



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



# We know who the real heroes are.

The past year has made one thing painfully clear: the greatest champions of freedom and human rights are no longer Western governments and multilateral organizations like the United Nations. In fact, they never really were.

When a dictator rigs an election, jails a journalist, or murders a dissident, the most effective response instead comes from courageous activists and civil society organizations. From the disastrous US withdrawal from Afghanistan, to the UN's failure to hold the Saudi regime accountable for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, to the West's continued indifference toward Putin's corruption or Paul Kagame's brutal tyranny, it is clear that human rights defenders around the world have to take matters into their own hands by mobilizing movements and holding those in power accountable for their abuses. This is where the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) steps in.

HRF is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights where they are most at risk. At HRF, we know who the real heroes are. They are brave individuals in countries under authoritarian rule who put their lives on the line to stand up for what is right. And we know how to help them too.

In this report, we will describe how, over the past year, we have successfully advocated for the release of prisoners of conscience from Cuba to Tanzania; elevated the stories and struggles of activists from across the world; exposed the attempts of dictatorships, from Saudi Arabia to Uganda, to whitewash their abuses; launched creative campaigns to raise awareness of some of 2021's most pressing human rights issues; developed educational resources for those living under authoritarian regimes; sparked new collaborations among human rights defenders and philanthropists, journalists, and technologists; and much more.

This past year, we were very pleased to once again host the Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) in-person in Miami (and simultaneously in Oslo), where we amplified the voices of activists who speak truth to power and have ignited movements that seek justice and defy authoritarian regimes. There is simply no gathering in the world like OFF, and dictators know it. They try anything they can to stymie our efforts, from hacking our livestream in order to censor us, to imprisoning dissidents to prevent them from attending. However, as we learned at this year's OFF, as long as one person is willing to speak out, there is hope that the truth will prevail.

As human rights advocates continue to struggle against mass surveillance, online censorship, and government-sponsored hacking, HRF connects them with experts in the tech and digital security fields to develop new strategies to combat authoritarianism. Consider the pioneering work we have done to support individuals using Bitcoin to deliver financial freedom across the globe, and to help our fearless associates in South Korea, who use flash drives to deliver information into North Korea, the most isolated country on the planet.

As we enter 2022, HRF will continue to grow and support the brave activists, dissidents, journalists, and human rights advocates who are making their societies freer and more just, one step at a time.

As a charitable organization without an endowment, HRF is entirely dependent on the generosity of donors like yourself in order to carry out our work. We are immensely grateful for your contributions to our work, and with your support, we can continue to hold dictators and their henchmen accountable and support the civil society leaders advocating for freedom and building a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic world.

With gratitude,

**Thor Halvorsen**

CEO

**Céline Assaf-Boustani**

President

## Cover illustration by Lilia Kvatsabaya

### *Letter to a Political Prisoner*

"I was inspired to create this artwork by the solidarity and support of Belarusians towards political prisoners. Letters are the only way for people, who are in prison for their political views, to have a connection with the outside world. Strengthening this connection, through communication with people from different cities of Belarus, helps prisoners to maintain a positive attitude. Unfortunately, many people do not get answers to their letters due to strict censorship. In my work, I depicted a bird that turns into a letter. The bird in this illustration is a symbol of hope, which overcomes the grid and gets to its recipient."

Lilia Kvatsabaya is a Belarusian illustrator and graphic designer. She is one of HRF's 2021 Artists in Residency (p. 27).



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p. 15

It is the end of 2021, and the Russian army is amassing along the border of Ukraine. As American and European diplomats scramble to prevent war, it is worth reflecting on the path that led us to the brink of another European conflict.

In 2014, Ukraine chose to reject Russian authoritarianism, and establish closer ties with the European Union. Despite the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, a frozen conflict in the Donbas, information warfare, and countless cyber attacks, reformers defended Ukraine's democratic project. And yet, through a combination of apathy, ignorance, and misplaced goodwill, the democratic world has allowed Putin to retain a veto over Ukraine's future. Democratic leaders have cozied up to Putin, accepting board positions on Russian oil and gas companies, tolerating Russian money laundering, and seeking diplomatic resets after every crisis.

Although Putin is now a clear and present danger, Europe and the United States are still getting it wrong elsewhere. In Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and China, Western leaders continue to smile and discuss business over human rights and accountability. Instead of taking a stand on principles of good and evil, right and wrong, and the universal values of human rights and human life, we have engagement, resets, and moral equivalence. Today, the so-called leaders of the free world talk about promoting democracy while treating the rulers of the world's most repressive regimes as equals. The policies of engagement with dictators have failed on every level, and it is about time to recognize this failure.

HRF provides the moral clarity that so many of our leaders refuse to see. We expose how authoritarian regimes stifle freedom and destroy prosperity all over the world and support brave activists and human rights defenders who are on the front lines of the struggle for freedom and democracy. And, importantly, we will always put justice and accountability over business and convenience.

Thank you for supporting our work.

**Garry Kasparov**

Chairman

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# OUR MISSION

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 ideas of the human rights movement: those most purely represented in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## HRF'S KEY AREAS



# HRF'S WORK AROUND THE WORLD

HRF works to promote democracy and human rights around the world, with a focus on closed societies.

This map illustrates a small sample of HRF's global achievements in 2021.

## THE AMERICAS

### BOLIVIA, CHILE, CUBA, ECUADOR, MEXICO, NICARAGUA, & VENEZUELA

Activists from Latin America joined HRF for the first-ever Working Retreat for Latin America (p. 38).

### US (NYC + DC)

HRF projected images of Jamal Khashoggi onto prominent monuments to shed light on the Saudi regime's crimes (p. 25).

### US (Miami)

HRF hosted the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum (p. 14-16).

### CUBA

HRF launched a digital gallery to support Cuban dissident artists (p. 29).

### VENEZUELA

HRF submitted a UN Universal Periodic Review for Venezuela (p. 13).

## EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

### NORWAY

HRF hosted a satellite Oslo Freedom Forum event for our Norwegian community (p. 14).

### BELARUS

HRF sent \$1,000,000+ to activists and protesters in Belarus (p. 17).

### SERBIA

HRF's Freedom Fellows received training on nonviolence and movement building (p. 36-37).

### RUSSIA

Imprisoned Russian dissident Alexey Navalny authored a speech in prison that was read at the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami (p. 15).

### HUNGARY

HRF published a blog post on the Hungarian prime minister's authoritarian tactics (p. 11).

### AFGHANISTAN

HRF's Art in Protest program featured Afghan artist Shamsia Hassani's work (p. 27).

### TURKMENISTAN

HRF published a blog post highlighting the cult of personality of Turkmenistan's dictator, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov (p. 11).

### AZERBAIJAN

HRF published a blog post on Azerbaijan's dictatorship (p. 11).

## AFRICA

### ETHIOPIA

HRF wrote an op-ed spotlighting Ethiopian prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed, who is presiding over human rights abuses in Ethiopia (p. 7).

### UGANDA

HRF wrote letters to musicians DJ Khaled and Akon about the urgent situation in Uganda as part of our Celebrities & Dictators program (p. 18).

### SENEGAL

HRF's Bitcoin Development Fund helped teach activists how to use Bitcoin as a tool for financial freedom (p. 32-33).

### TOGO

HRF worked with Togolese human rights activist Farida Nabourema to build a financial literacy program for local communities in Togo (p. 41).

### ZIMBABWE

HRF submitted a UN Universal Periodic Review for Zimbabwe (p. 13).

### RWANDA

HRF wrote letters to TV host Samantha Bee and the NBA to warn them not to whitewash Rwanda's brutal regime (p. 18).

### TANZANIA

HRF successfully petitioned the UN to release arbitrarily detained activist Theodory Giyan (p. 12).

## MIDDLE EAST

### IRAQ

Days ahead of the elections in Iraq, Iraqi political satirist Ahmed Albasheer delivered a talk at the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum (p. 15).

### QATAR

HRF wrote a letter to partners and sponsors of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, as part of our Celebrities & Dictators program (p. 18), and published an accompanying podcast (p. 34-35).

### SYRIA

HRF partnered with The Syria Campaign to host a panel discussion on the conflict in Syria (p. 40).

### IRAN

HRF featured the PaykanArtCar, an art project that gives a voice to LGBTQ+ people in Iran, at the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum (p. 14-16).

### SAUDI ARABIA

HRF joined the Khashoggi Ban Working Group to develop mechanisms to facilitate the submission of cases under the newly-announced Khashoggi Ban (p. 13).

## ASIA-PACIFIC & SOUTH ASIA

### TAIWAN

HRF hosted a virtual screening of the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami for students in Taiwan (p. 14-16).

### UYGHUR REGION

HRF launched the Uncomfortable Truth campaign to raise awareness about the Uyghur genocide (p. 31).

### JAPAN

HRF launched the Empty Box Campaign to disincentivize dictators to the 2021 Tokyo Olympics (p. 20).

### NORTH KOREA

HRF reached a milestone of sending 100,000 flash drives into North Korea, as part of our Flash Drives for Freedom program (p. 26).

### HONG KONG

At RightsCon 2021, HRF hosted a lightning talk on the recent crackdown in Hong Kong (p. 22).

### LAOS

HRF published a report and an accompanying op-ed on the intersection of foreign investments and human rights abuses in Laos (p. 10).

### CHINA

HRF received 4.7 B media impressions on articles and research related to the Chinese Communist Party's human rights abuses (p. 21-22).



## MEDIA IMPACT

HRF's global advocacy campaigns and events are covered by the world's top media outlets, including, in 2021, *The Associated Press*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, *CNN*, *The Hill*, *The Guardian*, *USA Today*, *Politico*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, and many more. HRF's media impact ensures that stories about the struggle against tyranny reach millions of people around the world, and ultimately inspire change.

**11,335** MEDIA MENTIONS

**27 B** MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

**18,573,256** SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

**\$74,272,034** EARNED SOCIAL MEDIA VALUE

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

### The Washington Post

January 12, 2021  
**A new movie about Jamal Khashoggi reveals a protégé who is alive and under assault**



### The New York Times

January 25, 2021  
**Wall Street Returns to Riyadh**



### VARIETY

February 5, 2021  
**"Dissident" Producer Thor Halvorssen on Alleged Saudi Troll Campaign Against Film on Rotten Tomatoes, IMDb**



### THE SIGNAL

March 14, 2021  
**Freedom Money**



### USA TODAY

October 5, 2021  
**Navalny from prison: Corruption flourishes when there's disregard for human rights**



### FIRING LINE WITH MARGARET HOOVER

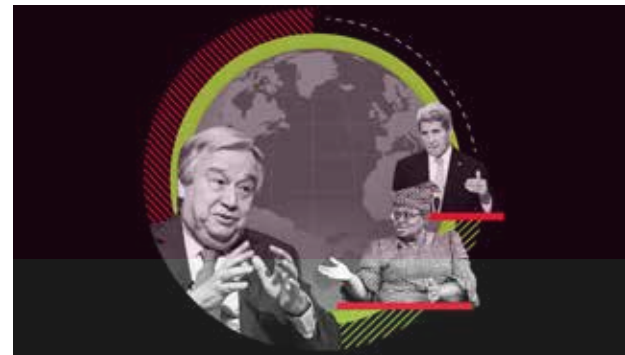
October 10, 2021  
**The Oslo Freedom Forum**



# MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

## POLITICO

October 6, 2021  
Postcard from the Oslo Freedom Forum



**"The activists themselves spoke of how much they value real engagement, compared to other global conferences where they said they sometimes feel treated as props. The exiled Chinese artist Badiucao – who was awarded the Forum's Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent – called the event 'a global safe harbor' guarding against the loneliness of exile. 'Here we do not feel lonely. We feel connected.'"**

## NATIONAL REVIEW

October 15, 2021  
"Be Human"



## THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

November 9, 2021  
Human Rights Foundation Leaders Call for Justin Bieber to Cancel Performance in Saudi Arabia



# HRF OP-EDS

## TIME

January 26, 2021  
Alex Gladstein

**In the Fight Against Extremism, Don't Demonize Surveillance-Busting Tools like Signal and Bitcoin**



## The News Lens 新聞評論

February 21, 2021  
Malaak Jamal & Jenny Wang

**Human Rights Abuses in Laos Are Rampant. International Businesses Should Take Action**



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

April 18, 2021  
Garry Kasparov

**Why Would Biden Want a Summit With Putin, Whom He Calls a 'Killer'?**



## Newsweek

May 11, 2021 • Garry Kasparov & Céline Assaf-Boustani

**Akon's Romance with Dictatorship**



## CNN

May 25, 2021 • Michelle Gulino & Malaak Jamal

**The Nobel Peace Prize winner who's presiding over a humanitarian catastrophe**



## THE HILL

July 1, 2021 • Jenny Wang & Joyce Ho

**Behind China's grand façade lies deep insecurity**



## USA TODAY

July 6, 2021 • Thor Halvorssen & Katrina Lantos Swett

**Don't let dictators grandstand with world leaders in Tokyo. Reclaim Olympics values.**



## DAILY NEWS

Sept 21, 2021 • Enes Kanter & Garry Kasparov

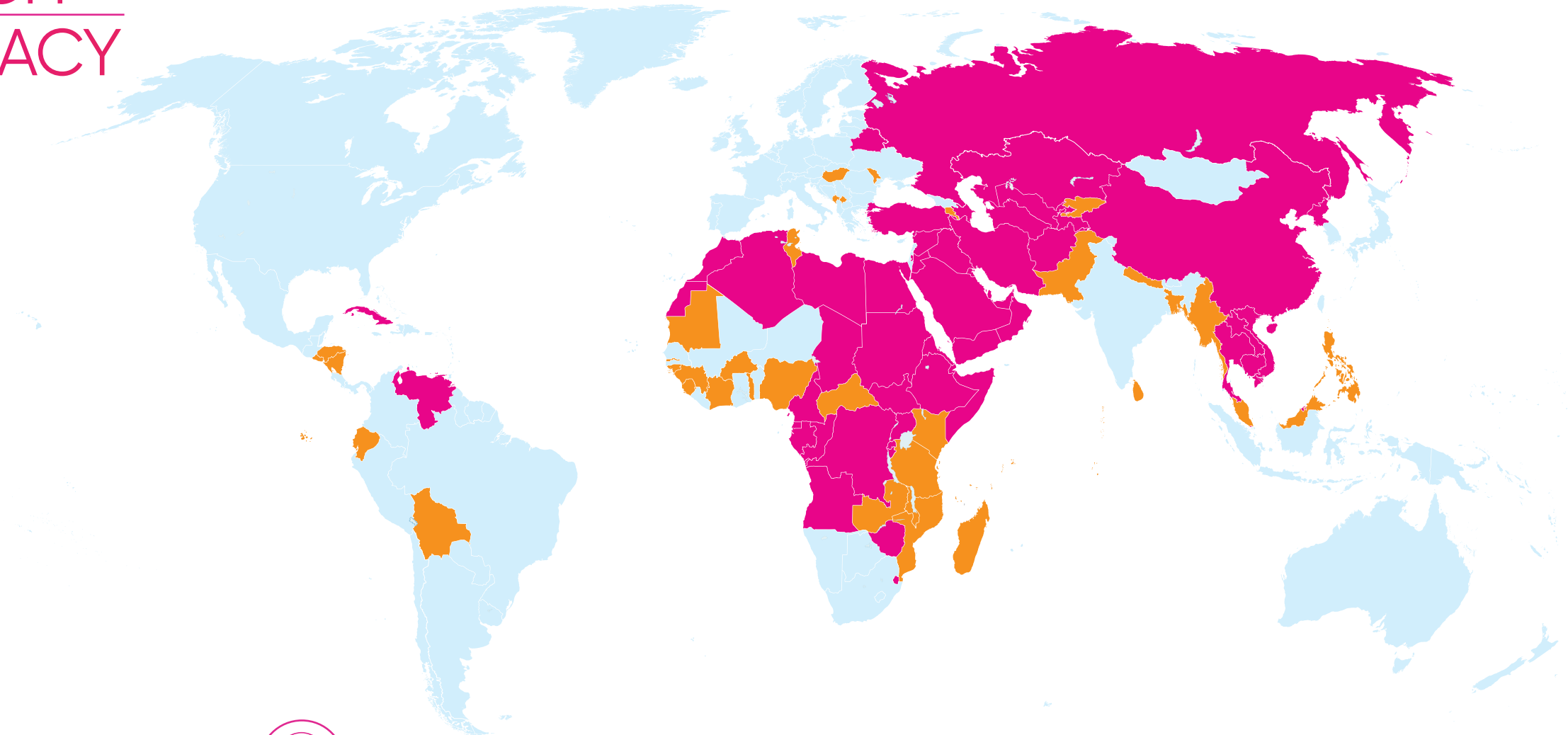
**A platform for the world's tyrants: The UN's General Assembly continues to amplify the words of the worst dictators.**



# POLICY RESEARCH & LEGAL ADVOCACY

## POLITICAL REGIME CLASSIFICATION

To fulfill our mission of promoting freedom and democracy in closed societies, HRF focuses our limited resources on countries where independent media, activists, NGOs, and opposition parties are under permanent threat and systematically prevented from forming meaningful opposition to the regime. To that end, HRF has taken on classifying all of the countries in the world, with an aim to distinguish democratic from authoritarian regimes. Our Political Regime Project categorizes countries as having "democracies," "competitive authoritarian regimes," or "fully authoritarian regimes."\*



### DEMOCRACIES

**106 countries**

**3,609,368,422 people**

Open societies where there is separation between the different branches of government, elections are free and fair, and civil liberties are respected.



### COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

**41 countries**

**1,232,788,047 people**

Societies where opposition parties are allowed to exist, but suffer pervasive harassment and judicial persecution.



### FULLY AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

**55 countries**

**3,030,675,594 people**

Societies where there are no free and fair elections, no separation of state powers, no independent media, no vibrant civil society, and no civil liberties.

**54% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION LIVES UNDER  
AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME.**

\*HRF classifies countries in the world based on their political regime types, following the definitions suggested by renowned University of Toronto and Harvard University political scientists Lucan A. Way and Steven Levitsky in their book *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*.



# ORIGINAL RESEARCH ON RIGHTS AND REGIMES

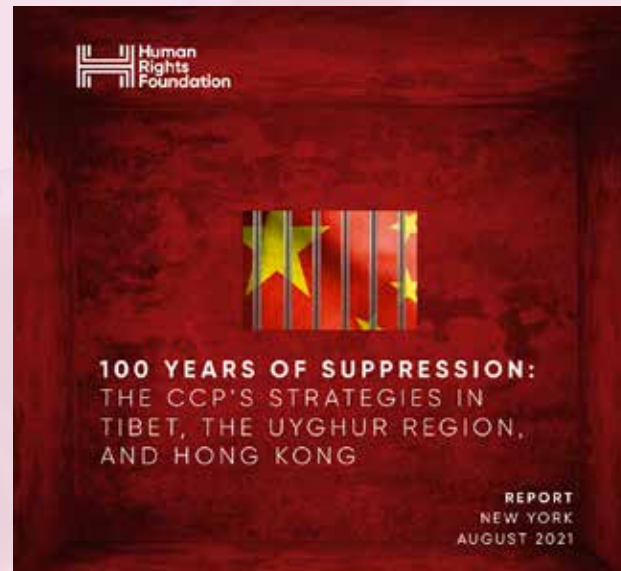
HRF's Center for Law and Democracy analyzes developments taking place in our countries of focus. Our research takes on a variety of forms, including blog posts, essays, and reports, which go on to guide HRF's strategic approach to advocacy and programmatic work.



February 2021

## Voices Silenced: The Impact of Foreign Investments on Human Rights in Laos

The Lao government's desire to profit from development projects has displaced thousands of communities. This report provides an overview of how irresponsible foreign investment and corruption perpetrate human rights abuses, and urges both the government and stakeholders to adhere to their obligation to respect and uphold human rights. The report was later cited by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in its April 2021 report.



August 2021

## 100 Years of Suppression: The CCP's Strategies in Tibet, the Uyghur Region, and Hong Kong

This report highlights the similarities between suppression tactics implemented by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in three focus regions: Tibet, the Uyghur Region (Xinjiang), and Hong Kong. It also presents policy recommendations that emphasize the urgency of implementing grassroots strategies and robust multilateral initiatives to strategically counter the CCP's authoritarian influence.

# BLOG POSTS & NOTES ON POLICY

January 2021  
**Is Saudi Arabia's Kafala System Truly Reformed?**

January 2021  
**The Last Internet Shutdowns**

February 2021  
**Dictatorship Sows Division in Nagorno-Karabakh**

February 2021  
**Protest Runway: The Use of Color & Fashion in Global Pro-Democracy Movements**

March 2021  
**Is the End Near for Viktor Orbán?**

April 2021  
**The Real Reformers of Saudi Arabia**

June 2021  
**Cult of Personality in Turkmenistan**

August 2021  
**Unraveling China's Attempts to Hinder Academic Freedom: Confucius Institutes**

December 2021  
**Igniting the Truth on Transnational Repression**

**Igniting the Truth Against Authoritarian Sportswashing**

**Igniting the Truth on Corruption**

December 2021

> *Excerpt*

## Truth Ignited: 2021 in Review Blog Series

Abdujelil Helil was a wealthy businessman from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, located in northwestern China. He had earned praise from local Communist Party officials for his loyalty. However, he was also Uyghur. For several years now, under the guise of combating terrorism, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has perpetuated a genocide against the Uyghurs, forcing them into labor camps, destroying their cultural sites, and forcibly sterilizing Uyghur women. In 2017, Chinese government officials came for Helil, accused him of financing terrorism, sentenced him to 14 years in prison,

and seized \$11 million in his assets. Following a secret trial in March 2021, the CCP further sentenced Helil for "membership in a terrorist organization."

Helil's story is not unique. Since 2017, dozens of wealthy Uyghur businessmen have been targeted by the Chinese government. Their assets are stolen, auctioned off, and then ... the assets disappear. They are laundered within a global system of financial corruption, and can re-emerge as contemporary art, luxury sports cars, and penthouse apartments. Stolen money linked to the Uyghur genocide can end up financing the lavish lifestyles of Chinese kleptocrats in London, Paris, and New York.



This system of global financial corruption is a grave danger to human rights and democratic values. Corruption hampers economic opportunity, erodes trust in institutions, corrodes the rule of law, and ultimately encourages regime officials to steal from vulnerable populations, safe in the knowledge that their ill-gotten gains can never be traced. Corruption is not exclusive to dictatorships, but it is fundamentally exacerbated by authoritarianism. In countries where there are no independent judiciaries, free press, or free and fair elections to hold leaders accountable for their crimes, corruption thrives.

*(Read more at [hrf.org](https://hrf.org))*

## IMPACT LITIGATION

**100% SUCCESS RATE IN PETITIONING THE UN ON BEHALF OF ARBITRARILY DETAINED DISSIDENTS. HRF HAS PREVAILED IN EVERY CASE FILED WITH THE UN.**

There is no judicial independence in dictatorships because separation of powers does not exist, which means that dissidents, journalists, and public intellectuals can be arrested without charge, or imprisoned without a fair trial. HRF seeks to help these individuals pursue justice through international semi-judicial bodies.

HRF's Center for Law and Democracy submits emblematic cases of arbitrarily imprisoned dissidents to several judicial and semi-judicial international bodies, such as the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD).

Submissions to the UNWGAD exert pressure on authoritarian regimes to release arbitrarily-detained prisoners, and HRF has helped achieve freedom for many activists. Since the start of this program, every outcome on a received decision has been in our clients' favor – explicitly stating that each case of detention was, indeed, arbitrary under international law.



### A Closer Look: Keilylli De La Mora

On April 12, 2020, when Cuban pro-democracy activist Keilylli De La Mora briefly removed her face mask a few steps outside of her home, Cuban police arrested her on a newly-invented charge of "spreading an epidemic." She was beaten by the police, subjected to a show trial – during which she was denied legal counsel – and sentenced to prison for contempt, resistance, and disobedience. While in prison, De La Mora was subjected to verbal and physical abuse.

After HRF submitted De La Mora's case, the UNWGAD ruled that her arrest was arbitrary and in violation of international law. The UNWGAD recommended that the Cuban government provide De La Mora with compensation and other reparations.

**"With this decision, Cuba must understand that, if it continues to deprive its people of their most basic rights and freedoms, the international community will continue to work to hold it accountable."**

> HRF commentary on the UNWGAD opinion

## UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS

HRF conducts advocacy work targeted at the UN and state governments on behalf of specific activists or groups. One way we do this is by submitting Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) to the UN Human Rights Council. UPRs allow civil society groups to bring attention to human rights abuses by raising issues under international covenants and conventions.

To date, HRF has submitted 16 UPR contributions against various authoritarian regimes.

## ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

### HOLDING DICTATORS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR CRIMES

HRF documents the links between corruption and authoritarianism, and submits evidentiary case files to the US Departments of State and Treasury, under the Global Magnitsky Act. Passed in 2012, the Act allows the president to revoke US visas and block US-based property and interests of foreign individuals who have committed, overseen, or financed serious human rights abuses or acts of corruption.



### A Closer Look: Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the regime wields power through violence and intimidation. Arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings are common tactics used by the government to quell dissent.

In July, HRF submitted a UPR to the UN, detailing the state of human rights in Zimbabwe. We called on Zimbabwe's government to respect the individual rights of its citizens, and to strengthen its commitment to gender equality by increasing access to legal and other support services for survivors of gender-based violence.



### Saudi Arabia

In July, HRF joined the Khashoggi Ban Working Group, a civil society coalition that works in coordination with the US State Department to implement the Khashoggi Ban, a new US policy which aims to sanction individuals involved in transnational repression.

### Hong Kong

In March, the US Treasury announced new sanctions on Hong Kong officials, one of whom was included on the list HRF submitted to the US Treasury.

# 2021 OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

## TRUTH IGNITED

**"This must be the first anti-dictatorship conference in Miami where Cuba was just one of dozens of storylines. But if ever there was a group of people in need of a break in Florida, it was this global collection of dissidents."**

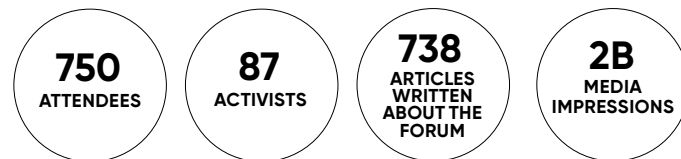
### Uniting Our Community Across Oceans

For the first time ever, HRF hosted a simultaneous event in Oslo that ran parallel to the main forum. Our Norwegian community gathered at the new Munch Museum to listen to in-person talks by Glacier Kwong and Filmon Debru, watch a livestream of the theater talks at the Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami, and discuss strategies for promoting democracy and civil liberties across the globe.



Glacier Kwong

> Politico



The Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) is a thriving global community of activists united by a common vision of making the world more peaceful, prosperous, and free from tyranny. Since 2009, HRF has cultivated a unique space for some of the world's leading human rights advocates, business leaders, tech entrepreneurs, journalists, and policymakers to share their stories and discuss ways to advance individual liberties and unleash human potential.

The 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum, which took place from October 4-5 at the New World Center in Miami, Florida, celebrated the stories that spark action across the globe in service of the truth. Our 2021 theme, **TRUTH IGNITED**, highlighted the voices of those who speak truth to power, ignite movements, and fight for justice, while defying authoritarian regimes worldwide.



Glacier Kwong at the Oslo Freedom Forum

## SPEAKERS

**"When those in power are afraid of their own people, democracy is within reach."**

> Tania Bruguera, 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum Speaker



**TANIA BRUGUERA**  
Dissident Cuban installation and performance artist



**LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ**  
Venezuelan opposition leader



**GLACIER KWONG**  
Hong Kong political and digital rights activist



**STEVE JURVETSON**  
American venture capitalist



**WAI HNIN PWINT THON**  
Burmese pro-democracy activist



**AHMED ALBASHEER**  
Iraqi political satirist



**ALEXEY NAVALNY**  
Founder of the Anti-Corruption Foundation



**AKIDA PULAT**  
Uyghur activist



**HATICE CENGIZ**  
Fiancée of the late Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi



**FILMON DEBRU**  
Eritrean human rights activist and trafficking survivor



**ARTHUR HOLLAND MICHEL**  
Author and surveillance expert



**DJ SWITCH**  
Nigerian artist and #EndSARS movement activist



**ESSAM DAOD**  
Psychiatrist and co-founder of Humanity Crew



**SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA**  
Leader of democratic Belarus



**BERTA VALLE**  
Journalist, pro-democracy activist, and wife of Nicaraguan presidential candidate Félix Maradiaga

# INTERACTIVE PROGRAMMING

The 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum featured a wide array of interactive programming, including panel discussions and fireside chats on the most pressing human rights issues of 2021, hands-on workshops with thought leaders and human rights experts, and spaces for networking and creative problem-solving.



Abdalaziz Alhamza, DJ Switch, and Joe Smith lead a workshop titled "Media and Mobilizations: How to Film Your Street Protests Like an Expert."



Samuel Chu, Masih Alinejad, and Melanio Escobar speak on the "Fake News, Censorship, and Encryption" panel.

## "A SPECTACULAR HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL"

> The Economist



"The Oslo Freedom Forum will open your eyes to the incredible network of brave men and women working every day to fight against the most oppressive states on earth, and restore your faith in the indomitable human spirit."

> Conference attendee



Thor Halvorssen and Hatice Cengiz on the main stage.



Zachary Couglin and Scott Johnston host a workshop titled "Submitting Cases Under the Global Magnitsky Act."



Screening of HRF's new film THE DISSIDENT.

# GLOBAL ADVOCACY & PUBLIC EDUCATION



## BELARUS SOLIDARITY FUND

### OVER \$1 MILLION RAISED FOR THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

In August 2020, hundreds of thousands of Belarusians took to the streets to protest Alexander Lukashenko's 26-year dictatorship – in what became the biggest pro-democracy movement in Belarus' history. For months, peaceful demonstrators endured the extreme violence of the regime, which used live ammunition, torture, and rape to intimidate those calling for freedom and democracy.

In response to the ruthlessness of the Lukashenko regime, HRF created the Belarus Solidarity Fund (BSF), which provides direct support to pro-democracy activists, independent journalists, and striking factory workers. We use our platform to raise awareness about the struggle for democracy in Belarus, and to amplify the voices of brave activists who risk their lives to protect civil liberties in their country. BSF allows anyone, especially the Belarusian community in the United States, to contribute to a transparent, reliable, and trusted entity that charges no fees and efficiently distributes funds to activists in Belarus.

#### Perspectives from the Belarusian Community

"If not for HRF, if not for this financial assistance, I don't even know what would have happened to our family. Thank you to all the caring people and the foundation!"

Victor

"Many thanks to HRF for the support of ordinary Belarusians!"

Sergey



Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, leader of democratic Belarus, visits HRF's office in New York on July 27, 2021.



Belarusian activists gather at the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami.



Akon

**"Purveyors of popular culture hold the power to spark change."**

> Céline Assaf-Boustani & Garry Kasparov, Newsweek

## CELEBRITIES & DICTATORS

### PRESSURING CELEBRITIES AND INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PRIORITIZE MORALS OVER MONEY

In recent years, authoritarian regimes have taken a particular interest in hosting celebrities to legitimize their rule and whitewash their crimes. Performing for an authoritarian regime sends a message – intentional or not – that validates the dictatorship and its policies.

HRF's Celebrities & Dictators program makes the struggle for individual rights mainstream, by denouncing pop culture figures who prop up dictators with performances and photo ops. The campaigns speak directly to the celebrity or organization, asking them to reverse their damaging publicity.

In 2021, HRF sent 37 letters to individuals and organizations, including Justin Bieber, the NBA, DJ Khaled, Akon, the International Ice Hockey Federation, MTV, Adidas, Budweiser, Coca Cola, McDonald's, Visa, and Hyundai, among others, appealing to their global standing and responsibility to promote justice and equality.

### International Ice Hockey Federation

In January, HRF asked the International Ice Hockey Federation to cancel the Ice Hockey World Championships in Belarus, given the Lukashenko regime's brutal suppression of dissent. After a sustained campaign by civil rights groups in Belarus, the championships were canceled, and HRF published a "Dissidents & Dictators" podcast episode on the practice of "sportswashing."

### MTV Africa Music Awards

MTV Africa Music Awards: In February, HRF wrote letters to American music producer DJ Khaled and CBS Viacom, urging them to cancel the MTV Africa Music Awards in Uganda and make a statement in support of human rights and democracy in the country. In the wake of a rigged election and massive government repression, the festival was suspended.

### FIFA World Cup Sponsors

FIFA World Cup Sponsors: HRF sent letters to several companies, including Adidas, Budweiser, Coca Cola, McDonald's, Visa, and Hyundai, all of which are sponsors of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. We urged them to use their influence to press Qatar's regime to end ongoing labor and human rights violations of the country's migrant workforce, which represents 90% of its population.



During the 2021 American Music Awards ceremony, HRF drove trucks through downtown Los Angeles, calling upon Justin Bieber to cancel his upcoming performance for the Saudi dictatorship.

**"You are a public figure with vast influence in the media... 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."**

> Letter from HRF to Justin Bieber



# EMPTY BOX CAMPAIGN



## DICTATORS DON'T BELONG AT THE OLYMPICS.

In May, HRF and the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice (Lantos Foundation) launched the "Empty Box" Campaign, calling on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to deny heads of state from authoritarian regimes the opportunity to participate in the Opening Ceremonies of the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games.

HRF and the Lantos Foundation wrote directly to Thomas Bach, President of the IOC, to request that the organization take a principled stand against authoritarianism and not invite or disinvite 15 of the world's most brutal dictators to the Games' Opening Ceremonies, at which heads of state are traditionally provided a place of honor in box seats. Instead, the letter urged the IOC to leave their designated seating



boxes empty – a signal to the world that dictators do not belong at the Opening Ceremonies of the world's premier sporting event. HRF CEO Thor Halvorssen and Lantos Foundation President Katrina Lantos Swett also published an op-ed in *USA Today* entitled "Don't let dictators grandstand with world leaders in Tokyo. Reclaim Olympics values."



## CCP DISRUPTION INITIATIVE

### SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE CCP'S 100 YEARS OF REPRESSION

China is ruled by a fully authoritarian regime headed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which maintains complete control over the country's government, military, economy, judiciary, and educational system. Over the past several decades, the CCP has unabashedly attacked fundamental human rights in order to advance its own political and ideological goals. From its mass crackdowns on civil liberties in Hong Kong, to increased digital surveillance and censorship, to severe stifling of freedoms in Tibet, to the Uyghur genocide, the CCP took bold steps in 2021 to assert its authoritarian political ideology and international influence.

HRF's CCP Disruption Initiative was especially timely in 2021, as the year marked the 100th anniversary of the party's founding. We helped shed light on the CCP's state-sponsored repression by hosting events with human rights activists and experts on China, undertaking research on China's authoritarian regime, and publishing articles and op-eds. In December 2021, a representative from HRF was invited to testify at a congressional hearing about China's economic coercion. At the hearing, HRF presented domestic policy recommendations directly to the US Congress, and emphasized the human rights implications of the Chinese government's weaponization of economic clout.

## Media Highlights

### HRF SPOTLIGHT

January 29, 2021

**What's Happening in Xinjiang? Q&A with Uyghur Activist Jewher Ilham**



March 18, 2021

**The last blow to Hong Kong's faltering democracy**



April 18, 2021

**China's intimidation and endless pursuit of ideological compliance**



July 1, 2021

**Behind China's grand facade lies deep insecurity**



**HRF REPORT**

August 6, 2021

**100 Years of Suppression: The CCP's Strategies in Tibet, the Uyghur Region, and Hong Kong**



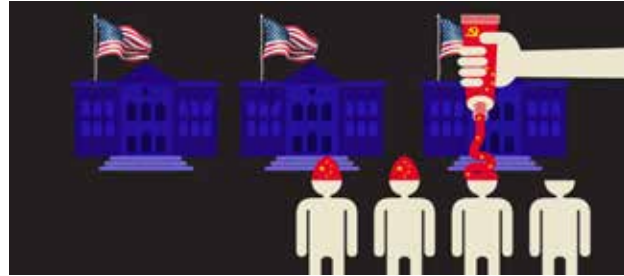
**Bringing Awareness to the Uyghur Genocide**

In April, HRF jointly produced a virtual event, "Genocide in the 21st Century: The Uyghur Crisis," with student organizations from Harvard University. Featuring engaging panel discussions, this two-day event provided participants with a holistic and multi-dimensional understanding of the Uyghur genocide. Speakers included Uyghur journalist and OFF speaker Gulchehra Hoja, the World Uyghur Congress Program and Advocacy Manager Zumretay Arkin, Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent for *BuzzFeed News* and former OFF speaker Megha Rajagopalan, and Hong Kong activist and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize nominee Alex Chow. Participants left the event equipped with concrete ideas on how they can help take a stand against these atrocities.

**HRF POLICY NOTE**

August 4, 2021

**Unraveling China's Attempts to Hinder Academic Freedom: Confucius Institutes**



October 1, 2021

**As China opens up, the CCP doubles down on repression in Tibet and Xinjiang**



**Supporting Hongkongers**

Since the passage of the draconian National Security Law in 2020, Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause has needed support from the international community more than ever. At RightsCon 2021, HRF hosted a lightning talk and "Ask Me Anything" session, featuring Hong Kong political and digital activist Glacier Kwong. The talk and session underscored the striking impact that the National Security Law has made on press freedom within Hong Kong, and provided recommendations for listeners on how to help. At the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum, HRF also premiered a video that we created, featuring Hong Kong activist Nathan Law, as part of our "Lifelines" series.

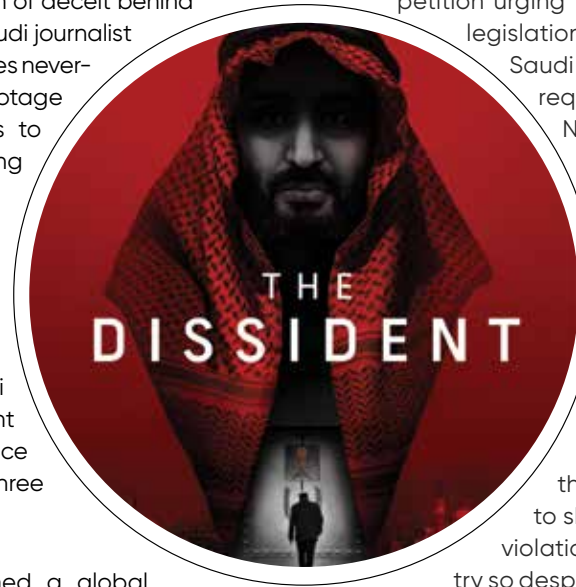
**THE DISSIDENT**

**1,574,130,647 MEDIA IMPRESSIONS IN 2021**

THE DISSIDENT, a feature documentary film produced by HRF and directed by Academy Award-winning director Bryan Fogel, was released on-demand in January 2021. The film exposes the labyrinth of deceit behind the high-profile murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and features never-before-seen surveillance footage and unprecedented access to a wealth of other damning information.

Although companies like Netflix and Amazon initially refused to purchase and distribute the film, out of fear of backlash from the Saudi regime, THE DISSIDENT went on to become an audience favorite and reached a top-three spot on iTunes in early 2021.

Simultaneously, HRF launched a global campaign calling for #JusticeForJamal, which



targeted different groups, ranging from the general public, to nonprofits, journalists, business leaders, and lawmakers. More than 10,000 people signed HRF's petition urging the US Congress to pass specific legislation to impose sanctions and hold the Saudi regime accountable, including requiring the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to declassify the report on Khashoggi's murder.

At the end of January, the Biden administration imposed a temporary freeze on US arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and on February 25, the Khashoggi report was officially declassified. These victories are evidence of the powerful effect that campaigns like ours can have to shine the spotlight on human rights violations that regimes like Saudi Arabia try so desperately to keep under wraps.

**Backlash from the Saudi Regime**

Shortly after its release, THE DISSIDENT caught the attention of the Saudi regime, which resorted to attacking the film by flooding the popular film-rating sites Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb with hundreds of negative reviews from fake accounts, dropping the film's

approval rating. *The Washington Post* published an article on why THE DISSIDENT had become a new target of the infamous Saudi troll farm. Since then, many of the fake negative reviews have been wiped, and the film stands at 97% today on Rotten Tomatoes.

**An alleged Saudi troll campaign is targeting a movie about the murder of Jamal Khashoggi**

'The Dissident' had received favorable audience scores on the Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb rating sites — until last week

## Awards



2021 Writers Guild Award

Documentary  
Screenplay



2021 Irish Council for Civil Liberties

Human Rights Film Award



Nomination for 2021 British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award  
Documentary

## Twitter Highlights



This is an incredible film that follows Saudi Prince MBS's ordered assassination of [#JamalKhashoggi](#). Jamal was Saudi Arabia's greatest defender of the freedom of speech. We must continue to fight for justice for Jamal Khashoggi's death. [#TheDissident](#)

**The Dissident** @TheDissidentMov - Jan 14  
@BryanFogel, Hatice Cengiz (@mercan\_resif), Omar Abdulaziz (@oamaz7) and @WashingtonPost's David Ignatius (@IgnatiusPost) discuss #TheDissident - watch now. [twitter.com/washingtonpost](https://twitter.com/washingtonpost)

1:19 AM - Feb 9, 2021 - Twitter for iPad



No wonder the Saudi government doesn't want you to see this: it tells the truth about the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi. It's a documentary but it's as watchable as a thriller.

MBS wouldn't want you to see it. So you should.



18 232 805



This is an interview I did with director [@bryanfogel](#) about his important documentary about the murder of Jamal Khashoggi [@TheDissidentMov](#).

**UK Redacted** @UKRedacted - Feb 4  
@BryanFogel and @JuddApatow explains why @TheDissidentmov, based on the murder of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi is important at this crucial moment. @TrueFactsStated [interviewmagazine.com/film/bryan-fog...](https://interviewmagazine.com/film/bryan-fog...)



absolutely incredible and eye opening and terrifying

**Ryan Mac** @RMMac18 - Jan 30  
The Dissident. What a film.  
[Show this thread](#)

11:42 AM - Jan 30, 2021 - Twitter Web App



If you haven't seen [#TheDissident](#), I hope that you will. This incredibly powerful documentary about the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the hands of the Saudi government is available to watch now:



tv.apple.com  
The Dissident | Apple TV  
From Academy Award-Winning director Bryan Fogel (ICARUS), The Dissident is a critically acclaimed edge-of-your-seat, adrenaline-filled thriller that p...

2:43 PM - Jan 12, 2021 - Twitter Web App

## #JusticeForJamal Projections

In January, HRF took THE DISSIDENT campaign to New York and Washington, DC, projecting audacious messages about Jamal Khashoggi's murder onto prominent monuments and government buildings.

This was part of a broader push for US-based businesses to stand up to Saudi Arabia's foreign influence. At the end of January 2021, the Saudi regime hosted "Davos in the Desert," an annual high-profile investment conference in the capital city of Riyadh, attended by executives from some of the most prominent companies on Wall Street. HRF targeted companies such as Goldman Sachs, KPMG, and Credit Suisse that attended Davos, projecting images of Khashoggi onto their headquarter buildings. We called upon companies to prioritize morals over money, and stop doing business in dictatorships.



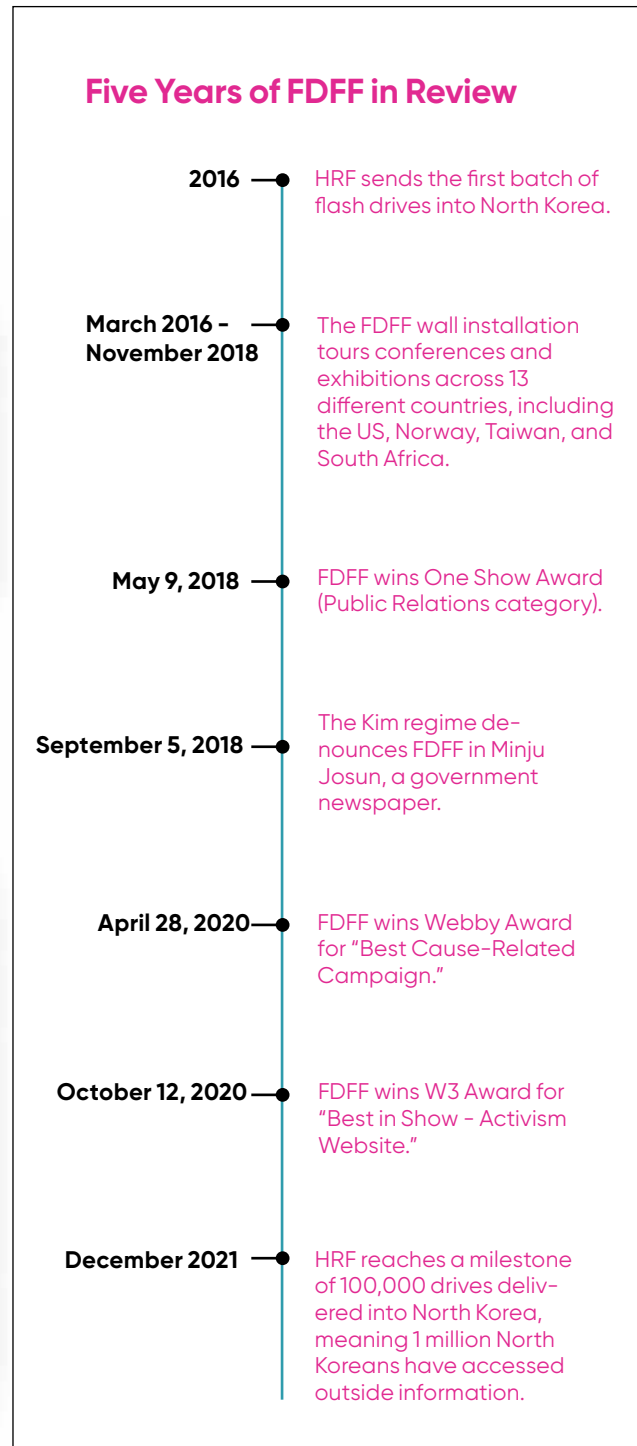


# FLASH DRIVES FOR FREEDOM

## HRF'S FLASH DRIVES FOR FREEDOM CAMPAIGN HAS SHOWN 1 MILLION NORTH KOREANS THAT ANOTHER REALITY IS POSSIBLE.

North Korea, the most isolated country in the world, continues to be ruled by a dynastic, totalitarian, communist dictatorship. The vast majority of North Koreans have no access to outside information – no internet, no foreign postal mail, and no ability to make phone calls abroad. Only government-sanctioned propaganda is allowed, which allows Kim Jong-un to prolong his brutal dictatorship.

As of December 2021, HRF has helped deliver 109,668 flash drives into North Korea, as part of our Flash Drives for Freedom (FDF) program. Our partners on-the-ground estimate that every flash drive is viewed by approximately 10 North Koreans, who can learn about life outside North Korea through foreign films, Wikipedia pages, and news articles. The flash drives prove that another reality – one that is not marred by state-sponsored violence, repression, and surveillance – is possible.



# ART & CULTURE

## ART IN PROTEST

### SUPPORTING DISSIDENT ARTISTS

**"The Art in Protest Residency program has been so valuable to me! Through creative and professional development sessions, I've been able to explore different directions in which art and activism can be presented, and learn how to better articulate my message."**

**> Lilia Kvatsabaya, HRF Artist-in-Residence**

Art in Protest is HRF's answer to the repression of creativity that authoritarian regimes impose on their people. By promoting artists who embody the spirit of creativity and dissent, Art in Protest opens up a dialogue about human rights and free expression, and aims to bring to a diverse audience the work of artists who are making an impact in the global struggle against authoritarianism.

## ARTIST RESIDENCY

This year, HRF launched the Art in Protest Artist Residency program, in collaboration with the Gray Area Foundation for the Arts. The residency allows for artists-in-residence to develop projects that use art and technology to create social and civic impact. In addition, artists receive mentorship and personalized feedback on their work from interdisciplinary artists and technologists in the Gray Area community, as well as workshop opportunities that build on the mentorship they receive.



**Badiucuo**  
Exiled Chinese dissident artist



**Lilia Kvatsabaya**  
Belarusian illustrator and graphic designer



Badiucuo's art exhibit at the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum was filmed by CBS's "60 Minutes." The episode aired on December 27, 2021.

## Badiucao x HRF Take Over Art Basel

To align with the 2021 Art Basel in Miami Beach, HRF spearheaded a poster campaign with exiled Chinese dissident artist Badiucao, featuring his Beijing 2022 Olympics collection, which condemns the CCP's repression of the Tibetan and Uyghur people, dismantling of democracy in Hong Kong, omnipresent surveillance systems, and lack of transparency surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. These artworks were posted in a total of 46 locations across both Miami and Miami Beach. The campaign aimed to raise awareness among the global art community about the Chinese government's human rights abuses leading up to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Badiucao's Beijing 2022 Olympics collection was initially released at the New World Center's Soundscape Park as part of the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami.



Posters of Badiucao's Beijing 2022 Olympics collection were posted across 46 locations in Miami.

### Media Highlight



THE ART NEWSPAPER

November 29, 2021

"Chinese Banksy" hits Miami streets



"Arte en Resistencia" 3D virtual gallery features Cuban dissident artists from the San Isidro Movement.



Ania Redko • Belarus

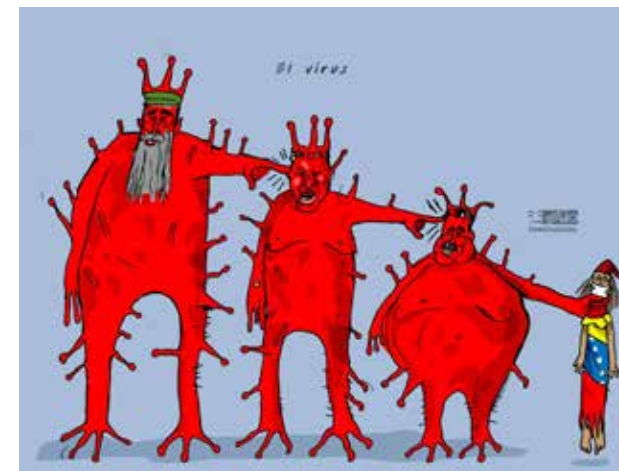


Artem Loskutov • Russia

## VIRTUAL GALLERIES

This year, Art in Protest launched a digital gallery where visitors can view and purchase dissident artists' work, including by Shamsia Hassani (Afghanistan), Lilia Kvatsabaya (Belarus), Badiucao (China), the Gao Brothers (China), Song Byeok (North Korea), Zehra Doğan (Turkey), and Rodrigo Figueredo (Venezuela).

The digital gallery also features thematic exhibitions. "In Pursuit of Freedom: A Collection of Global Protest Art" exposes the deception and social bankruptcy of tyranny by featuring art inspired by major protest movements since 2019 in countries under authoritarian rule. Art in Protest's first 3D virtual gallery, "Arte en Resistencia," reflects on art as a form of political dissent in Cuba, where citizens took to the streets in unprecedented numbers to demand justice and democracy in July 2021.



Edo • Venezuela



Enes Kanter Freedom



### Art in Protest at the NBA

On October 20, 2021, Boston Celtics center and 2018 Oslo Freedom Forum speaker Enes Kanter Freedom kicked off the NBA season sporting a pair of bold customized shoes – hand-painted by Badiuca – emblazoned with the Tibetan flag and a clear message: “FREE TIBET.”

The Chinese government responded swiftly – within minutes, the game was pulled from Tencent, the NBA’s streaming partner in China, as were all scheduled broadcasts of Boston Celtics games. The Chinese foreign ministry even slandered Kanter, calling him a “clout-chasing” athlete who was hungry for attention.

Kanter, however, stood firm and continued to wear customized shoes with human rights messages for the following games, featuring statements about the Uyghur crisis, forced labor, the Chinese dictatorship’s fragility, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. These shoes garnered millions of impressions across social media, and have helped propel the struggle for freedom into the global spotlight.



# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

**20% OF THE WORLD'S COTTON GARMENTS ARE LINKED TO UYGHUR FORCED LABOR.**

**IT'S TIME FOR US TO WEAR OUR VALUES.**

### Awards



**2021 Luum Awards (Gold)**

**Human Rights Category**



**Applied Arts' 2021 Advertising Awards**

**Out of Home Series PSA/Charity Series**

**+91,000 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS**

**+590,000 MEDIA COVERAGE IMPRESSIONS**

Right now, more than one million Uyghur Muslims – an ethnic minority in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region – are arbitrarily detained and working at forced labor camps across China. This forced labor scheme is part of a broader strategy perpetrated by the Chinese government; it is a system of abuse that has unfolded into what has been officially recognized as a genocide by the US and other democracies.

In June, as part of our Wear Your Values program, HRF initiated a campaign entitled “Uncomfortable Truth,” to bring attention to the links between the apparel industry and the Uyghur genocide in China. Mimicking a recent viral fashion marketing campaign by Yeezy x GAP, we distributed posters across New York City with a picture of a prison jumpsuit, like the ones worn by detained Uyghurs in China, and a QR code. The QR code directs to a website, where HRF highlights how the fashion industry is complicit in forced labor in China.



HRF’s “Uncomfortable Truth” poster campaign was launched in several neighborhoods around New York City, and was viewed by thousands of people across the city.

# TECH & LIBERTY

## CONNECTING TECHNOLOGISTS WITH ACTIVISTS

HRF connects activists who live under dictatorships with world-class technologists who can provide them with the resources they need to protect their communications and privacy, fight state surveillance, and use technology to advance free expression and press freedom. The 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum featured workshops with representatives from Twitter, Jigsaw, Yubico, and the Citizen Lab.



John Scott-Railton and John Shaffer lead a virtual workshop titled "Pegasus Spyware and Other Threats: What You Need to Know Now."

## HRF AND BITCOIN: HELPING ACTIVISTS OBTAIN FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Encrypted messaging and virtual private networks are well-known tools to human rights activists, but many have yet to learn about the potential of Bitcoin as a bulwark against financial repression. In many countries, the legacy financial system is censored, frozen, surveilled, and slowed. Using cash can be dangerous, and receiving funds to bank accounts can be risky. More than 1.6 billion people live under double, triple, or even quadruple digit inflation. In response, pro-democracy organizations across the world – from Belarus to Nigeria, Russia, and Hong Kong – have used Bitcoin to raise millions of dollars in funds even after their bank accounts were shut down.

In 2021, HRF focused on providing direct support to human rights activists, funding the development of the Bitcoin network, and raising awareness on how to use Bitcoin as a tool for financial freedom.

**"The digital security training I received from HRF has been useful in my daily life and in my work as an activist. We live in a time where the phone, social networks, and other tools can serve our cause but also be a gateway to those who want to undermine our struggle. These trainings have not only allowed us to understand this new system, but also to protect ourselves against risk in the digital space."**

**> Fred Bauma**  
Congolese pro-democracy leader

### Why Bitcoin Matters for Human Rights



Cannot be censored by authorities



Cannot be devaluated by governments



Cannot be monopolized by corporations



Cannot be easily mass surveilled



Cannot be stopped by borders



Can be accessed by anyone



Dread, Farida Nabourema, Fodé Diop, and Roya Mahboob speak on a panel at the inaugural Bitcoin Academy.

### Bitcoin Development Fund

HRF's Bitcoin Development Fund supports software developers who are making the Bitcoin network more private, decentralized, and resilient, so that it can better serve as a financial tool for human rights activists, civil society organizations, and journalists around the world. Since its creation in the spring of 2020, the Bitcoin Development Fund has awarded more than \$900,000 to Bitcoin developers, designers, educators, and wallet creators working to improve the usability of Bitcoin for human rights activists. As a result of our support:

- Arabic HODL is translating Bitcoin content to make it more accessible to the 300+ million Arabic speakers in the world.
- Journalist and Bitcoin privacy educator Janine Roem is writing a Bitcoin privacy newsletter to educate the public on Bitcoin privacy best practices and updates on privacy in the Bitcoin space.
- Bitcoin is becoming easier for human right activists to use through tools like MuunWallet and BTCPay, which allow activists to painlessly fundraise and store their Bitcoin.
- Bitcoin Core developers like Gloria Zhao, Calvin Kim, Dhruv Mehta, and Abubakar Nur Khalil are making the Bitcoin network itself more resilient and decentralized.

Elizabeth Stark and Alex Gladstein host a workshop on the Bitcoin Lightning Network.

### Oslo Freedom Forum Bitcoin Academy

At the 2021 Oslo Freedom Forum, HRF hosted the first-ever Bitcoin Academy, a full program of presentations, workshops, and fireside chats with world-renowned Bitcoin educators, coders, and entrepreneurs. Participants explored what Bitcoin is, how it can benefit activists' causes, how to set up a wallet, how to receive donations, how to transact instantly with the Lightning Network, how to secure funds, and how to, when necessary, sell Bitcoin safely into fiat currency to fund human rights work or movements.



PODCAST

# Dissidents & Dictators

**BRINGING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES TO 60,000 LISTENERS AROUND THE WORLD**

“Dissidents & Dictators” serves as a storytelling platform for some of the world’s bravest activists, artists, policymakers, business leaders, and technologists. Our podcast provides those who risk their personal safety with a chance to raise global awareness of human rights issues, and the incredibly important work that is being done to address them.



## Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces Events

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online forums and audio-only chat rooms became increasingly popular spaces for people to learn about and discuss pressing social issues. HRF took to Clubhouse and Twitter to host a regular discussion series with activists and leaders from around the world. Guests discussed everything from Putin’s tactics of repression to the future of democracy in Nicaragua, and audience members from the public chimed in for our live Q&A sessions. Select events were recorded and published as part of HRF’s “Dissidents & Dictators” podcast series.

PLAY

SAVE

...

## Episodes



### Labor and Human Rights Violations in Qatar

A conversation between Chief Football Writer for the Independent Miguel Delaney and investigative journalist Pete Pattison about the harmful conditions and human rights violations facing migrant workers in Qatar, in light of the 2022 FIFA World Cup set to be held in the country.

June 26 / 46 min



### The Future of Democracy in Belarus

A discussion with democratic leader of Belarus Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, Magnitsky Act architect Bill Browder, and HRF Chairman Garry Kasparov on the prospects of democracy in Belarus.

May 7 / 62 min



### An Invisible Threat: Press Freedom and Dangers of Spyware

A conversation featuring Saudi activist and blogger Omar Abdulaziz, THE DISSIDENT’s award-winning director Bryan Fogel, Al Jazeera journalist Ghada Oueiss, and Committee to Protect Journalists Senior Africa Research Jonathan Rozen on how spyware is used to silence dissidents and journalists.

April 5 / 60 min



### Adapting to the Rise of Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is on the rise globally – but one resilient country has learned how to push back. In this conversation with Taiwan’s Digital Minister Audrey Tang, learn how Taiwan is protecting its young democracy using transparency, innovation, and open governance.

February 23 / 26 min

# DIRECT SUPPORT

## AIDING THOSE ON THE FRONTLINES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

More often than not, the burden of protecting human rights in authoritarian regimes falls upon activists, journalists, and community leaders, and few resources exist – even in democracies – to support these brave individuals. Given HRF’s mission to promote freedom in closed societies, we believe in the value of providing activists from authoritarian regimes with the knowledge, tools, resources, and connections needed to scale up their movements and make an even greater impact in their home countries. We do this through microgrants, mentorship programs, capacity-building events, and volunteer work.

## FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

The Freedom Fellowship is a 12-month professional mentorship program tailored to individuals working to defend human rights inside countries under authoritarian rule. Throughout the course of a year, HRF matches Freedom Fellows with seven mentors who provide education, assistance, and guidance in the areas of nonviolence and movement building, organizing, technology and digital security, media, leadership, mental health, and fundraising. Each Freedom Fellowship cohort consists of up to 10 human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists who are provided with the knowledge, tools, and resources to take their work to the next level.

Since the launch of the Freedom Fellowship in 2019, focus areas of the program have expanded from two to seven in 2021.



### **Nonviolence and Movement Building:**

This track covers essential topics for nonviolent movements, such as strategy, goal-setting, communication, security, branding, and more.



**Organizing:** Through regular mentorship sessions, Fellows learn how to devise a decentralized movement structure and ensure the effective management of human resources in volunteer-based organizations.



**Technology and Digital Security:** This track focuses on the digital threats that activists from countries ruled by authoritarian regimes face, and provides Fellows with specific guidelines for maintaining security online.



**Media:** In this track, Fellows learn how to create compelling videos and use social media platforms to spread their messages across the globe. They also learn how to give interviews and write compelling op-eds.



**Mental Health:** Mental health sessions provide Fellows with critical knowledge on how activism may impact personal wellbeing, and tools to improve mental health.



**Fundraising:** This track explores how to solicit donations, write grant applications and reports, and maintain steady communication with donors.



**Leadership:** In this track, Fellows identify their leadership style, strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement.



*Farida Nabourema, Freedom Fellows Class of 2021*

After a year-long hiatus from in-person events, the past three cohorts of the Freedom Fellowship convened in October at the Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami, where they completed strategically-curated workshops in nonviolence and movement building, media, fundraising, leadership, and mental health to complement their main program curricula. Previous classes of Fellows had the opportunity to present the results of the action plans they developed throughout the course of their fellowship, receive feedback from their mentors, as well as act as peer-mentors to the current class of Fellows.

Over the past year, HRF was able to strengthen the Freedom Fellowship by providing a yearly grant to sustain Fellows’ projects that help materialize the strategies and skills learned during the fellowship, and that fall in line with HRF’s mission of advancing freedom and democracy in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.

# OSLO FREEDOM FORUM WORKING RETREAT

In October, HRF hosted a private working retreat for activists from Latin America. The event brought together 37 advocates from Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela to identify the most pressing issues in the region, engage in high-level strategy sessions, form meaningful partnerships, and partake in hands-on workshops.

During the working retreat, activists discussed the challenges they are facing, and worked with HRF staff and our community to create a roadmap of tangible solutions. Together, they addressed topics such as the state of civil society, nonviolent resistance, the lessons of failed and successful transitions to democracy, how to make use of multilateral legislative bodies, the role of technology in the promotion of democracy, the threat of the expanding influence of powerful dictatorships, digital security, and mental health.



Pro-democracy activists from Latin America evaluate the successes and challenges of their movements in recent years.



Srdja Popovic addresses the issue of state repression and ways to deal with it.

## Testimonials

**"Now I know that there is much to do, and that there are also societies that fight harder battles than my own. I have motivation to move forward, learn, and put into practice everything acquired in this retreat."**

**"The best part of the event was working with other people doing similar things in their own countries. Simply having the opportunity to share experiences was wonderful."**

**"It was a learning space, but also fundamentally a hug full of solidarity and hope that reminds us that we are not alone and that there are people committed to the change we long for in our countries."**

**"This was the first and only event where I was treated like a person, not only a cause."**

# OSLO SCHOLARS

The Oslo Scholars Program connects speakers from the Oslo Freedom Forum with college and university students for summer internships. Through this program, activists receive useful services and support for their work, and students gain an unforgettable experience learning about the most pressing human rights issues today.

The speaker serves as a mentor, encouraging their Oslo Scholar(s) to learn about and become involved in the global struggle for freedom and democracy. HRF matches students with speakers based on their needs, interests, and expertise, while the students' universities fund the students' work.

**"I'm loving my internship with IranWire. Three articles I wrote have been published so far, and I'm working on a fourth, longer piece about climate change and water shortages in Iran. I am so thankful to the Oslo Scholars Program for matching me with this incredible opportunity."**

> **Michaela Abrams**, Wellesley College student

**"Despite the niche and often difficult subject matter involved, Michaela rose to each challenge we set for her with the curiosity and fortitude that marks a real journalist in the making. Her flexibility, sincerity, and truly globalist outlook were evident throughout her time with us, and might well be owed in part to experience in the Oslo Scholars Program."**

> **Hannah Somerville**, Principal Editor for IranWire English



## 2021 MENTORS



**MAZIAR BAHARI**  
IranWire



**ASMA KHALIFA**  
Khalifa Ihler Institute



**RAFAEL MARQUES DE MORAIS**  
Ufolo Studies Center for Good Governance



**SRDJA POPOVIC**  
CANVAS



**JAMILA RAQIB**  
Albert Einstein Institution



**VANESSA TSEHAYE**  
One Day Seyoum



**YANG JIANLI**  
Citizen Power Initiatives for China

## NEW COLLABORATIONS

HRF collaborates with organizations around the world to create innovative solutions to address some of the world's worst human rights violations. Here are a few standouts from 2021:



## RAISING AWARENESS FOR SYRIA



In 2011, the Syrian people took to the streets peacefully to demand freedom and democracy. Bashar al-Assad's regime responded with force, resulting in the deaths of more than 500,000 people and the displacement of over 13 million people.

This past June, HRF and The Syria Campaign (TSC) co-organized a panel discussion at RightsCon 2021 called "Syria: The Most Documented Conflict in History and How Tech is Pursuing Justice". The panel was moderated by Legal Director of the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre Roger Lu Phillips, and featured award-winning filmmaker Waad Al Kateab, activist and journalist Wafa Mustafa, Syrian Archive founder Hadi Al Khatib, and Bellingcat Hisenior investigator Nick Waters. HRF and TSC are also collaborating on a report addressing justice and accountability for crimes against humanity in Syria.

These projects are outcomes of the OFF Working Retreat for the Arab World, which was held in November 2019.

## UNCOVERING SPYWARE TECHNOLOGIES



Authoritarian regimes around the world, such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia, are increasingly using technology to spy on journalists, dissidents, and activists. In March, HRF co-hosted a virtual panel with

the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) to discuss the invisible digital threats placing press freedom and access to information at risk.

The conversation was attended by nearly 500 people, and featured Saudi activist and blogger Omar Abdulaziz, THE DISSIDENT's Academy Award-winning director Bryan Fogel, *Al Jazeera* journalist Ghada Oueiss, and CPJ Senior Africa Researcher Jonathan Rozen. Panelists unpacked the most pressing questions about spyware: How is spyware used to silence dissidents and journalists? How is it falling into the hands of bad actors? How widespread is the danger? And how should concerned governments respond?

## BITCOIN EDUCATION IN TOGO



HRF is collaborating with the "Faure Must Go" movement in Togo to establish a Bitcoin financial literacy program. This initiative will begin to provide the citizens of Togo with the knowledge and opportunity to break free from the dictator-backed CFA franc currency – a colonial system of theft, corruption, and financial oppression. The government of Togo controls every single cent that the nation and the people earn, and financial surveillance in the legacy system allows the regime to suppress fundraising and arrest financial supporters of the opposition. Not only is using Bitcoin an act of peaceful resistance in Togo, but it also provides an opportunity for marginalized citizens who have been financially excluded for decades to build movements and a stronger future.

This program, led by Togolese human rights activist and 2020 HRF Freedom Fellow and former Oslo Freedom Forum speaker Farida Nabourema, will provide digital resources to:

- Educate Togolese citizens about Bitcoin, with a focus on youth and women.
- Create a virtual digital platform of Bitcoin users in Togo.
- Establish a helpline for Togolese citizens who want to understand how Bitcoin works and how to use it as safely as possible.

## SUPPORTING BELARUSIAN PROTESTERS



Since the establishment of the Belarus Solidarity Fund (BSF) in August 2020, HRF has worked very closely with BYSOL, a Belarusian organization based in Lithuania, to support repressed peaceful protesters, journalists, and striking factory workers in Belarus. BYSOL is in the vanguard of human rights organizations using cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin to safely and quickly transfer funds into authoritarian regimes like Belarus, where international transactions are closely monitored. Together with BYSOL, HRF educates Belarusians about the use of Bitcoin as a tool for secure financial transactions and greater financial freedom. The funds raised by HRF and delivered to Belarus through BYSOL have been a lifeline for Belarusians and Belarusian civil society organizations suffering from the repression of the Lukashenko regime. The founders of BYSOL have presented on panels organized by HRF, and BYSOL continues to send tens of thousands of dollars in donations from BSF into Belarus every month.

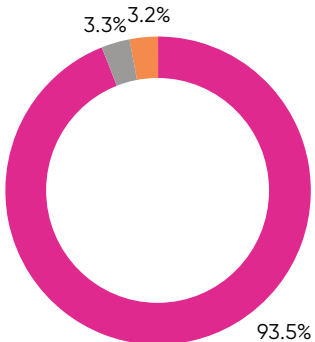




# FINANCIALS

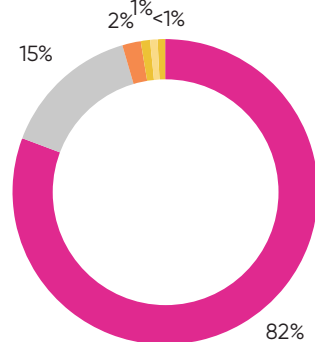
2020

**Expenses**  
\$15,666,304



- Programs **\$14,382,379**
- Oslo Freedom Forum Norway\* **\$262,724**
- Development **\$519,365**
- Administrative **\$501,836**

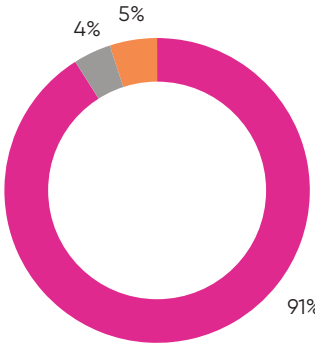
**Revenue**  
\$21,439,796



- Individual Contributions **\$17,660,336**
- Charity & Foundation Contributions **\$3,159,996**
- Oslo Freedom Forum Norway\* **\$372,401**
- Corporate Contributions **\$236,763**
- Federated Campaigns **\$8,233**
- Product Sales **\$2,065**

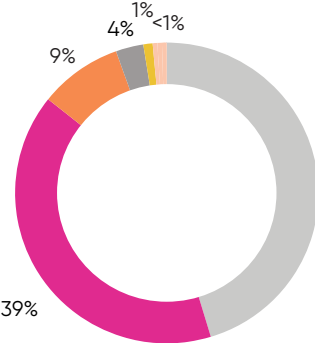
2021

**Expenses**  
\$10,052,014



- Programs **\$8,853,274**
- Oslo Freedom Forum Norway\* **\$271,619**
- Development **\$418,175**
- Administrative **\$508,946**

**Revenue**  
\$22,664,559



- Charity & Foundation Contributions **\$10,671,495**
- Individual Contributions **\$8,905,754**
- Film Revenue **\$1,967,553**
- Corporate Contributions **\$830,334**
- Oslo Freedom Forum Norway\* **\$284,673**
- Program Services **\$85,178**
- Federated Campaigns **\$2,494**
- Product Sales **\$2,254**

\*Revenue and expenses generated by Oslo Freedom Forum Norway for the Oslo Freedom Forum event, planned and executed by HRF.

2021 Revenue & Expense totals are Unaudited

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	<b>Konstantina Yaneva</b>

## In Memoriam

<b>Václav Havel</b> Chairman Emeritus [1936 – 2011]	<b>Ramón José Velásquez</b> [1916 – 2014]
<b>Vladimir Bukovsky</b> [1942 – 2019]	<b>Elie Wiesel</b> [1928 – 2016]
<b>Palden Gyatso</b> [1933 – 2018]	<b>James Q. Wilson</b> [1931 – 2012]
<b>Eduardo Mendoza</b> [1917 – 2009]	<b>Harry Wu</b> [1937 – 2016]

# IN MEMORIAM



**José Luis Martín "Chito" Gascón (1964 – 2021)**

Filipino human rights advocate and former Oslo Freedom Forum speaker José Luis Martín "Chito" Gascón passed away in October 2021. A longstanding activist in the Filipino community, Gascón organized protests against the Marcos dictatorship and played a crucial role in the country's transition to democracy. He was the youngest member of the reconstituted congress, and served in the Filipino government for many years. In 2016, he became an outspoken critic of Rodrigo Duterte and his government's so-called "War on Drugs," which has been responsible for rampant human rights violations and the deaths of thousands, while failing to actually reduce drug consumption and abuse. Gascón was an invaluable force in the world of human rights, and a voice who proactively worked to reimagine democracy in the 21st century.



**Bolat Atabayev (1952 – 2021)**

Kazakhstani theater director and human rights defender Bolat Atabayev passed away on the 28th of July 2021. Atabayev was a fierce defender of human rights and an outspoken critic of the Nazarbayev regime. In December 2011 he was arrested after supporting a peaceful strike of oil workers in the town of Zhanaozen, which ended when security forces murdered 15 people, including bystanders. In prison, Atabayev was beaten and denied access to a lawyer. Pressure from human rights organizations helped secure his release in July 2012. After his release, Atabayev and his theater group – Aksaray – produced plays to shed light on the crimes of the Nazarbayev regime. In 2012, Atabayev won a Goethe Medal for his work connecting Kazakh and German theatre.



# JOIN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

We at HRF hope that you will join our diverse, growing community of changemakers seeking to promote and protect freedom and democracy around the world. HRF's campaigns and events create a ripple effect, inspiring social innovation, policy changes, greater international awareness for human rights issues, alliances, and new philanthropic support for pro-democracy causes. Together, we are committed to creating a world that is more peaceful, prosperous, and free.

## DONATE

HRF is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. We rely on donations to make our work possible. We accept checks by mail, online donations, cryptocurrency, gifts of stock, charitable gift annuities, memorial gifts, and legacy gifts. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of US tax law. Learn more and make a gift today at [donate.hrf.org](https://donate.hrf.org).

**"Together, we can make this world a little bit better by helping people who stand up against dictatorship and tyranny!"**

> [HRF donor](#)

## VOLUNTEER

If you believe you have a unique set of skills or abilities that HRF could utilize in the global struggle for freedom, please send an email to [info@hrf.org](mailto:info@hrf.org) with "Volunteer Opportunities" in the subject line.

## CAREERS

HRF is a great place to begin or advance your career in human rights. Apply today at [hrf.org](https://hrf.org).




**"HRF sits at the convergence of principle, compassion, and education, striving to not only create lasting international change, but also a thriving international community. Once you choose to be part of HRF's community, you are a member for life, and for many, it is the greatest gift we have to offer."**

> [HRF staff member](#)

## INTERNSHIPS

HRF offers both paid, in-office internships with flexible schedules, as well as virtual internships, to students and recent graduates. These positions afford students the opportunity to engage in human rights work and gain hands-on experience in the nonprofit world. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to provide an enriching intern experience by adapting our internship program to a remote format. Inquire via email at [interns@hrf.org](mailto:interns@hrf.org).

## SPREAD AWARENESS

-  [hrf.org](https://hrf.org)
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-  [/humanrightsfoundation](https://facebook.com/humanrightsfoundation)
-  [/humanrightsfdn](https://youtube.com/humanrightsfdn)
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-  [humanrightsfoundation](https://linkedin.com/company/humanrightsfoundation)
-  [contact@hrf.org](mailto:contact@hrf.org)
-  [+1 \(212\) 246-8486](tel:+12122468486)



WHY IS BIEBER SINGING FOR SAUDI KILLERS?

WHY IS BIEBER SINGING FOR SAUDI KILLERS?

*During the 2021 American Music Awards ceremony, HRF chartered a plane to fly a message over downtown Los Angeles, urging Justin Bieber to cancel his performance for the Saudi dictatorship.*

