2022 Oslo Freedom Forum
23-25 May 2022
Oslo Konserthus | Oslo, Norway

Impact Report
The Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) is a thriving global community united by a common vision of making the world more peaceful, prosperous, and free from tyranny. It is where some of the world’s leading human rights advocates, business leaders, tech entrepreneurs, journalists, and policymakers come together to share their stories and discuss ways to advance liberty and democracy across the globe.

OFF is a catalyst for human rights defenders and their work: from sharing their stories on stage and raising awareness of key human rights issues, to developing new skills and refining practices that strengthen their missions, to networking with champions of change from all fields and all corners of the world. The flagship Forum is held annually in Oslo, Norway, while OFF satellite events convene in cities like New York, Johannesburg, Mexico City, San Francisco, Miami, and Taipei.

“One of the greatest benefits of the Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF), say its participants, is that it makes people feel less alone. If you are a dissident up against a dictatorship, you can feel very, very alone. But the people at OFF are in the same boat, so to speak. They can trade stories, compare notes — be understood. And they feel less alone.”

— Jay Nordlinger
National Review (1 June 2022)
We have seen time and again that when faced with repression by authoritarian regimes, seemingly ordinary individuals step up to become champions of change in their communities and in the world. While governments and multilateral organizations are often slow to react to international crises, these individuals leap into action — sometimes at great personal risk — to protect freedom, expose corruption, and reform unjust systems.

Our theme for OFF 2022, Champion of Change, celebrated both activists, who are themselves champions, and their causes. This theme represented a strong, scalable call to action, inviting our community to act and advocate on behalf of activists and unite in the common cause of promoting freedom and human rights. At OFF, we realize that everyone has the potential to effect change — either as a champion on an individual level, or as part of a larger movement.
More than 150 international and local journalists attended OFF 2022 to cover our keynote speakers and shed light on the most pressing human rights issues of this year. As of June 2022, there have been more than 445 unique articles, profiles, op-eds, interviews, podcasts, and videos produced about the conference and its speakers, in 22 languages and from 47 countries. Outlets covering OFF 2022 include CNN, The Washington Post, Bloomberg, National Review, POLITICO, Associated Press, NRK, Aftenposten, and The Guardian.
**HIGHLIGHTS**

**The Washington Post**

Iranian Artists-in-Exile Find a Vehicle for Protest  4 June 2022

**The Guardian**

‘You Have to Step Over Your Fear’: How to Take on a Dictator  7 June 2022

**NATIONAL REVIEW**

For Freedom, Against Dictatorship, Campaigning for Good  1 June 2022

**AP**

PaykanArtCar Receives the Havel Prize for Creative Dissent at the 2022 Oslo Freedom Forum  26 May 2022

**Connect the World**

27 May 2022

**Dagsrevyen**

25 May 2022

**VG**

Hjelpeløse FN  28 May 2022
At OFF 2022, speakers revealed how they are championing causes — including justice, human rights, truth, peace, and innovation — in their communities and in the world. They called upon the international community to stand in solidarity with activists and take tangible actions to advance freedom and democracy.
FODÉ DIOP
Senegalese Financial Freedom Advocate

ROMAN DOBROKHOTOV
Russian Investigative Journalist

ZARIFA GHAFARI
Exiled Afghan Activist & Politician

JEWHER ILHAM
Uyghur Advocate & Daughter of Imprisoned Scholar Ilham Tohti

BEKTOUR ISKENDER
Kyrgyz Journalist & Free Speech Activist

CARINE KANIMBA
Daughter of Imprisoned "Hotel Rwanda" Hero Paul Rusesabagina
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

EVGENIA KARA-MURZA
Project Manager, Free Russia Foundation

TAWAKKOL KARMAN
Yemeni Nobel Peace Prize Laureate & Human Rights Activist

FATMA KARUME
Tanzanian Lawyer & Human Rights Advocate

GARRY KASPAROV
Chairman, Human Rights Foundation

LUCY KASSA
Ethiopian Investigative Journalist

TATSIANA KHOMICH
Belarusian Activist & Sister of Political Prisoner Maria Kalesnikava
CHUNG CHING (GLACIER) KWONG
Hong Kong Political & Digital Rights Activist

CHEMI LHAMO
Tibetan Activist & Community Organizer

DMYTRO KULEBA
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine

JACK MALLERS
CEO, Strike

OLEKSANDRA MATVIICHUK
Head of the Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine

PHILIPPA THOMAS
BBC Journalist
KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

VERONICA TSEPKALO
Chair, Belarus Women’s Foundation

SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA
Leader of Democratic Belarus

MICHELA WRONG
Author & Journalist

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PERFORMERS

LYNN ADIB
Syrian Vocalist & Musician

WALID BEN SELIM
Moroccan Musician & Producer

SAKDIYAH MA’RUF
Indonesia's First Muslim Female Stand-Up Comic

MANASSEH MATHIANG
Sudanese Musician & Activist

JP JOFRE
Argentinian Bandoneon Player & Composer

ØISTEIN KRISTIANSEN
Norwegian Cartoonist, Author, & Media Personality

KEVORK MOURAD
Armenian-Syrian Visual Artist

YURY REVICH
Austrian Classical Violinist & Composer
TALK HIGHLIGHTS

“The war continues, and I cannot know the way my personal story will end. However, I am certain that Ukraine will win. And freedom will prevail.”

– OLEKSANDRA MATVIICHUK
Head of the Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
“And the next time you see refugees as a burden, say my name. Remember that refugees are refugees for a reason. Filmon did not choose to become a refugee. Filmon’s body was sold and trafficked and almost left for dead. Filmon was fleeing for his life.”

— FILMON DEBRU
Eritrean Human Trafficking Survivor
“Honor the sacrifice Hong Kong has made for you, and press your governments to stand with those who held umbrellas into a wind of tear gas to defend our common values.”

– CHUNG CHING (GLACIER) KWONG
Hong Kong Political & Digital Rights Activist
“It was all a mock execution; my mother managed to smuggle me out. A moment near death, that taught me that my life has a purpose: I must serve.”

– OMAR ALSHOGRE
Director of Detainee Affairs, Syrian Emergency Task Force
“To the leaders present here today, invest in the youth. Look around, the champions of change are here, right beside you. We are ready and so, together, let’s RISE.”

– CHEMI LHAMO
Tibetan Activist & Community Organizer
THE VÁCLAV HAVEL INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR CREATIVE DISSENT

The Havel Prize was founded in 2012 with Dagmar Havlová, the widow of the late Czech poet, playwright, dissident, and statesman Václav Havel. Havel was the chairman of HRF from 2009 until his death in December 2011. The Havel Prize honors his legacy and celebrates those who, with bravery and ingenuity, unmask the lie of dictatorship by living and creating in truth. The 2022 Havel Prize Laureates include: PaykanArtCar, Enes Kanter Freedom, and Marina Ovsyannikova.

PAYKANARTCAR

Each year, the PaykanArtCar organization commissions an exceptional Iranian artist-in-exile to use its vintage Paykan automobile as a canvas to capture the Iranian struggle for human dignity and basic freedoms. The inaugural PaykanArtCar was designed by Alireza Shojaian and features a historic Persian design with a provocative message about the brutality and ruthlessness faced by the marginalized and oppressed LGBTQ+ community inside Iran.

Left to right: Norwegian MP Mahmoud Farahmand, Iranian artist Alireza Shojaian, PaykanArtCar CEO Ambassador Mark Wallace, and PaykanArtCar Executive Director & Co-Founder Dr. Hiva Feizi.
MARINA OVSYANNIKOVA

Marina Ovsyannikova is a Ukrainian-born Russian journalist and activist, who staged a live protest against the war in Ukraine during a news broadcast on Russian state TV. Following her demonstration on live TV and subsequent anti-war video, Ovsyannikova was held overnight in a police station, denied access to a lawyer, and ultimately fined 30,000 roubles.

ENES KANTER FREEDOM

Enes Kanter Freedom is a professional basketball player who has used his global platform to raise awareness of the Chinese Communist Party’s human rights abuses. Using his basketball shoes as the canvas for his messages, he wore multiple artistic designs highlighting issues such as the Uyghur genocide, the occupation of Tibet, and the intolerance of China’s dictator.
INTERACTIVE PROGRAMMING

Interactive programming at OFF 2022 featured panel discussions, deep dives, fireside chats, and workshops each afternoon. The sessions challenged participants to think more critically about the issues presented during the theater talks, forge partnerships, and create practical, innovative solutions to advance freedom worldwide. Sessions were organized into four thematic tracks that explored various elements of our theme, Champion of Change.

Successful movements rely on passion, creativity, and the commitment of their fiercest champions. Painting, music, theater, and film can act as tools for dissident artists to reveal the corruption of dictatorships and create symbols that unite people around a common message of freedom. Some of the most effective activists leverage their creative talents to build a coalition of people against tyranny. However, in building these movements, activists also face challenges along the way and learn to develop resilience.

- Defending the Defenders: The Right to Protect the Environment
- Fighting Transnational Repression Against Journalists
- LGBTQI+ Rights When Democracy Dies
- How to Talk to the Media [workshop]
- Putin's Wars: How to Defend Human Rights in Russia, Ukraine, and Beyond
- The Myth of the “Efficient” Dictatorship
- How Can Civil Society Counter a Coup d’Etat?
- Using Creativity to Champion Change [workshop]
- Building an Alliance for Freedom [workshop]
- Tanzania’s Child Marriage Struggle
Justice is the bedrock of a prosperous and free society because it allows everyday citizens to hold those in power accountable for their actions. In autocracies, the law is used and abused to keep the regime in power and eliminate all forms of opposition. Without independent judiciaries, free media, and democratic elections, ordinary citizens cannot protect themselves from government abuse. This thematic area explored how activists and their allies work to hold regimes accountable — revealing their corruption, reporting on their brutality, and showing that a fairer, more just society is possible.

- Corruption, Rent-Seeking, and the Acquisition of Loot: The Central Objectives of Authoritarianism
- The True Story of China’s Genocide of the Uyghurs: A Conversation with Nury Turkel and Garry Kasparov
- Sportswashing: From the Beijing Genocide Games to Qatar’s FIFA World Cup Migrant Workers’ Crisis
- Authoritarianism, ESG, and the Impact of Foreign Investment on Global Human Rights
- When Systems Fail: Understanding the Intersection of Authoritarian Regimes and Modern Slavery
- Citizen Driven Corporate Accountability in Human Rights and Beyond
- Building Justice for Syria: Universal Jurisdiction and the Koblenz Trial
- The Future of Palestine
Over the past decade, the internet and other technologies have played a central role in organizing social movements across the globe. However, even as these technologies have connected billions of people, authoritarian regimes have manipulated them to encroach on civil liberties, censor dissidents, and spread discord. Surveillance states, troll factories, and internet blackouts all serve to prevent ordinary people from uncovering the truth and organizing resistance. However, this thematic area showed how activists across the world have harnessed the power of innovation to overcome the barriers put up by dictatorships.

- Citizen Lab & the Community [office hours]
- Twitter & the Community [office hours]
- Meta & the Community [office hours]
- Tech Tactics of New Authoritarianism
- Digital Security with Yubico [workshop]
- The Spyware That Came in From the Cold: Pegasus and Candiru [workshop]
- Digital Safety Training for Artists and Human Rights Defenders [workshop]
- Can NFTs be a Helpful Tool for Human Rights Activists?
Financial freedom is an increasingly important aspect of human rights. Authoritarian regimes are more likely to devalue their currencies, steal from ordinary citizens, and freeze activists’ bank accounts. This thematic area examined how dictatorships — such as those in China, Turkey, and Venezuela — use money to pressure ordinary citizens to behave a certain way, whether that be by monitoring bank accounts or providing incentives to join a political party. Some activists are using Bitcoin and related technology to push back. This programming was generously sponsored by Seetee.

- The Quest for Financial Freedom
- Can Bitcoin Reach a Billion People?
- The Rise of Stablecoins in Emerging Markets and Authoritarian Regimes
- Is Bitcoin Compatible with Democracy?
- Bitcoin, the Environment, and Human Rights
- CBDCs, Privacy, and the Cashless Society
- A Sustainable Financial World
Confronting authoritarianism requires a creative, multi-faceted approach. The 2022 expo featured innovative projects by artists, technologists, civil society organizations, academics, and business leaders who have become champions of change within their particular industries. Through hands-on exhibits and art installations, the expo invited attendees from all disciplines, regions, and walks of life to unite in protecting freedom and human rights globally. Exhibits showcased HRF programs, as well as initiatives by our partner organizations.

"Transmuting Borders," a digital installation featuring works from artists in HRF’s Art in Protest Residency, explores themes of protest in the face of global authoritarianism and the refugee crisis it perpetuates.
ArtLords Community Mural: Stand With Ukraine

Attendees contribute to a live community mural, designed by ArtLords, which paid tribute to the children of Ukraine during the Russian invasion.

The Current by Jigsaw

Representatives from Jigsaw introduce attendees to The Current, a new publication that compiles and connects relevant research, data, technology, and culture.
Defund Dictators

A guest uses HRF’s new Defund Dictators tool to see if one of his investments may be inadvertently propping up an authoritarian regime. Defund Dictators is part of HRF’s recently launched Responsible Finance program.

Gaming for Freedom

Attendees explore how video games can be a creative avenue for activism in HRF’s “Gaming for Freedom” exhibit, which debuted at the SXSW conference in March 2022.
End Banned Books

The “End Banned Books” exhibit, hosted by Ideas Beyond Borders, highlights the evolving global character of book banning and censorship by showcasing various books by OFF speakers that have been banned by dictatorships.

Impact Litigation: Postcards for Prisoners

Attendees view portraits and stories of arbitrarily detained dissidents whom HRF’s Impact Litigation team has defended. Guests were able to write supportive messages on postcards to these individuals.
The Lightning Lounge

Engineers and developers chat with attendees about how the Lightning Network is making online payments faster, cheaper, and more private.

Memory Gates

“Memory Gates,” a 3D art installation by Armenian-Syrian artist Kevork Mourad, explores the complexities and connections between memory and place.
Amnesty International Norway and the Hong Kong Committee in Norway unveil the Pillar of Shame, an eight-meter-tall statue that pays homage to the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre.

A HRF staff member helps attendees use the “Uncomfortable Truth” plug-in, which pings online shoppers when they are about to make a purchase from brands that are complicit in Uyghur forced labor.
Voices from Inside Ukraine

The "Voices from Inside" exhibit plays short audio testimonials from Ukrainians about Putin's war. Guests have the opportunity to record their own messages of support for the Ukrainian people.

Nobody’s Listening

A guest tries out "Nobody’s Listening," a powerful VR experience that transports viewers to sites of the Yazidi genocide to help them understand and empathize with victims.
STORIES OF IMPACT

OFF is just the first step. After the event, connections often blossom into innovative collaborations and useful partnerships. OFF has a ripple effect — inspiring social innovation, policy changes, greater international awareness for human rights issues, alliances, and new philanthropic support for pro-democracy causes. The following pages are just a few examples of OFF 2022’s impact so far.
At OFF 2022, Citizen Lab hosted office hours in which its team tested guests’ phones to see if they had been infected by spyware from authoritarian regimes. This was the second time the Rwandan regime had targeted Kanima’s devices to monitor and repress her activism. Through this experience, Kanima was able to evade dictator Paul Kagame and continue freely advocating for the release of her father, Paul Rusesabagina, who is currently a prisoner of conscience in Rwanda.

OFF 2022 speaker Carine Kanima discovered that her phone was infected with the Pegasus spyware, thanks to the help of Citizen Lab, a digital security lab based in Canada.
From left to right: PaykanArtCar CEO Ambassador Mark Wallace, Iranian artist Alireza Shojaian, and PaykanArtCar Executive Director & Co-Founder Dr. Hiva Feizi accept the 2022 Havel Prize.
Reporter and journalist Melissa Mahtani joined award-winning filmmaker David Henry Gerson to host a Q&A at a recent screening of Gerson’s new documentary “The Story Won’t Die.”

The documentary, which Mahtani first saw at OFF 2022, examines a young generation of Syrian artists who use their work to protest and process the Syrian refugee crisis. Mahtani and Gerson reunited at an exclusive documentary screening at Soho House in New York on June 15, 2022, and were able to garner greater attention for this film and stories of Syrian activists.
Julie Trébault, Director of Artists at Risk Connection at PEN America, and OFF 2022 speaker Carolina Barrero have decided to launch a campaign to put pressure on the Cuban government to release prisoners of conscience.

Barrero has been advocating on behalf of fellow Cuban artist and HRF community member Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, who was sentenced to five years in prison for creating art critical of the Cuban regime. She met Trébault at OFF 2022, and the two began working on this collaboration soon after the event.

HRF Freedom Fellows Kenyan labor rights defender Malcolm Bidali and Ethiopian blogger and civil society leader Befekadu Hailu have shared regional know-how and resources.

After meeting for the first time in-person at OFF 2022, Bidali also introduced Hailu to a lawyer who has helped him finalize outstanding paperwork for his organization, the Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy.

Dmytro Kuleba, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, gives a virtual talk on how the international community can support Ukraine.

Speakers and audience members alike consider how they can be champions of change.
Violinist Yury Revich performs on the OFF mainstage.
Through networking opportunities at OFF 2022, Russian environmental activist Evgeniya Chirikova secured a grant from Avaaz, a US-based campaigning community that supports activists around the world.

Chirikova and her team are using this grant to open and operate a shelter in Russia for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

As a result of attending OFF 2022, Togolese human rights defender Farida Nabourema and Senegalese developer Fodé Diop received $150,000 in new funding for their upcoming conference on financial freedom for Africa, to take place December 7-9 in Accra, Ghana.