



HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION



2016 MEDIA

NEW THIS MORNING

NAS 4085.70

MARIAH PERFORMS FOR DICTATOR
EARNS A MILLION FOR PERFORMANCE



goodmorningsamerica.com

HRF Advocacy

ABC and Al Jazeera 1

VICE and MSNBC 2

CNN and CNN: Amanpour 3

CNN 4

The Weekly Standard 5

NPR 6

Oslo Freedom Forum

The New York Times 7

BBC Newsnight 8

Tablet 9

Tech Crunch 10

Financial Times 11

The Economist 12

The Wall Street Journal 13

The Daily Beast 14

Putting Dictatorship in Pop Culture

The New York Times15

The Atlantic16

The Guardian.....17

Good Morning America and ESPN18

Tech and Human Rights

WIRED19

Business Insider.....20

The Verge21

CNN: Fareed Zakaria GPS.....22

Challenging the Supporters of Tyranny

The Wall Street Journal.....23

Foreign Policy24

Global Impact

Chosun and Verdens Gang (VG).....25

El País and Le Monde.....26

Social Media

Tweets and Facebook posts27

HRF Advocacy



HRF president Thor Halvorssen on ABC News's This Week discussing our efforts to assist civil society groups smuggling media, culture, and knowledge into North Korea



HRF chairman Garry Kasparov on Al Jazeera discussing the 2015 Oslo Freedom Forum

HRF Advocacy



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, the 24-minute documentary “Propaganda over Pyongyang,” is a unique look at how knowledge and culture are opening North Korea, and how the regime and its supporters are trying to fight back.



HRF chief legal officer Javier El-Hage on MSNBC’s “The Rundown with Jose Diaz-Balart” after the Cuban government released political prisoner and graffiti artist Danilo “El Sexto” Maldonado, one of the 2015 Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent laureates

HRF Advocacy



CNN featured HRF's Flash Drives for Freedom project, a campaign that works with the tech community to collect flash drives from around the world and donate them to North Korean refugee organizations. The drives will be loaded with valuable information about the outside world and then sent into North Korea.



HRF president Thor Halvorssen with Bahraini blogger Ali Abdulemam on CNN's "Amanpour" after Abdulemam's public appearance at the 2013 Oslo Freedom Forum where he discussed his more than two years in hiding from the Bahraini regime



Drones drop films, information into N. Korea, activists say

By Madison Park | May 26, 2016

No Chain and the Human Rights Foundation have quietly delivered more than 1,000 SD cards and flash drives to the communist country via hexacopter drones, they said. The groups declined to reveal from what countries the drones are launched -- and how those countries respective governments might feel about it -- and where the dropoffs are, citing security reasons.



The groups chose to send media because of its power to show outside life to North Koreans, said Human Rights Foundation President Thor Halvorssen.

"The regime is trying to stop soap operas, Hollywood films, and things like K-pop. For the reputation as a strong group of vicious tyrants, they're certainly quite fearful of something as simple as cartoons and TV programs. This challenges their iron grip of the North Korean people," he said.

...

"A USB flash drive costs a month's wage for a North Korean worker, but despite high costs, the North Korean people desire outside info," said Jung.

"In that dark land, there are still people hungry for info."

Related Video: Balloons vs. North Korea
01:51

Human Rights Foundation funded the efforts, Halvorssen said.

After months of testing in secrecy, they decided to make their activities public in order to "encourage other civil society organizations to take advantage of new technologies."

"With more and more other actors, it could have a big impact in increasing quantity of info getting in," Halvorssen said.

The drones can follow a specified route and drop off their payloads in a specific area. Halvorssen said they're able to load several pounds of SD cards and flash drives on one drone.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/25/asia/north-korea-drones/>



Troublemaker for Tyrants

Thor Halvorssen hammers the Kims

By Matt Labash | April 6, 2015

From the moment his dead-of-night emails, texts, and encrypted Wickr messages start flooding my inboxes like a storm surge, it's clear that Thor Halvorssen, who keeps vampire hours, is not your average clock-punching do-goodnik.

The 39-year-old Halvorssen is president of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation (HRF), which he launched in 2005. Half-Norwegian, half-Venezuelan (born and raised in Caracas, he speaks accentless American English), he descends from assorted swashbucklers and heads of state. His paternal grandfather Øystein, who was the Norwegian king's consul in Venezuela during World War II, diverted all of Norway's merchant fleet to Venezuelan ports when the Germans invaded his homeland, then had a fistfight with a couple Nazis when they stopped by to object. His mother is descended from the first president of Venezuela, Cristóbal Mendoza, as well as from Simón "The Liberator" Bolívar, the statesman/military leader who helped win Latin America's independence from Spain. For Thor, as for his forebears, human rights and individual liberty are not something that should be on the table in any discussion, they are the table upon which all other discussions rest.

His knowledge of the subject is not theoretical. After exposing government corruption while working as Venezuela's drug czar, his father was tortured in a Caracas prison. His mother was shot in an anti-Hugo Chávez demonstration. His first cousin Leopoldo López—a perpetual challenger of the Chavista regime that failed to die with its namesake—is currently gutting it out as a political prisoner in a Venezuelan jail. But unlike many in the human-rights racket, Thor spends no time playing the stereotypical activist sad-sack. He doesn't emit sour world-weariness, or cluck over the evils of American hegemony, or adopt the default gloomy-Gus disposition of one who loves humanity and hates people.

"I love people!" Thor says, as he says most things: emphatically. Those he loves most are dissidents and defectors, freedom's troublemakers who blow spitballs at authoritarians while standing up against tyranny. Thor had Václav Havel serve as HRF's chairman until he died in 2011, only to replace him with Garry Kasparov, the Russian chess grandmaster and political activist/Vladimir Putin scourge. It's not a ceremonial title, either. By 2012, Kasparov was carried off and repeatedly punched by Russian police while protesting the guilty verdict of Pussy Riot, the Moscow punk band sentenced to two years in prison for the crime of singing an anti-Putin song.

Thor himself has been beaten black-and-blue for the cause. In 2010, he and a cameraman traveled to Ho Chi Minh City to interview the patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, Thich Quang Do, whose church had been banned, and who'd spent 28 years under house arrest. After Thor snuck into his monastery, they taped an interview. On the way out, Vietnamese authorities decided to use Thor as a heavy bag. He was arrested and detained until convincing police he was a Buddhist seeker. (He's actually a lapsed Catholic.) His cameraman snuck out a side door with the video card hidden in his rectum. "Someone else had to download that one," Thor grimaces. HRF's unofficial motto, it seems, is don't just talk about human rights, roll up your sleeves and get dirty.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/troublemaker-for-tyrants/article/899824>





After Two Years In Hiding, A Bahraini Blogger Escapes

By Andy Carvin | May 15, 2013

OSLO (Reuters) - A Bahraini blogger and human rights activist said he had been granted asylum in Britain after being in hiding for two years.

A leading voice among protesters during anti-government demonstrations in 2011, Ali Abdulemam hid to escape a government crackdown and was smuggled out by fishermen. A military court tried and sentenced him in absentia to 15 years in prison.

"I have not seen my daughters since they were six-months-old. It is hard to know that your daughters know you only from a picture," said Abdulemam, a 35-year-old former engineer with Gulf Air and author of the pro-democracy Bahrain Online blog.



"I feel pain because I am not in my homeland. I did not choose this. I did not want this," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the Oslo Freedom Forum rights conference on Monday.

Sources close to Abdulemam said he was smuggled to Saudi Arabia inside a car with a secret compartment. From there, he traveled to Kuwait, where fishermen smuggled him into Iraq, from where he flew to London. Abdulemam, making his first public appearance since disappearing from view two years ago, said he had been granted asylum in Britain. Britain's Home Office said it did not comment on individual asylum applications.

A Bahraini government statement released to CNN on Monday said Abdulemam had not been tried in court "for exercising his right to express his opinions".

"Rather he was tried for inciting and encouraging continuous violent attacks against police officers," the statement said, adding that his website had been used "to incite hatred, including the spreading of false and inflammatory rumors".

Abdulemam denies the government's charges, and says he is campaigning for democracy and civil rights. Bahrain, which hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet, is ruled by the Sunni al-Khalifa family which crushed Shi'ite-led pro-democracy demonstrations that began in February 2011.

At least 35 people were killed in the unrest, though the opposition says the number is higher. Lower-level unrest has since continued.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2013/05/15/184193663/after-two-years-in-hiding-a-bahraini-blogger-escapes>

The World's Dissidents Have Their Say

By Danny Hakim | October 25, 2014

OSLO — THE movie “Titanic” was more than just a doomed romance for Yeonmi Park.

Ms. Park, 21, said she was a young teen living in North Korea when she watched a bootleg copy of the blockbuster. The tale of love found and lost helped her begin to shake off the psychic grip the Kim dynasty had on her.

“It was fascinating to me that anyone would make a movie about such a shameful story,” she said during a speech last week at the sixth Oslo Freedom Forum, a gathering of activists and dissidents from around the world. “How could they release such a movie? I was so curious.”

...

For a conference dedicated to human rights, there was a lot to talk about this year. The Freedom Forum, which showcases and celebrates the stories of dissidents, had an abundance of offerings at a time when the world's problems seem to keep multiplying.

...

“Things are unquestionably getting worse, and that is not embellishment or melodrama,” said Thor Halvorssen, 39, the forum's founder, of the state of human rights. His group has helped smuggle activists out of repressive countries, provided many with broader exposure and connected others with prominent financiers and technologists. Nico Sell, the chief executive of Wickr, a communications app that promotes its privacy, helpfully handed out Faraday cages, which shield cellphones and other devices from digital snoops.

“People say the truth will win out,” Mr. Halvorssen said, but “it's hard for truth to win out when on the other side there is an enormous machinery of propaganda or of lawyers threatening defamation suits. Truth will win out, but it needs a little help.”

...

This much is clear from last week's gathering: There is no shortage of people committed to pushing human rights along. And they seemed to draw strength from one another.

“They are really optimistic,” Ms. Park said of her fellow travelers. “They have hope, and I have hope, too.”



Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/sunday-review/the-worlds-dissidents-have-their-say.html? r=0>

Oslo Freedom Forum



In a 6-minute video produced by the BBC for its flagship evening show Newsnight, OFF was profiled as a place where “pro-democracy activists share ideas and learn about agitating for positive change.”

Watch the video here: goo.gl/X6Z5WK

Tablet

A Dispatch From the Oslo Freedom Forum

Dissidents, activists, and journalists gathered in Norway during a difficult period for human rights around the world

By Armin Rosen | May 31, 2016



It's hard to imagine a place more orderly or rational than modern-day Oslo. The ship-buriers of days past now have the top spot on the UN's Human Development Index. So it's fitting, in a way, that the Human Rights Foundation's annual forum is held in a place that experienced such a hopeful and relatively brief march from barbarism to social tranquility.

At the same time, that trajectory can move in reverse, and on a far shorter time scale. The Foundation's yearly Oslo Freedom Forum, which took place last week, is an ideal chance to reflect on what happens when the fragile, and inevitably human-made trappings of a liberal society disappear—when things go radically in the opposite direction, and Viking-like cruelty and chaos return to the center of human affairs.

This year's forum included some well-known names: Nobel prize-winning author Wole Soyinka spoke about Boko Haram's ravages in his native Nigeria, and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales discussed the plight of Bassel Khartabil, a Syrian Wikipedia editor who disappeared into Bashar al-Assad's prison system in 2012. But the most affecting speeches at the two-day conference came from people whose names are less familiar. Abdelazaiz Alhamza, one of the founders of the Syrian anti-ISIS civil society group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently recalled the day in late 2013 when ISIS recruiters first arrived at his university. And Jung Guang-il, who was thrown into his country's gulag system despite serving in the North Korean military for 10 years, described seeing prisoners worked to death in timber forests and subjected to other, even less imaginable cruelties. He secretly crossed the border into China just 12 days after getting out of prison in 2003.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/203924/a-dispatch-from-the-oslo-freedom-forum>



Wickr Foundation invests in Whistler, an app dedicated to helping activists and citizen reporters

By Jonathan Sieber | May 23, 2016



Earlier today at the Oslo Freedom Forum, the Wickr Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to private communication and uncensored information, announced its first investment in a new secure communications and education app for human rights activists and citizen reporters called Whistler.

Around the world, thousands of citizen activists have turned to the Internet and social media as tools to expose oppression and organize non-violent resistance to incredibly violent regimes.

However, many of these tools leave their users exposed to potential acts of reprisal from the very powers they seek to challenge. Whistler aims to change that.

It's hard to imagine a place more orderly or rational than modern-day Oslo. The ship-buriers of days past now have the top spot on the UN's Human Development Index. So it's fitting, in a way, that the Human Rights Foundation's annual forum is held in a place that experienced such a hopeful and relatively brief march from barbarism to social tranquility.

It's the brain child of Srdja Popović, a Serbian dissident and political activist, and Nico Sell, the founder of the secure messaging service Wickr and the Wickr Foundation.

The two met at the Oslo Freedom Forum, a gathering devoted to increasing communication among human rights advocates and their supporters, and began discussing how to create secure tools for activists to use in crisis situations.

Read the rest of the article here: https://techcrunch.com/2016/05/23/wickr-foundation-invests-in-whistler-an-app-dedicated-to-helping-activists-and-citizen-reporters/?iframe=true&theme_preview=true



Fighting the crisis of liberalism, one suicide-bomber joke at a time

By Tom Burgis | May 29, 2015

There are drawbacks to being a satirist from a deeply authoritarian state. Exile is a frequent consequence. But it has its advantages.

“I’m really blessed as an Iranian comedian,” Kambiz Hosseini told the audience of democrats, dissidents and defectors who gathered this week in Norway for the annual Oslo Freedom Forum (or “Davos for dissidents”). “There’s no shortage of material for me.”

To get a laugh, he can simply show clips of the preposterous contradictions of the Islamic republic’s public pronouncements. Like the one where the Supreme Leader invited Iranians abroad to return home, only for a senior official to clarify that, while expatriates were indeed free to board a plane back to Tehran, those deemed unsavoury could expect to be arrested upon landing.

“I wasn’t a comedian,” says Hosseini. “They forced me to be one.” He records his weekly satirical news show Poletik in New York. People call him the Iranian Jon Stewart.

Such laughs are more blessed than ever in what Larry Diamond, a democracy expert at Stanford university, calls “a period of authoritarian resurgence”. Diamond argues that since 2006, the 30-year advance of democracy since the end of the Cold War has gone into reverse – or at least stalled. The blowback to the Arab spring is just one of the more recent episodes. He uses Freedom House data to make the case.

Weak institutions “enable easy and wanton abuse of power,” Diamond told the activists. That leads in turn to “corruption, nepotism and straight theft”. Citizens lose trust in the looting state and, with it, trust in the democratic process.

Meanwhile, authoritarians are on the march. Diamond calls Vladimir Putin “one of the most dangerous men in the world today” and concurs with those who see Xi Jinping as the most authoritarian Chinese ruler since Mao Zedong. Iranian influence is spreading through the Middle East. Diamond detects “an increasingly integrated authoritarian conspiracy” whose principal vehicle is the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a grouping of Russia, China and four central Asian states mostly in the grip of dictators.

The key to reversing this, Diamond believes, is to make democracy work better. The key to doing that is to fight corruption. He was cheered to see Attahiru Jega hold his nerve as the head of Nigeria’s electoral commission and deliver the first vote in which a sitting president of Africa’s most populous nation lost at the ballot box and departed office voluntarily. Previous polls were carnivals of bribery and violence.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2015/05/fighting-the-crisis-of-liberalism-one-suicide-bomber-joke-at-a-time/>

The Economist

After the uprisings

Digital technology is keeping the spirit of the Arab Spring alive

May 25th 2016 | By ERASMUS | OSLO



It seems a long time ago. Four years back, when human-rights campaigners, brave dissidents and their supporters assembled for an annual get-together in Oslo, there was a giddy optimism in the air. From Morocco to the Gulf and far beyond, a vast change of consciousness seemed to be sweeping over the Arab and Muslim world, comparable to the pro-democracy movement which overcame communism around 1990. As you'd expect, feelings were especially upbeat among some of the drivers of that change: the young bloggers and stars of cyber-space who had used technology to communicate freely with their compatriots and bypass the dreary official media.

So how do things stand in 2016, as the Oslo Freedom Forum brings together a bigger-than-ever collection of campaigners against tyranny? Clearly the euphoria generated by the Arab Spring, which spread to many other despotic places, was excessive, to put it mildly. Syria and Yemen are mired in civil war; Saudi Arabia seems as intolerant of dissent as ever; elsewhere in the Arab Gulf, prosperity is offered as a substitute for liberty; Egypt has swung from elected Islamism to secular authoritarianism; and Libya is struggling to avoid disintegration. Only in Tunisia, where the largest party has just formally renounced Islamism, is there still some ground for liberal hope.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2016/05/after-uprisings>

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Prize for Creative Dissent

Three winners in the mold of Václav Havel.

May 15, 2012

Imagine the dejection of Russian human-rights activists as Vladimir Putin takes up the third term of his presidency for life. Or of Syrian street demonstrators, as Bashar al-Assad's troops shoot and shell them with impunity. So it's worth celebrating a glimmer of inspiration from Norway.

That's where the inaugural Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent—funded in part by Sergei Brin and Peter Thiel—was awarded to three individuals who represent what the late Havel called “the power of the powerless.”

Ai Weiwei, 54, uses art, journalism and round-the-clock tweets to campaign for freedom and the rule of law in China. After the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, he took up the cause of the thousands of children who died when their poorly built schools collapsed—while nearby government offices remained standing.

As the government suppressed information to keep that contrast quiet, Mr. Ai scoured records to create a database of victims. In 2009, he covered the façade of a Munich art museum with 9,000 children's backpacks, spelling out in bright Chinese characters a mother's lament for her 7-year-old daughter. Such activism has earned Mr. Ai beatings, jail time and trumped-up tax-evasion charges. After police beat him nearly to death in 2009, he made sure to tweet images of his brain scans to his followers.

The second laureate is Manal al-Sharif, a 33-year-old Saudi woman jailed last year for driving while female. After she posted video of her crime on YouTube and Facebook, some Saudis praised her while others called for her flogging. The authorities detained her for a week—making her, thanks largely to the Internet, an internationally recognized critic of Saudi medievalism.

The third Havel Prize went to Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose creativity is seen in decades of determination—including 15 years under house arrest—to keep international pressure on Burma's hermetic leaders. This year for the first time, her National League for Democracy has been allowed to gain minority power in parliament.

Ms. Suu Kyi's odyssey is, as Havel's was, a reminder that defeating tyranny is often a lifetime struggle. Kudos to the Human Rights Foundation for inaugurating a prize celebrating those who threaten to bring down the world's oppressors.

Read the article here: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304203604577396372334739162>



Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Her Peers

The Burmese leader was honored for her tenacious pursuit of democracy this week in San Francisco, where she crossed paths with fellow activists from Saudi Arabia to Uganda. Andy Isaacson on her stirring acceptance speech.

By Andy Isaacson | September 30, 2012



Touching down in San Francisco on her whirlwind tour of the United States, Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Friday received the Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation, an organization whose board included the late Czech president, with whom she corresponded during her years under house arrest.

The event, billed with a theme of “Many Paths, One Goal,” also included a dozen global human-rights activists who gave testimonies of their work reaching for a democratic ideal. (The absence of two scheduled

speakers—Egyptian journalist Mona Eltahawy, who was arrested in New York last week for defacing an anti-Muslim subway ad, and Marcel Granier, a Venezuelan radio broadcaster who had his passport canceled days before his flight—illustrated the perils of those paths.)

Manal al-Sharif, a 33-year-old Saudi woman who last June challenged her country’s ban on women driving by organizing a collective protest via YouTube, in which several dozen women openly flouted the long-standing law, told an audience of philanthropists and entrepreneurs that included Google founder Sergey Brin and former Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo: “Few [outsiders] can understand the depth of the issue, because in the rest of the world, it’s a non-issue.”

“In Saudi Arabia, women driving goes beyond the mundane matter of a woman getting her hands on the wheel,” Sharif said. “The freedom of movement that lifting such a ban implies is what has conservative factions in our society so rigid.”

Sharif’s “Women2Drive” campaign sparked a fierce backlash in the kingdom (but inspired this sassy video by the British hip-hop performer M.I.A.): Sharif was jailed for nine days, but only a single driving ticket was issued the day of protest. Saudi’s King Abdullah has since decreed that women be allowed to work openly in retail jobs, employing more than 40,000 Saudi women, and last September, the king granted women the right to vote in future local elections and join the advisory Shura council as full members.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/30/aung-san-suu-kyi-meets-her-peers.html>

The New York Times

Nicki Minaj Concert in Angola Draws Human Rights Complaint

By Katie Rogers | December 16, 2015

The Human Rights Foundation is asking Nicki Minaj to reconsider her scheduled performance in Angola on Saturday, citing a list of abuses committed by the president of the oil-rich African nation.

In an Instagram post, the 33-year-old rapper said that she would be performing at a public Christmas festival hosted by the communications company Unitel. In a letter published on Tuesday, the Human Rights Foundation said that the company is controlled, in part, by the daughter of José Eduardo dos Santos, who has ruled the country since 1979.

“Nicki Minaj is a global artist,” the group’s president Thor Halvorssen, said in a statement.

“Millions of people look up to her for creative inspiration. There is no good reason for her to do business with the corrupt Angolan dictatorship and endorse the ruler’s family company.”

It is not unusual for celebrities to receive seven figures for performing in countries with questionable human rights records. Lately, the celebrities have also been receiving some scrutiny: In 2013, Jennifer Lopez was criticized for accepting \$10 million to perform for Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov, the president of Turkmenistan, who has long been accused of rigging elections and running a repressive government.

Ms. Minaj is likely to be paid well for her visit to the country. In 2013, Mariah Carey received \$1 million for traveling to perform in Angola. The two performers have the same manager, the organization said in the letter.

In a profile of Angola published by The New Yorker in June, the writer Michael Specter described rampant inequality in the country — the capital, Luanda, is the most expensive in the world for expatriates to live, yet the country remains one of the world’s least-developed nations. (Angola is ranked first in the world for deaths among children under the age of 5.)

Mr. Specter also chronicled the corruption that touches the daily lives of visitors — the traffic police whose bribes must be paid, the extra fees just to be seated at a restaurant and served a bottle of water.

The Humans Rights Foundation said that circumstances are even worse for Angolans. The organization cited the story of Luaty Beirao, a young Angolan rapper who was among 17 people who were jailed in June for discussing a book that covered the topic of nonviolent resistance.

Read the rest of the article at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/17/world/nicki-minaj-concert-in-angola-draws-human-rights-complaint.html?login=email&_r=0



The Atlantic

Africa's Game of Thrones

The hazards of human-rights work in the continent's last absolute monarchy

By Thor Halvorssen and Alex Gladstein | April 18, 2014

Imagine a mountainous kingdom at the edge of a lush, tropical continent, where one house has clung to power for hundreds of years. The aged king passed away after ruling for more than six decades in one of history's longest reigns. He fathered more than 200 children but left no heir, unleashing an epic struggle between the queen regent and a handful of challengers in the royal court. Eventually, a 14-year-old boy, the product of one of the king's hundreds of illegitimate affairs, was chosen as successor, and his mother was wedded to the dead leader's corpse to legitimize the plot. Selected as a puppet, the new king quickly outgrew his courtiers and became notoriously cruel and corrupt.



Today, the new king rules from a castle and employs a royal guard to protect his 15 wives. He often picks a new wife in a national festival each summer where his servants round up tens of thousands of the most beautiful young virgins from all across the land. There, they dance shirtless, and the king examines each one, choosing his next bride.

This is a feudal society where the majority of the population are poor farmers, tilling land supervised by the royal palace. Through his relationships with foreigners, the king earns plenty of coin, but hardly any of it trickles down to the poor. Although surrounded by spectacular and exotic plants and animals, the king's subjects suffer from a lack of basic goods and modern medicine. More than one in four adults is afflicted with an incurable, often-fatal disease.

...

We who write this are not on the production team of HBO's *Game of Thrones*. We work in a human-rights organization in 2014. Yet we could be describing King's Landing. Regrettably, however, this is no tale from Westeros: It is an accurate description of Africa's last absolute monarchy, a tiny country near the continent's southeastern coast called Swaziland.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/04/africas-game-of-thrones/360864/>

Lionel Messi accused of undermining children's rights work with Gabon visit

US-based group says Barcelona striker displayed 'enthusiastic support for dictatorship that has refused to investigate ritual murders'



Footballer Lionel Messi has been accused by activists of endorsing a central African "dictatorship" that has failed to halt the ritual murder of children.

The Barcelona striker and children's rights advocate visited Gabon last month to take part in a ceremony at one of the venues for the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations.

The US-based Human Rights Foundation said that Messi "displayed enthusiastic support" for Ali Bongo, who was elected president of Gabon in 2009 in polls that triggered days of rioting and opposition complaints of fraud. He succeeded his

father Omar Bongo, who had a tight grip on power in the oil-rich state from 1967 until his death nearly 42 years later.

Thor Halvorssen, president of the HRF, said: "In providing PR services to Gabon's Bongo family, Lionel Messi has seriously undermined the credibility of his own charitable foundation." Messi serves as a Unicef ambassador to promote youth education. Halvorssen claimed that, by taking part in the trip, the footballer had "endorsed a kleptocratic regime that refuses to investigate the ritual murder of children in Gabon".

Bongo's government has been criticised for doing little to prevent ritual killings of children whose lips, tongues, genitals and other organs are removed for their supposed supernatural powers.

Gabon and Messi have denied reports that the soccer star was paid €3.5m (£2.5m) by the Bongo family for the visit, which was broadcast on state television and used, according to the HRF, as "internal propaganda". Messi helped lay one of the first stones for a planned 40,000-capacity stadium in the second biggest city, Port-Gentil and was criticised by an opposition party for turning up in denim shorts and a T-shirt.

The 28-year-old Argentinian also visited a state-owned hospital and the opening of a restaurant owned by Bongo's family, where the president said: "When I was in Barcelona a few years ago, I met Messi who had told me that he would come to visit me in Libreville. It's a promise he made me. He is a man of honour who just kept his word."

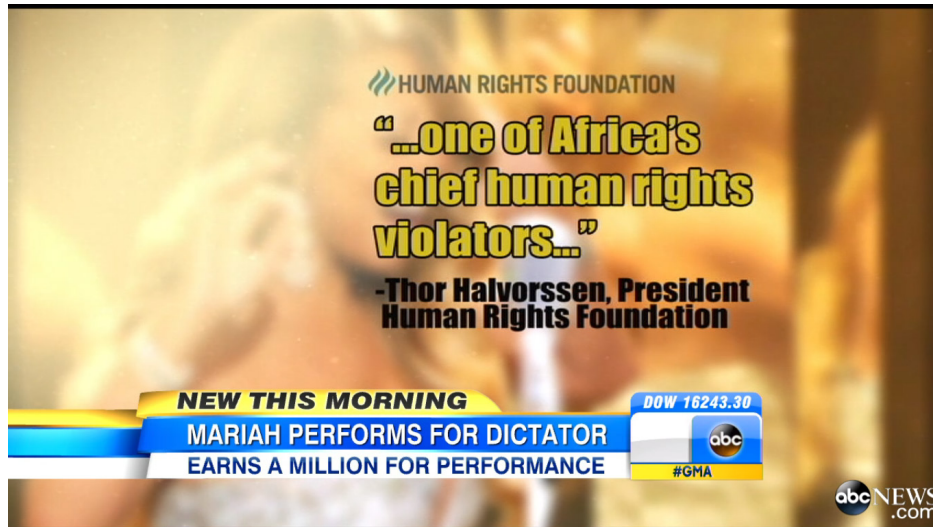
Read the rest of the article at: <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/aug/03/lionel-messi-accused-of-undermining-childrens-rights-work-with-gabon-visit>

Putting Dictatorship in Pop Culture



Mariah Carey Slammed by Human Rights Group for Collecting 'Dictator Cash'

December 20, 2013



Watch the video here: <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/entertainment/2013/12/mariah-carey-slammed-by-human-rights-group-for-collecting-dictator-cash/>



Human Rights Foundation hits out at Lionel Messi over Gabon trip

August 2, 2015

Barcelona forward Lionel Messi has been criticised by the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) for showing “enthusiastic support for the dictatorship” during his trip to Gabon last month.

Messi, 28, visited Gabon, which is set to stage the 2017 African Nations Cup, and met President Ali Bongo Ondimba, who drove him around the capital, Libreville.

HRF president Thor Halvorssen said on his organisation’s website: “In providing PR services to Gabon’s Bongo family, Lionel Messi has seriously undermined the credibility of his own charitable foundation.

“Whereas Messi claims to support children’s rights, and even serves as a UNICEF ambassador to promote youth education, he has endorsed a kleptocratic regime that refuses to investigate the ritual murder of children in Gabon.”

He added: “Messi’s trip is part of the Bongo family’s PR campaign to promote the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations, which Gabon will host at enormous expense despite the fact that the Bongo family’s embezzlement has left 20 percent of the population to live on less than \$2 per day.”

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.espnfc.com/barcelona/story/2546237/human-rights-foundation-hits-out-at-lionel-messi-over-gabon>

WIRED

The Plot to Free North Korea with Smuggled Episodes of "Friends"

By Andy Greenberg | March 2, 2015

ON A CLOUDY, moonless night somewhere in northeastern China, three men creep through a stand of Japanese Clethra trees. They carry no flashlights, and the sky is so dark that they hear the sound of the rushing Tumen River before they see it: They've arrived at the North Korean border.

Earlier in the evening at a nearby restaurant, they treated the local Chinese police chief and head of the border patrol to a blowout feast of more than 20 dishes, climaxing with a southern China delicacy—a carp deep-fried and served alive, its mouth and gills still moving. Following an after-meal session of pricey Chunghwa cigarettes and shots of Moutai liquor, the officials made phone calls telling subordinates to abandon their posts for several hours.

After dozens of these bribe dinners, they had become routine, practically a tradition among friends; by now the smugglers even had their own key to the rusty bike lock securing the border area's barbed wire fence.

Two hours later the trio's leader, a middle-aged North Korean defector named Jung Kwang-il, steps into the tall weeds of the riverbank. He pulls out a cheap laser pointer and flashes it across the water. Then he waits for a response: If he sees an X slashed through the air by a laser on the opposite bank, the operation will be called off. Instead, he's answered with a red circle painted through the darkness.

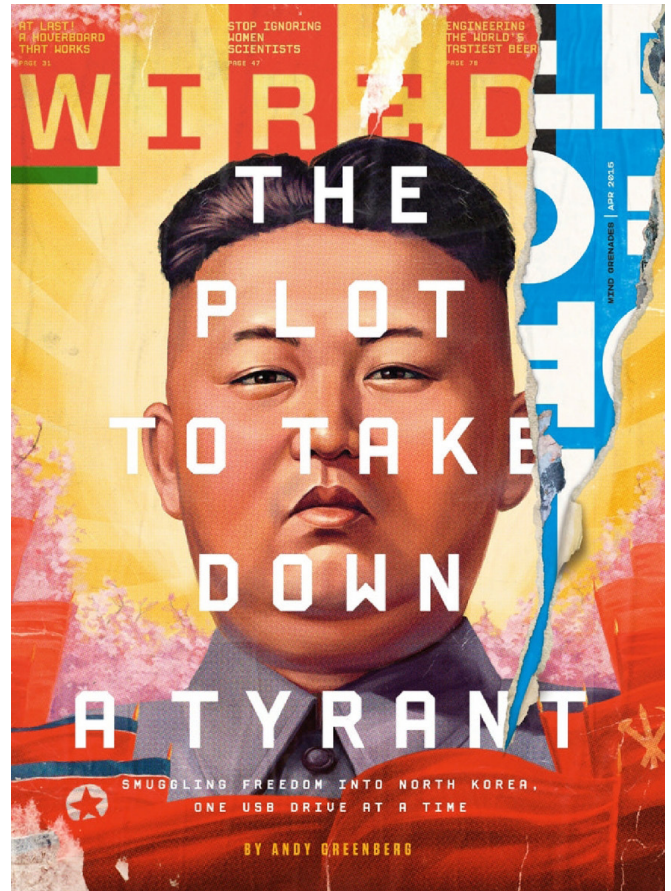
...

The man in the hoodie slings the bag of digital contraband over his shoulder. Then he says good-bye and disappears back into the world's deepest black hole of information.

THAT SMUGGLING MISSION was planned and executed last September by the North Korea Strategy Center and its 46-year-old founder, Kang Chol-hwan. Over the past few years, Kang's organization has become the largest in a movement of political groups who routinely smuggle data into North Korea.

...

He's also looking at ways the American tech community could advance NKSC's mission. The group is working with the Wikimedia Foundation to put a North Korean-dialect version of Wikipedia on every flash drive it smuggles over. And in conjunction with the Human Rights Foundation, it's been talking to Silicon Valley types about building new tools—everything from a small concealable satellite dish to steganographic videogames that hide illegal data. (The activists have considered delivering USBs with miniature drones, but that option remains impractically expensive.)



Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.wired.com/2015/03/north-korea/>

BUSINESS INSIDER

These 15 Tech Billionaires Are Spending Millions To Save The World

By Julie Bort | April 5, 2013

With great wealth comes great responsibility.

That's how we judge the tycoons of tech. While many of them spend their money on expensive luxuries, like cars, houses, planes — even islands — they are also expected to use their prosperity to do good works.

That's the implicit demand of the tech industry.

Some are astoundingly generous, giving tens of millions —even hundreds of millions — to their favorite causes. How much they give says a lot about them. Which causes they support does, too.

Sergey Brin: Curing Parkinson and championing human rights

Sergey Brin and his wife Anne Wojcicki are probably best known for their work to cure Parkinson's disease and for good reason: Brin has blogged about how his mom has the illness and that he's got a good chance of getting it, too.

Wojcicki cofounded 23andMe, a genetic testing startup that made a big discovery about Parkinson's. And they've donated about \$95 million in recent years to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

On top of that, they've bankrolled a \$190 million foundation of their own that focuses on social issues. It supports organizations like Ashoka, a fund that invests in social action startups; the Human Rights Foundation; and Tipping Point Community, a nonprofit that serves needy families in Northern California.



Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.businessinsider.com/tech-billionaires-favorite-causes-2013-4?op=1>

THE VERGE

How Silicon Valley wants to hack North Korea

Balloons, slingshots, and miniature radios could get information to ‘the darkest corner of earth’

By Lessley Anderson | August 4, 2014



How do you encourage another Arab Spring in a country where internet access is punishable by death? Over the weekend, a room of engineers, activists, and journalists met in San Francisco to tackle this conundrum at the first-ever Hack North Korea, sponsored by the New York-based Human Rights Foundation with help from the Thiel Foundation.

Held in the airy SOMA warehouse space of a nonprofit coding organization, the event drew about 50 people from the Bay Area and beyond. The mission was to develop clever ways to get media into the hands of North Koreans, and get information out, too.

...

But the winning idea from Team Skylight was a dual offering that took advantage of new digital technologies. The first idea involved using Raspberry Pi, a granola-bar sized computer, in concert with SDR (software defined radio) to create a small radio that could pick up signals other than the official state-sanctioned ones. The team recommended dropping the computers via balloon.

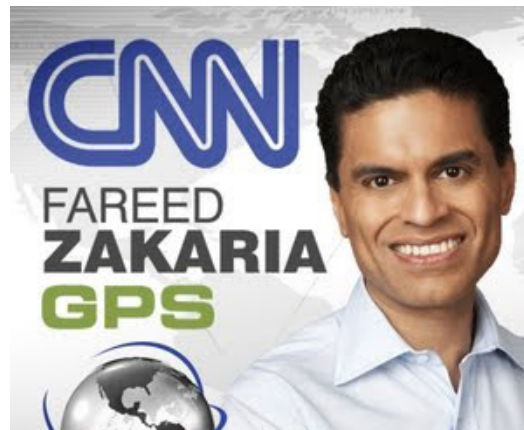
...

Hack North Korea was the brainchild of Silicon Valley venture capitalist Alex Lloyd, a longtime supporter of the Human Rights Foundation. Lloyd became fired up about the issue of North Korea a few years ago after seeing defector Lee Hyeon-seo's TED talk about her harrowing escape from the country. Lloyd said he thinks many Americans tend to be disengaged from the issue of North Korean human rights abuses, partially because they fear the volatility of its leader ("There's a certain craziness factor there," says Lloyd), or because they feel powerless.

"Until it's humanized, the way it was for me at that TED talk, there's this fear," says Lloyd. "If nothing else, the hackathon gets people here thinking and talking about what's happening in this hermit kingdom."

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.theverge.com/2014/8/4/5966185/silicon-valley-hacks-north-korea>

Tech and Human Rights



On September 14, 2014, CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS featured a segment on HRF's Hack North Korea, the world's first North Korea-focused hackathon aimed at breaking the Kim regime's monopoly on information.

Watch the video here: goo.gl/ViSqB9

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Human Rights Toast for an African Tyrant

Equatorial Guinea brutalizes its people like North Korea and Syria. So why is a prominent U.S. foundation cozying up to its dictator?

By Thor Halvorssen and George Ayittey | August 8, 2012

In the campaign for human rights and justice in apartheid South Africa, black American civil rights leaders were instrumental. One was Leon H. Sullivan, who enunciated the “Sullivan Principles” guiding multinational firms toward treating blacks fairly while doing business in South Africa. Why, then, is the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation today celebrating the exploits of a brutal African tyrant?

On Aug. 20, a plane-load of lobbyists, civil rights leaders, entertainers and former government officials will land in the West African nation of Equatorial Guinea for the Sullivan Summit IX. The summit’s stated objective is to “create an atmosphere of open dialogue about the state of human rights and the interconnected issues of modern Africa.” Seldom has so much dishonesty fit into one sentence.

Equatorial Guinea is home to Africa’s longest-ruling dictator, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who seized power in a military coup by executing his uncle 33 years ago. Freedom House ranks the country among the “worst of the worst” human-rights abusers, along with North Korea, Syria and Somalia. Yet the Sullivan Foundation is celebrating its Obiang-hosted summit as a milestone for human rights, part of its “unwavering commitment to democratic ideals.”

According to the agenda posted online, summit attendees will lounge at a five-star resort for a week discussing human rights and economic development, all between black-tie dinners and champagne. They may toast to the petroleum-rich country’s staggering per capita income of \$36,515 (according to the World Bank), but outside the resort the people of Equatorial Guinea will continue to toil in poverty. Sixty percent live on less than \$1 a day, the majority don’t have access to clean water or electricity, and nearly one in eight children die before their fifth birthday.

Since his 1979 coup, Mr. Obiang has rigged every election to give himself more than 95% of the vote. He has criminalized dissent, tortured or disappeared his opponents, and killed tens of thousands (as documented by historian Randall Fegley, among many others). Under his iron fist, Mr. Obiang siphons billions of dollars in oil revenues into his family coffers. Still the Sullivan Foundation’s marketing materials praise him for a “tremendous emphasis on social development and good governance.”

Nor is this month’s summit the first time the Sullivan Foundation has cozied up to Mr. Obiang. Last December it bestowed on him its “Beacon for Africa” award for “exemplary contributions to improving the lives of Africa’s most vulnerable citizens.” When news of the award first leaked, the foundation initially denied that Mr. Obiang was honored, tweeting that a horrible mistake had been made. It then pretended that it was honoring only the rotating presidency of the African Union, which happened to be held at the time by Mr. Obiang.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443687504577565451822103204>

Challenging the Supporters of Tyranny



North Korea's Fellow Travelers

Gloria Steinem, two Nobel Laureates, and 26 other women will be making a big mistake if they march across the DMZ with Christine Ahn.

By Thor Halvorssen and Alex Gladstein | April 30, 2015



On May 24, a march billed as WomenCrossDMZ will try to pass through the two-mile wide demilitarized zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea in a “symbolic act of peace.” Organized by the Korean-American activist Christine Ahn, the march’s 30 confirmed participants include feminist icon Gloria Steinem, Nobel Laureates Leymah Gbowee and Mairead Maguire, filmmaker Abigail Disney, and Amnesty International Americas director Erika Guevara Rosas.

Ahn says that her march, walking from north to south, intends “to help reunite families, improve human rights in North Korea, and end the state of war for 70 million Koreans.” With Steinem and Nobel Laureates on board, the effort has garnered coverage from the New York Times and the Guardian. Ahn, who is in contact with officials from North Korea, said she traveled there to obtain Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un’s official stamp of approval: an expression of “full support” and a promise to “render all necessary assistances” for plans that even include an “international peace symposium” in Pyongyang, where marchers hope to share “ideas of mobilizing women to bring an end to violent conflict.”

Why would a totalitarian state open its doors to a human rights initiative, let alone provide it with enthusiastic backing? When the Human Rights Foundation, which has extensive contact with the North Korean human rights and defector community, analyzed Ahn’s views and the circumstances behind the march’s planning, the results revealed a startling amount of bad faith.

Read the rest of the article here: http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/30/fellow-travelers-gloria-steinem-dmz-north-korea-christine_ahn/



[인터뷰] “북한 인권 외면하는 한국 의원들 무책임”

미 인권재단(HRF) 대표 토르 할보르센



“동물보호법은 통과시키면서 북한인권법은 통과시키지

알렉스 글래드스타인(31) 미 인권재단(HRF) 전략기
서울 광화문 언론회관(프레스센터)에서 미 인권재단인
텔에서 그를 만났다.

그는 “2만5000명의 탈북자가 국내에 거주하고 있는
법 통과와 시급성에 대해 말했다. 알렉스가 기획실장으
10년째 계속 중인 북한인권법을 두고 한국 국회의원들
HRF는 비영리 인권단체로 2006년 뉴욕에 처음 사무실

이 단체 주최로 매년 열리는 ‘자유포럼’이 유명하다. 이
자유포럼을 ‘운동가들의 다보스’ ‘환상적인 인권축제’ 등
처음 열린 자유포럼은 그동안 미국, 칠레, 독일 등에서
관계자들의 이번 방한도 ‘서울자유포럼’을 개최하기 위

주간조선은 HRF 대표인 토르 할보르센(39·메네수엘
를 들었다. 할보르센은 HRF의 기자회견 직후 한국을 떠
부탁해 서면으로 이틀에 걸쳐 인터뷰를 진행했다. 다음

- 북한 인권에 관심을 두기 시작한 건 언제부터인가.



Afghanistan-krigen ga Roya friheten

Krigen i Afghanistan førte mye godt med seg. Unge kvinner fikk muligheter de ellers aldri ville fått. En av dem er Roya Mahboob.

Hanne Skartveit | 21.05.2016



Mange kritiske stemmer har reist seg om Norges engasjement i Afghanistan. Men Roya Mahboob, Afghanistans første kvinnelige toppleder i et it-selskap, avviser fullstendig at det var bortkastet. Tvert om, mener hun. Men hun peker også på at myndighetene i landet forspilte mulighetene de fikk.

I dag bor Roya i USA. Som høyprofilert kvinne og næringslivsleder måtte hun flykte, etter gjentatte drapstrusler. Hun driver fortsatt selskapet i Afghanistan, men i mindre skala enn da hun bodde i landet.

Vi treffer Roya i lobbyen på Grand Hotel. Hun er en av talerne under Oslo Freedom Forum, som avholdes neste uke. Her samles menneskerettighetsforkjempere fra hele verden.

Penger gir frihet

Roya var bare 23 år da hun ble toppleder. Hun hadde lært seg engelsk gjennom frivillige organisasjoner, og datateknologi gjennom et FN-prosjekt. Et tysk universitet drev gjesteundervisning i hjembyen hennes. Smart og talentfull som hun er, fikk hun plass her.

EL PAÍS

Mauricio Macri y la posible resurrección de la OEA

El presidente de Argentina debe seguir el ejemplo de Rómulo Betancourt, precursor de la "cláusula democrática" en Latinoamérica

Javier El-Hage | 26 nov 2015

El presidente electo de Argentina, Mauricio Macri, ha prometido aplicar la cláusula democrática del MERCOSUR contra el gobierno de Venezuela. Así suspendería al Estado venezolano de toda participación en esta organización multilateral de la que es miembro pleno desde el 2012. La promesa de Macri busca honrar el compromiso asumido por Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Paraguay, Uruguay y Chile en julio de 1998 con la firma del Protocolo de Ushuaia. Este tratado internacional dice que "la plena vigencia de las instituciones democráticas es condición esencial" para la pertenencia en el MERCOSUR, y que "toda ruptura del orden democrático en uno de los Estados partes" debe llevar a su suspensión.

Mientras Macri pretende, acertadamente, castigar los quince años de erosión democrática y pernicioso liderazgo regional de Venezuela a cargo del régimen autoritario-competitivo de Hugo Chávez y Nicolás Maduro, hay otro expresidente izquierdista venezolano —un demócrata— a quien Macri debería estudiar y tomar como inspiración para asumir un liderazgo que vaya más allá de las fronteras comerciales del MERCOSUR, hacia foros de vocación continental como la CELAC y la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA). Hablo de Rómulo Betancourt, el presidente socialista de Venezuela de los años 50, y que con los años fue codificado en distintos de "cláusula democrática": lo mismo que quiere aplicar

Chávez y Maduro han desmantelado las instituciones de la democracia y adornado cualquier dictadura totalitaria del continente y adornado cualquier cargo de la OEA. Por el contrario, Rómulo Betancourt trató su país, aislar diplomáticamente a todos los autoritarismos frente a las víctimas tanto de las dictaduras militares como los gobiernos comunistas y movimientos guerrilleros.

En un acto que Macri debería emular, Betancourt explicó en 1959:

"Regímenes que no respeten los derechos humanos, que con el respaldo de policías políticas totalitarias, deben ser sometidos a una pacífica colectiva de la comunidad jurídica interamericana."

Al igual que muchos líderes e intelectuales latinoamericanos, un declarado admirador de la revolución cubana, pero su intención no era crear una alternativa democrática a estilo soviético. En 1962, después de pedirle a Castro que respete a las libertades y la dignidad humana", Betancourt, en su segundo periodo presidencial, Betancourt también rechazó la República Dominicana de Trujillo y los gobiernos de Honduras y Haití. En honor a su liderazgo continental.

Le Monde Afrique

A Luanda, Nicki Minaj en concert, Luaty Beirao en prison

Par Joan Tilouine | 18.12.2015



NICKI MINAJ
@NICKIMINAJ

Follow

ANGOLA! R u ready for the show?!???! Can't wait to see u guys!

Get your tickets here!

zonspr... [instagram.com/p/_XLnUDr8Qt/](https://www.instagram.com/p/_XLnUDr8Qt/)

1:08 PM - 16 Dec 2015

1,104 retweets 2,246 likes

Son flow est chic, rapide ou suave, souvent délirant. Dans ses clips, elle est à la fois sensuelle, provocante, vêtue de lingerie vulgaire ou élégante. Nicki Minaj, la pulpeuse rappeuse new-yorkaise du Queens, originaire de Trinidad-et-Tobago, fait tourner les têtes jusqu'à Luanda, capitale classée pour la troisième année consécutive ville la plus chère du monde pour les expatriés.

Selon le magazine américain Foreign Policy, elle se produira dans la capitale angolaise le 19 décembre, conviée par l'opérateur téléphonique Unitel, propriété du clan présidentiel. Au pouvoir depuis 1979, José Edouardo Dos Santos dirige l'Angola d'une main de fer et exerce, avec ses proches, une mainmise totale sur l'économie de ce pays pétrolier où 36,6 % de la population vit sous le seuil de pauvreté, selon la Banque mondiale. S'offrir un show de Nicki Minaj n'est qu'une simple coquetterie pour la famille du dictateur accusée de détourner des millions de pétrodollars. Une extravagance qui contraste avec l'emprisonnement de plusieurs militants des droits de l'homme et le procès qui se déroule depuis le 16 novembre à huis clos de 17 opposants au régime, dont le rappeur Luaty Beirao, accusés de tentative de coup d'Etat.

La dictature angolaise choisit ses rappeurs, et privilégie le bling bling de Nicki Minaj au rap engagé de son ressortissant Luaty Beirao qui vilipende sa mauvaise gouvernance. La première devrait toucher au moins 1 million de dollars pour sa prestation, à l'instar de la pop-star américaine Mariah Carey, elle aussi venue à Luanda pour un concert en 2013. Le second pourrait payer son engagement de plusieurs années de prison.

Plusieurs ONG ont crié haro sur la star du hip-hop américaine. A la tête de Human Rights Foundation, Thor Halvorssen a adressé une lettre à Nicki Minaj pour l'informer de la nature du régime angolais. Et de lui demander de revenir sur sa décision de « faire du business avec la dictature corrompue angolaise et ainsi soutenir une société de la famille au pouvoir ».

Social Media



CNN
@CNN



Follow

.@NickiMinaj and 7 other pop stars who sang for dictators cnn.it/1NyhTd



Perez Hilton
@PerezHilton



Follow

Human Rights Activists Plan On Dropping #TheInterview DVDs Into North Korea! goo.gl/xgXZvQ



ESPN FC

August 3, 2015 ·

FC Barcelona's **Leo Messi** has been criticised for a visit to Gabon by Humans Rights Foundation.



The Associated Press
@AP



Follow

Human Rights Foundation (@HRF) criticizes rapper Kanye West for performing at a wedding in Kazakhstan: apne.ws/17NTEtE -JM



WSJ Editorial Page
@WSJopinion



Follow

A Prize for Creative Dissent: Three winners in the mold of Václav Havel.



A Prize for Creative Dissent

The Wall Street Journal writes in an editorial about the prizes awarded to three political and human-rights activists in the mold of Václav Havel: Ai Weiwei, Manal al-Sharif and Aung San Su...

wsj.com

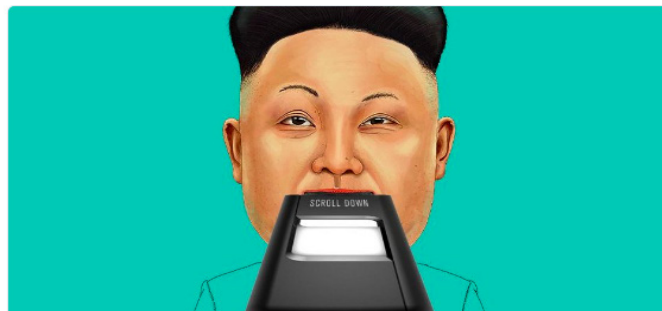


The Guardian
@guardian



Follow

Flashdrives for freedom? 20,000 USBs to be smuggled into North Korea



Flashdrives for freedom? 20,000 USBs to be smuggled into North Korea

Forget sanctions – campaigners say exposing residents to western TV is a powerful way to undermine the regime

theguardian.com



Policy
@policy



Following

Dubbed the 'Davos for Dissidents', we recently spent time with human rights activists at @OsloFF. Read more:



Participating at Oslo Freedom Forum: 'Davos for Dissidents...

Dubbed 'Davos for Dissidents', Oslo Freedom Forum is an annual event that seeks to avail attendees of the opportunity to bear witness to human rights challenges around the world, share ins...

blog.twitter.com



Roya Mahboob
@RoyaMahboob



Following

Such honor to meet with Prime Minister of Norway, we discussed the impact of technology on #GirlsEducation. @OsloFF





Contact

Phone: +1.212.246.8486

Fax: +1.212.643.4278

Email: info@hrf.org

Human Rights Foundation
Empire State Building #4515
New York, NY 10118

hrf.org

Twitter: @HRF

Facebook: [HumanRightsFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/HumanRightsFoundation)

Google+: plus.google.com/+TheHRForg

oslofreedomforum.com

Twitter: @OsloFF

Facebook: [OsloFreedomForum](https://www.facebook.com/OsloFreedomForum)

Google+: plus.google.com/+oslofreedomforum

