



Empire State Building #4202
New York, NY 10118

Thor Halvorssen
PRESIDENT AND CEO

Garry Kasparov
CHAIRMAN

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL**

- Kenneth Anderson
- Diego Arria
- George Ayittey
- Abdel Ould Ethmane
- Park Sang Hak
- Ron Jacobs
- Mart Laar
- Alexander Lloyd
- Jacqueline Moudeina
- Amir Ahmad Nasr
- Marina Nemat
- Yeonmi Park
- W. Brad Stephens
- Mutabar Tadjibaeva
- Cameron Colby Thomson
- Álvaro Vargas-Llosa
- Konstantina Yaneva

IN MEMORIAM

- Václav Havel
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS
(1936-2011)
- Vladimir Bukovsky
(1942-2019)
- Palden Gyatso
(1933-2018)
- Eduardo Mendoza
(1917-2009)
- Ramón José Velásquez
(1916-2014)
- Elie Wiesel
(1928-2016)
- Harry Wu
(1936-2016)

🌐 hrf.org
🐦 @hrf
📄 /humanrightsfoundation
📍 /humanrightsfdn
📷 @hrf
✉ contact@hrf.org
☎ +1 (212) 246-8486

July 19, 2021

Samantha Bee
Host and Executive Producer
Full Frontal with Samantha Bee
Via e-mail

Dear Ms. Bee,

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is aware that you recently traveled to Rwanda to produce an episode of *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, entitled "[RwandaVision](#)," examining the status of refugees and conservation in the central African country. HRF commends your noble intention to explore "more stories to tell about Rwanda today" and the attention you have raised about Rwanda's positive conservation efforts. **However, we are writing to express concern about how Rwanda's dictatorial regime will likely exploit your segment "[Rwandans and the UNHCR Are Treating Refugees with Empathy](#)," to whitewash its long history of grave atrocities against refugees and refugee camps in the region following the country's 1994 genocide, as well as its ongoing deadly repression against Rwandan dissident refugees living outside of Rwanda.**

HRF admires how you articulate your passion for social justice and protecting refugee communities, as well as how you use your platform to champion important causes. For example, you have [worked with](#) groups like El Refugio to provide housing for immigrants in need, and have [organized fundraisers](#) for organizations like the Committee to Protect Journalists, which do valuable work defending press freedom around the world.

Taking this into consideration, we would, therefore, like to inform you that Rwanda is ruled by the brutal dictatorship of Paul Kagame — a former warlord who achieved the stability and development accredited to him by committing grave atrocities which United Nations (UN) investigators have [described](#) as "war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide." Additionally, in 2012, the U.S. Ambassador at Large for Global Criminal Justice [publicly warned](#) Kagame that he could be prosecuted for war crimes. Since taking over Rwanda following the 1994 genocide, Kagame's regime has committed an extensive series of grave crimes against refugees, despite the image he likes to portray internationally as a force for stability and humanitarianism in a volatile region.

According to evidence gathered on-the-ground in Human Rights Watch's 789-page report, [Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda](#), and UN investigator Robert Gersony's [report](#), as Kagame's rebel Tutsi army took over Rwanda in 1994, it rounded up and systematically killed tens of thousands of unarmed civilians across the country, including refugees. One of the worst crimes of the Rwandan regime was the destruction of the [Kibeho camp](#) in April 1995 of internally displaced people and the [massacre](#) of thousands of refugees. Furthermore, in 1997, Kagame launched two wars into the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which Rwandan military forces and allies attacked and destroyed refugee camps and slaughtered "several tens of thousands" of refugees, as detailed in the 2010 UN's [mapping report](#)."

While celebrating the people of Rwanda for their positive and welcoming attitude toward refugees is commendable, praising the government of Rwanda for its policy toward refugees lends Kagame's murderous regime

undeserved legitimacy and provides it with the false appearance of humanitarianism, openness, and tolerance.

Rwanda's regime is actively attempting to distract the international community from the extensive crimes that it has committed both in the past and present, including those against refugees. Most recently among these crimes was the Rwandan government's abduction of Paul Rusesabagina, a refugee and former hotel manager whose heroism in saving hundreds of people from the genocide was documented in the 2004 Oscar-nominated film *Hotel Rwanda*. The regime's broad campaign of espionage, assassinations, renditions, and intimidation against dissident Rwandan refugees around the world, including Rusesabagina, is detailed in a [2021 report](#) by Freedom House.

Given your status as a public figure who advocates for social justice, especially for refugees, we believe that you have a responsibility to take a moral stand — that which is against Kagame and his brutal government.

We therefore urgently and respectfully request that you:

- Begin a dialogue with current or former refugees whose lives have been directly affected by the devastation, destruction, and death perpetrated by Kagame's regime;
- Explicitly make clear that your efforts to highlight the lives of refugees in Rwanda are not an endorsement of Kagame's brutal regime or policies; and
- Make a categorical and unequivocal public statement addressing your position on these matters.

Your viewers and supporters in the United States and across the world look to you to provide truthful and contextual reporting and entertainment on some of the most current and pressing issues. We urge you to deny Kagame's regime the opportunity to use and manipulate your global influence, in order to whitewash its extensive crimes against refugees and others in the region.

If you have any questions, you can contact us at +1 (212) 246-8486, or by replying to this e-mail.

Sincerely,



Thor Halvorssen
CEO and President
Human Rights Foundation