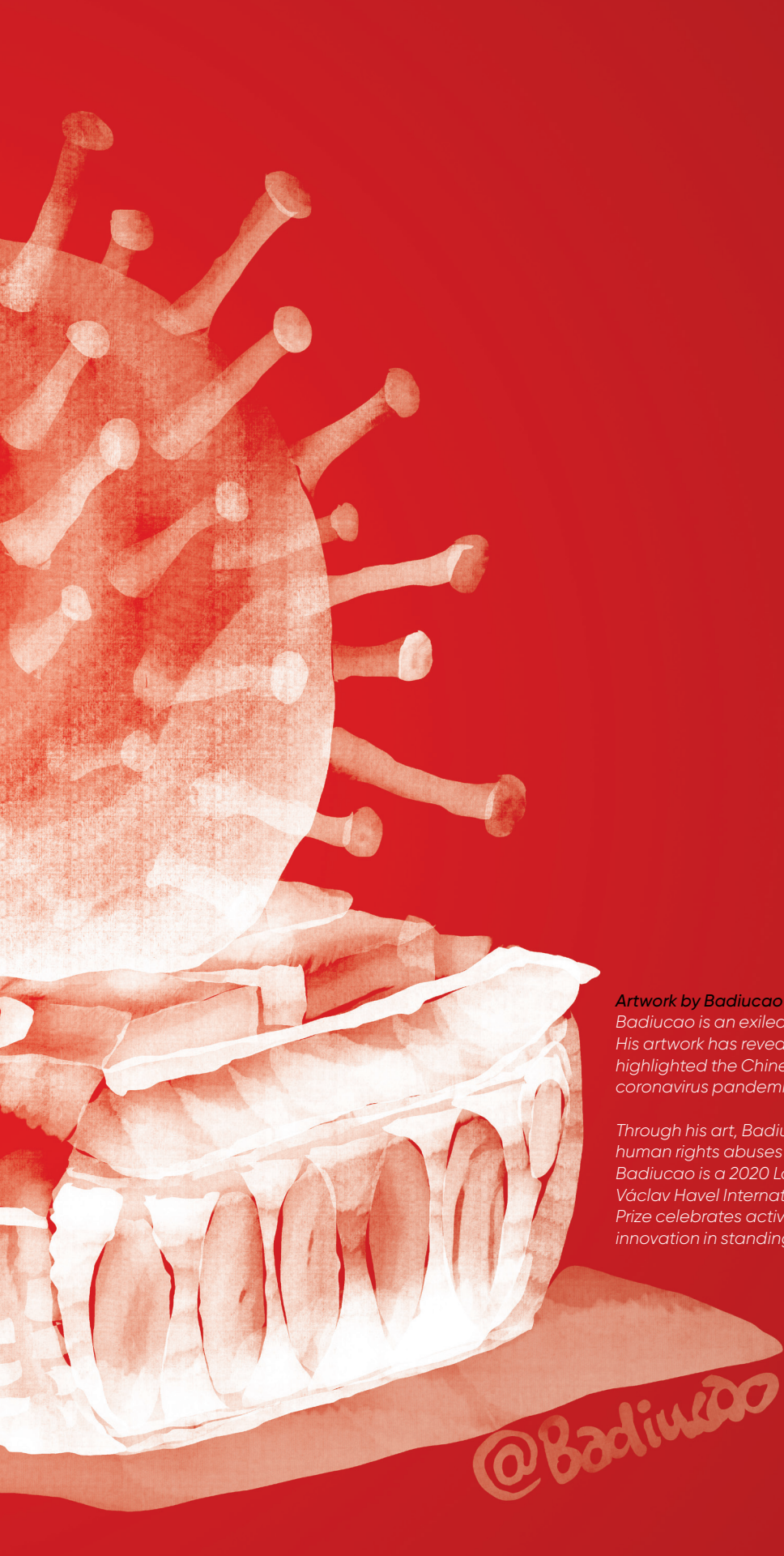


2020  
ANNUAL  
REPORT





**Artwork by Badiucado**

*Badiucado is an exiled Chinese dissident artist based in Australia. His artwork has revealed the lies of the Chinese regime, and highlighted the Chinese Communist Party's censorship of the coronavirus pandemic.*

*Through his art, Badiucado raises awareness about ongoing human rights abuses in China, Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang. Badiucado is a 2020 Laureate of the Human Rights Foundation's Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent. The Havel Prize celebrates activists who exhibit bravery and artistic innovation in standing up against dictatorships.*

# Defending Human Rights and Democracy Since 2005

At the Human Rights Foundation (HRF), our work is inspired by the individuals who dedicate their lives, often at great personal risk, to challenging authoritarian governments that violate the most basic rights of 4.2 billion people around the world.

What differentiates HRF from other human rights organizations is our singular focus on authoritarian regimes. We believe authoritarianism is the single largest obstacle to freedom around the world, and the statistics overwhelmingly support this position. According to HRF's research, 54% of humanity currently lives under an authoritarian regime.

Many other human rights organizations focus a substantial portion of their resources on democracies, where domestic nonprofits are allowed to operate freely, oftentimes at the cost of devoting less attention to the most egregious cases of human rights abuses that occur under authoritarian regimes. Given our size, budget, and track record, we believe the way HRF allocates its resources is efficient and impactful.

HRF seeks to reach as many people as possible to promote freedom and democracy to those living under authoritarian regimes. These include world leaders, academics, journalists, philanthropists, artists, technologists, as well as the general public.

We advocate for the release of prisoners of conscience, develop educational resources for those living under authoritarian regimes, and host forums where people can learn about the importance of individual rights directly from those on the frontlines of human rights issues.

We produce global events that feature the stories of brave activists who risk their lives for the freedom many take for granted, and we collaborate with tech experts and companies that provide skills, knowledge, and resources for these activists to remain safe and secure in their line of work.

2020 was a disruptive and devastating year, but I am most grateful that HRF continued to work to achieve international legal victories and assist our global community through this time of great need.

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. With your support, we can continue to expand our efforts to challenge tyranny and promote freedom.

With gratitude,

Thor Halvorssen  
President  
Human Rights Foundation

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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.

Grounding our work in a deep commitment to individual liberty, HRF aims to raise awareness about the nature and vulnerability of freedom around the world. In addition to strengthening the work of grassroots activists in closed societies, our programs provide education about what constitutes a free society, why freedom matters, and how freedom is nurtured, developed, and sustained.

We unite the world  
to stand against  
tyranny.

# Year in Review

## Timeline of Accomplishments

### Jan

**8**  
HRF submits Universal Periodic Review for Brunei

**11**  
HRF Freedom Fellows gather in San Francisco for week of workshops with tech companies and world-class mentors

**25**  
HRF film “The Dissident” premieres at Sundance Film Festival



### Feb

**13**  
HRF publishes analysis of how authoritarian regimes exacerbate public health emergencies

**24**  
HRF hosts College Freedom Forum at Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala



**26**  
HRF submits UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) petition – Burma

### Mar

**11**  
HRF submits UNWGAD petition – Hong Kong



**18**  
HRF campaigns OAS’s Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression regarding the arrest and conditions of Cuban dissident Luis Manuel Otero

**18**  
HRF campaigns against Russia’s constitutional amendments resetting Putin’s term limits and allowing him to stay in power through 2036

### Apr

**13**  
HRF hosts COVIDCon, a virtual conference about the relationship between authoritarianism and the pandemic

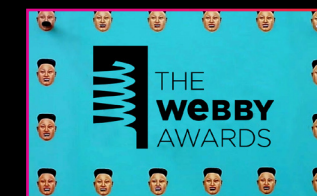


**20**  
Oslo Freedom Forum speakers Ji Seong-ho and Thae Yong-ho elected to South Korea’s National Assembly

**24**  
HRF campaigns against Saudi buyout of the Premier League soccer club Newcastle United | The bid is later retracted as Saudi Arabia fails to pass the club’s “Fit and Proper” ownership standards

### May

**19**  
Flash Drives for Freedom wins a Webby Award



**20**  
HRF hosts virtual South by Southwest (SXSW) panel about protest in the age of surveillance

**27**  
HRF wins case presented to the UNWGAD against Tajikistan and Russia, on behalf of Maksud Muhidinovich Ibragimov, a Tajik-born political opposition activist

### Jun

**4**  
HRF hosts virtual event, “Looking Back on the Tiananmen Massacre”, on the anniversary of the tragedy

**9**  
HRF releases report, “Corporate Intimidation and Censorship in China”

**10**  
HRF launches Bitcoin Development Fund to support open-source financial software as a tool for privacy and human rights

**14**  
HRF publishes open letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-In, urging him to respect South Korean citizens’ rights to freedom of expression regarding the North Korean regime

**15**  
HRF submits joint Urgent Appeal to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, on behalf of Uyghur tech entrepreneur Ekpar Asat

# Jul

**1**  
HRF launches new podcast “Dissidents and Dictators”



**8**  
HRF submits Urgent Appeal to the UN, on behalf of ethnic Uzbek human rights activist, Azimjan Askarov, arbitrarily detained in Kyrgyzstan | He died in detention just days later

**31**  
HRF presents “Defending the Defenders,” a panel about environmental activism, at RightsCon Online



# Aug

**7**  
HRF campaigns to stop a regime-backed concert in Belarus the night before the presidential elections | Tyga and SAINT JHN cancel their performances

**17**  
HRF launches campaign notifying Belarusian security officers of potential implication in crimes against humanity

**20**  
HRF launches Belarus Solidarity Fund, which by the end of 2020 allocates more than \$150,000 to the pro-democracy movement in Belarus

**26**  
HRF submits petitions to the UNWGAD, on behalf of individuals arbitrarily detained in Cuba, Russia, Tajikistan, and Tanzania

**28**  
HRF joins Twitter Trust and Safety Council

# Sep

**11**  
HRF sends letter to Disney CEO Robert “Bob” Chapek to inform him of the disastrous human rights situation in Xinjiang, after learning that parts of Mulan were filmed there

**17**  
Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent awarded to recipients from Rwanda, China, and Saudi Arabia

**24-25**  
HRF hosts first-ever online Oslo Freedom Forum with speakers Jack Dorsey, Audrey Tang, Masih Alinejad, and others



**29**  
HRF and Stanford University launch joint event series, “The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism: China, AI, and Human Rights”

# Oct

**5**  
HRF, UN Watch, and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights (RWCHR) publish a report analyzing each UN Human Rights Council candidate’s record of human rights protection, including dictatorships such as China, Cuba, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Uzbekistan | Saudi Arabia loses its bid for a seat on the Council

**12**  
Flash Drives for Freedom wins W3 Award



**22**  
HRF campaigns against women’s golf tournament hosted by Saudi Arabia

# Nov

**21**  
HRF launches “Eyes on Saudi” podcast series to coincide with the G20 Summit hosted by Saudi Arabia



**25**  
HRF sends UN Urgent Appeal to condemn Hong Kong’s National Security Law and tip-off hotline established to encourage citizens to report their neighbors for acts that would allegedly endanger national security

**30**  
HRF releases a new report, “Building and Uniting a Movement in the Arab World” | The report presents findings from the 2019 OFF Working Retreat

# Dec

**7**  
“The Dissident” is released

**8**  
HRF sends open letter to the South Korean National Assembly urging against the passage of a law that criminalizes leaflet activities

**12**  
Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss announce support of HRF through their company Gemini

**15**  
HRF submits petition to UN-WGAD on behalf of Muay, an imprisoned activist from Laos.

# The Dissident

## Seeking Justice for Jamal Khashoggi

“The Dissident” is a new feature documentary film directed by Academy Award-winning director and Oslo Freedom Forum speaker Bryan Fogel, and produced by HRF.

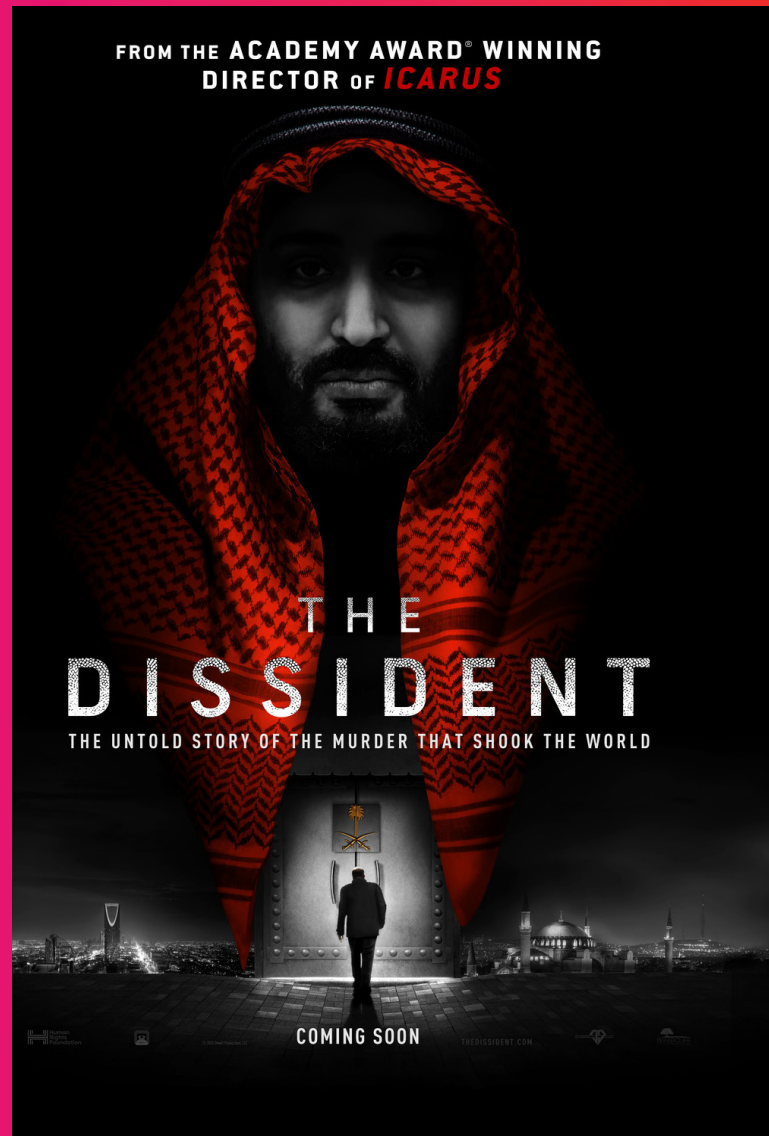
In January 2020, HRF’s first film, “The Dissident,” premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, one of the world’s top showcases of new cinema.

The film exposes the labyrinth of deceit behind the high-profile murder of *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey in 2018.

Featuring never-before-seen surveillance footage and unprecedented access to a wealth of other damning information previously unavailable to the public, “The Dissident” weaves together a story of bravery, corruption, tyranny, and technology run amok.

At the core of the film is Khashoggi himself, a principled reformer who sought to create a more just and open society in his homeland, and who was ultimately murdered for his vocal opposition to the Saudi regime.

This stunning film has remained at the top of critics’ lists for the year’s best documentary. On December 25, the film opened in select theaters across the United States in advance of a wider, view-on-demand release for global audiences on January 8, 2021.



“Completely shocking and gripping. Thriller paced. Like the best of journalism... needs to be seen by as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.”

*Nick Allen, RogerEbert.com*

“Edge of your seat intrigue. Riveting. A thriller of staggering relevance. This is a movie with just about everything. How can made-up tales of high-level treachery hold a candle to the scary realities on display.”

*Owen Gleiberman, Variety*

“FIRST RATE. RIVETING. VIGOROUS, DEEP AND COMPREHENSIVE. TRAGIC, MADDENING AND POIGNANT. THE EVIDENCE IS ALL HERE FOR THE WORLD TO SEE.”

*Todd McCarthy, Hollywood Reporter*

“Immaculately assembled. Both a documentary and a real life thriller. A massively damning non-fiction work. Fogel fashions a shadowy international tale of intrigue. It deserves to be seen widely.”

*Jake Coyle, AP*

“ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FILMS OF THE LAST DECADE.”

*Alec Baldwin*

# HRF in the News



## Making Headlines

HRF gives activists from around the world a platform to tell their stories about the struggles they face — and the triumphs they achieve — while living under dictatorship.

### In 2020

**4,306** MEDIA MENTIONS

**9.2 B** MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

**1,498,000** VIDEO VIEWS

Hundreds of unique articles featuring activists working with HRF and highlighting HRF's work were published in The Washington Post, CNN, The Independent, NY Daily News, The Atlantic, Foreign Policy, Business Insider, The Guardian, National Review, Slate, the Financial Times, Wired, The New York Times, Vox, and others.

Media coverage in dozens of international outlets including El País (Bolivia), El Nacional (Spain), Die Zeit (Germany), Le Monde (France), BBC News Mundo, and more.

### The Washington Post

January 23, 2020

"A Jamal Khashoggi documentary could take the film world — and U.S.-Saudi relations — by storm"



### THE DIPLOMAT

Read The Diplomat, Know the Asia-Pacific

May 11, 2020

"Pro-Democracy Legislators in Hong Kong Need International Support"



### WIRED

March 2, 2020

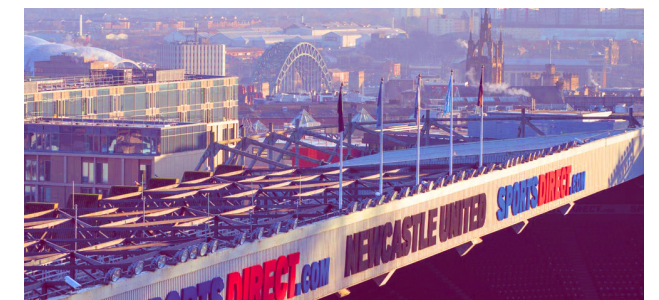
"Dictatorships Are Making the Coronavirus Outbreak Worse"



### INDEPENDENT

May 21, 2020

"Premier League cannot risk turning a blind eye over Newcastle takeover"



### Daily Mail

April 24, 2020

"Human Rights Foundation become the latest campaign group to urge Premier League to block £300M Saudi-led takeover of Newcastle that will cause "irreparable reputational harm"



### CNN

May 22, 2020

"The Other Hong Kong: Will China's Democratic Enclave Become Just Like the Mainland?"

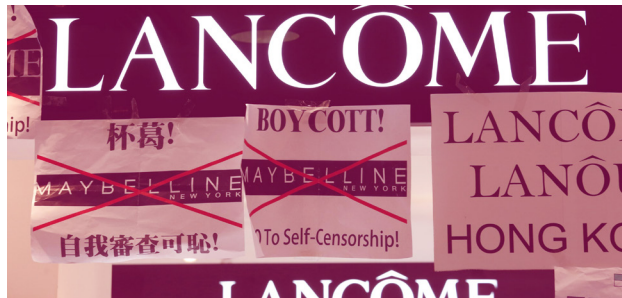


June 4, 2020  
"In Hong Kong, Remembering Tiananmen Is Now Forbidden"



**QUARTZ**

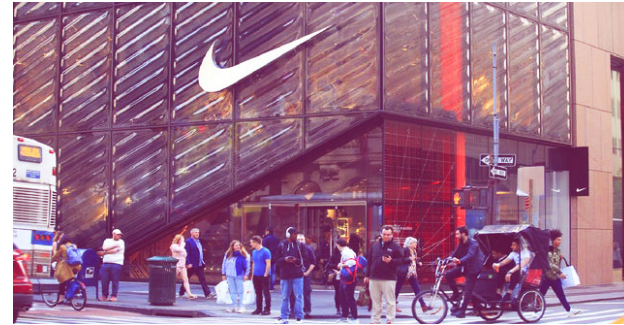
June 11, 2020  
"European Companies are Walking a Political Tightrope to do Business in China," which references HRF's report "Corporate Intimidation & Censorship in China"



June 27, 2020  
"Endgame for Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko?"



June 13, 2020  
"Corporate America Stands Against Injustices – Except Those 'Made in China'"

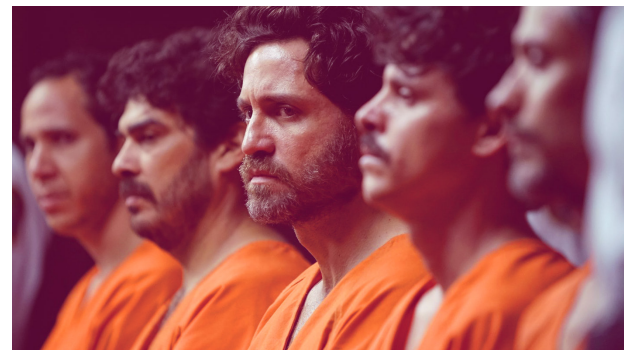


**Forbes**

June 12, 2020  
"Human Rights Foundation's Development Fund Aims to Strengthen Bitcoin's Privacy"



July 11, 2020  
"The Dishonest and Irresponsible Wasp Network"



**Pitchfork**

August 6, 2020  
"Human Rights Foundation Asks Tyga to Cancel Concert in Belarus"



"This performance, scheduled for the day before Belarus' elections, is no coincidence. It is an excuse to cancel the opposition's final electoral rally, and prevent ordinary Belarusians from showing their support for freedom and democracy. It is also a deliberate attempt to turn attention away from the massive electoral fraud that is already taking place across the country."

*HRF president and founder Thor Halvorssen, in his letter to Tyga.*

**billboard**

August 6, 2020  
"Tyga Asked to Cancel Belarus Concert Criticized as 'Propaganda Stunt'"



01.

# Policy & Research

## HRF is not your typical think tank.

Our organizational expertise on political regimes sets us apart from traditional advocacy groups, and we use these policy findings to guide our investments of time and resources.

In addition to our focus on political regime types, HRF has found through our research that authoritarianism is among the structural problems at the root of many global crises, and we have developed an expertise in identifying the correlation between authoritarianism and a variety of pressing issues, including human trafficking and forced labor. Whether that's assessing the independence of the press or analyzing election results, HRF is committed to developing insights on closed societies that would otherwise remain opaque to outside observers.

**95 countries in the world are non-democratic.**

**54% of the world's population lives under authoritarianism.**

**That's 4.2 billion people living under authoritarian regimes.**

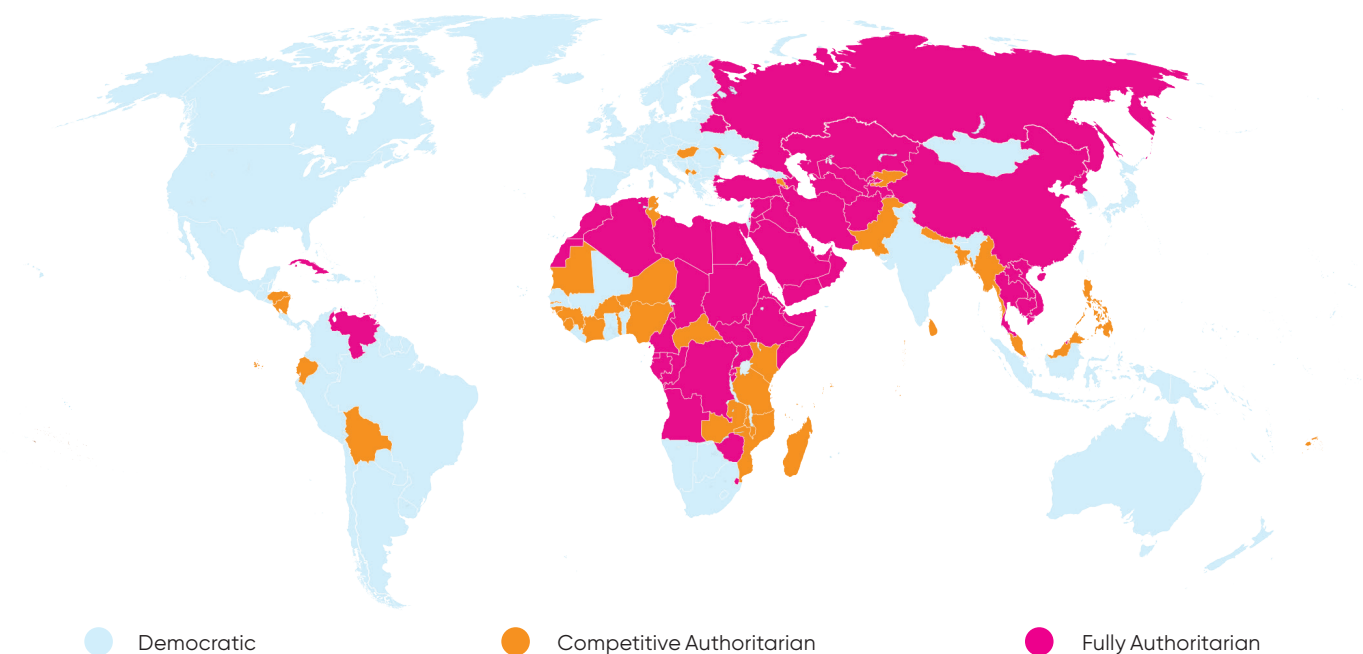
## Political Regime Classification

### Assessing Democracy Around the World

In order to fulfill our mission to promote freedom and democracy “with a focus on closed societies,” HRF has taken on classifying all of the countries in the world with an aim to distinguish democratic from authoritarian regimes.

HRF chooses to focus our limited resources on countries where independent media, activists, NGOs, and political opposition parties are under permanent threat and systematically prevented from forming meaningful opposition to the regime.

HRF's research further shows that there are currently a little over 100 democracies that govern over 46% of the world's population; 41 competitive authoritarian regimes that rule over 1.2 billion people, or 16% of the world's population; and 54 full-fledged dictatorships ruled by tyrants, strongmen, kings, or military juntas that oppress over 2.9 billion people, or 38 % of the world's population.



# Center for Law & Democracy

## Original Research on Rights and Regimes

The Center for Law and Democracy at HRF analyzes developments taking place in our countries of focus. Our research takes on the form of reports and policy notes written by HRF's Legal & Policy team that are published on HRF's website as a part of our Notes on Policy blog series, as well shared on our social media platforms to reach a wide audience. Our research informs our advocacy campaigns, events, and programs.

### Selected Research



Street Protests vs. Authoritarianism: From 2019 to the Decade Ahead



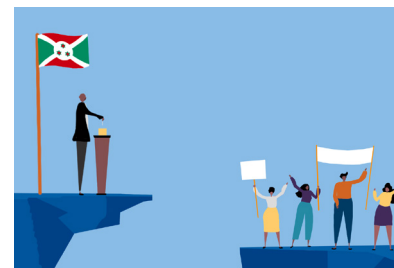
Elections Under Authoritarian Regimes: Azerbaijan and Iran



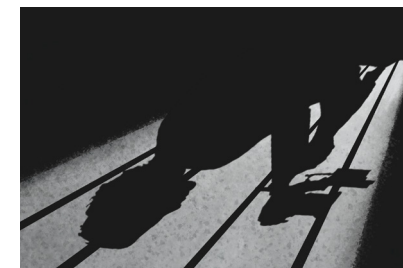
Repression and Persecution Under Tajikistan's Authoritarian Regime



LGBT Community Under Increasing Pressure in Morocco



Burundi Elections Proceed Despite Coronavirus Outbreak



Remembering Shady Habash: A Victim of Egypt's Horrific Prison Conditions



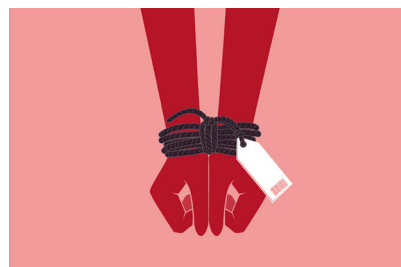
Cuba: 60 Years of Revolution, 60 Years of Oppression



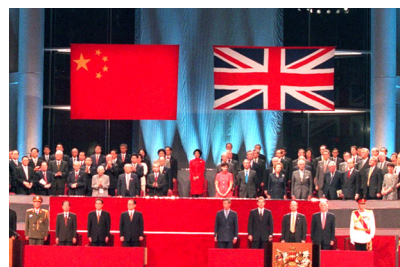
Corporate Intimidation and Censorship in China



Building and Uniting a Movement in the Arab World



Uncovering the Links Between Authoritarianism and Human Trafficking



Hong Kong's National Security Law: The Nail in the Coffin for One Country, Two Systems



Technology Emerges As A Tool for Tyrants (and Dissidents)



Whitewashing Enables Dictators, Fans Fight Back



Authoritarianism Rising on International Day of Democracy



Malawi: Against Background of Global Declines, Democracy Scores A Win



The State of Protest: Sudan, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, Algeria, Hong Kong, Russia, Egypt, Bolivia, Iraq, Guinea, and Iran



Women-Led Protest Movements Advance



Vietnam's COVID Success Belies Escalating Crackdown on Rights

## 02.

# Legal Representation

In countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, separation of powers does not exist, resulting in a lack of judicial independence. Legal proceedings are difficult to access and, where made possible, operate as a mere formality where courts are, in practice, enforcers of discretionary rules used to harass, jail, convict, and impose arbitrary sanctions against critics of the regime.

Dissidents, journalists, and public intellectuals live under threat of being arrested and detained. This is why a core part of HRF's work each year is focused on representing the cases of human rights defenders in international courts.

# Impact Litigation

## Pro Bono Legal Representation

International semi-judicial bodies can be essential for filling the gaps in the protection of basic individual rights. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) is the most prestigious and active example of an international litigation body among international litigators, and that is where the majority of HRF's legal petitions are filed.

HRF routinely represents individuals before the UNWGAD who have been wrongfully detained for exposing the human rights abuses and corruption of authoritarian regimes.

The UNWGAD has issued opinions on a majority of cases HRF has submitted over the years, which is a considerable achievement, as the Working

Group receives thousands of submissions each year but only issues opinions on a very small number of filings.

Furthermore, for each petition that HRF has received a decision on since the start of our program, the outcome has been in our clients' favor, explicitly stating that each case of detention was, indeed, arbitrary. Submissions to the UNWGAD are particularly effective in exerting pressure on governments to release arbitrarily-detained prisoners, and HRF has submitted multiple petitions and Urgent Appeals that have contributed to activists' freedom.

### Cases brought before the UN in 2020:



**Tajikistan and Russia**  
Sharofiddin Gadoev



**Tanzania**  
Theodory Faustine  
Giyani



**Burma**  
Peacock Generation  
Satire Troupe



**Venezuela**  
Maria Lourdes  
Afuni



**Hong Kong**  
Johnson Yeung



**Cuba**  
Keilylli de la Mora



**China**  
Ekpar Asat



**Kyrgyzstan**  
Azimjan Askarov

**Tajikistan and Russia**  
Maksud Muhidinovich  
Ibragimov

**Burma**  
Peacock Generation  
Satire Troupe

### Cases that received an opinion in 2020:

#### **Tajikistan and Russia: Maksud Muhidinovich Ibragimov**

After suffering severe attacks for political opposition activism with his movement, Ibragimov was abducted in Moscow and returned to Tajikistan, where he has been detained since 2015. In May 2020, the UNWGAD declared his detention to be arbitrary under each category for which HRF submitted an argument, and referred his case to additional Special Rapporteurs.

#### **Burma: Peacock Generation Satire Troupe**

After organizing a traditional Burmese thangyat performance without seeking prior approval from the government, members of the troupe were arrested and sentenced to years of prison for criticizing the military during the performance. In September 2020, the UNWGAD declared their detention to be arbitrary under all categories for which HRF submitted arguments.

# Universal Periodic Reviews

## Assessing the State of Freedom

HRF performs advocacy work targeted at the United Nations (UN) or state governments on behalf of specific activists or groups, including through Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions.

HRF's Center for Law and Democracy has submitted contributions to the UN Human Rights Council's UPR, a mechanism established to examine the human rights performance of all UN member states.

To date, HRF has submitted 10 contributions to the UPR of various authoritarian regimes.

In 2020, HRF submitted review cases for the countries of Niger and Brunei.

19

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# Anti-Corruption Initiative

## Developing Smarter Sanctions

HRF is committed to documenting the links between corruption and authoritarianism and pursuing evidence-based sanctions against human rights abusers. Our Legal team submits evidentiary case files to the US State Department under the Global Magnitsky Act, which allows the president of the United States to block or revoke US visas and to block all US-based property and interests under the possession of foreign individuals and entities who have engaged in acts of corruption or committed, overseen, or financed serious human rights abuses. Organizations such as HRF are invited to submit case files regarding perpetrators for eventual inclusion on the Specially Designated Nationals List for sanctions.

### Global Magnitsky Coalition

In December 2019, the Global Magnitsky Coalition — of which HRF is a member — saw wins in the form of increases for Global Magnitsky enforcement in all relevant House of Representatives appropriations bills in the FY20 packages. Nearly one-third of the US government's sanctions designations were results of inputs from members of the Coalition.

In June 2020, staff from the US Treasury reached out to HRF for a list of Hong Kong officials to consider for sanctions. HRF worked with local Hong Kong partners to submit a list that included Hong Kong Police Force officials, Hong Kong administrative officials, mainland Chinese officials, and others involved in the ongoing human rights abuses in Hong Kong.

On August 7, the US Treasury announced sanctions on high-level Hong Kong officials, including Carrie Lam, and all were included on the list HRF had submitted in June, except for three newly appointed officials.

As a result of HRF's efforts, the following individuals were added to the Office of Foreign Assets Control's Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list update: Carrie Yuet-ngor Lam, Eric Kwok-ki Chan, Teresa Yeuk-wah Cheng, John Ka-chiu Lee, Stephen Wai-chung Lo, Huining Luo, Bi Sidi Souleymane, Chris Tang, Erick Kwok-wai Tsang, Baolong Xia, Xiaoming Zhang, and Yanxiong Zheng.

In August, HRF signed on to a joint letter addressed to the US, UK, and Canadian governments, requesting that the British and Canadian governments use their targeted human rights sanctions programs to mirror US sanctions actions concerning Xinjiang, and that they routinize information-sharing concerning human rights and anti-corruption targeted sanctions to multilateralize Magnitsky-like sanctions.

## 03.

# Global Campaigns & Advocacy

One of the most important ways in which HRF uses its sizable platform is to advocate against abuse and repression in its countries of focus.

Through creative campaigns, in-house research, and interactive events, HRF strives to raise awareness among the international community about human rights and the struggle against repression. These campaigns serve as powerful tools for public education, and focus on bringing human rights issues to the attention of new audiences around the world.

HRF's portfolio of ongoing campaigns relates to issues of democracy and authoritarianism around the globe. In 2020, HRF advanced the objectives of long-term programs like Flash Drives for Freedom and the Hong Kong Desk, while launching a major new initiative in support of Belarus' democratic movement.

# Standing with Belarus

## Supporting the Democratic Movement

HRF's mission is to defend human rights where they are systematically denied to people. Under Alexander Lukashenko's regime in Belarus, political dissent is met with extreme brutality. Free and fair elections have not taken place in 26 years, and the country is currently at a point where nationwide public protests could usher in a new era of democracy.

### Belarus Solidarity Fund

Since May 2020, HRF has closely monitored the situation in Belarus and, in August 2020, set up the Belarus Solidarity Fund to provide financial assistance to Belarusians who have been fired, denied wages, or otherwise negatively impacted for supporting democracy in their country.



### On the Main Stage

At the 2020 Oslo Freedom Forum, leader of the Belarus democratic movement and president-elect Svetlana Tikhanovskaya addressed the audience via livestream.



### Celebrities & Dictators

The American rapper Tyga was scheduled to play a concert organized by the government in Belarus on the night before the elections, conveniently drawing attention away from the opposition's final rally and whitewashing the regime's violence. HRF intervened, sending a letter to Tyga and his representatives, and succeeded in convincing Tyga and another rapper, SAINT JHN, to cancel their performances.



### Campaigning Against Police Brutality

HRF sent letters to 25 members of the Belarusian state security apparatus that have been implicated in crimes against humanity, including murder, torture, and arbitrary detention of peaceful protesters. The letters explained the crimes committed by the individuals, and urged them to lay down their arms and refuse to follow illegal orders. Several of the individuals identified by HRF were later sanctioned by the US Department of the Treasury.



### Our Impact

Following Tyga and SAINT JHN's public withdrawal from their concert in Belarus, millions of fans around the world became aware of the Belarusian dictatorship. HRF has raised more than \$250,000 to support protesters in Belarus, which has helped to sustain the pro-democracy movement during this critical time.



# Hong Kong Desk

## Challenging China's Authoritarianism

In 2020, the world watched as the “one country, two systems” principle crumbled in Hong Kong, and China grabbed power back from Hong Kong’s legislative system. The urgency of HRF’s international advocacy on behalf of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement reached a new pitch as, seemingly overnight, the rule of law and freedom of the press disappeared.

### Impact Litigation

HRF filed a petition to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of imprisoned Hong Kong activists and filed an analysis on police brutality to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.



### Identifying Corporate Risk

In June, HRF published a report, “Corporate Intimidation and Censorship in China,” highlighting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s coercion tactics on foreign companies, with a focus on incidents surrounding the 2019 Hong Kong protest movement. The report lays out examples of censorship, self-censorship, and retaliation against international companies doing business in China, revealing how the CCP has signaled that foreign companies operating in China must help advance its agenda or face expulsion from the Chinese market.



Nathan Law

“Beijing says that the [national security] law is a gift to Hong Kong, but it’s really the poison from the devil.”

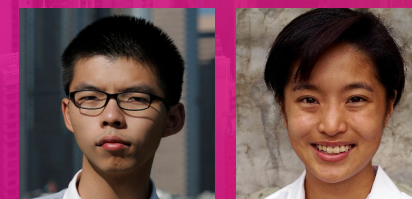
Nathan Law



Samuel M. Chu

Denise Ho

Frances Hui



Joshua Wong

Mary Hui

### On the Mainstage

HRF featured speakers representing Hong Kong at each of our events this year.

At the 2020 Oslo Freedom Forum, Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Nathan Law was prominently featured as a main stage speaker, and his talk is still the most widely watched of this year’s event. Private roundtable discussions featured a number of high-level global policymakers and Hong Kong activists discussing concrete strategies for supporting Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement in the wake of the recent national security law.

At COVIDCon in April, Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong and journalist Frances Hui spoke on panels about government responses to the spread of the virus and how to keep protest movements alive during the pandemic.

At the virtual South by Southwest (SXSW) in May, HRF’s panel, “Protest in the Age of Surveillance,” focused heavily on lessons learned from Hong Kong, as Denise Ho, singer-songwriter and pro-democracy activist; Nathan Law; and Mary Hui, Quartz journalist, discussed combating government surveillance in protests.

At the “Looking Back at the Tiananmen Massacre” virtual event in June, Hong Kong activist-journalist Frances Hui and founding/managing director of the Hong Kong Democracy Council Samuel M. Chu provided their insights on the future of Hong Kong as they continue to bravely stand up against China’s authoritarian regime.

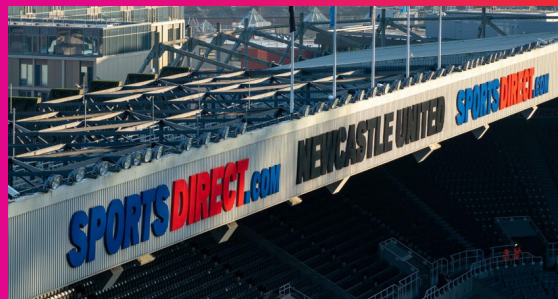
# Celebrities & Dictators

## Making Human Rights Mainstream

This program enlists celebrities in the global struggle for freedom by recognizing that public figures with widespread name recognition are uniquely positioned to raise awareness of human rights issues. HRF reaches out directly to the celebrity or organization, appealing to their personal responsibility to justice and equality.

### Premier League

In April, HRF sent an open letter to Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters regarding the impending purchase of Newcastle United Football Club by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), chaired by Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), Saudi Arabia's de facto dictator. In July, Saudi Arabia pulled out of the deal, following HRF's campaign.



### G20 in Riyadh

The Group of Twenty, or the G20, is the premier forum for international economic cooperation. Saudi Arabia's hosting of the G20 Summit was yet another effort to portray itself as a modern, progressive country. The week of the event, HRF executed an international awareness campaign about Saudi's human rights issues and why none of the reforms to date have substantially improved the situation.



### Tyga

In August, HRF learned that US rapper Tyga was scheduled to perform at a government-sponsored concert in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. The concert was set for August 8, deliberately coinciding with the opposition's final electoral rally on the day before the country's presidential elections.

HRF sent a letter to Tyga and his representatives, briefing him on Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko's brutal dictatorship and his appalling human rights record, while urging him to stand with the people of Belarus and pull out of the concert.

Within hours, both Tyga and the other headlining performer, rapper SAINT JHN, announced that they were cancelling their performances. Entertainment publications, including Pitchfork, Hollywood Reporter, and NME, quickly picked up on the news, enabling HRF to reach an audience that traditionally doesn't focus on human rights abuses.

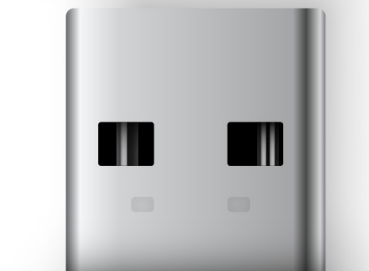
The cancellation of the performances helped galvanize Belarusian civil society, drew attention to the rigged elections that took place the next day, and dealt Lukashenko a major public relations setback.



# Flash Drives for Freedom

## Freeing North Korea with Information

North Korea, one of the most closed societies 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.



## Winning Awards

In May, Flash Drives for Freedom was voted the Best Cause-Related Campaign in the People’s Voice category at the 24th annual Webby Awards, the leading international awards organization honoring excellence on the internet.

In October, the program was recognized with yet another award from W3 when it was voted “Best in Show,” among websites for activism in the 15th annual W3 Awards. Receiving over 3,000 entries from across the globe, the W3 Awards illuminate creative excellence on the Web, recognizing the best digital content creators across the industry.

This level of recognition has also been reflected in the amount of online attention given to this campaign: from April to June, flashdrivesforfreedom.org saw an increase in website traffic of more than 1,000%, with an average of more than 200 daily clicks.

As of 2020, Flash Drives for Freedom has received more than one billion global media impressions.



## Petitioning South Korea



This year, the South Korean government has been embroiled in criticism for persecuting North Korean defector activist groups, most notably through the “anti-leafleting law”, which criminalizes sending information into the North by up to three years’ imprisonment and a fine of up to \$27,000.

In June, HRF sent a letter to President Moon, urging him to respect the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association of South Korean citizens regarding the North Korean regime. In December, HRF sent a letter to the National Assembly urging them to do the same.

The UN Special Rapporteur on North Korea recommended the South Korean government stop its persecution of North Korean human rights activists.

In July, Park Sang-hak, a former OFF speaker, wrote an op-ed detailing how the South Korean government has been suppressing the work of North Korean human activists, which HRF helped place in the Washington Post.

HRF is currently working with activists and other human rights organizations on strategizing operations in view of the new law, which was passed on December 29th.

# Defending the Defenders

## Protecting the Rights of Environmental Activists

**"Coronavirus has turned the world upside down and for environmental activists this is not the exception."**

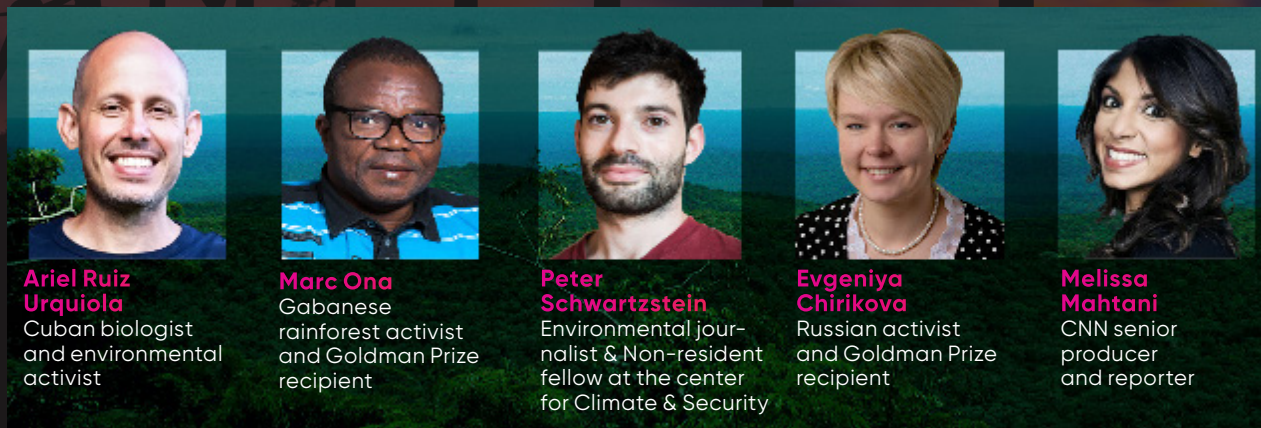
*Peter Schwartzstein*

Physical attacks, intimidation, and murders of defenders of nature and the environment are highest in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes, where rule of law is weaker, and where civil society, independent media, and the internet are more restricted.

In response to the alarming rate of attacks on environmental defenders, HRF, in partnership with the City of Oslo, continued a series of events and conversations stemming from the program's launch in 2019.

This series brings together frontline environmental activists, journalists documenting environmental crimes, and other experts to share their stories in order to raise awareness about the perils of this earth-preserving work.

At the 2020 RightsCon Online, HRF presented a panel discussion called "Defending The Defenders: Environmental Activism & Digital Rights." This session focused on the need to protect the digital rights and spaces of environmental activists working in countries under authoritarian rule, from Russia to Cuba to Gabon and the Middle East. Speakers on this panel included Goldman Environmental Prize laureates Marc Ona and Evgeniya Chirikova, environmentalist Ariel Ruiz Urquiola, and environmental journalist Peter Schwartzstein.



## 04.

# Tech & Liberty

HRF connects world-class technologists with activists who live under dictatorships to provide them with the resources they need to meaningfully advance their work and protect their communications.

As authoritarian regimes develop systems of oppression that increasingly rely on technology, HRF is partnering with tech experts to help secure dissident voices.

The goal of the program is to keep activists and their work private online, fight state surveillance, and support technologies that advance free expression and press freedom.

Much as scientists played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union, technologists can play a key role in eroding the control of authoritarian regimes today. We know that once tyrants lose their control over information, they begin to lose their grip on power.

# Bitcoin Development Fund

## Making Bitcoin More Private, Decentralized, and Resilient

Encrypted messaging and virtual private networks are well-known tools to human rights activists, but many have yet to realize the potential utility 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.

This year, pro-democracy organizations in Belarus, Nigeria, Russia, and Hong Kong have used Bitcoin to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in funds even after their bank accounts were shut down. HRF expects Bitcoin use in the global human rights movement to grow moving forward, just as the use of encrypted messaging grew in the movement over the past decade.

One of the biggest developments in 2020 was HRF's launch of the Bitcoin Development Fund: a campaign to support software developers who are improving the Bitcoin network as a financial tool so it can better serve human rights activists and civil society organizations around the world.

### Bitcoin Development Fund Grant Recipients

- Chris Belcher, developer of CoinSwap
- Openoms, creator of JoinInbox
- Evan Kaloudis, creator of Zeus
- Fontaine, creator of Fully Noded
- Gloria Zhao, developer on Package Mempool Accept

In December 2020, Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss announced a \$50,000 gift to support HRF's Bitcoin Development Fund through their company Gemini.

HRF will continue to raise support for making Bitcoin a better tool for freedom, with the goal of announcing new gifts every few months. As the first nonprofit working on such an initiative, HRF has the potential to inspire other organizations in this space to support Bitcoin research and software development.



# China, AI, and Human Rights

## Investigating the Rise of Digital Authoritarianism

HRF hosted a four-part online series on China's digital authoritarianism in September and October, with a focus on artificial intelligence. This partnership with Stanford University's Global Digital Policy Incubator (GDPi), the Hoover Institution, and the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence was designed to bring together the biggest names working in artificial intelligence and human rights, in order to better examine the implications of China's leading role in this burgeoning industry.

### Topics

- How AI is Powering China's Domestic Surveillance State
- The Ethics of Doing Business with the CCP and Chinese Companies
- The Geopolitics of China as an Emerging AI Global Superpower
- How Democracies Should Respond to China's Emergence as an AI Superpower



# China, AI, and Human Rights

## Event Speakers

**Condoleezza Rice**, Former U.S. Secretary of State

**Eric Schmidt**, former CEO of Google

**Audrey Tang**, Taiwan's Digital Minister

**Melissa Chan**, Journalist, Global Reporting Centre

**Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian**, China reporter at Axios

**Larry Diamond**, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

**Glenn Tiffert**, Hoover Visiting Fellow

**Paul Mozur**, Asia Technology Correspondent, New York Times

**Xiao Qiang**, UC Berkeley, Editor-in-Chief of China Digital Times

**Casey Newton**, Silicon Valley Editor, The Verge

**Alex Stamos**, Director, Stanford Internet Observatory

**Mary Hui**, Journalist, Quartz

**Megha Rajagopalan**, International Correspondent, BuzzFeed News

**Mike Brown**, Director, Defense Innovation Unit

**Eileen Donahoe**, Executive Director of GDPi

**Dominic Ziegler**, Senior Asia Correspondent and Banyan Columnist, The Economist

**Lindsay Gorman**, Fellow for Emerging Technologies, Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund

**Maya Wang**, Senior China Researcher, Human Rights Watch

**Steven Feldstein**, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**Anja Manuel**, Co-Founder, Rice, Hadley, Gates & Manuel

**Chris Meserole**, Deputy Director of the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technology Initiative, Brookings Institution

## 05.

# HRF Events

## Inspiring a Global Audience

For over a decade, dissidents have come from across the world to educate, share, and inspire at the Human Rights Foundation's annual conference, the Oslo Freedom Forum.

This annual event has grown into a global series, as HRF has developed a reputation for unique and world-class events where attendees can learn about the struggle for freedom directly from dissidents and human rights defenders on the frontlines.

Then, in 2020, the world changed. Virtually overnight, conferences and events disappeared from the calendar as travel restrictions were announced and lockdown measures were enforced.

Rather than shuttering our events, we leaned into the opportunity to bring people together online to participate in crucial conversations about the free flow of information, censorship, authoritarian power grabs, public health, governance, and data privacy.

Despite the challenges, HRF presented a total of five conferences this year, and staff spoke at several others, including South by Southwest (SXSW) and RightsCon, reaching tens of thousands of attendees from countries around the world.

The success of HRF's expansion into virtual events has demonstrated the reach and universal appeal of our work.

# College Freedom Forum

## Uniting Students in Activism

In February 2020, HRF hosted the fifth annual College Freedom Forum (CFF) at Universidad Francisco Marroquín in Guatemala, the first campus where the CFF was held outside the United States in 2016.

The HRF College Freedom Forum is a series of one-day satellite versions of HRF's annual flagship conference, the Oslo Freedom Forum, held on university campuses.

Fostering dialogue and collaboration between global activists and university students creates potential to cultivate new avenues and approaches to human rights advocacy.

Through College Freedom Forum events, HRF encourages students to become catalysts who will go on to educate others, lead businesses and nonprofits, and affect policy in an intergenerational movement.



Left to right: Roya Mahboob, Felix Maradiaga, Yoani Sánchez, Ahmedur "Tutul" Chowdhury, Vanessa Tsehaye, and Rodrigo Diamanti.

**"This is a meeting point between activists who fight for their freedom and students who become inspired."**

*Gabriel Calzada, Dean of Universidad Francisco Marroquín*



*Participants had the opportunity to ask speakers questions during the Forum.*

### Event Speakers

**Ahmedur "Tutul" Chowdhury**, Bangladeshi journalist

**Yoani Sánchez**, Cuban blogger and human rights defender

**Vanessa Tsehaye**, Eritrean activist

**Rodrigo Diamanti**, Venezuelan activist

**Roya Mahboob**, Afghan businesswoman and founder of the Digital Citizen Fund

**Felix Maradiaga**, Nicaraguan democracy activist

# COVIDCon

## Authoritarianism & The Pandemic

In April, HRF presented COVIDCon, an online conference focused on how authoritarianism sparked and continues to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic.

We gathered a diverse group of human rights activists, technologists, and journalists from across the world to discuss how the Chinese government helped cover up the initial COVID-19 outbreak and featured presentations and panels about state censorship, disinformation, surveillance, and civil liberties.

The live event was attended by more than 3,500 audience members across the world, from Honolulu to Reykjavik to Lagos to Auckland, and recorded sessions were watched by more than 22,000 viewers. The event was covered by media outlets such as POLITICO, The Sydney Morning Times, Brisbane Times, Liberty Times, and El Nuevo Herald.

**COVID CON** OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

APRIL 13-14, 2020 | POST-EVENT SUMMARY

**HOW TYRANNY SPARKED AND EXPLOITS THE PANDEMIC**

<b>27</b> Speakers	<b>+3.5K</b> Virtual attendees	<b>12</b> Sessions
<b>@ 1.5M</b> Social media impressions	<b>+22K</b> Livestream viewers	<b>53M</b> Media coverage impressions

### A Selection of Event Speakers

**Ai Weiwei**, Chinese artist and dissident

**Dr. Yang Jianli**, Chinese scholar and human rights activist

**Joshua Wong**, Hong Kong pro-democracy activist

**Kyle Bass**, Founder of Hayman Capital Management and US-China relations expert

**Peter Kréko**, Hungarian professor and free speech advocate

**Masih Alinejad**, Iranian journalist and human rights activist

**Anne Applebaum**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author

**Naval Ravikant**, Entrepreneur and AngelList founder

**Evan Mawarire**, Zimbabwean democracy activist, pastor, and leader of the #ThisFlag movement

### Where did attendees join from?



# Tiananmen Square Anniversary

## Remembering June 4

On June 4, 1989, the Chinese government ordered the People's Liberation Army to turn its weapons and tanks on unarmed students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, in order to crush their peaceful pro-democracy protest movement.

Despite the Chinese Communist Party's best efforts to erase the truth of the Tiananmen Massacre, what happened on that day forever changed the relationship between the Chinese people and a regime that chose brute violence over dialogue.

With more than 350 virtual participants and thousands of video views of the panel discussions, this event was a successful experiment in a new format for HRF.

### Event Speakers

**Claudia Rosett**, American investigative journalist and editor

**Anastasia Lin**, Chinese-Canadian human rights activist

**Dr. Yang Jianli**, Tiananmen Massacre survivor

**Megha Rajagopalan**, BuzzFeed News world correspondent

**Frances Hui**, Hong Kong activist-journalist

**Samuel M. Chu**, founding and managing director of the Hong Kong Democracy Council

# LOOKING BACK AT THE TIANANMEN MASSACRE

JUNE 4 2020 ←



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# Oslo Freedom Forum

## Celebrating Resilience

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.

This transformative conference series unites the world's most engaging human rights advocates, artists, tech entrepreneurs, and policymakers to share their stories and brainstorm ways to advance human rights and unleash human potential across the globe.

In September, HRF hosted the first fully online Oslo Freedom Forum.

This year's theme, Resilience, was dedicated to the courage and determination of activists and citizens around the world who persist in their mission to make the world more open and freer, despite a global pandemic and imposed emergency laws and restrictions.

Audiences around the world tuned in to watch the live-streamed talks and fireside chats from 14 main stage speakers before joining invitation-only panel discussions and workshops hosted on HopIn, a new platform designed for interactive virtual events.

Attendees tuned in from more than 100 countries to watch inspiring talks and testimonies, and tens of thousands more have viewed this year's content via the Oslo Freedom Forum's YouTube channel.

Press coverage of the Oslo Freedom Forum was printed in 48 countries, reaching approximately 1.25 million readers via media outlets including Reuters, U.S. News and World Report, Forbes, Business Insider, NASDAQ, CNN, Yahoo, Focus, Apple Daily Hong Kong, The Diplomat, The Times of India, The Jerusalem Post, The Star Online, ChannelNews Asia, Nau, Matichon, and Taiwan News.

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**"The most successful virtual conference since COVID began."**

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"Message to the organizers: thank you. What a bunch of hard-working rockstars. Message to the dictators: COVID hasn't stopped us."

WE ARE  
RESILIENT

## Mainstage Speakers



**Gulchehra Hoja**  
Uyghur journalist



**Mohamed Nagi Alassam**  
Sudanese doctor & pro-democracy activist



**Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit**  
Thai opposition leader



**Masih Alinejad**  
Iranian journalist and human rights activist



**Christopher Balding**  
“Who Owns Huawei?” author and professor



**Ariel Ruiz Urquiola**  
Cuban environmentalist and LGBTQ + rights activist



**Audrey Tang**  
Taiwan’s Digital Minister



**Fatou Toufah Jallow**  
Gambian anti-rape activist



**Bryan Fogel**  
Oscar-winning film director



**Lyudmila Savchuk**  
Russian investigative journalist



**Nathan Law**  
Exiled Hong Kong pro-democracy activist



**Jack Dorsey**  
Twitter and Square CEO



**Eunhee Park**  
North Korean defector



**Svetlana Tikhanovskaya**  
Leader of the Belarusian democratic movement

**“The quality of speakers was really phenomenal.”**

## South by Southwest SXSXW

### Exploring Protest and Surveillance

Over the past five years, HRF has created unique programming at South by Southwest (SXSW), the highly publicized multi-day conference in Austin, Texas, where top CEOs, music moguls, movie stars, industry leaders, innovators, and changemakers convene for keynotes, panels, workshops, and more. This year, the conference was cancelled for the first time in its 33-year history, due to the coronavirus. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, HRF has continued to make a pop culture and media impact with SXSW.

In May, we hosted a SXSW virtual panel with Nathan Law, founding chair of Demosistō; Denise Ho, singer-songwriter and pro-democracy activist; and Mary Hui, Quartz journalist who has covered protests in Hong Kong extensively, on how to ensure the safety of protesters in the age of surveillance and how protesters are continuing to organize amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In July, SXSW chose to feature HRF in its “Brands in Action” series, which highlights companies that are working toward the betterment of communities around the world.

**“Out to change the world, the Human Rights Foundation was created to help fight against injustice and protect the rights of others. Their work continues to highlight ongoing advocacy programs across the globe and aims to provide relief and publicity of their efforts.**

**Using their videos and outreach, HRF hopes to continue moving conversations forward and shedding light on the ripple effects of a global pandemic. This includes tracking how activism has adapted in a world with limited social interaction. HRF Freedom Fellowship Manager, Jhanisse Vaca-Daza writes, “The global pandemic has forced activists to find new and creative ways to express dissent and build civic unity.”**

*South by Southwest “Brands in Action” Report*

06.

# Art & Culture

HRF believes that art, fashion, music, and pop culture are crucial access points for exposing a larger audience to issues of democratic change and individual rights.

By expanding beyond the usual realms of policy and politics, HRF aims to engage a diverse population in discussions of these issues through social media and digital campaigns.

## Václav Havel International Prize

### Celebrating Creative Dissent

Named after the late Czech poet, playwright, dissident, statesman, and former HRF chairman Václav Havel, the Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent celebrates individuals who exhibit bravery, creativity, and artistic innovation in standing up against dictatorships.

Havel led the nonviolent revolution that freed Czechoslovakia from communist rule, using first, his poetry and plays, and later, political essays and the Charter 77 manifesto, to challenge arbitrary power and injustice in his country.



HRF launched the Havel Prize in 2012 with the support of Dagmar Havlová, Havel's widow.

Havel Prize laureates receive a bronze sculpture depicting the "Goddess of Democracy," the iconic figure erected by Chinese students during the Tiananmen Square protests in June 1989. Each sculpture embodies the spirit of creative dissent and represents the power of truth and beauty in the face of brutality and oppression. The laureates also share a prize of 350,000 Norwegian kroner (\$38,000).

#### This year's recipients



**Badiucao**  
Chinese political artist



**Omar Abdulaziz**  
Saudi political satirist and activist



**Kizito Mihigo (awarded posthumously)**  
Rwandan gospel musician and peace activist

# Art in Protest

## Supporting Dissident Artists

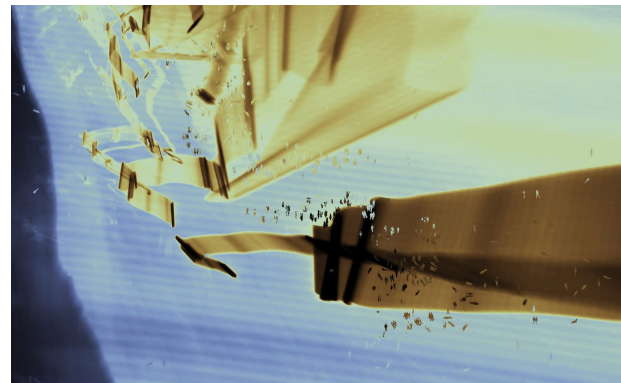
HRF promotes and features artists from around the world who embody the spirit of creativity and dissent, and whose art is connected to their countries' struggle for democracy and basic human rights.

Art in Protest opens 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.

Art can expose that deception, speaking with an emotional immediacy that is stronger than any statement and able to resonate more widely than any declaration.

Since its inception, Art in Protest has connected the art world and human rights activists through events for diverse audiences in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oslo, showcasing artists from different regions of the world.

In 2020, HRF launched the Art in Protest digital gallery, which features works from artists from North Korea, Afghanistan, Turkey, China, and Venezuela. In this virtual gallery, visitors can see how these artists are making an impact on the global struggle against authoritarianism through their powerful works of art.



**The Gao Brothers** (China)



**Rodrigo Figueredo** (Venezuela)



**Song Byeok** (North Korea)



**Shamsia Hassani** (Afghanistan)



**Zehra Doğan** (Turkey)

# Wear Your Values

## The Convergence of Fashion and Human Rights

The fashion industry is one of the world's largest economies (worth an estimated \$1.5 trillion in 2020) and employs millions of people around the world. The most labor-intensive stages of production are done in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and China, where workers' rights are continuously violated without recourse. The lack of basic human rights in countries under authoritarian rule directly

affects the lives of millions of workers, including children, who work in the fashion supply chain.

The fashion industry benefits from a lack of transparency under some of the worst dictatorial regimes, and therefore indirectly contributes to a system of oppression and tyranny. Using fashion as a tool, Wear Your Values seeks to draw attention to human rights abuses in closed societies.



The Xinjiang region, which exports 20 percent of the world's cotton, has become the world's largest open-air prison. Illustration by Mariana Bernardez.



The BANNED Collection highlights the role that fashion plays as a powerful tool of both expression and oppression. On display: the Uyghur Doppa and signature balaclava worn by Pussy Riot

Wear Your Values engages the fashion industry in the human rights movement, promotes transparency and human rights in the supply chain, and brings awareness to the hidden social costs of the industry through a series of events, exhibitions, panel discussions, and talks that are designed to educate consumers. In the past, HRF has created dialogue about human rights in the fashion industry during New York Fashion Week, Costa Rica Fashion Week, and at many Oslo Freedom Forum events. Past exhibitions highlighted the role that fashion has played in the fight for freedom around the world and as a powerful medium of expression.

HRF published two op-eds on the role of fashion in human rights. The first piece, "Using Fashion as a Silent Protest,"

discusses the many ways in which fashion has become a political statement in North Korea and in global protest movements. HRF also published an op-ed highlighting the fashion industry's ties to the exploitation of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region, which exports 20 % of the world's cotton, and urging consumers to wear their values.

In 2020, HRF also joined the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, which works to end state-sponsored forced labor in Xinjiang, calling on top brands and retailers to ensure that they are not supporting or benefiting from the forced labor of the Uyghur population perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party.

# Dissidents & Dictators

## Amplifying Voices of Dissent

Authoritarian regimes around the world are cracking down further on civil liberties, and in response, HRF has launched a new podcast to help share stories from activists and human rights defenders around the world.

“Dissidents & Dictators” is a series that serves as a storytelling platform for some of the world’s bravest activists, artists, policy-makers, business leaders, and technologists.

Podcast guests have included Twitter and Square CEO Jack Dorsey; Hermitage Capital Management CEO-turned-human-rights-activist Bill Browder; Chinese-Canadian human rights activist and former beauty queen Anastasia Lin; Burundian poet, essayist, former journalist, and pro-democracy activist Ketty Nivyabandi; and many other distinguished activists and changemakers.

Find “Dissidents and Dictators” on



# Lifelines

## HRF's Short Documentary Series

In August, HRF launched “Lifelines,” a short video documentary series on our YouTube channel, wherein we tell the stories of seven human rights activists pushing for civil liberties around the world.

This series, a collaboration with Cultivator Labs, captures the stories and amplifies the voices of these tireless and courageous activists who are devoted to helping make their countries and the world a freer and more open place.

### Featured Stories

- **Vladimir Kara-Murza**, a journalist and campaigner who has survived two assassination attempts by the Russian government for his outspoken pro-democracy advocacy
- **Rafael Marques De Morais**, a civil rights activist working to bring awareness to the roots of conflict diamonds in Angola
- **Tahir Imin**, a Uyghur rights activist and survivor of the Chinese government’s “re-education camps”
- **Lisa Sánchez**, executive director of Mexico United Against Crime, a Mexican NGO working on citizen security, justice, and drug policy issues
- **Edipcia Dubón**, a Nicaraguan pro-democracy and women’s rights advocate
- **Omar Mohammed**, an Iraqi historian who ran Mosul Eye, a blog documenting life under ISIS occupation
- **Mai Khoi**, a Vietnamese pop star and political activist



# 07. Direct Support

HRF works to directly support individual activists and civil society organizations on the frontlines of democratic change.

This support can take a number of different forms: technical support, training, networking opportunities, and fundraising and financial support.

HRF programs that provide direct support include the Freedom Fellowship, Oslo Scholars, and Microgrants programs.

## Freedom Fellowship

### Helping Leaders Grow Their Movements

In 2019, HRF launched the Freedom Fellowship, a one-year program that awards human rights advocates, social entrepreneurs, and non-profit leaders from challenging political environments around the world with the unique opportunity to dramatically increase the impact of their work. During the program, the fellows work with a team of mentors to focus on areas including movement building, leadership, technology and digital security, media, fundraising, organizing, and mental health.

The first class of Freedom Fellows completed their one-year program this fall, with impressive results. Subsequently, the 2020 cohort of the Freedom Fellowship was finalized, and it includes the following seven fellows: Alexander Solovyev, Russian opposition politician; Befekadu Hailu, Ethiopian writer and an advocate for liberal democracy; Farida Nabourema, Togolese political activist, blogger, and writer; Irade Kashgary, Uyghur-American activist; Jemhira Rose Garcia, Filipina youth advocate for democracy and human rights; Nada Hussein, one of the first women artists to protest through mural art in Iraq; and Victoria Arana, a team leader of Patria Libre y Vivir (“Freedom and Life”), a social movement that seeks to establish the tenets of nonviolent civic struggle in Nicaragua.



*Freedom Fellows Class of 2020 at the 2019 Oslo Freedom Forum*

#### Here's how members of the inaugural fellowship described their experiences:

“Thanks to the Freedom Fellowship, I tremendously improved my skills in communication. This allowed our organization to reach the international level and establish ties with some of the largest and most influential think-tanks and NGOs that spread the values of individual freedom, free markets, and self-governance.”

*Andrey Bystrov, Freedom Fellow from Russia*

“What I love about the Freedom Fellowship is that it brought together a community of activists, whom I learned from and with. The support, understanding, and connections are invaluable. Often, as activists, we are shunned for being troublemakers or for wanting change. It was healing and empowering to be in a room with other Fellows.”

*Asma Khalifa, Freedom Fellow from Libya*

# Oslo Scholars

## Connecting Students and Activists

HRF offers extraordinary students the chance to attend the flagship Oslo Freedom Forum and learn about the most compelling issues in human rights today through a summer internship.

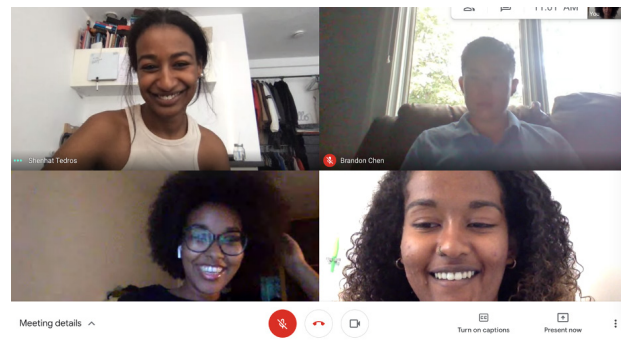
University students are paired with activists in HRF's network, and work with them directly in the field or remotely in a research capacity.

The program is part of HRF's broader mission to enable the world's future leaders to learn more about human rights early on in their careers.

**"I spent a productive summer working with the highly motivated One Day Seyoum (ODS) team, doing both research work and institutional design. I was assigned to the Refugee Clinic team, and was responsible for creating a structure, organization norms/rules, and reaching out to like-minded organizations to jumpstart our program."**

**The work was engaging and unique: I found the beauty of this internship – and the Oslo Scholars program in general – was the opportunity to do meaningful work in an area that was quite unexplored for me. Additionally, I felt I learned just as much in interacting with and seeing the passion/drive of the ODS team as I did in the actual day-to-day work."**

*Brandon Chen, student at Harvard University*



*Oslo Scholars working with One Day Seyoum attend a virtual meeting during Summer 2020*

# Microgrants

## Funds and Connections for Activists

HRF directly supports the work of human rights activists living under authoritarian governments. We provide funding for specific projects executed by civil society organizations that foster human rights in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes. These grants are given to activists, civic leaders, non-governmental organizations and citizens' associations after being thoroughly vetted by HRF to ensure that their work is in line with our mission statement. The goal of this one-time grant is to help activists kickstart initiatives that foster education and defense of human rights in closed societies.

One of 2020's Microgrants recipients was Afghan activist Laila Haidari. She has dedicated much of her career to combating drug addiction in Afghanistan. Haidari founded "Mother Camp," Kabul's only private drug rehabilitation treatment center. Haidari personally funds the center through a popular Kabul cafe, where unmarried men and women are able to interact despite the Taliban's presence. In 2020, HRF provided funds to Mother Camp through the

microgrants program. Thanks to this, Mother Camp was able to identify, house, and treat 83 homeless addicts, 23 addicts more than the project target. This time, Mother Camp included patients who had been forcibly deported to Afghanistan from other countries. Mother Camp also quarantined and provided food and shelter for 40 recovered patients for more than one month.

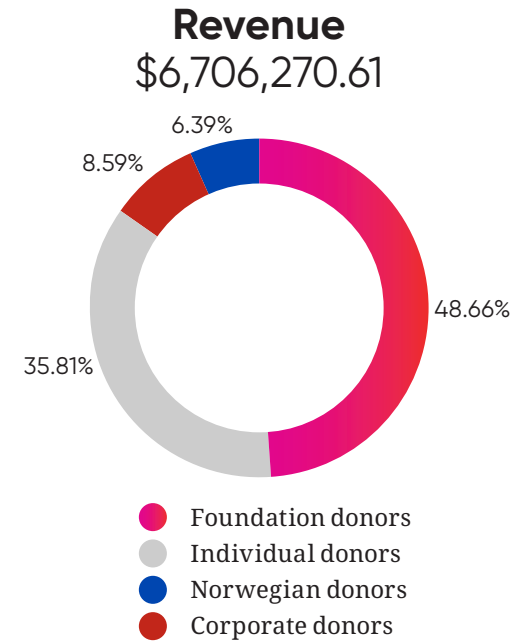
Given that the project coincided with the outbreak of coronavirus in Afghanistan, Mother Camp decided not only to collect, treat, and shelter addicts, but also to support their families, as well as other poor families in Kabul.

In 2020, HRF also provided microgrants for human rights projects in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Cuba, DRC, Ethiopia, Gabon, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and South Africa, among others.

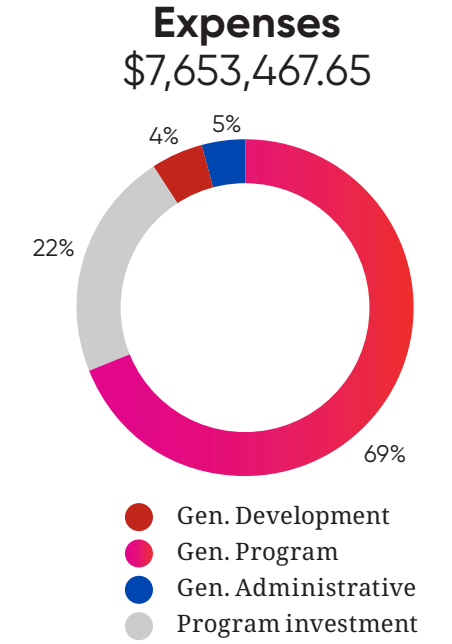
# 08. About Us

## Financials

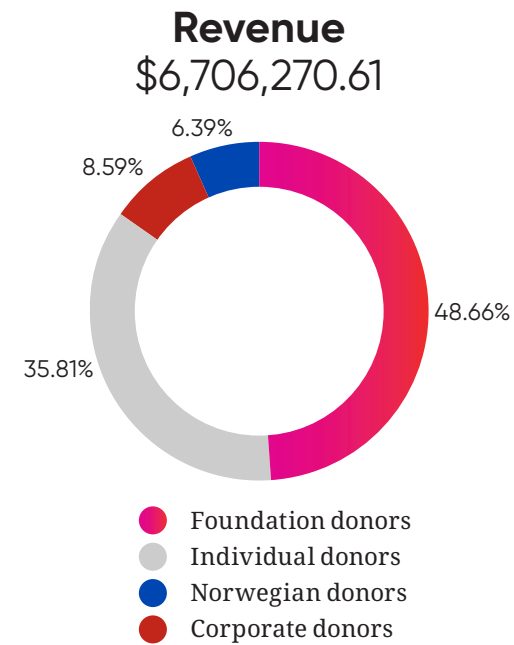
2019



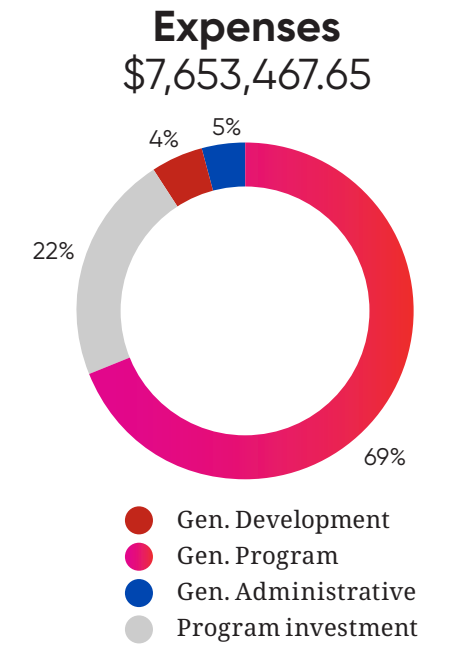
2019



2020



2020



## Our Staff

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Chief Program Officer

**Maya Faucher**  
Director of Special Projects

**David July**  
Strategic Advisor

**Alexander Sikorski**  
Program and Policy Fellow

**Holly Baxter**  
Art in Protest Director

**Raven Germaine**  
Finance Associate

**Mohammed Keita**  
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**Mariana Bernardez**  
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**Jenny Wang**  
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**Michelle Gulino**  
International Legal Associate

**Alvaro Piaggio**  
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Director of Outreach

**Chloe Dyer**  
Research Associate

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### In Memoriam

**Václav Havel**  
Chairman Emeritus  
[1936 – 2011]

**Ramón José Velásquez**  
[1916 – 2014]

**Vladimir Bukovsky**  
[1942 – 2019]

**Elie Wiesel**  
[1928 – 2016]

**Palden Gyatso**  
[1933 – 2018]

**James Q. Wilson**  
[1931 – 2012]

**Eduardo Mendoza**  
[1917 – 2009]

**Harry Wu**  
[1937 – 2016]

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# How to Get Involved

## 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 according to US tax law. Learn more and make a gift today at [donate.hrf.org](https://donate.hrf.org).

## 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 us an email with “Volunteer Opportunities” in the subject line to [info@hrf.org](mailto:info@hrf.org).

## Careers

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

## Internships

HRF offers paid, in-office internships with flexible schedules to a number of students in New York City each year. These positions afford students the opportunity to engage in human rights work and gain hands-on experience in the nonprofit world. With the coronavirus pandemic this past year, HRF continued to provide students with an enriching intern experience by adapting its internship program into a remote format.

### Get social



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