

Thor Halvorssen
CEOCéline Assaf-Boustani
PRESIDENTGarry Kasparov
CHAIRMANBOARD 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) 246-8486Mr. Justin Bieber
c/o Mr. Scott "Scooter" Braun
SB Projects
Via email

Dear Mr. Bieber,

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is aware that you will be traveling to Saudi Arabia to perform at the Formula 1 STC Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2021 on December 5, 2021.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is the individual who authorized and is financing your performance at the event. Since coming to power in 2017, MBS has spearheaded a brutal crackdown on dissidents, including women's rights activists and sexual minorities, through arbitrary detention, prosecution, and barbaric methods of execution, such as decapitation, crucifixion, and stoning to death. Your sponsor authorized the beheading of gay men for the "crime" of being born that way.

We are writing to urgently inform you of the human rights crisis in Saudi Arabia; to explain the role that the regime of MBS has played in violating the rights of tens of millions of Saudis; to ask that you consider the unfortunate implications of your engagement with the brutal dictatorship of MBS; and to respectfully request that, in light of your status as a global personality, you take this opportunity to positively influence human rights policy in Saudi Arabia by canceling your appearance, as a symbol of solidarity with the ongoing suffering of the Saudi people.

Saudi Arabia is not a democracy. It is an absolute monarchy whose de facto dictator, MBS, brutally silences anyone who dares to criticize his policies or calls for reform. The Kingdom is among the worst violators of basic individual rights — in particular the right to freedom of opinion and expression. [Unsurprisingly](#), it was classified as "Not Free" in Freedom House's 2021 Freedom in the World Index, which focuses on civil liberties and political rights worldwide.

For decades, the Saudi regime has [harassed](#), [arbitrarily detained](#), and [sentenced](#) innumerable dissidents. Despite recent initiatives that seek to promote a more moderate and modern image of the country through global engagement and cosmetic social reforms, the Kingdom frequently engages in the systematic repression of activists and human rights defenders, often leading to lengthy prison sentences without

due process. Your performance is a component of MBS' public relations initiative to whitewash his murderous brutality.

While the Saudi Basic Law of Governance broadly establishes the State's obligation to protect human rights, it fails to specify any of these rights. In addition, although the Kingdom has signed several United Nations human rights treaties, it has firmly opposed one of its foundational documents — the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights — for allegedly contradicting the principles of the religious Shari'a Law, which form the basis of Saudi Arabia's legal system.

The Kingdom is particularly [intolerant](#) of criticism directed toward the government and its unelected officials, religion, or politics. In practice, the royal family exerts absolute control over most newspapers and media broadcasts. Self-censorship is widespread, and freedom of the press is practically non-existent. According to the Reporters Without Borders' [2021 World Press Freedom Index](#), Saudi Arabia ranks near the bottom, holding the 170th position out of 180 countries.

Civil society is not allowed to operate freely inside the Kingdom. The criminalization of human rights organizations and prohibition of demonstrations has left Saudis with no means by which to express their opinion without having to face the threat of arrest, lengthy detention, or imprisonment. Advocacy organizations are not allowed to exist either. Therefore, except for organizations affiliated with the government, no human rights group has been granted legal status. As a result, these groups operate without a license, despite the enormous risks of persecution.

Public demonstrations are also illegal and harshly punished, even though there are no express laws regulating or prohibiting assembly or demonstrations. In 2013, the Kingdom [sentenced seven government critics](#) to prison terms ranging from five to ten years, for "inciting protests and harming public order," after they wrote about protests on Facebook.

Saudi Arabia's ruler has also led a relentless [campaign to silence women's rights activists](#). Many of the women who advocated to lift the driving ban in Saudi Arabia are currently in jail and subjected to torture that includes [electric shocks, flogging, and rape](#). Saudi women are treated like second-class citizens. They cannot fully and freely access education and healthcare services, or even get married without permission from a male relative.

Having yourself [acknowledged](#) the "struggles women face," and having made a commitment to support women's rights, why would you lend your name to a regime that has a track record of imprisoning and punishing women for asking to be treated equally? Have you ever heard the stories of Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Nassima al-Sadah, Nouf Abdulaziz, or Maya al-Zahrani?

Mr. Bieber, you've expressed solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. Yet, if you move forward with this performance, you will be condoning, and serving the public relations needs, of a regime that [executes](#) members of the LGBTQ+ community for the "crime" of being who they are or identifying as they do. In April 2019, five gay men were [beheaded](#) after they confessed to crimes under torture.

The Saudi regime is committing these abuses while claiming it is fundamentally transforming the country through its "Vision 2030" plan, which is [cited](#) on the Formula 1 event website. This has gone hand-in-hand with the Saudi regime waging a major public relations campaign abroad to whitewash its crimes. To achieve this, the regime invests billions of dollars to propel an image of modernism and prosperity. A keystone of this effort involves the funding of sporting and entertainment industries,

including film and music festivals, and business summits.

You and your fellow musical artists have tremendous media influence, which MBS hopes to manipulate and profit from, for his own benefit and to the detriment of the Saudi people, who will face restrictions that will not apply to you and other guests of the Formula 1 Grand Prix. The Saudi regime is happy to pay large sums to international celebrities to give the Kingdom a veneer of respectability, as long as the human rights violations occurring within Saudi Arabia are never mentioned. We believe that part of the goal of this December event is to launder the Saudi regime's crimes, by allowing Saudi Arabia to present itself as a progressive, forward-thinking country instead of the dictatorship that it really is. Unfortunately, your performance affords the Saudi regime the opportunity to distract the world from the terrible conditions that women and the LGBTQ+ community endure in the Kingdom, the war that Saudi Arabia is furthering in Yemen, and the repressive conditions that Saudis face every day.

You are a public figure with vast influence in the media. Perhaps unbeknownst to you, MBS counts on using and manipulating your influence — as he repeatedly does with numerous organizations, unsuspecting Hollywood celebrities, music festivals, and business summits — to bolster his own reputation and regain credibility, both domestically and abroad. Instead, we urge you to use your platform to promote human rights in Saudi Arabia and contribute to a mission of promoting and protecting freedom globally.

We invite you to watch [THE DISSIDENT](#), a documentary produced by HRF with Oscar-winning director Bryan Fogel, about the high-profile murder of Washington Post columnist and pro-democracy advocate Jamal Khashoggi, which is perhaps the most brazen example of the brutality that MBS is willing to exert in order to silence his critics. The dismemberment of Khashoggi — a former advisor to the Saudi royal family — with a bone saw, shows that MBS is willing to inflict medieval punishments on his critics, even those who live outside of Saudi Arabia. We are happy to provide you with a link to watch the documentary and are hopeful that the evidence of the Saudi regime's brutality will persuade you that it is worth standing up for human rights in the Kingdom and not engaging with a murderous regime.

Mr. Bieber, as you can see, you are scheduled to perform at a state-sponsored event in one of the most repressive regimes on earth. Considering the information above, HRF believes that your participation in an event sponsored by a murderous regime involved in gross human rights violations — especially of women and sexual minorities — sends a message that dictatorships can purchase legitimacy. Furthermore, it would be disastrous for a public figure of your standing who has articulated a commitment to civil rights and social justice. Just last year, you released a [statement](#) voicing your support for the Black Lives Matter movement, and this year, with your album *Justice*, you [recognized](#) that you were playing “a small part” in discussions of justice as they related to abuses perpetrated against the Black community. You further stated that, “if we all do our part by using our gifts to serve this planet, and each other, that we are that much closer to being united.”

Saudi Arabia's human rights record clearly stands in contrast to the core values you claim to subscribe to. In line with your desire to “keep growing and learning about just all social injustices and what it looks like for [you] to be better,” HRF believes that you should recognize the unfortunate consequences of performing in Saudi Arabia, and uphold the principle that music is not merely a

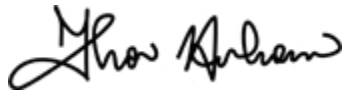
business, but also an influential art form that should not be purchased by a brutal dictatorship.

If you move forward with this performance for a festival sponsored by the Crown Prince, you will be in league with people who respond to freedom of expression and thought with murder. Your appearance in Saudi Arabia will severely undermine your support of human rights and cause irreparable reputational harm to your image. You will become a pawn — a tool of the repressive Saudi regime's campaign — used to detract attention away from the country's dire human rights situation.

To that end, HRF requests that you urgently cancel your participation on December 5, 2021 at the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Saudi Arabia, just as your colleague Nicki Minaj canceled her performance in Saudi Arabia in 2019, and make a statement in support of human rights in Saudi Arabia.

If you have any questions, you can contact us by e-mail at info@hrf.org.

Sincerely,



Thor Halvorssen
Chief Executive Officer



Garry Kasparov
Chairman