



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

HRF.ORG




Mission

Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies. We are driven by the founding ideals of the human rights movement, those most purely represented in the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We seek, in particular, to advance liberty where it's most under threat. We believe that all human beings are entitled to:

 Freedom of self-determination


 The right to acquire and dispose of property


 Freedom from arbitrary detainment or exile

 Freedom of speech and expression

 The right to leave and enter their countries


 Freedom from slavery and torture

 The right to worship in the manner of their choice

 The right to equal treatment and due process under law

 Freedom from interference and coercion in matters of conscience

 Freedom of association

 The right to be able to participate in the government of their countries

Letter from the President



Thanks to you, 2015 was a landmark year for HRF. By supporting and sharing our mission to promote liberty where it's most at risk, you helped us achieve a great deal.

As HRF enters its 10th year in 2016, our aim is to:

- Dramatically step up democracy promotion in closed societies
- Continue to aid in the liberation of prisoners of conscience
- Increase exposure of corruption and cronyism
- Expand our international education efforts

These efforts will help HRF assist more individuals suffering under tyranny; help inform the public through media appearances, lectures, and speeches; and help facilitate a meaningful dialogue in the international community to move toward action.

As a recent profile of our work put it: "HRF's unofficial motto, it seems, is don't just talk about human rights, roll up your sleeves and get dirty... their daily toil involves covering various corners of the globe, striving to shine a light on authoritarianism and lend a megaphone to dissidents and political prisoners."

In 2015, our team of 15 carried out advocacy projects to promote human rights around the world, including in [Angola](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Bahrain](#), [Burundi](#), [Burma](#), [Cuba](#), [China](#), [Comoros](#), [Ecuador](#), [Egypt](#), [Gabon](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Malaysia](#), [the Maldives](#), [North Korea](#), [Russia](#), [Thailand](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Swaziland](#), [Sudan](#), [Venezuela](#), and [Yemen](#). As you read about our programs and results in the following pages, please consider how few non-profits achieve such a level of influence with limited staff and resources.

The diversity of our programs underscores a harsh reality: dictators still rule a large percentage of the world. HRF's mission is predicated upon the belief that freedom can be best promoted if (1) dissidents and change-makers within closed and closing societies are supported, and (2) in open societies, the problem of dictatorship is elevated to the same level in public discourse as issues like terrorism, poverty, water scarcity, pollution, and mass epidemics.

That is why we dedicate ourselves to on-the-ground projects—such as our initiatives to send outside knowledge and information into oppressed places like North Korea and Cuba—as well as focus our efforts on making sure that human rights are prioritized in media coverage and policy debates in open societies. An immensely important element of this equation is education in closed societies, and we're promoting just that with our global guides project "Your Human Rights." I hope you enjoy reading about that new project in this report.

It is with deep appreciation that I report to you about this work, because you, our supporters, have made it all possible. Thank you.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thor Halvorssen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thor Halvorssen
President and CEO
Human Rights Foundation

Letter from the Chairman

2015 was a year of great sorrows and great joys. The murder of my friend and colleague Boris Nemtsov was a harder blow than I could allow myself to imagine. Boris was a giant in body and soul and both Russia and I will miss him until the end of our days. It was also a year of new life: The birth of my son Nickolas and of my book, *Winter is Coming*. I said in 2005 that I wanted my elder son, now 19, to grow up in a free Russia, and it is painful to have that same wish for Nickolas.



The signs are not good at the moment. There is increasing global trauma, and it seems that it will get worse before the world wakes up to reverse the trend. My most hopeful wishes at the end of 2015 went mostly unrealized, while my darker fears have come to pass in too many cases. As always, we must keep in our thoughts the innocent victims of dictatorship and terror and the few brave dissidents and leaders who take so many risks in the struggle for freedom. The lives lost and the new lives born in 2015 must remind us of the value of human life — and why we must fight to defend it against those who do not value it at all.

While we are wondering what 2016 will bring, let us also imagine what the people of 2050 will think of us. Did we do everything we could to expand human freedom? To increase human knowledge and joy? To spread the opportunity to succeed that most of us enjoy? It is not enough to want these things; we must make the decision to achieve them. Let us face this challenge and find new ways to improve ourselves, and improve the world.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garry Kasparov', with a long, sweeping underline.

Garry Kasparov
Chairman
Human Rights Foundation



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Global Guides for Your Human Rights

In places where information is suppressed and censored, educational materials that provide a clear understanding of fundamental human rights are essential in the struggle for freedom and basic human dignity.

In 2015 HRF launched global guides for “Your Human Rights,” a series of blueprints for freedom adapted to be manually and digitally shared among dissidents in closed societies. HRF is partnering with international law experts and individual rights advocates throughout the globe to create a series of attractive, accurate, and accessible educational guides that explain and clarify the subject of human rights and basic human dignity. What are fundamental human rights? What do these rights mean? Through this effort, HRF will provide individuals in some of the world’s most repressive countries a useful and powerful tool to both inspire and inform.

The first “Your Human Rights” guide was originally written in Spanish for the people of Cuba. With the success of “Your Human Rights” in Cuba—



where ten thousand hard and digital copies are circulating—HRF is now expanding to other countries around the world.

Each guide is compact, engaging, and visually appealing. Because these guides are tailored to each country and culture, every section



relates basic freedoms to examples of pertinent human rights violations in each particular country and culture. Once completed, the guides will be distributed through local networks and uploaded for public access at hrf.org. Our goal is to have the first set of guides tailor-made, finalized, and in the field by 2016.

Technology and Liberty



One of HRF's goals is to leverage the tech community in the global effort for human rights and free expression. Much as scientists played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union, technologists can play a key role in the erosion of power of authoritarian regimes today. We know that once tyrants lose their control over information, they begin to lose their grip on power.

In 2014 HRF organized the world's first ever *hackathon* for North Korea

in California with the goal of sending information into closed societies. As a result, in 2015, partnerships have multiplied between Silicon Valley companies and human rights groups in HRF's network. HRF also organized the world's first tech lab for dissidents at the 2015 Oslo Freedom Forum. Over the last two years, HRF has worked with AnchorFree, Google Ideas, Silent Circle, Twitter, Wickr, Wikimedia, Yahoo! and YouTube, in order to identify ways in which to support dissidents at risk. In 2015

HRF worked with Google's *Jigsaw project* to explore censorship and free expression, getting the work of brave activists in front of technologists around the world.

HRF also presented this work at Europe's largest technology conference, DLD, and at the European Parliament, the U.S. Congress, MIT, Stanford, and the United Nations.

Putting Dictatorship in Pop Culture

By challenging celebrities who perform for dictators, HRF can better expose their crimes and raise the social and professional cost for pop stars that choose to fête tyrants. HRF reaches an audience who might not otherwise be aware of these countries or human rights issues. In 2015, HRF's advocacy encouraged millions of people to read, post, comment, share, and engage with stories about human rights.

In July 2015, HRF drew major global attention to human rights violations and corruption in the rarely-discussed Central African country of Gabon, by challenging a recent PR trip by Argentine football star Lionel Messi. The world-famous athlete was invited by the dictator Ali Bongo, whose family has ruled Gabon since 1967. For decades, the Bongos have treated Gabon like their personal property, systematically looting the country's vast natural resources, oil wealth, and rainforests. By visiting the country and joining the government's propaganda machine, Messi—who is a UNICEF ambassador for children's rights—helped whitewash a tyrant who, among other things, has failed to investigate the disturbing ritual murders of children.

By drawing attention to Messi's visit, HRF sparked a global conversation

on the little known crimes of the Gabonese dictatorship, educating millions of people through popular culture and mainstream media in more than a dozen languages, including ESPN. Only two weeks later, Messi donated \$500,000 to UNICEF. In this case, HRF's work set back the Bongo family's expensive efforts to whitewash and cover up their crimes. The regime attacked HRF publicly, but Gabonese civil society groups wrote to us privately to express their "great hope" in HRF's advocacy.

In December 2015, an Angolan journalist wrote to HRF to inform that his government planned to pay Nicki Minaj to come to Angola to perform for them. He had seen HRF's advocacy on this topic before, and requested our help. HRF wrote Minaj a public letter the week before the event, urging her not to accept a paycheck from one of the world's most corrupt governments.

Ultimately, Minaj took a \$2,000,000 paycheck and performed the concert, but as a result of the worldwide scrutiny brought about by HRF's campaign, the Angolan regime felt the global attention and released 15 activists from jail into house arrest.

HRF made Angola's kleptocracy and human rights abuses world news everywhere from...

- [The New York Times](#)
- [BBC](#)
- [NBC](#)
- [CNN](#)
- [Foreign Policy](#)
- [TIME](#)
- [Der Spiegel](#)
- [Le Monde](#)
- [El Pais](#)
- [The Sunday Times](#)
- [The Guardian](#)
- [The Washington Post](#)

...to online outlets like...

- [Mashable](#)
- [BuzzFeed](#)
- [Drudge Report](#)

...to niche publications like...

- [Marie Claire](#)
- [Elle](#)
- [MTV](#)
- [Jezebel](#)
- [BET](#)
- [The Hollywood Reporter](#)

HRF is never one to let a human-rights-atrocity spotlight pass. Unlike a lot of humanitarian outfits that incessantly court celebrity to represent their causes, HRF regularly and publicly lights celebrities up for performing for dictators, raising holy media hell when, say, Mariah Carey or Jennifer Lopez tries to go nonchalantly collect a seven-figure payday for a private concert. Not only can HRF instantly undo years' worth of image-polishing that dictatorships often pay Western lobbying firms to do on their behalf. But instead of expecting people to read dreary white papers on human rights abuses, those very same abuses will now be splashed on Access Hollywood, while Howard Stern does 20 minutes of material on Turkmenistan, which he previously couldn't locate on a map. (Stern impersonating J. Lo: "I want to say everybody raise your glasses, let's hear it for concentration camps! Now I'd like to sing 'Jenny from the Block.'")

—WEEKLY STANDARD



Worldwide Advocacy

Over the second half of 2015, HRF experienced a five-fold increase in its institutional communications. New policies implemented at the executive level allowed HRF to go from 13 total communications covering a handful of countries between January 1 and June 30, to a total of over 60 communications between July 1 and December 31, covering four times as many countries.

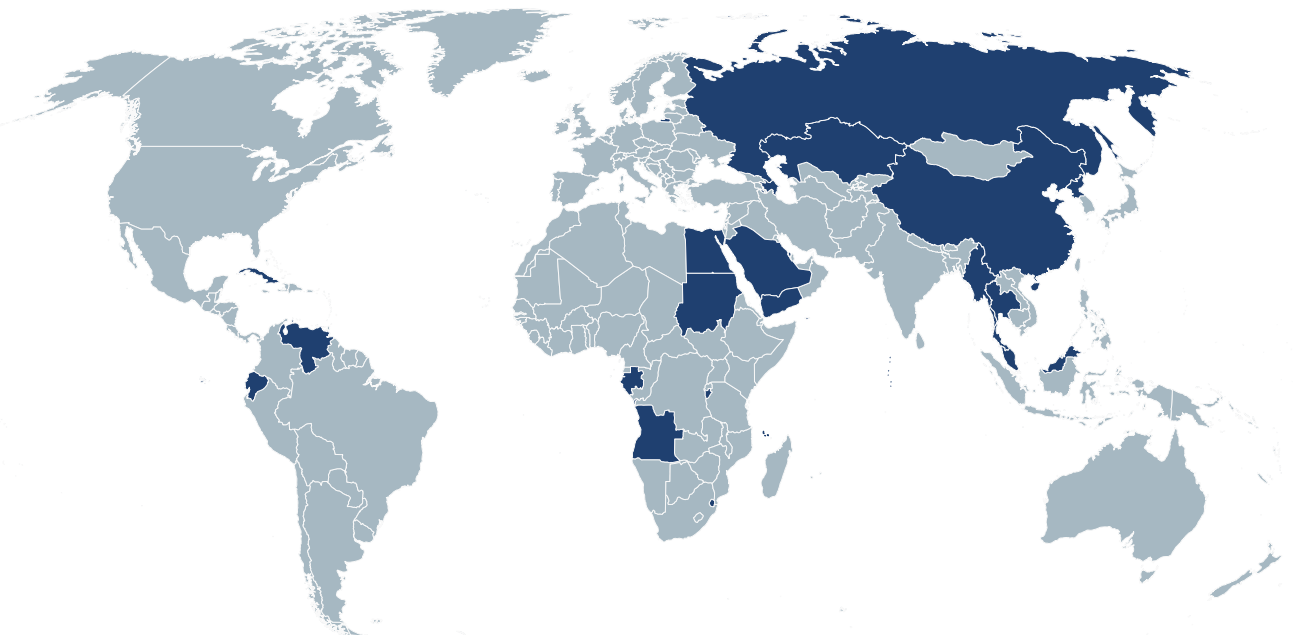
Also in 2015, HRF expanded its ability to perform meaningful advocacy work in most corners of the globe by adding staff with new language capacities. HRF now operates in Arabic, Cantonese, English, French, Korean, Mandarin, Norwegian, Russian, and Spanish.

On July 22, 2015, the third anniversary of the death of Oswaldo Payá, HRF published a [legal report](#) highlighting the inconsistencies of the official government investigation following his death in 2012. Payá was the most prominent Latin American pro-democracy activist of the last 25 years, and was killed under suspicion of foul play in Cuba, the Western Hemisphere's only military dictatorship.

HRF documented numerous due process violations, including damning witness accounts, a grossly inadequate autopsy examination, and other key pieces of evidence that were overlooked by Cuba's totalitarian judicial system. HRF's report concluded that the "evidence, which

was deliberately ignored, strongly suggests that the events of July 22, 2012, were not an accident, but instead the result of a car crash directly caused by agents of the state."

HRF presented this report during a public event in July 2015 at Georgetown University, triggering a wave of media coverage everywhere from the *Washington Post* to *Foreign Policy* to *El Nuevo Herald*. HRF is determined to help the Payá family find truth and justice by raising awareness about his death internationally and exerting pressure on the Cuban government to allow for an independent international investigation.



Speaking Freely

Chief Legal Officer Javier El-Hage speaking at UN Watch's Geneva Summit



In 2015, HRF made significant progress on its “Speaking Freely” project. A legal research initiative made possible by the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation, HRF’s “Speaking Freely” project analyzes international law and legal systems around the world, with the aim of promoting the highest possible protection of freedom of expression.

Based on preliminary findings from the project’s research, HRF issued

more than 25 public statements relating to 10 different countries from five world regions. HRF’s advocacy communications defended individuals from around the world that were facing similar “incitement” and “criminal defamation” charges being imposed by authoritarian governments to criminalize speech that would be perfectly legitimate in a democratic country. Despite the differences among the legal systems in authoritarian countries, the charges

were strikingly similar in that they were defined vaguely and applied in an overly broad manner to criminalize basic expressions of dissent. HRF’s releases garnered considerable international media coverage and helped increase HRF’s general communications output and social media follow-up.

Oslo Freedom Forum

The Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) brings together dissidents, business leaders, technologists, journalists, policymakers, and philanthropists from around the world to discuss how best to promote human rights and open societies worldwide.

Described by the *Financial Times* as the “Davos for Dissidents,” the 2015 OFF brought together 400 delegates from more than 35 countries. OFF videos have attracted more than 2.2 million global views—this year, the conference generated 18,000 social media posts that reached more than 225 million people in 100 countries.

Programming included talks from Charlie Hebdo’s Zineb el-Rhazoui, Twitter vice president Colin Crowell, former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko, Venezuelan cartoonist Rayma Suprani, Malaysian opposition leader Nurul Izzah Anwar, Stanford political scientist Larry Diamond, pioneering lawyer Kimberley Motley, and Afghan media entrepreneur Saad Mohseni.

According to Foreign Policy, “OFF is perhaps the world’s highest profile human rights conference.” *The New York Times* calls OFF the place “where the world’s dissidents have their say,” and discusses how the conference goes beyond networking by providing attendees with



“broader exposure” and connecting them with “prominent financiers and technologists.” A profile in National Review called OFF the “best conference in the world” and stated that: “Some enterprises are so startlingly effective they need to be celebrated while they are in their prime. Such is the case with the Oslo Freedom Forum, an annual showcasing of human-rights activists from all over the world. They may spend the rest of the year in exile or shunted to the margins of their societies or, in some cases, in prison or on the run. But in Oslo they are celebrated, and they can network and swap ideas. Things also get done.”

In 2015, HRF launched the inaugural Tech Lab at OFF, where eight

companies taught dissidents and journalists how to encrypt their communications, circumvent state censorship, and access the internet where signals are weak. HRF also placed a special focus on supporting individual speakers beyond the conference in their advocacy work. For example, the North Korean defector Ji Seong-ho received more than \$35,000 in post-conference grants to increase his organization’s ability to send radio broadcasts into North Korea, while Gabonese environmentalist Marc Ona Essangui received \$10,000 to assist HRF with a human rights guide to be distributed in activist circles in his country.



HRF's annual Oslo Freedom Forum has become its signature, now widely recognized as a can't-miss event for human-rights beat reporters, who've come to shorthand it 'Davos for Dissidents'... Thor and his crew host lesser-known Solzhenitsyns from the world over, assuming they're not currently in hiding or imprisoned. In Oslo, dissidents are given the stage and the 'rocket fuel' of moral support and connections to people who can help their causes. (Wikipedia's Jimmy Wales, after introductions made through HRF, has fixed up North Korean defector groups with full sets of Korean-language Wikipedia USBs to smuggle into the Fatherland.) Held at Oslo's Grand Hotel—the very same hotel where the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded—the Oslo Freedom Forum awards dissidents the Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent. The award is a bit like a harder-earned Nobel."

—MATT LABASH



Educating Students on Human Rights

HRF has hosted successful College Freedom Forums at [Tufts University](#), the [University of Colorado at Boulder](#), and in 2015, at [Yale University](#) and [Stanford University](#). In each case, hundreds of students have the opportunity to hear directly from the activists. The CFF experience gives people firsthand knowledge of the struggle for democracy and allows them to connect with inspiring change-makers. One Yale attendee said that the CFF would “encourage Yale students to focus more of their time on campus to issues of human rights abuses... We need to maintain that momentum in order to progress into making concrete changes in educational policy and the world.” We aim to expand this program considerably in 2016. If you’d like to help us host a College Freedom Forum at a university near you, please let us know and we can start planning today.

HRF also engages students through our Oslo Scholar and Kistefos Scholar programs. Through the Oslo Scholar program, university students connect with Oslo Freedom Forum speakers who mentor them during a three-month summer project. Since 2010 students from Tufts University, McGill University, and the London School of Economics have worked in



India, London, Pakistan, Peru, Serbia, South Korea, Toronto, and Washington. The scholars assist with projects ranging from the Tibetan government-in-exile, to a Palestinian women’s rights organization, to a group challenging corruption in Equatorial Guinea. Through the Kistefos

Scholar program, the Norwegian investment firm Kistefos sponsors the participation of five Norwegian students to attend the Oslo Freedom Forum with the goal of ensuring that Norway’s future leaders learn more about and become involved with human rights at a young age.

Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent



The 2015 Havel Prize laureates are the Sudanese nonviolent resistance movement Girifna, Indonesian stand-up comedian Sakdiyah Ma'ruf, and Cuban graffiti artist Danilo Maldonado "El Sexto." They were honored in a ceremony during the 2015 [Oslo Freedom Forum](#), and received a monetary award and an artist's representation of the "Goddess of Democracy," the iconic statue erected by Chinese students during the

Tiananmen Square protests of June 1989. Each sculpture embodies both the spirit and the reality of creative dissent, representing the power of truth and beauty against the brute force of dictatorship. The laureates share a prize of 350,000 Norwegian kroner.

HRF founded the Havel Prize with the endorsement of Dagmar Havlová, widow of the late poet, play-

wright, and statesman Václav Havel, who served as HRF chairman. The prize celebrates those who, with bravery and ingenuity, unmask the lie of dictatorship by living in truth. Past laureates include Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, Russian punk protest group Pussy Riot, Saudi women's rights advocate Manal al-Sharif, and Burmese Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Disrupt North Korea

This year HRF visited Seoul three times and continued advising and supporting the defector and refugee groups on the front lines of North Korea's information revolution. The individuals HRF meet are challenging the world's most oppressive government and need all the help they can get. The Kim tyranny uses gulags, public executions, pervasive spying, and guilt-by-association punishment to instill fear among its citizenry. Top regime officials live in luxury, while the average North Korean citizen struggles on a daily basis to obtain enough food to survive. Due to the gravity of the situation in North Korea, we aim to provide ample training and new resources to North Korean defectors.

HRF chairman Garry Kasparov, Serbian nonviolent revolutionary Srdja Popovic, and Jimmy Wales Foundation CEO Orit Kopel joined HRF on a September trip to share their experiences with defectors and make a public statement to South Korea about the importance of human rights in North Korea. In October, HRF launched the [Global Coalition for the North Korean Human Rights Act](#) to promote a piece of legislation that has been trapped in South Korea's parliament for a decade. HRF held a press conference in Seoul for the launch, published an [op-ed](#)



Press Conference to support passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act in Seoul

[about the Global Coalition](#) in the *Wall Street Journal*, and triggered a new wave of conversation about the legislation inside South Korea.

This followed a year of sustained advocacy where HRF's efforts to disrupt Kim Jong-un's censorship regime were featured on the front cover of three magazines, and documented in short films from [VICE](#) and [BBC](#). *WIRED UK* devoted its [April cover story](#) to HRF's North Korea project, calling it "an initiative that unites activists in Korea with technologists and campaigners in the West." Meanwhile, the U.S. version of *WIRED* featured a cover story that mentions how HRF have helped defector groups talk "to Silicon Valley types about building new tools—everything from a small concealable

satellite dish to stenographic video games that hide illegal data."

HRF has driven this conversation through talks at various universities and fireside chats, press events, and closed-door brainstorms everywhere from New York City to Oslo to San Francisco to Seoul. In 2015, HRF raised nearly \$100,000 through online crowdfunding to support North Korean defector groups who send information into their closed-off homeland by radio, balloon, and flash drives.

As the U.S. policy and academic communities shift toward doing business with the Kim family—at the expense of acknowledging human rights—HRF's work is vital.



This month we've travelled to the North-South Korean border to show how technology is being used to bring outside views into a closed nation. As Michael Hodges reports, it's mostly analogue tech at the moment—propaganda-packed hydrogen-filled balloons



that activists are flying over the border to the North, from where many of them escaped appallingly brutal treatment. As well as leaflets and dollar bills, the balloon packages contain USB sticks filled with western media—including, in one upcoming blitz, a planned 10,000 copies of Sony Pictures' anti-Kim-Jong-un satire *The Interview*. Will the airdrops bring down a corrupt regime? Hardly. But if they can spread plural ideas among those receiving the packages, and remind North Korean citizens that they are not alone, then who knows how far they can empower change. Who says tech isn't an enabler of progress?"

—WIRED

Promoting Democracy in Russia

In November [HRF received](#) the Sergei Magnitsky Award for “Outstanding Human Rights Activism” in Westminster. Magnitsky was a Moscow lawyer who was tortured to death in one of Vladimir Putin’s prisons after uncovering and exposing epic corruption inside Russia’s tax authority. The Magnitsky Award was given to HRF in recognition of the organization’s “extraordinary steps to combat corruption and to promote democracy and human rights.” It was a privilege to receive this inaugural award, which affirmed that HRF’s work is making a difference.

In August HRF launched a new project called Real Russia Today. Russia’s government uses state-funded media channels, Western PR companies, hired bloggers, and social media trolls to distort facts, deflect criticism, and mislead both the global community and people living in Russia. To counter the steady stream of propaganda generated by Kremlin channels, Real Russia Today features news pieces, opinion articles, and non-traditional news sources that document the actual human rights situation in Russia. In 2015 alone,



Russian security forces arrest Garry Kasparov in Moscow outside of a hearing for the members of Pussy Riot

HRF sent out 90 of these reports, which are being read by hundreds of experts and policymakers. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter, please contact katia@hrf.org.

This daily digest is the first of many that will keep readers up to date on the most important human rights news in today’s world, where coverage about economics and stability often overshadows individual free-

dom. HRF’s efforts in Russia in 2015 were buttressed by the publication of our chairman Garry Kasparov’s latest book: *Winter is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped*. In the fall of 2015, Kasparov took these issues to college campuses and media outlets across the U.S. on an extensive book tour.

Supporting Free Expression in Cuba

Danilo Maldonado Machado, best known as El Sexto, is a Cuban artist who spent 10 months behind bars for painting two pigs with Fidel and Raul Castro’s names, and attempting to release them in a central Havana park as part of a performance piece called “Rebelión en la Granja”—the Spanish title of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.

In May 2015, while he was still arbitrarily held in prison, HRF awarded El Sexto with the Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent for his bravery and ingenuity in exposing the Cuban dictatorship. El Sexto joined other Havel Prize laureates like Ai Weiwei, Manal al-Sharif, and Aung San Suu Kyi. In October, HRF was invited to take part in a television special on the case of El Sexto, which was aired later that month.

Because of a wave of international pressure led by HRF, El Sexto was finally released by Cuba’s regime in late October. He attributed his release to the international exposure that he received after HRF awarded him the prize.

In December, El Sexto visited HRF’s office, met with HRF’s chairman Garry Kasparov, and created a new work of art dedicated to those who helped secure his freedom.



Media Impact



HRF chairman Garry Kasparov on [Al Jazeera](#) discussing the 2015 Oslo Freedom Forum. Garry is a frequent guest on international television programs on topics ranging from Russia to Syria to Venezuela and is able to promote HRF's work effectively to millions of people on a regular basis.



HRF president Thor Halvorsen on [ABC News's This Week](#) discussing our efforts to assist civil society groups smuggling media, culture, and knowledge into dictatorships. Thor makes regular appearances in print and video formats across the globe and is often featured as a voice to support individual rights where they are most at risk.



Left: HRF's work to bring information into closed societies featured on the April 2015 cover of [WIRED](#) magazine. This particular story reached hundreds of thousands of people in print, and millions online.

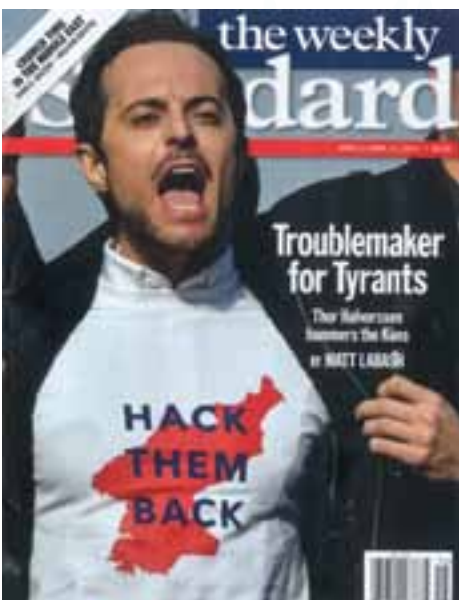
Right: Norway's [Aftenposten](#) newspaper profiles the Oslo Freedom Forum. HRF's work is regularly covered in Norway and in broader Europe in large part thanks to our deep networks and regional events.



In January 2015 *VICE News* sent journalist Michael Moynihan and a camera crew to Seoul with HRF to document the work of North Korean defector groups. The result was a 24 minute documentary looking at how outside media is opening North Korea, and how the regime’s supporters are trying to fight back.



HRF chief legal officer Javier El-Hage on *MSNBC's The Rundown with Jose Diaz-Balart* talking about human rights violations in Cuba. HRF’s legal team makes ongoing appearances on television and in print media in various languages to highlight their global casework.



Left: HRF’s work is featured on the cover of *The Weekly Standard*. In this wide-ranging profile, writer Matt Labash explores HRF’s founding, history, and personal story of CEO Thor Halvorssen.

Right: Leading French newspaper *Le Monde* profiles HRF’s work to challenge celebrities who perform for tyrants. In this case, the focus is Nicki Minaj and her paid performance in December 2015 for the dictator of Angola.

Staff Biographies

Celine Assaf Boustani

International Legal Associate

Celine joined HRF's Center for Law and Democracy in 2014 to focus on the protection of freedom of expression in Arabic and French-speaking countries around the world. Her legal and advocacy work cover the Middle East and Africa. She has since co-authored a legal report on the case of Waleed Abu al-Khair in Saudi Arabia. She completed a master's in international law at Columbia Law School, and she also holds a master's in French Law from Pantheon-Assas Paris II, France. Celine was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, where she earned her Bachelor of Laws from Saint-Joseph University.

Andrea Austin

Director of Programs

Andrea has a broad background in strategic planning and program development, and currently coordinates programs for HRF. Previously, she oversaw communications and public affairs for United Nations Foundation's Girl Up campaign. Andrea has also managed advocacy and communications work for various anti-trafficking organizations, including Polaris and Shared Hope International. She has a Master of Arts in international human rights law from the United Nations-mandated University for Peace, and a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Virginia.

Javier El-Hage

Chief Legal Officer

Javier's research topics and areas of expertise include International Human Rights Law, International Criminal Law, International Democracy Law, Comparative Constitutional Law, and International Investment Law & Arbitration. He holds Masters degrees in International Law from Columbia University School of Law,

and the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. He is an attorney admitted to practice in the State of New York. From 2006-2008, El-Hage was constitutional law professor at the Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz-Bolivia, during which period he was invited by the Bolivian Constituent Assembly to provide expert testimony on international investment law and international human rights law. Upon conclusion of his LLM at Columbia Law School ('09), El-Hage has taught legal courses and seminars as adjunct faculty at the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar (based in Ecuador) and the Universidad Francisco Marroquín (in Guatemala).

Ellen Eoff

Development Specialist

Ellen comes to HRF with more than six years experience as a development professional with an expertise in donor relations. Ellen received her bachelor of social work degree from Baylor University and her master of social work with a concentration in administrative leadership and a portfolio in nonprofit studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Before joining HRF, Ellen managed development and communications activities for One Heart World-Wide and worked in leadership gifts at the California Academy of Sciences. Ellen is actively involved in the Association of Fundraising Professionals and enjoys co-chairing her chapter's Mentor Program.

Sandra Germaine

Executive Assistant to the President

Sandra joins HRF with 10 years of experience in business administration across various industries. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Philosophy as well as an MBA from Loyola Marymount University.

Alex Gladstein

Chief Strategy Officer

Alex heads HRF's strategic efforts in marketing and development. He has served as Vice President of Strategy for the Oslo Freedom Forum since its inception in 2009. His writing and views on dissidents and dictators have appeared in *TIME*, NPR, *The Atlantic*, BBC News, CNN, *The Guardian*, *Fast Company*, ABC, *Foreign Policy*, *Wired*, *The Daily Beast*, NBC, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He has spoken about HRF's work at Stanford, MIT, the School of Visual Arts, and at the European Parliament. Before joining HRF, he served as a foreign policy advisor in the British Parliament. Alex is a magna cum laude graduate of Tufts University where he majored in international relations and Middle Eastern studies. He currently lives in San Francisco.

Roberto González

International Legal Associate

Roberto graduated with honors from Rafael Landívar University in Guatemala, where he earned a Bachelor of Laws. In 2010, he was awarded first place on a human rights moot court competition. The following year, he joined the Washington College of Law's Program of Advanced Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. As part of HRF's Center for Law and Democracy, Roberto's research focuses on comparative constitutional law and international law. He is a candidate for a master's degree in International Law and Justice at Fordham University School of Law.

Noemi Gonzalo-Bilbao

Communications Specialist

Noemi Gonzalo-Bilbao graduated from the University of Navarra in Spain with bachelor's degrees in Journalism and Audiovisual Communications. She received her masters in Protocol Law

from Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Madrid and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to undertake a masters degree in International Affairs with the New School University in New York, NY. Before joining HRF, Noemi worked for the Delegation of the Basque Country in the US, the United Nations, and the Latino Commission on AIDS. She has written numerous articles for different media outlets, including *El Nuevo Herald*, *El Correo*, and *Deia*.

Thor Halvorsen

President & CEO

Thor is a Venezuelan-born human rights advocate and film producer. Described by *The New York Times* as “a champion of the underdog and the powerless,” he began advocating for human rights as an adolescent in London by organizing opposition to South African apartheid. He became involved full-time in the promotion of due process and individual rights after his father became a political prisoner in Venezuela. He founded HRF after his mother was shot during a political protest in Venezuela in 2004. He is the Patron of the Prague-based Children’s Peace Movement, On Own Feet.

Jamie Hancock

Senior Coordinator, Oslo Freedom Forum

Jamie joined HRF after completing her master’s in international politics and business at New York University, where her thesis focused on the erosion of press freedom in Latin America. She served as media relations coordinator at HRF for three years before managing the Oslo Freedom Forum, HRF’s annual flagship conference. Jamie also holds a bachelor’s degree with a double major in international political economy and Spanish language and literature from the University of California at Berkeley.

Katia Krasavina

Program Officer and Speaker Coordinator

Katia Krasavina is a Russian democracy

activist. In 2005, she moved from St. Petersburg to New York and pursued a dual degree in political science and psychology. She joined HRF in 2013 after graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Brooklyn College.

John Lechner

Program and Technology Officer

John is a graduate of Syracuse University, where he studied international affairs and economics. Born in Stavanger, Norway, John spent his formative years overseas but hails from Houston, Texas. He held two summer internships with HRF before beginning a full-time position in the summer of 2013. In addition to his duties as a program officer, John manages HRF’s IT architecture and infrastructure.

Alexandra Prow

Program Associate

Alexandra is a Program Associate at HRF, focusing primarily on the annual Oslo Freedom Forum. She joined HRF in the fall of 2014 as a recent graduate of Vassar College, where she graduated with honors in music. She speaks Spanish and Arabic, and received the Ann Cornelisen Fellowship in 2014 to study at Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco. Alexandra’s research background centers on the role of arts in international policy and protest movements, particularly in Latin America and the Middle East.

Centa Rek

International Legal Associate

Centa is a Bolivian attorney and cum laude graduate from Santa Cruz Private University, where she earned Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws degrees. She worked for seven years as legal counsel in the oil and gas industry before moving to New York in 2011. Centa joined HRF’s legal department in 2012 and has since co-authored several international human rights law reports, petitions, and amici curiae, including Media Crackdown in Kazakhstan, The Case of Miguel Ángel Hernández Souquett, The Case of María

Lourdes Afiuni Mora, and The State of Independence of the Judiciary in Venezuela.

Jim Warnock

Director of Outreach

Jim Warnock grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and after graduating from the Woodrow Wilson School of Politics at UVA, has spent years in various capacities. Working for varied companies like *The Financial Times*, Zegna, and the History Channel, he has worked in leadership positions in sales, TV and film production, and marketing. As Director of Outreach for HRF he has brought his experience in sales and team building, and he is completely inspired and humbled by the opportunity to work with such a dedicated, dynamic group.

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Financial Report

HRF is committed to using donations responsibly. We spend 93 cents out of every donated dollar on our programs to promote and protect human rights in closed societies.



Total income: \$3,626,687.80

- Foundation donations: \$1,984,032.00 (55%)
- Individual donations: \$1,012,787.52 (28%)
- Norwegian donations: \$613,384.24 (17%)
- Corporate support: \$16,484.04 (1%)



Total expenses:

- Program: \$3,355,148.30 (93%)
- Development: \$122,442.95 (3%)
- Administration: \$139,150.83 (4%)



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