by security forces.

“You know, I miss them,” Mzwandile Masuku, a Swazi human rights lawyer, joked of his usual pursuers. “I wonder what they are doing.”

Iran: Nazanin Boniadi gir stemme til kvinner som kjemper mot henrettelser og for menneskerettigheter i Iran

Outlet
Aftenposten

Author
Nazneen
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Date
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Aktivister både i og utenfor Iran står fortsatt på for å velte den islamske republikken. Særlig iranske kvinner kjemper en beundringsverdig kamp.



U Den britisk-iranske skuespilleren Nazanin Boniadi vil at folk skal forstå at det er forskjell på Iran og den islamske republikken. Foto: Jan T. Espedal

Slik valgte Nazanin Boniadi, den iransk-britiske skuespilleren og aktivisten å starte sitt bidrag under Oslo Freedom Forum nylig: «Iranere er ikke redde for fengsel, for Iran er nå et feng sel.» Sitatet har hun hentet fra den iranske skuespillerkollegaen Katayoun Rishi.

Boniadi er aktuell i serien «The lord of the rings: the rings of power» på Amazon. Hun er også kjent fra seriene «Homeland» og «How I met your mother».

Under den årlige konferansen som samler aktivister fra hele verden, var Iran et av hovedte- maene. Det skyldes det voldsomme opprøret som eksploderte i fjor i november

etter drapet på 22 år gamle Mahsa Amini.

– Selv om det ikke er store demonstrasjoner i gatene lenger, betyr ikke det at opprøret har sluknet, det har bare funnet andre former for å overleve, sa Boniadi da jeg møtte henne dagen før hun holdt talen.

Hun har engasjert seg i kampen mot det islamske regimet i mange år. Og demonstrasjonene, de har økt i frekvens.

De mest optimistiske mener dette er et tegn på at det iranske folket har fått nok. Andre mener det ikke engang finnes en tunnel eller et lys. Det er lite tvil om at iranerne som kjemper mot regimet, står mot brutale krefter.

Aktiv i Amnesty. Kurdiske Amini ble arrestert av det iranske moralpolitiet fordi hun hadde på seg den pålagte hijaben feil. Hun døde etter å ha vært i deres varetekt. Hennes død førte til at tusener av iranere stormet ut i gatene i raseri. Hun representerte ikke bare de unge, men også en av Irans mange minoriteter som i økende grad forfølges.

Mange kvinner over hele verden klippet av håret sitt og brente hijabene sine i protest. Revolusjonsgarden responderte nådeløst. Tusenvis ble arrestert og utsatt for vold. Over 500 mennesker ble henrettet av regimet i fjor, ifølge Amnesty. I år har tallet allerede nådd 277 ifølge Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO).

Under talen viste Boniadi bilder av

lederne av den islamske republikken. De er alle eldre menn. Og så byttet hun bildene ut. De andre bildene var av unge kvinner som lot håret flomme fritt. De sto med ryggen til i red sel for å bli arrestert, voldtatt, torturert og i verste fall drept.

Flyktettill London. Iranske kvinner viser mot. Igjen og igjen.

En stor andel kvinner demonstrerte også i 1979 etter at ayatollah Khomeini kom til makten. I tusentall gikk de ut i gatene og protesterte mot hijabpåbudet. Frem til 1979 kunne kvinner velge selv om de ville gå med hijab, med unntak av da Reza sjah Pahlavi forbød det i 1936, og frem til han gikk av i 1941.

En av disse som gikk med hodet høyt hevet i Teherans gater, var Boniadis egen mor. Hun og ektemannen flyktet til London kort tid etter revolusjonen, rett etter at Boniadi ble født.

Håpet er at et sekulært demokrati skal erstatte det islamske regimet. Det er en drøm den iranske diasporaen kjemper hardt for å realisere. Men samtidig betyr det at den må klare å danne en felles politisk front. Det kan bli svært krevende å få til.

Skulle det islamske regimet mirakuløst veltes, ville det potensielt få enorme konsekvenser for hele regionen.

Visepresident i FN. Iran har en unik rolle som et av de ledende sjiamuslimske landene i Midtøsten. Det islamske regimet har lange tentakler – til blant annet Jemen, Syria og Irak. Boniadi

forteller meg at hun er frustrert over at vestlige demokratier og FN fortsetter å anerkjenne den islamske republikken på tross av menneskerettighetsbruddene.

– Iran ble kastet ut av FNs kvinnekommisjon, men nå er Iran valgt til å inneha blant annet visepresident-vervene i FNs generalforsamling. Det gir den islamske republikken legitimitet, sa Boniadi. Hun vil at vestlige demokratier skal gjøre mer for å isolere regimet. Boniadi mener at sanksjonene som EU og USA har iverksatt, har bidratt for lite til å ramme selve regimet.

Det er folk flest som lider i Iran. Matprisene er høye, det samme er inflasjonen, og arbeidsledigheten er stadig stigende.

Despoter forenes. Boniadis uro forsterkes av Yasmin Green. Hun er opprinnelig iransk og er direktør for

Googles datterselskap Jigsaw. Det bekjemper globale nettrusler. Ifølge Green akter den islamske republikken nå å bruke kinesisk overvåkingsutstyr til å følge med på om iranske kvinner går med hijab eller ikke. Det er allerede sendt ut tekstmeldinger for å advare kvinner.

Det er mange som er svært bekymret for hvordan autoritære regimer samarbeider om å bruke teknologi for å undertrykke sine borgere. Bildene av lederne i den islamske republikken sammen med Russlands president Vladimir Putin, Syrias Bashar al-Assad og Nicolás Maduro fra Venezuela uroer demokratiforkjempere. Lederne samarbeider selv om de verdimesig ikke har så mye til felles.

Green har heldigvis et håp iranere kan ha med seg videre: Det finnes alltid motstandsfolk som er like smarte, om ikke smartere enn despotene.



A ‘Tribe’ of Freedom Fighters

Outlet
National Review

Authors
Jay Nordlinger

Date
June 22, 2023

Pastor Seungeun Kim, June 2023 (Oslo Freedom Forum)



Oslo is an international city, in that foreigners regularly come here to hold meetings. This has been true since 1901, when the Nobel prizes began. Norway hosts, and awards, the peace prize. Foreigners come here to live, too – to pursue their destinies as Norwegians.

The president of the Storting, Norway’s parliament, is Masud Gharahkhani. His family fled Iran in 1987, when he was a child. “Every single day, I’m grateful to live in a country built on democracy and human rights,” he says. When he leaves the Storting after work, he regularly hears the sound of a rally or protest outside. It is sweet music to his ears – a democratic sound.

“A free person has many dreams,” Gharahkhani says. “An unfree person has only one dream.” That is a striking formulation, immediately ringing true.

I am listening to Gharahkhani at the Oslo Freedom Forum, which is marking its 15th anniversary this year. The forum is the brainchild of Thor Halvorsen, a Venezuelan. (Sometimes Norwegians are named “Gharahkhani”; sometimes Venezuelans are named “Halvorsen.” The world is ever in flux.) The Oslo Freedom Forum is organized by the Human Rights Foundation, in New York, which Halvorsen founded in 2005.

The forum was supposed to be a one-time thing, back in 2009. Halvorsen gathered some veteran champions of freedom to tell their stories – their personal stories – and to comment on new struggles for freedom – the struggles of the first decade of the 20th century. Among the participants were Elie Wiesel, Václav Havel, Harry Wu, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Armando Valladares.

Halvorsen gathered some veteran champions of freedom to tell their stories – their personal stories – and to comment on new struggles for freedom – the struggles of the first decade of the 20th century.

Wiesel, as you know, was a Holocaust survivor and writer who won the Nobel Peace Prize. Havel was a playwright and political prisoner in Czechoslovakia who became the first president of his country, after the Fall of the Wall. Harry Wu was a face of Chinese dissidence. Bukovsky had been a political prisoner in the Soviet Union. Armando Valladares had been a political prisoner in Cuba.

These were formidable men, all.

Instead of being a one-time thing, the Oslo Freedom Forum wound up happening year after year. There have now been 355 speakers, from 108 countries. Seventy-seven of the speakers have been former political prisoners – prisoners of conscience. They have spent a combined 263 years in prison.

The forum is highly unusual in at least two respects. First, the participants come from all those places – places ranging “from North Korea to Nicaragua, from Belarus to Zimbabwe,” as Garry Kasparov says. Second, the forum doesn’t care what flavor a dictator is: left-wing or right-wing, monarchical or military, ideological or cultish. The forum is anti-dictatorship, period.

Kasparov is the chairman of the Human Rights Foundation. He is as much a freedom champion as a chess champion – and he was No. 1 in the world at the chessboard for 255 months (which is 21 years, and change). He could have spent the rest of his life as the chess hero, resting on his laurels, collecting accolades. Instead, he has been in the thick of fight after fight.

“I never wanted to be a statue,” he told me once. “That would be boring. Plus, you know what pigeons do to statues.”

At the annual forum, dissidents compare notes. Their struggles and trials can be very lonely. The forum makes them feel less alone. They are among people who understand, and who cheer them on.

This year, I see Masih Alinejad and Zineb El Rhazoui talking and laughing together. Masih is an Iranian journalist and dissident, in exile; Zineb is a Moroccan-French journalist, who worked for Charlie Hebdo, in Paris. In 2015, you will recall, Islamist terrorists murdered twelve people at the magazine. Zineb was on vacation at the time. Islamists vowed to finish her off, too. Masih and Zineb have had to dodge assassination for years. They take precautions. But they are determined to live, defiantly.

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At the close of an interview in 2015, I said to Zineb, "I want you to live to be a very old lady." She answered, "For that, I have to stop smoking."

It was at the Oslo Freedom Forum that I first met a North Korean – that was in 2010. He was Kang Chol-hwan. Honestly, I felt I was meeting someone from outer space, or from the depths of hell. Since then, I have met many North Koreans at the forum. It was also at that 2010

gathering that I first met a Uyghur. She was Rebiya Kadeer. And, thanks to the forum, I have met many Uyghurs since.

I'm not entirely sure that I knew what Equatorial Guinea was. Guinea, yes. Guinea-Bissau, maybe. But "EG," as it's known? It is the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa. And since 1979 it has been ruled by the same dictator, a brute named "Obiang." I know about EG through Tutu Alicante, a regular at the forum.

This year, he laments to me that some wonderful people – including human-rights activists – die young, while dictators such as Obiang live on and on. (Robert Mugabe kicked off at 95; Fidel Castro at 90. Castro's brother Raúl is still kicking, and dictating, at 92.)

Continuing with memories . . . I can picture Vladimir Bukovsky, in the breakfast room at the Grand Hotel. There were FSB agents around – because the Russian president, Dmitri Medvedev, was in town. Bukovsky glowered at the agents, whose predecessors had tormented him so.

It was a thrill to meet, and interview, Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity hero, a man who truly rocked the world. I'm also thinking of some Afghans – Laila Haidari, for one, a fantastically brave woman, a heroine of our time. She started treatment programs for drug addicts. (Her brother needed such help.) She was also, I believe, the first woman to own a restaurant in Afghanistan. (All of that is over now, of course – at least for the time being.)

Another Afghan was Fatemah Qaderyan, then 16. She was the captain of her robotics team, all-girl. Her father had been killed when terrorists bombed a mosque. "He taught me to be brave," said Fatemah, "and that's what I should be." She liked French fries (which she ate, as we talked). Her hero was Einstein. And she also liked Harry Potter.

In 2016, I sat with Denis Mukwege, a doctor who treats rape victims in Congo. I had the feeling of being in the presence of a saint – a saint made of granite. In 2018, he was a co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2022, I sat with Oleksandra Matviichuk, the executive director of the Center for Civil Liberties, in Kyiv. Later that year, her center shared the peace prize.

Leopoldo López, the Venezuelan democrat, was a speaker at the forum, early on. Then he was in prison, for three years. Then he was out, and back at the forum. The slogan associated with him is "El que se cansa, pierde" – "He who tires, loses." I frequently have occasion to think of that.

I have talked with many relatives of prisoners – two Chinese daughters, for example: Grace Gao, whose father is Gao Zhisheng, and Ti-Anna Wang, whose father is Wang Bingzhang. What those young women have endured; what their fathers have endured. Last year, I sat with a sister, Areej al-Sadhan, whose brother, Abdulrahman, is a prisoner in Saudi Arabia. He had jotted some tweets critical of the government.

Speaking of Saudi Arabia: Jamal Khashoggi was a speaker at the forum in 2018. Several months later, he was sliced up with a bone saw by agents of the Saudi dictatorship.

In 2014, I met Tanele Maseko, from Swaziland. She was here on behalf of her husband, Thulani, a political prisoner. In 2016, I had the pleasure of seeing Thulani Maseko himself, along with Tanele. They were full of joy, which was catching.

Swaziland is ruled by a nasty king, a despotic king, Mswati III (who recently renamed the country "Eswatini"). In 2016, I remarked to the Masekos, "What I'd like for Swaziland is a constitutional monarchy, like Great Britain, and, for that matter, this country, Norway." They said, "Exactly!"

In January of this year, Thulani Maseko was murdered in his home by agents of the state, in front of Tanele and their children.

Do you know Tanele is in Oslo again this week – with a fighting spirit, still? I can hardly fathom it. I admire it.

Evgenia Kara-Murza is here. Her husband, Vladimir, has long been a feature at the Oslo Freedom Forum. He is now a prisoner of the Kremlin, having been sentenced to 25 years for "high treason." What Vladimir had done was criticize, forthrightly, the war on Ukraine.

During a session of the forum, we see a video of Vladimir, speaking here in a previous year. He implores his audience not to equate Putin and

his dictatorship with Russia itself. That's what they want you to do, he says. But there is another, infinitely better, Russia.

I don't meet other North Koreans this year. But I meet Pastor Seungeun Kim, from South Korea, who helps North Koreans to escape. He presides over a kind of underground railroad, really. Talk about a living saint. There are Uyghurs – survivors of the camps: two women, Gulbahar Haitiwaji and Kalbinur Sidik. They have experienced unspeakable things, but they speak them anyway.

Victor Navarro survived another kind of camp, a torture center in Venezuela: El Helicoide. The ways in which torture “dehumanizes” a person, he says, are “almost impossible to express.”

In Egypt, there are 60,000 political prisoners, who are routinely tortured. I sit with a young woman, Sanaa Seif, who has been in prison three times. She once went on hunger strike for 72 days. Sanaa is very soft-spoken, very gentle – but obviously steely. Her brother, Alaa Abd El Fattah, has been a prisoner for years, with no end in sight. Sanaa campaigns for him ceaselessly.

Abraham Jiménez Enoa is an interesting Cuban – born into a revolutionary family. His grandfather was a bodyguard to both Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. His father was a colonel in the interior ministry. Over the years, Abraham became disillusioned with the dictatorship and began to write. To write what he saw, felt, and

knew. When the authorities gave him the choice of prison or exile, he left for Spain.

I spot a name tag on a young woman – “Nana Gongadze,” it says. I figure she must be a daughter of Georgiy and Myroslava. She is. Georgiy Gongadze was a Georgian-Ukrainian journalist and filmmaker, murdered in 2000 – murdered by a post-Soviet Ukrainian regime that was not very “post-Soviet” at all. Myroslava Gongadze, too, is a journalist – the Eastern Europe chief of the Voice of America. Their daughter Nana works for Razom, a Ukrainian civil-society group. (The name means “together.”) I have no doubt her father would beam at her.

The Oslo Freedom Forum gives a prize named after Václav Havel. One of the recipients this year is a political cartoonist from Nicaragua, Pedro X. Molina. He had to flee that dictatorship in 2018. In remarks to the audience in Oslo, Molina talks about “speaking truth to power.” Where I live, this is usually a hollow phrase. In a liberal democracy, the easiest thing in the world is to “speak truth to power.” You are applauded for it. But when someone such as Pedro Molina says it? It means something – it means a lot.

Also receiving the Havel prize are several Ukrainians. One of them must be honored posthumously. He is Yuriy Kerpatenko, an orchestra conductor in Kherson. He refused to conduct a propaganda concert for Russian occupiers. So they came to his home and murdered him.

Some are deeply traumatized; some have been healed of trauma, and want to help others achieve the same. All of these people come together in solidarity, to cry out for freedom.

Freddy Lim is on hand to present the award to the Ukrainians. He is a member of the Taiwanese parliament (who is also the lead vocalist in a heavy-metal band). Lim emphasizes the kinship that Taiwanese feel with the Ukrainians. Will they be next, tar-

geted for annihilation by a behemoth neighbor?

Talking about the Oslo Freedom Forum, Thor Halvorssen is a little jocular. He says the group is like the Star Wars bar, in which strange beings walk around, from places far and wide, dressed in their various ways. They tend to be intense. Some are deeply traumatized; some have been healed of trauma, and want to help others achieve the same. All of these people come together in solidarity, to cry out for freedom and lift a middle finger to the tyrants of the world.

“If I have a tribe,” one participant is heard to say, as he sweeps his arm around a room, “it’s this. These are my people. This is my tribe.” Really good tribe, really good people.

BROADCAST AND TELEVISION

HRF's work is consistently featured in top media outlets around the world. Besides print and online formats, HRF regularly makes appearances on television, the radio, and podcasts. Here's a snapshot:



June 15, 2023



Paul Rusesabagina speaks out after prison release



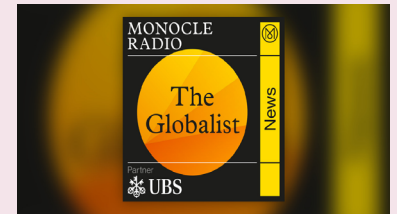
June 14, 2023



Most Russians 'sitting on the fence and waiting for this horror to end,' says Garry Kasparov



June 15, 2023



An interview with Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliff



June 15, 2023



An Overview of the Financial Freedom track



June 17, 2023



Norge jubler over Haalands triumf. Vil vi glemme fotballens mørke side?

