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

HRF unites people in the common cause of defending human rights and promoting liberal democracy. Our mission is to ensure that freedom is both preserved and promoted around the world.

We focus our work on the founding ideals of the human rights movement, those most purely represented in the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
HRF BELIEVES THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE ENTITLED TO:

- Freedom of self-determination
- The right to worship in the manner of their choice
- The right to acquire and dispose of property
- The right to equal treatment and due process under law
- Freedom from arbitrary detention or exile
- Freedom from interference and coercion in matters of conscience
- Freedom of speech and expression
- Freedom of association
- The right to leave and enter their countries
- The right to be able to participate in the government of their countries
- Freedom from slavery and torture
When HRF was founded ten years ago, it was clear that the finest champions of democracy and the rule of law were civil society organizations. Western governments and United Nations officials had fallen asleep at the wheel. Today, this is painfully evident. Those actually challenging tyranny continue to be prodemocracy activists and courageous dissidents living under repressive rule or working from exile. These women and men are brave, but they are almost always underfunded and mostly ignored.

To start turning the tide against dictatorship, people across all industries should support and join the freedom movement. Artists, entrepreneurs, technologists, investors, politicians, diplomats, and students — everyone has an important role to play. For the last 10 years, HRF has sought to provide civil society organizations and dissidents around the world with resources, training, exposure, and solidarity through our own programs and by connecting them with experts from other fields who can aid in their work.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and donors, we were able to expand our efforts in 2016, with a focus on increasing the resources and tools available to activists in closed societies so they can succeed in their grassroots efforts to promote individual rights and personal liberty.

In 2016, HRF personnel traveled across the world: from Seoul to New York to San Francisco to Taipei to Oslo to Tbilisi to Las Vegas to London and beyond working to grow the movement for individual rights in each place. We held the largest of our annual Oslo Freedom Forum conferences as well as Freedom Forums in San Francisco and even Guatemala. HRF created customized guidebooks on human rights for citizens in 10 countries, provided vital legal support to free thinkers imprisoned for criticizing their governments, sent thousands of flash drives containing information about the outside world into North Korea, published international legal reports documenting emblematic cases of persecution in authoritarian regimes, provided technological resources to dozens of activists from authoritarian countries, and so much more.

By making the struggle for freedom a priority, we can also impact open, democratic societies.

We can educate and inspire new waves of solidarity from business communities and popular culture. When people who do not normally consider human rights to be an important public good come into contact with our programs and experiences, they begin to value and treasure their own freedoms, and understand why it is so important to fight to keep them. They learn to understand that such freedoms cannot be taken for granted. When achieved, individual freedoms need to be preserved, protected, and when necessary, vigorously defended.

We look forward to 2017, a year when our mission to promote liberty where it is most at risk remains as important as ever. Thank you to the generous supporters who make our work possible. On behalf of the millions who benefit from HRF’s work, we are deeply grateful for your commitment to the global struggle for freedom.

Sincerely,

Thor Halvorssen
President and CEO
Human Rights Foundation
We should remember that 2016 was marked by celebrity deaths that received a lot of attention, and by the continued global decline of freedom and democracy that did not receive as much attention as it deserved. Especially in countries like Hungary, Russia, China, Venezuela, and Turkey.

In 2016, we lost ground to the overt advocates and the more nuanced apologists of authoritarianism and corruption, of dictatorship and terror, of chaos and brutality. We saw once again, in Syria, that men are capable of bulldozing fellow men, despite so many warnings from politicians and so many promises by democratic leaders to never to repeat our mistakes.

In 2015, I hoped my book “Winter Is Coming” would not need to be so relevant a year later, but the opposite has come true. Vladimir Putin and the enemies of the free world are still dire threats — and the steps I proposed to deter and push back against them are, unfortunately, more needed now than ever. Winter is here and it will be a long and harsh winter.

But I prefer to light a fire instead of cursing the cold!

In 2017, HRF will continue to take strength from the bright spots and I encourage you to do the same. Difficult times call for optimism and greater awareness that anything is possible. There is nothing to be gained by hanging our heads after setbacks. We must learn from them and adapt our strategies accordingly.

Authoritarianism lies at the root of so many of the world’s crises — from terrorism to poverty to war — and the solution is to continue to find ways to promote individual freedom.

Technology is agnostic; it works as a power multiplier for anyone who uses it effectively. This is dangerous in the hands of black hat hackers and deadly when wielded by dictators. Used correctly, however, technology can assist us to amplify our efforts and obtain unprecedented speed. In order to maximize impact we must develop and sustain our resources. This will require leadership, and in the free world that comes from the people, not from our increasingly risk-averse and morally-vacant elected officials. If we continue to shine light into the darkness and come together in action, the course we are currently on can and will be changed. Eventually, the governments of democracies will follow the lead of its people.

You don’t have to be an inspirational leader to use the powerful technology at everyone’s fingertips to share knowledge. In a world overflowed with propaganda and fake news, it is up to each of us to bring a little more truth.

We at HRF look forward to keeping you updated on our progress in 2017 as we follow our mission of promoting freedom where it is most at risk.

Sincerely,

Garry Kasparov
Chairman
Human Rights Foundation
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SUPPORTING ACTIVISTS AND DISSIDENTS
GLOBAL GUIDES FOR YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS

Through our guide series, Your Human Rights, we create and distribute tailored, accessible guides outlining everyone’s inherent human rights. HRF established partnerships with local NGOs operating in closed and closing societies to adapt the content to the local cultural context and to emphasize regional laws that protect individual rights, such as the right to free assembly, the right to free expression, the right to a fair trial, the right to privacy, and the right to participate in one’s government.

The guides include simple explanations, aided by pictures and case studies, to illustrate rights violations. Our local partner NGOs run focus groups to ensure that the guides are accessible and relatable. In 2016, we began disseminating these guides inside Angola, Azerbaijan, Burma, Iran, Gabon, Uganda, Vietnam, and Swaziland.

COMPLETED GUIDES

- **CUBA** 2007/ IN SPANISH
- **VENEZUELA** 2011/ IN SPANISH
- **GABON** 2016/ IN FRENCH, MARC ONA ESSANGUI (BRAINFOREST)
- **SWAZILAND** 2016/ IN ENGLISH, THULANI MASEKO (INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP)
- **UGANDA** 2016/ IN ENGLISH, KASHA JACQUELINE (KUCHU TIMES)
- **AZERBAIJAN** 2016/ IN AZERI, MALAHAT NASIBOVA
- **VIETNAM** 2016/ IN VIETNAMESE, HOI TRINH (VOICE)
- **ANGOLA** 2016/ IN PORTUGESE, RAFAEL MARQUES DE MORAIS (MAKA ANGOLA)
- **BURMA** 2016/ IN BURMESE, ANNA ROBERTS (BURMA CAMPAIGN UK)
- **IRAN** 2016/ IN Farsi, MARYAM FAGHIHIMAMI (CENTER FOR CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT; WORLD EDUCATION FOUNDATION)
TECHNOLOGY AND LIBERTY

A key component of HRF’s mission is to provide activists in authoritarian countries with the skills and resources they need to do their work.

One of the areas where HRF has made the greatest impact is through technical training. In 2016, HRF attended technology conferences such as DEF CON, Mozilla Festival, and WIRED to build a network of cyber security and information technology experts who are now providing pro-bono services for dissidents across the world. It is more important than ever for activists and journalists to know how to protect themselves from hacking and spying, as authoritarian regimes increasingly use these means to clamp down on dissent. HRF aims to ensure that activists are as protected as possible.

HRF also organized Tech Labs at the 2016 Oslo Freedom Forum and the San Francisco Freedom Forum. We brought activists from all over the world to meet with influential technologists.

Participants learned how best to arm themselves against spying and hacking, how to evade censorship and circumvent firewalls, and how to communicate securely with each other.

Participating organizations included Anchor- Free, Twitter, Outernet, Benetech, Cloud City, Wickr Foundation, Google’s Jigsaw project, and the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

CANVAS founder Srdja Popovic and Wickr founder Nico Sell announce a collaboration to create Whistler, an encrypted messaging app designed for activists and journalists living in dictatorships.
The Wickr Foundation teaches Oslo Freedom Forum attendees about cyber security.
“Indifference and resignation, I believe, are the most serious forms of human decline into nothingness.”

- Václav Havel
VÁCLAV HAVEL INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR CREATIVE DISSENT

The Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent celebrates those who, with bravery and ingenuity, unmask the lie of dictatorship by living in truth.

Past laureates include Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, Russian punk protest group Pussy Riot, North Korean democracy activist Park Sang Hak, and Saudi women’s rights advocate Manal al-Sharif.

In May, HRF awarded the 2016 Prize to Iranian cartoonist Atena Farghadani and Uzbek photojournalist Umida Akhmedova. The Prize includes a grant of 116,000 Norwegian kroner to each recipient to further their work.

Atena Farghadani is an Iranian artist who received a 12-year prison sentence for a cartoon she posted on social media depicting Iran’s parliamentarians with animal heads. When she was briefly released, Farghadani publicized the abuse that prisoners suffer in Iranian jails and was swiftly arrested and punished again. She went on a hunger strike and suffered a heart attack. Her case sparked the social media campaign #Draw4Atena, in which cartoonists from all over the world shared their work in support of her case. Farghadani was released on May 3, 2016.

Umida Akhmedova is a photojournalist and the first female documentary filmmaker in Uzbekistan. She specializes in subjects that have historically been regarded as taboo in the country: gender, poverty, and ethnic issues. She has been accused of “slander” and “damaging the country’s image” for publishing a series of photos about life in rural Uzbekistan.
STRENGTHENING CUBAN CIVIL SOCIETY

HRF continues to support civil society and free expression in Cuba.

Danilo Maldonado Machado, also known as “El Sexto,” is a Havel Prize laureate who was imprisoned in 2014 for planning a performance art piece based on George Orwell’s “Animal Farm.” El Sexto painted the words “Raúl” and “Fidel” on two small pigs. Following his detention, HRF campaigned for his release, which occurred in late 2015, and has supported El Sexto’s efforts ever since. El Sexto’s prominence as a dissident artist and his consequent effectiveness at exposing the Cuban dictatorship to the outside world have made him a frequent target of the regime.

The day after Fidel Castro died in November 2016, El Sexto was taken from his home, beaten, and arrested without a warrant for refusing to show sadness upon the dictator’s passing. He spray painted the words “He’s Gone” on the wall of a prominent hotel, and signed his name beneath the political statement. On December 12, HRF submitted an individual complaint to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), requesting that they initiate proceedings to investigate El Sexto’s arbitrary arrest and ongoing detention. Later that week, in conjunction with HRF’s legal team, international lawyer Kimberley Motley, who had met El Sexto

Kimberley Motley with Cuban civil society activists in Havana

El Sexto prepares a demonstration inspired by Orwell’s Animal Farm
twice at HRF’s Freedom Forums in Oslo and San Francisco, embarked on a daring trip to Cuba where she attempted to visit El Sexto in prison, but was subsequently arrested herself.

At the time of the publication of this report, El Sexto has finally been released. He was subjected to two months of daily psychological torture. State agents cut his hair, poisoned his food with sedatives, stripped him naked, and continuously threatened him with execution by firing squad.

Upon his liberation, El Sexto’s family published a statement thanking Human Rights Foundation for playing an instrumental part in securing his release.

This work builds on HRF’s efforts in Cuba to support the island’s underground library movement, independent journalism, and activists like the Ladies in White, Rosa María Payá, the late Laura Pollán, and Roberto Guerra.
HRF’s Work in Cuba

2006

HRF starts supporting Cuba’s underground library movement. HRF also provides pro-democracy organizations and activists with basic technological equipment and educational materials.

Cuban dissident Armando Valladares becomes chairman of HRF’s board. Valladares spent 22 years as a political prisoner in Cuba and continues to be a leading voice against the island’s totalitarian regime from exile.

2007

HRF runs a successful campaign to free Cuban doctor Amauris Samartino from arbitrary detention and to win him asylum in Norway. Samartino, a Cuban citizen, was detained in Bolivia for criticizing president Evo Morales’ stance on Fidel Castro. He was to be deported to Cuba.

HRF begins production and distribution of Tus Derechos Humanos, an educational guide to human rights for Cubans.

2008

HRF campaigns for the Organization of American States to enforce the Inter-American Democratic Charter, calling for the organization to deny Cuba readmission to OAS membership.

HRF pens a public letter asking Pope Benedict XVI to call for the respect of human rights in Cuba ahead of his visit to the island.

HRF denounces the beating of at least 20 human rights activists for organizing a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2009

HRF opposes OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza’s campaign to reincorporate Cuba into the organization’s membership.

HRF invites Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez to speak at the Oslo Freedom Forum.

On the seventh anniversary of Cuba’s Black Spring (its 2003 crackdown on dissidents) HRF demands that the government release all political prisoners.

HRF releases an exclusive documentary of the Ladies in White, a Cuban pro-democracy movement, to provide context for the Cuban government’s decision to release and exile 52 political prisoners.

2010

HRF launches insulza.no to advocate for democracy in the Americas and democratic values within the Organization of American States.

HRF releases an exclusive video interview with Laura Pollán, leader of the Ladies in White.
2011
HRF translates Oslo Freedom Forum talks into Spanish and distributes them inside Cuba.
Following the release of prisoner of conscience Oscar Elías Biscet from prison, HRF demands amnesty for him and for all the prisoners of conscience detained during Cuba’s Black Spring.
HRF commemorates the death of Cuban democracy leader Laura Pollán, drawing media attention to her organization, the Ladies in White.
HRF produces the short film “Change for Cuba.”

2013
HRF awards the Havel Prize to the Ladies in White, bringing international attention to their nonviolent movement for democracy.

2014
HRF formally appeals to the U.N. to investigate the brutal assault of Cuban journalist Roberto Guerra.

2015
HRF publishes the world’s first major report on the disappearance of prominent Cuban democracy activist Oswaldo Payá, prompting widespread media coverage.
HRF submits a petition to the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions requesting that he investigate whether the Cuban government was responsible for any of the death threats sent to Rosa María Payá.
HRF’s lawyers advocate for the release of political prisoner and artist Tania Bruguera.

2016
HRF submits a petition to the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions requesting that he investigate whether the Cuban government was responsible for any of the death threats sent to Rosa María Payá.
HRF urges democratic governments at the U.N. General Assembly not to elect Cuba to the U.N. Human Rights Council.
HRF files a petition with the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention requesting the release of artist Danilo “El Sexto” Maldonado Machado who was illegally imprisoned for exercising his freedom of expression.
WORLDWIDE LEGAL ADVOCACY
LEGAL ANALYSIS AND CASE WORK

Spearheaded by a full-time team of five international lawyers, HRF’s analysis and advocacy work in 2016 continued to focus on those who are not able to legally protest or criticize their governments.

HRF’s legal advocacy helped liberate activists from prison or escape prosecution, and triggered action from governments, regional courts, and U.N. bodies. In the past year, HRF has worked to free political prisoners in countries such as Cuba, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.


HRF’s Chief Legal Officer Javier El-Hage is interviewed by MSNBC on human rights violations in Cuba and Syria.
legal report outlining how the Saudi dictatorship had stripped Abu al-Khair of his rights and put him in prison for criticizing the ruling system. The Washington Post published an op-ed written by HRF’s lawyers, which was cited by major think tanks and U.S. members of Congress. In 2016, as part of HRF’s Speaking Freely project, HRF advanced casework and advocacy across all corners of the globe in more than 25 countries and regions, including Angola, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Gabon, The Gambia, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

HRF’s map categorizing regimes as democracies or authoritarian states
SPEAKING FREELY

HRF’s Speaking Freely project analyzes the domestic legal systems of every country in the world, and then compares them with international law’s strictest and most protective standards for the right to freedom of expression.

The project seeks to better inform decision makers around the world and the global public about the value of a high free speech standard. In 2016, HRF hosted several discussions, including an activists’ panel during the International Students for Liberty Conference in Washington, D.C., a panel on the human rights movement in China with the Asian American Alliance, and a high-level academic conference in Norway focused on defamatory, inciteful, or “hateful” speech.

HRF organized an exhibit and interactive world map showcasing emblematic cases at the San Francisco Freedom Forum to present the findings of the research project. HRF educated
hundreds of influential individuals about the importance of promoting a robust standard for the protection of freedom of expression.

In February, HRF and the Impact Litigation Project (ILP) at the American University Washington College of Law submitted a joint petition to the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) on the case of Mahmoud Abdel Shakour Abou Zeid Attitallah, an Egyptian photojournalist who has been arbitrarily detained since 2013. HRF and ILP expect WGAD to issue a resolution on Mahmoud’s case in the months to come.

During 2016, HRF also published nearly 40 press releases based on the Speaking Freely research project’s findings regarding the way domestic incitement and official defamation law provisions should be interpreted in order to comply with international law. Among the countries addressed in these press releases were Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Burma, Cambodia, China, Comoros, Cuba, Ecuador, Gabon, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, the Maldives, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Swaziland, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. These releases garnered significant media coverage around the world, including in The Washington Post, Foreign Policy, Los Angeles Times, The Miami Herald, Global Voices, National Review, MSNBC, Voice of America, EFE, AFP, Fox News Latino, and Yahoo News.

HRF’s research outcomes include six academic papers documenting the latest legal standards on official defamation and incitement under international law, the evolution of the world’s free speech standards, and the legal efforts to liberalize speech restrictions in the very influential English legal tradition. “Speaking Freely” is made possible thanks to a grant by the John Templeton Foundation.

In 2016, HRF also built an online interactive map to publish a compendium of most incitement and official defamation laws from democratic and non-democratic countries around the world. We aim to use the benefits of technology to present this compendium in a modern, user-friendly, and visually attractive way in order to reach not only a broader audience, but to serve as a source of consultation for legal researchers and scholars worldwide. The website will be a permanent platform where scholars and non-specialists alike may learn and, eventually, collaborate to update information on official defamation, incitement laws, and case law from most countries around the world. The early beta version of the website can be accessed at freespeechunlimited.org.
ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE UNITED NATIONS

In the fall months of 2016, HRF took part in a campaign to remove Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council.

In collaboration with the Geneva-based NGO U.N. Watch, HRF brought dissidents from several authoritarian regimes to testify at the U.N. headquarters, spotlighting the crimes of the many dictatorial countries running for open seats. Ultimately, Russia was rejected — an important step toward a future Council made up exclusively of democratic nations.

There is still much work to be done; the dictatorships of China, Cuba, Egypt, Rwanda, and Saudi Arabia remain on the Council. As a result, the Council tends to ignore human rights abuses in authoritarian regimes while focusing its criticism on democratic countries. For example, China — the world’s most populous human rights violator — has never been the subject of condemnation by the Council since its creation in 2006. HRF will continue to campaign for a Human Rights Council comprised only of liberal democracies that protect the human rights of their citizens.
THE FREEDOM FORUM
More than a dozen new grants totaling over $200,000 were awarded to dissidents and activists operating in closed societies.

Activist speakers were profiled by major world media ranging from The Guardian to The Atlantic to El País to TechCrunch. Ultimately, media outlets published more than 100 profiles of conference speakers and participants, highlighting the global struggle for freedom.

More than ten new creative and technical partnerships were launched between dissidents and organizations such as Outernet, Wickr Foundation, Cloud City, WIRED UK, and Leo Burnett design firm.

Seven students had the opportunity to work with Freedom Forum speakers in Kashmir, Korea, Serbia, and beyond as part of our Oslo Scholars program.

Speakers and activists met with the Norwegian Prime Minister, the President of the Norwegian Parliament, several top Foreign Ministry officials, lawmakers from all major parties, U.N. special rapporteurs, the European Union, and the U.S. government.

In a post-conference survey, 95.6% of participants said they were “most satisfied” with their overall conference experience. 81% said that OFF was “most useful” for their human rights work. 100% of respondents said they would attend again.
The Oslo Freedom Forum has become the world’s premier destination for human rights activists and dissidents to attract moral support, resources, media attention, and technical skills. At the same time, the Freedom Forum is developing into a destination for funders and policymakers looking to make a difference.
SPEAKER DIVERSITY

240 speakers (aged 19 to 93) from 93 countries, speaking 21 languages.
SPEAKER STATS

- 21 TIME MAGAZINE COVERS FEATURING SPEAKERS
- 377 BOOKS PUBLISHED BY SPEAKERS
- 35 DOCUMENTARY FILMS ABOUT SPEAKERS
- 10 HEADS OF STATE
- 10 RAFTO PRIZE RECIPIENTS
- 9 WEF YOUNG GLOBAL LEADERS
- 8 NOBEL LAUREATES

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS IMPRISONED FOR POLITICAL REASONS, ALL TOGETHER SPENDING 227 YEARS IN PRISON.

- 58
- 49
- 9

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS CURRENTLY LIVING IN EXILE.
NUMBER OF SPEAKERS THAT HAVE BEEN BANNED FROM ATTENDING BY THEIR GOVERNMENT.

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

- 3,672,583 VIDEO VIEWS
  *as of January 2017

NORTH KOREA AND TURKMENISTAN ARE THE ONLY COUNTRIES WHERE NO INDIVIDUALS HAVE EVER VIEWED OFF TALKS

- 20,000 LIVESTREAM VIEWERS FROM MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES

- MORE THAN 90,000 PEOPLE MENTIONED #OSLOFF

- 10,000 TWEETS CREATED

90 MILLION IMPRESSIONS
OFF SPEAKERS CUMULATIVELY HAVE 25,841,651 TWITTER FOLLOWERS
*as of May 2016

6,000 attendees, 985 articles written about HRF, OFF, and OFF speakers
SAN FRANCISCO FREEDOM FORUM

In September, HRF held the second San Francisco Freedom Forum (SFFF).

This event united some of the brightest minds in Silicon Valley with our global dissident and activist community, and was covered by influential media like HBO, ABC, and local public radio. Speakers addressed the struggle for freedom in closed societies around the world, and guests participated in an Interactive Expo, where they met experts in encryption, live video, anti-censorship, information security, and virtual reality.

More than one dozen new partnerships originated at the event. To name just a few, international lawyer Kimberley Motley decided to take a more active role in the case of Cuban artist, activist, and prisoner of conscience Danilo “El Sexto” Maldonado Machado. Cartel Land film director Matthew Heineman sent a crew to SFFF to capture footage for his documentary “City of Ghosts,” which tells the story of Abdalaziz Alhamza and his citizen journalist organization Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently. This film premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival to wide acclaim. The law firm Holland & Knight organized a speaking event for North Korean defector Hyeonseo Lee the day before SFFF, and since then has been collaborating with HRF to provide pro-bono legal work to assist political prisoners.
HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDATION’S GLOBAL NETWORK

HRF’s work involves and engages people and organizations from a wide range of industries. We believe that everyone has a role to play in the struggle for human rights and freedom.

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DISRUPT NORTH KOREA
FLASH DRIVES FOR FREEDOM

In February, HRF launched Flash Drives for Freedom, a campaign to collect USB sticks; load them with films, books, and educational materials; and send them into North Korea.

The thumb drives are collected with the help of Silicon Valley-based nonprofit Forum 280, and act as windows to the outside world for millions of North Koreans trapped in the world’s most repressive country. They have become increasingly valuable in the nation’s black markets. Many policy analysts with specialization in North Korea as well as North Korean defectors believe that the best way to bring nonviolent change to North Korea is through providing its citizens with access to information, which will spark change just as it did inside Romania, Eastern Germany, and other communist countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Flash Drives for Freedom has been covered by BBC World Service, Fast Company, and CNN, to name a few. USA Today called the campaign one of the highlights of the 2016 SXSW festival in Austin, Texas. Since then, HRF has taken the project to the WIRED conference, DEF CON, PubCon, and the Mozilla Festival, where we informed diverse audiences on the human rights situation in North Korea. Through these efforts, we collected nearly 20,000 drives, which are in the process of being sent into North Korea. This project is a collaboration with the marketing firm Leo Burnett, which has generously provided pro-bono design services.

In addition to providing direct support to defector groups, HRF seeks to spotlight their work in the media. In 2016, we facilitated profiles of these organizations in Business Insider, El País, the Financial Times, the Guardian, Le Monde, and PBS, to name a few.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 30 2016</td>
<td>HRF presents Flash Drives for Freedom at the SXSW Trade Show in Austin, Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 24 2016</td>
<td>BBC World Service runs an interview with HRF on the campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 26 2016</td>
<td>CNN publishes a front-page story on how HRF and its partners have started sending USBs into North Korea by drone</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15 2016</td>
<td>Forum 280 ships the first load of donated drives to our North Korean partners in South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20 2016</td>
<td>HRF visits South Korea to promote the campaign on the Korean peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4-7 2016</td>
<td>Business Insider publishes a profile on Flash Drives for Freedom that goes viral, with more than 395,000 unique views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 28-30 2016</td>
<td>The Mozilla Festival includes the campaign in their expo, connecting HRF with hundreds of creative professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3-4 2016</td>
<td>PBS Newshour features Flash Drives for Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18 2016</td>
<td>Nearly 20,000 flash drives are in the process of being sent into North Korea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2016, HRF celebrated a major success with the passage of the North Korea Human Rights Act in South Korea.

For several years, HRF has been visiting Seoul to work with members of North Korean defector organizations, whom we support and equip to send information into their homeland by radio, balloon, and human networks over the Chinese border. Until 2016, the South Korean government had no legal framework to support these activities.

In 2015, HRF visited Seoul and created an international task force composed of leading thinkers and doers such as Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, Harvard University cognitive scientist Steven Pinker, former presidents of Ukraine and Peru, and Stanford University political scientist Larry Diamond. The task force penned a widely-shared op-ed in The Wall Street Journal, and by engaging the South Korea’s National Assembly from both top-down and grassroots angles, HRF helped a network of defector groups lay the groundwork for the Act’s historic passage.

As a result, the South Korean government is now in the process of creating a department to support civil society groups promoting human rights in North Korea. This is just one element of our Disrupt North Korea program, which aims to break the information monopoly that the Kim dictatorship has over its citizens.
In October, HRF and the Yonsei Center for Human Liberty co-hosted the Launch of the Sages Group on North Korean Human Rights. Five of the founding members participated in HRF’s event: Marzuki Darusman, former U.N. special rapporteur on North Korea; Robert King, U.S. special envoy for North Korean human rights issues; Michael Kirby, former chair of the U.N. Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Sang-Hyun Song, former president of the International Criminal Court; and Jung-Hoon Lee, Republic of Korea ambassador for North Korean human rights. The meeting was at capacity, with 75 members from the press, experts in the NGO community, public officials, and students in attendance.

The Sages Group underlined their support for holding the Kim dictatorship accountable for its crimes and discussed ways of raising attention on the human rights crisis, including: a) increasing the flow of outside information into North Korea; b) introducing a possible boycott of the North Korean regime from international sporting competitions such as the Olympics; and c) making the U.N.’s 2014 Commission of Inquiry report more accessible in Korea and beyond.

In December, the U.N. Security Council held a special meeting on North Korea’s human rights situation, marking the third consecutive year the international body addressed the matter. In advance of the meeting, HRF sent a letter to the 15 member states, urging the Council to refer cases of gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity in North Korea to the International Criminal Court.

After HRF issued a press release about the letter, HRF was asked to attend a special session of the Security Council promoted by member-states Spain, the U.K. and the U.S. on the human rights situation in North Korea. Unfortunately, the dictatorships of China, Russia, Angola, and Venezuela ultimately opposed any meaningful discussion of the issue at the Security Council. In a separate room, HRF was invited to “Separated, but Not Forgotten: The Heartbreaking Impact of North Korea’s Repressive Policies on Families,” a small, closed-door event hosted by the U.S. mission. At the event, HRF’s chief legal officer engaged in a brief public dialogue with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power.

By exerting pressure on governments, engaging citizens across the world to get involved, and publicizing the work of defector groups, HRF is measurably increasing the amount of outside information that is getting into the hands of the North Korean people.
POPULARIZING HUMAN RIGHTS
HRF is making the struggle for individual rights mainstream by taking it beyond Foreign Policy magazine and The Atlantic and into pop culture, with stories about human rights and dictators in Good Morning America, ESPN, Perez Hilton, and even Howard Stern. Through Wall Street Journal op-eds, New York Times articles, BBC films, National Review columns, WIRED cover stories, VICE videos, and CNN breaking news, we have reached not just decision-makers, but hundreds of millions of engaged citizens through traditional media. When we get such a tremendous range of people learning and arguing about corruption and dictatorship, we move the needle.

In 2016 HRF also expanded its presence on social media dramatically — today, @HRF has more than 140,000 followers on Twitter, and our staff have appeared in videos that have attracted more than 20 million views online. We aim to be the mavens of human rights, and in 2017 we will continue to grow an online community that can interact with and amplify our message.
Bloomberg  WIRED  TechCrunch
It would be less effective “if they just saw that ‘Kim Jong-un is the devil,” said Ellen Eoff, a development specialist at HRF. “It’s much more subversive to show South Koreans who have running water.”


Digital technology is keeping the spirit of the Arab Spring alive

Four years back, when human-rights campaigners, brave dissidents and their supporters assembled for an annual get-together in Oslo, there was a giddy optimism in the air.

Bruce Clark reviews the Oslo Freedom Forum. May 25, 2016

America, Your Election Is Not Rigged

A democracy is as strong as its people believe it to be. It cannot be destroyed from the outside, only from within.

HRF Chairman Garry Kasparov publishes an op-ed. October 29, 2016

Your Outdated Flash Drive Could Help Fight North Korea’s Censorship

“It might be an obsolete piece of junk to you, but it could be totally life-changing and valuable for someone in North Korea.”

HRF Chief Strategy Officer Alex Gladstein in an interview. Feb 11, 2016

‘The Totalitarian Regime Is Intact’: One Cuban’s Message to Obama

“Cubans are not less than Americans,” Payá insisted. “Why do we have to sit down and wait for a king to die? No. We can have rights today. There’s not a single reason to deny human rights to a whole population.”

Follow the Human Rights Foundation @HRF for activism and updates on dissidents for freedom around the world. Please read & support our work!
“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

- Elie Wiesel
EXPOSING THE SUPPORTERS OF TYRANNY

In the summer of 2016, HRF criticized the Atlantic Council’s decision to bestow a “Global Citizen Award” on Ali Bongo Ondimba, the corrupt dictator of Gabon. HRF researched the issue and found out that the think tank was very likely engaging in a “pay for play” whitewashing operation, as several financial backers of the Atlantic Council were also paid agents of the Gabonese government.

Six hours after HRF publicly questioned the award, Atlantic Council staff told the media that Bongo would no longer be traveling to New York to receive his prize. Despite protests from Atlantic Council President Frederick Kempe, HRF later exposed the Atlantic Council’s relationship with dictatorial regimes in detail in Foreign Policy and The Hill.

This work sets a precedent that warns respectable policy groups like the Atlantic Council to think twice before celebrating tyrants. Many dictators seek to whitewash their human rights abuses via public relations efforts like this one. HRF will continue to act as a watchdog for such “pay for play” behavior in 2017 and beyond.

HRF strives to expose Western supporters of tyranny. The Atlantic Council is a prestigious Washington, D.C.-based policy organization. HRF has recently exposed its ties to oppressive governments including Bahrain, Kazakhstan, and Eritrea.
Russian President Vladimir Putin has built an aggressive international propaganda campaign to whitewash his corrupt rule. As a result, followers of Russian affairs in the West constantly have to wonder whether what they are reading is “fake news” created by Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin.

HRF’s Real Russia Today program aims to provide a broader picture of what is going on in Russia by sending out multiple news digests every week documenting the situation of democracy and human rights in that country. The emails reach policymakers, think tanks, journalists, scholars, and other subscribers who benefit from an unvarnished view of what is really happening in Russia today. In 2016, we sent out 96 digests, which included more than 1,000 articles.

Russians protest the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov. Credit: Vocativ.
Он погиб за будущее России
ЭТИ ПУЛИ - В КАЖДОГО ИЗ НАС
БОРИСь
ПРЕДАТЕЛ РУССКИЕ
GEROY NE UMIRAYUT
ЭТИ ПУЛИ
EDUCATIONAL WORK
Oslo Scholars with their mentors at the opening reception for the 2016 Oslo Freedom Forum at Oslo City Hall
This program encourages young leaders to learn about, and become involved with, the global struggle for freedom. The 2016 Scholars spent their summer working with activists everywhere from Libya to South Korea to Serbia. HRF also partners with Students for Liberty and the Norwegian investment firm Kistefos to allow students from Norway and around the world to participate in the Oslo Freedom Forum.

My experience as an Oslo Scholar has both enabled and inspired me to be more active and engaged with human rights issues in North Korea and around the world. OFF has encouraged me to continue working to improve human rights conditions for North Korean defectors after returning to Montreal. It has also enabled me to continue working with NGOs, journalists, and activists who aim to create a better world. The experience has also compelled me to encourage my peers and colleagues to get involved and engage with the efforts to stop human rights violations. I will carry this passion for human rights with me throughout my career.

- 2016 Oslo Scholar Jennifer Yoon
COLLEGE FREEDOM FORUM

HRF also prioritizes the promotion of individual rights on college campuses through our College Freedom Forum series.

In March of 2016, we hosted the first international College Freedom Forum (CFF) at Universidad Francisco Marroquin in Guatemala. The event featured five speakers who told personal stories about their struggles for freedom in Cuba, Venezuela, and beyond. More than 900 students attended, and local organizers were so impressed by the event’s impact that they invited HRF back in 2017. This event follows others at the University of Colorado Boulder, Stanford University, Tufts University, and Yale University.

If you’d like to make a contribution to HRF that would allow us to host a College Freedom Forum at your alma mater, please let us know at info@hrf.org
Activists from around the world speak at the College Freedom Forum.

More than 900 attendees watch a presentation at the 2016 College Freedom Forum at Universidad Francisco Marroquín.
ABOUT HRF
Celine Assaf Boustani  
International Legal Associate

Celine joined HRF’s Center for Law and Democracy in 2014 to focus on the protection of freedom of expression in Arabic and French-speaking countries around the world. Her legal and advocacy work cover the Middle East and Africa, and she has since co-authored a legal report on the case of Waleed Abu al-Khair in Saudi Arabia. She completed a master’s in international law at Columbia Law School, and she also holds a master’s in French law from Pantheon-Assas Paris II, France. Celine was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, where she earned her Bachelor of Laws from Saint-Joseph University.

Javier El-Hage  
Chief Legal Officer

Javier’s research topics and areas of expertise include international human rights law, international criminal law, international democracy law, comparative constitutional law, and international investment law and arbitration. He holds master’s degrees in international law from Columbia University School of Law and the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. He is an attorney admitted to practice in the State of New York. From 2006 to 2008, El-Hage was a constitutional law professor at the Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz-Bolivia, and during this time, he was invited by the Bolivian Constituent Assembly to provide expert testimony on international investment law and international human rights law. After completing his Master of Laws at Columbia Law School in 2009, El-Hage taught legal courses and seminars as an adjunct professor at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Ecuador and the Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala.

Andrea Austin  
Director of Programs

Andrea has a broad background in strategic planning and program development, and currently coordinates programs for HRF. Previously, she oversaw communications and public affairs for United Nations Foundation’s Girl Up campaign. Andrea has also managed advocacy and communications work for various anti-trafficking organizations, including Polaris and Shared Hope International. She has a master’s in international human rights law from the United Nations-mandated University for Peace, and a bachelor’s in English from the University of Virginia.

Ellen Eoff  
Development Specialist

Ellen comes to HRF with more than six years experience as a development professional with an expertise in donor relations. Ellen received her Bachelor of Social Work degree from Baylor University and her Master of Social Work with a concentration in administrative leadership and a portfolio in nonprofit studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Before joining HRF, Ellen managed development and communications activities for One Heart World-Wide and worked in leadership gifts at the California Academy of Sciences. Ellen is actively involved in the Association of Fundraising Professionals and enjoys co-chairing her chapter’s Mentor Program.

Sandra Germaine  
Executive Assistant to the President

Sandra joins HRF with 10 years of experience in business administration across various industries. She received her Bachelor of Arts in political science and philosophy, as well as a Master of Business Administration, from Loyola Marymount University.

Alex Gladstein  
Chief Strategy Officer

Alex heads HRF’s strategic efforts in marketing and development. He has served as vice president of strategy for the Oslo Freedom Forum since its inception in 2009. His writing and views on dissidents and dictators have appeared in TIME, NPR,
Thor Halvorssen
President & CEO

Thor is a Venezuelan-born human rights advocate and film producer. Described by The New York Times as “a champion of the underdog and the powerless,” he began advocating for human rights as an adolescent in London by organizing opposition to South African apartheid. He became involved full time in the promotion of due process and individual rights after his father became a political prisoner in Venezuela. He founded HRF after his mother was shot during a political protest in Venezuela in 2004. He is the patron of the Prague-based Children’s Peace Movement, On Own Feet. Prior to HRF, Thor was the founding executive director and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). Thor has lectured at universities across the world on matters of liberty, and his opinions and views have appeared in numerous venues, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The Washington Post, National Review, National Public Radio, TIME, The Daily Telegraph, The New York Post, and GQ, as well as televised outlets such as Al Jazeera, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, BBC, HBO, and many others.

Jamie Hancock
Senior Director, Oslo Freedom Forum

Jamie joined HRF after completing her master’s in international politics and business at New York University, where her thesis focused on the erosion of press freedom in Latin America. She served as media relations coordinator at HRF for three years before managing the Oslo Freedom Forum, HRF’s annual flagship conference. Jamie also holds a bachelor’s degree with a double major in international political economy and Spanish language and literature from the University of California at Berkeley.

Roberto González
International Legal Associate

Roberto is a Guatemalan attorney and cum laude graduate from Rafael Landívar University, where he earned a Bachelor of Laws degree. He also holds a master’s degree in international law and justice from Fordham University School of Law. As a part of HRF’s Center for Law and Democracy, Roberto’s research focuses on comparative constitutional law and international law. Roberto is an alumnus of the Washington College of Law’s Program of Advanced Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. Roberto’s opinions and views on democracy and international law have been featured in CNN en Español, El País, National Review, Voice of America, and Mundo Fox.

Joy Jiao
International Legal Associate

Joy Jiao received her bachelor’s in psychology from the University of Texas at Austin, and her Juris Doctor from Rutgers School of Law. She is trilingual in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. During law school, Joy interned for the New York Supreme Court Appellate Division - First Department and Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, L.L.P., in Beijing. She is part of HRF’s legal team, and oversees HRF’s legal research and advocacy in the Asia region. She is an attorney admitted to practice in New York and New Jersey.
Jim Warnock
Director of Outreach

Jim Warnock grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. After graduating from the Woodrow Wilson School of Politics at the University of Virginia, he worked for various companies like The Financial Times, Zegna, and the History Channel. He has also held leadership positions in sales, television and film production, and marketing. He brings experience in sales and team building to HRF, and is inspired and humbled by the opportunity to work with such a dedicated, dynamic group.

John Lechner
Program and Technology Officer

John is a graduate of Syracuse University, where he studied international affairs and economics. He held two summer internships with HRF before beginning a full-time position in June 2013. In addition to his duties as a program officer, John manages HRF’s IT architecture and infrastructure.

Centa Rek
International Legal Associate

Centa is a Bolivian attorney and cum laude graduate from Santa Cruz Private University. She worked for seven years as legal counsel in the oil and gas industry before moving to New York in 2011. Centa joined HRF’s Center for Law and Democracy in 2012 and has since co-authored several international human rights law reports, petitions, and amici curiae, including “Media Crackdown in Kazakhstan,” “The Case of Miguel Ángel Hernández Souquett,” “The Case of Maria Lourdes Afiuni Mora,” and “The State of Independence of the Judiciary in Venezuela.” Centa’s research focuses on international human rights law and impact litigation.

Prachi Vidwans
Communications Specialist

Prachi Vidwans is HRF’s communications specialist. In 2016, she graduated with a Master of Arts in international relations from the University of Chicago, where she studied democratization and conflict. Previously, Prachi served as assistant editor of Democracy Lab, a journalistic partnership between Foreign Policy magazine and the Legatum Institute, which provided coverage of countries undergoing democratic transition. She also contributed editing, research, and photography to Global Concerns Leadership’s women’s empowerment project in Bangalore, India. She comes to HRF with five years of editing experience and a passion for democracy promotion, conflict resolution, and human rights.

Katia Krasavina
Program Officer and Speaker Coordinator

Katia Krasavina is a Russian democracy activist. In 2005, she moved from St. Petersburg to New York and pursued a dual degree in political science and psychology. She joined HRF in 2013 after graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Brooklyn College.

Alexandra Prow
Program Officer

Alexandra joined HRF in 2015 to focus on the annual Oslo Freedom Forum and its satellite programs. In addition to her role as program officer, she is a speaker coordinator for the Oslo Freedom Forum and coordinates event logistics. She is a graduate of Vassar College, where she received a Bachelors of Arts with honors in music and a minor in Arabic. A recipient of the Ann Cornelisen Fellowship, Alexandra studied at Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco in 2014. Her research background centers on the role of art and artists in protest movements, particularly in Latin America and North Africa.
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REMEMBERING
ELIE WIESEL

HRF founding member
Elie Wiesel passed away in 2016.

“As with Elie Wiesel’s passing we have lost one of tyranny’s greatest witnesses. It is impossible to reduce his lifetime of moral courage to a few words, but we should forever heed his mantra to always take sides. He exposed the advocates of engagement, realpolitik, and moral equivalence who pretend there is no right and wrong, no good and evil. He taught us that there is no neutrality — you are either fighting for good or you are helping evil win.”

– Garry Kasparov
FINANCIAL REPORT

HRF is fully funded by the generosity of our donor community and we are committed to using their investments in human rights responsibly. 93 cents out of every dollar you donate goes directly to our programs.
**INCOME 2015**

- Foundation donations: $1,984,032
- Individual donations: $1,012,787
- Norwegian donations: $613,384
- Corporate support: $16,484

$3,626,687

**EXPENSES 2015**

- Program: $3,355,148
- Development: $122,442
- Administration: $139,150

$3,616,740
HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Donate:

HRF is a 501(c)(3) charity organization. We rely on donations to make our work possible. We accept checks, gifts online at hrf.org, gifts of stock, charitable gift annuities, memorial gifts, and legacy gifts. Donations are tax-deductible according to U.S. tax law.

Learn more:

Follow us on Twitter at @HRF, Facebook at HumanRightsFoundation, Google+ at TheHRFor, and Instagram at HumanRightsFDN.

Volunteer:

If you have skills or time to lend to our staff in New York, Oslo, San Francisco, South Korea, or elsewhere, we would love to hear from you: info@hrf.org.

Spread the word:

Share our social media posts or emails, or tell others about our work.