



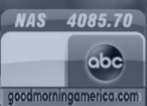
HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION



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EARNS A MILLION FOR PERFORMANCE



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The Washington Post

Why the rise of authoritarianism is a global catastrophe

By Garry Kasparov and Thor Halvorssen | February 13, 2017



Garry Kasparov is chairman of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation. Thor Halvorssen is the foundation's president and chief executive.

Last month the world's elite listened politely as Chinese President Xi Jinping offered the keynote address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Of course, the leader of the Chinese dictatorship didn't mention how he and his cronies jail and disappear human rights activists, persecute ethnic minorities and religious groups, and operate a vast censorship and surveillance system, among other evils. It is striking that a forum dedicated to "improving the state of the world" would offer such an important stage to the leader of a repressive regime. Xi began his remarks in part by asking "What has gone wrong with the world?" The fact is, he's part of the problem.

At present, the authoritarianism business is booming. According to the Human Rights Foundation's research, the citizens of 94 countries suffer under non-democratic regimes, meaning that 3.97 billion people are currently controlled by tyrants, absolute monarchs, military juntas or competitive authoritarians. That's 53 percent of the world's population. Statistically, then, authoritarianism is one of the largest — if not the largest — challenges facing humanity.

Consider the scale of some of the world's other crises. About 836 million live under extreme poverty, and 783 million lack clean drinking water. War and conflict have displaced 65 million from their homes. Between 1994 and 2013 an annual average of 218 million people were affected by natural disasters. These are terrible, seemingly intractable problems — but at least there are United Nations bodies, aid organizations and State Department teams dedicated to each one of them.

Dictators and elected authoritarians, by contrast, get a free pass. The World Bank bails out repressive regimes on a regular basis. There is no anti-tyrant U.N. task force, no Sustainable Development Goals against tyranny, no army of activists.

We, the authors, have experienced the ills of authoritarianism personally. One of us has been beaten, blacklisted and forced into exile by operatives of the Kremlin. Russian President Vladimir Putin has relentlessly pushed to crush freedom of speech, brazenly annex Crimea and increase his global military activities in ways that hark back to the Cold War. The other author has seen his mother shot by Venezuelan security forces and his first cousin languish for nearly three years in a military jail as a prisoner of conscience. Today Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro runs a regime that regularly imprisons dissidents, abuses protesters and engages in such widespread graft and corruption that the country is now undergoing a catastrophic economic collapse.

Putin and Maduro have co-conspirators in all parts of the world, fellow would-be tyrants who are dismantling the free press, jailing opponents, manipulating elections and committing a host of human rights violations. In Turkey, a once-promising

HRF Advocacy

democracy is gasping for air. Its president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has shut down 149 media outlets, shuttered more than 2,000 schools and universities, fired more than 120,000 civil servants and jailed more than 45,000 suspected dissenters. In North Korea, Kim Jong Un rules the most totalitarian government on Earth, brainwashing 25 million people and terrorizing them with public executions, forced famines and a vast network of concentration camps that reminded U.N. investigators of Pol Pot's Cambodia and Nazi Germany.

And there are so many lesser-known dictators in countries such as Bahrain, Kazakhstan and Equatorial Guinea, where tyrants pilfer their countries' natural resources and pocket the profits in private off-shore accounts. To cover their atrocities, they hire lobbyists, public relations firms and even policy groups in the free world to whitewash their actions.

If injustice and oppression aren't bad enough, authoritarian governments bear an enormous social cost. Dictator-led countries have higher rates of mental illness, lower levels of health and life expectancy, and, as Amartya Sen famously argued, higher susceptibility to famine. Their citizens are less educated and file fewer patents. In 2016, more patents were filed in France than in the entire Arab world — not because Arabs are less entrepreneurial than the French, but because nearly all of them live under stifling authoritarianism. Clearly, the suppression of free expression and creativity has harmful effects on innovation and economic growth. Citizens of free and open societies such as Germany, South Korea and Chile witness advances in business, science and technology that Belarusians, Burmese and Cubans can only dream of.

And consider that free nations do not go to war with each other. History has shown this to be the only ironclad law of political theory. Meanwhile, dictators are always at war, often with a foreign power and always with their own people. If you are worried about public health, poverty or peace, your mandate is clear: Oppose tyranny.

Tragically, world institutions and organizations have failed to properly address authoritarianism. Western governments sometimes protest human rights violations in countries such as Russia, Iran, and North Korea — but routinely ignore them in places such as China and Saudi Arabia, in favor of upholding trade deals and security agreements. The United Nations, established to bring peace and justice to the world, includes Cuba, Egypt and Rwanda on its Human Rights Council. Here, a representative from a democracy carries the same legitimacy as a representative from a dictatorship. One acts on behalf of its citizens, while the other acts to silence them. Between June 2006 and August 2015 the Human Rights Council issued zero condemnations of repressive regimes in China, Cuba, Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Despite the fact that dictatorship is at the root of many global ills — poor health, failing education systems and global poverty among them — authoritarianism is hardly ever addressed at major conferences worldwide. And no wonder: Many, including the World Economic Forum and the now-defunct Clinton Global Initiative, receive ample funding from authoritarians. Few human rights groups focus exclusively on authoritarianism, and most establishment ones spend significant chunks of their budgets on criticizing democratic governments and their policies. Dictators are rarely in the spotlight.

The noble struggle against tyranny has fallen upon individual activists and dissidents living under authoritarian rule or working from exile. Citizen journalists Abdalaziz Alhamza and Meron Estefanos found that few people in peaceful, free countries were interested in reporting on Syria and Eritrea, so they took it upon themselves to do so, despite the enormous danger this put them in. Hyeonseo Lee defected from North Korea to find that victims of sex trafficking in China are often abandoned and ignored, so she started pressuring the Chinese government herself. When Rosa María Payá's father, Cuban democracy leader Oswaldo Payá, died in mysterious circumstances in 2012, it fell to her to demand a formal investigation and fair treatment for dissidents in Cuba. Such individuals are in constant need of support, because in their home countries there is no legal way to protest, no ACLU, no Washington Post and no opposition party to stand up for their rights.

If authoritarianism and dictatorship are to be properly challenged — and if so many resulting crises, including military conflict, poverty and extremism, are to be addressed at their root cause — such dissidents need funding, strategic advice, technical training, attention and solidarity. To turn the tide against repression, people across all industries need to join the movement. Artists, entrepreneurs, technologists, investors, diplomats, students — no matter who you are, you can reach out to a civil society organization at risk and ask how you can help by using your knowledge, resources or skills.

Today, authoritarians rule an increasingly large part of the globe, but the leaders of the free world lack the motivation and gumption to create a new U.N.-style League of Democracies. In the meantime, as individuals living in a free society, we believe it is our moral obligation to take action to expose human rights violations and to use our freedom to help others achieve theirs.

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



Reason TV covered HRF's 2017 presence at SXSW, the world's largest interactive festival. HRF's panel, "The Real Information Revolution," featured HRF President Thor Halvorssen, Cuban democracy advocate Rosa María Payá, Syria citizen journalist Abdalaziz Alhamza, Eritrean activist Meron Estefanos, and Afghan entrepreneur Roya Mahboob.



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.

NEW YORK POST

How Venezuela's corrupt socialists are looting the country to death

By Thor Halvorssen | January 10, 2017



Venezuela is no longer a country with a government, institutions and a civil society. It's a geographic area terrorized by a criminal enterprise that pretends to govern, with a civil society made up of two sets of people: accomplices and victims.

More than 30 million of the latter.

The Hugo Chavez-led looting spree began in 2000. By "looting," I mean fraudulent government contracts, a celebration of bribery, phantom payrolls across all government ministries, bogus government grant programs, the sacking of Venezuela's gold reserves and a massive currency exchange scam.

More than \$1 trillion has disappeared — some of it wasted on social programs that produced nothing — and a staggering amount has ended up in bank accounts in Andorra, Panama, New York, Hong Kong and Switzerland.

And the pillaging has turned Venezuela into a dystopian landscape. There are shortages of every imaginable foodstuff and basic necessity; diseases once thought eradicated are back with a vengeance; and a crime wave that has given Caracas the highest murder rate in the world.

Loving parents are putting their children up for adoption because they have nothing to feed them; the elderly are starving; patients with treatable conditions are dying in hospitals that lack basic medicine like insulin and oxygen, where vital equipment has been pilfered and emergency rooms operate without electricity. In a gruesome twist, even the morgues can't handle the number of unclaimed bodies, so they rot in hallways.

In one city just before Christmas, more than 80 percent of supermarkets, bodegas and food stores were looted. The ransacking spread to private homes. Meanwhile, the government does little to stop the disorder. The more chaos there is, the less President Nicolas Maduro needs to worry about antigovernment protests or marches.

Meanwhile, those in power can focus on what they do best: looting the country's natural-resource wealth and manufacturing and trafficking illegal narcotics. In fact, Maduro just upped his game by appointing Tareck el-Aissami, a drug kingpin, as vice president.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://nypost.com/2017/01/10/how-venezuelas-corrupt-socialists-are-looting-the-country-to-death/>

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Focus on the Suffering of North Koreans

By Yeonmi Park and Thor Halvorssen | May 9, 2017



South Koreans elected a new president Tuesday: Moon Jae-in of the opposition Minjoo party, who supports engagement and trade with North Korea’s Kim regime. His supporters celebrate him as the “peace” candidate, but Mr. Moon’s policies represent little more than accommodation of an evil regime that enslaves its own people.

Kim Jong Un’s dictatorship deprives its citizens of food, medical care and electricity; starves and works them to death in labor camps; and sentences them to public executions for crimes as benign as listening to foreign music. The United Nations 2014 Commission of Inquiry detailed such “unspeakable atrocities” as complete denial of free thought and belief; state-sponsored trafficking and sexual violence; and gulags akin to Holocaust concentration camps. The U.N. recommended trying the North Korean government for crimes against humanity.

Mr. Moon has no apparent plans to challenge or even expose this grim reality. He promises to focus instead on humanitarian aid and commerce—all of which is controlled and manipulated by the Pyongyang regime. He and his advisors have a record of hostility to any efforts to promote human rights in North Korea.

Former President Park Geun-hye took a fiercely oppositional stance toward the Kim regime. Last year her government passed legislation to promote human rights in North Korea after 10 years of delay, but this was too little too late. Seoul plans to set up a “museum” dedicated to North Korean human rights—by 2019. In the meantime the North Korean regime will continue to jail, torture and kill hundreds of thousands of people.

To reverse Ms. Park’s approach, Mr. Moon wants to revive the “Sunshine Policy” of cooperating with North Korea as Seoul did from 1998 to 2008.

Read the rest of the article here: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/focus-on-the-suffering-of-north-koreans-1494350470>



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>

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



The Young Turks, the world’s largest online news show, joined us at OFF in 2017. In addition to livestreaming the speakers’ talks on Facebook, they also filmed a full live show at the forum, interviewed more than a dozen speakers, and shared their experience on YouTube.

Watch their live show here: <https://www.facebook.com/TheYoungTurks/videos/10154683159619205/>



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

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

Faith, secularism, and freedom

A pastor and a secularist publisher stand together for freedom

By Erasmus | May 28, 2017



In an ever more impressive annual gathering of people who have taken a stand for liberty and those who are determined to help them, the historic centre of Oslo became a focal point this week for dissidents, pro-democracy campaigners and former prisoners of conscience, as well as admirers of their causes. In a well-trying formula, speakers at the Oslo Freedom Forum were given about 12 minutes each to tell their stories, explain their personal predicaments or lay out their proposals. They were asked to prepare these presentations carefully because they would be live-streamed across the world and viewed by myriad visitors to the OFF website.

Two of the most inspiring presentations this year were offered by a Christian pastor from Zimbabwe, and a Bangladeshi publisher who is known for airing secularist ideas. In other words, a man of religion and a person who gives a platform to those who question religion.

Using rhetorical skills that were clearly developed in the pulpit, Pastor Evan Mawarire has given heart to the opposition in an African country where opponents of Robert Mugabe, the nonagenarian president, had become demoralised. Previously best known as the founder of a Pentecostal church, he turned his energies to politics (in the broadest sense) when he made a video in April 2016 under the hashtag #ThisFlag which seemed to galvanise the nation. Rejecting Mr Mugabe's claim to be worthy heir of a noble independence struggle, Mr Mawarire retorts that people (including his parents) who fought for Zimbabwe's liberation nearly 40 years ago would be horrified by the country's present impoverished and looted condition.

Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.economist.com/node/21722731>

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>

The New York Times

A Saudi Woman Who Got Behind the Wheel and Never Looked Back

By Somini Sengupta | June 16, 2017



Ms. al-Sharif, 38, has undergone a radical change of heart since [her] Salafi firebrand days. She is now best known for challenging the laws and mores that keep women down in Saudi Arabia, including what she considers the kingdom’s infantilizing restrictions on the right of women to drive.

Her first book, “Daring to Drive: A Saudi Woman’s Awakening,” published this week by Simon & Schuster, is a memoir of her political coming of age. It is equally a portrait of tumult and tyranny in Saudi Arabia over the last four decades — and the kingdom’s vexing relationship with the United States.

...

In 2012, Ms. al-Sharif received the Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent at the Oslo Freedom Forum, an annual conference of human rights advocates. Ms. al-Sharif had never heard of Mr. Havel, the Czech dissident writer who went on to become president, nor did she know precisely what dissent meant.

Speaking out — and that too, abroad — meant losing her job, Ms. al-Sharif said, along with company housing.

Only later did she realize that she was following in the footsteps of women who had dared to drive as far back as 1990, and had become social outcasts afterward.

The Oslo trip was a turning point in other ways too. One speaking engagement brought another. She wanted to write a book about women agitating for change in her country. An agent persuaded her to write about herself, which wasn’t easy, especially about the one thing Saudis don’t talk about: genital cutting, which she describes as “the most difficult part of my childhood.” It took five years to pull together a memoir, and several writers whom she calls her collaborators.

Read the rest of the article here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/16/world/middleeast/saudi-womens->

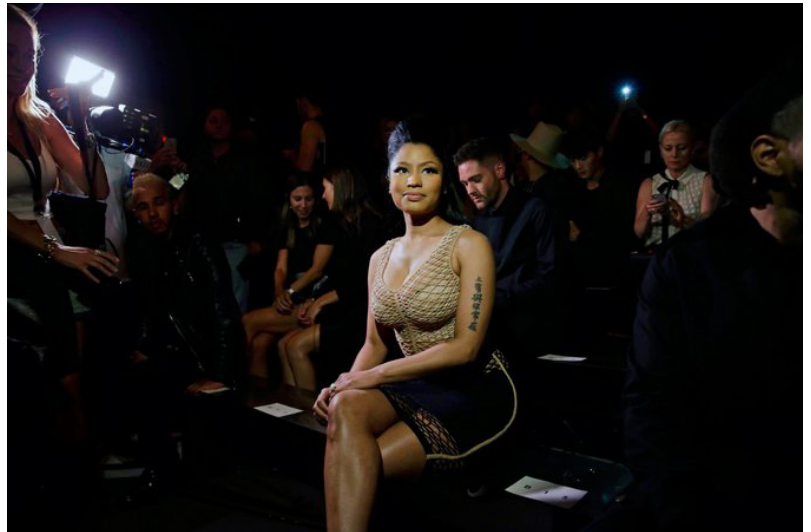
The New York Times

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 Berdymukhammedov, 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 Human 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>

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

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 Halvorsen 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.

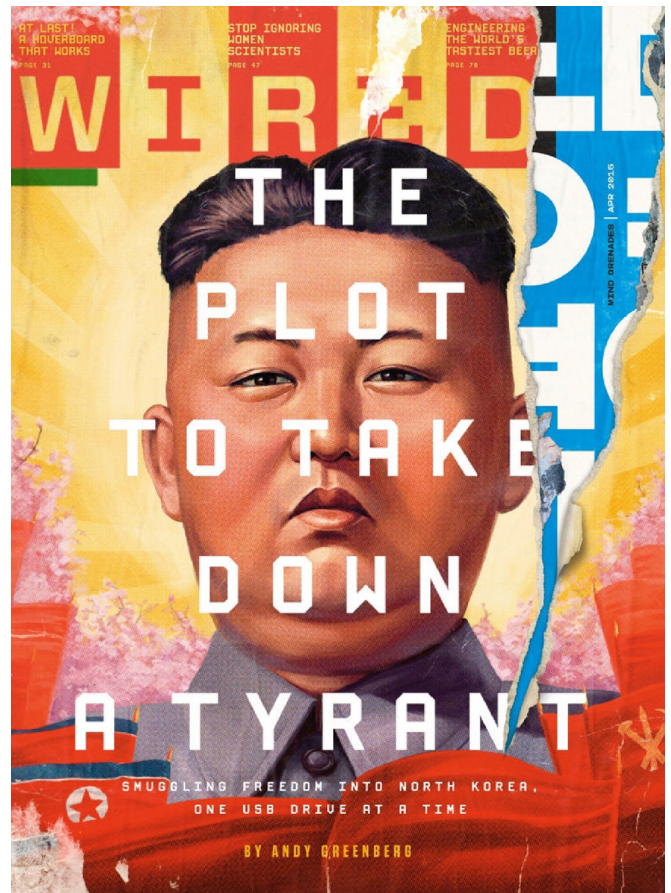
...

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/>



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>



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/>

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>

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.”

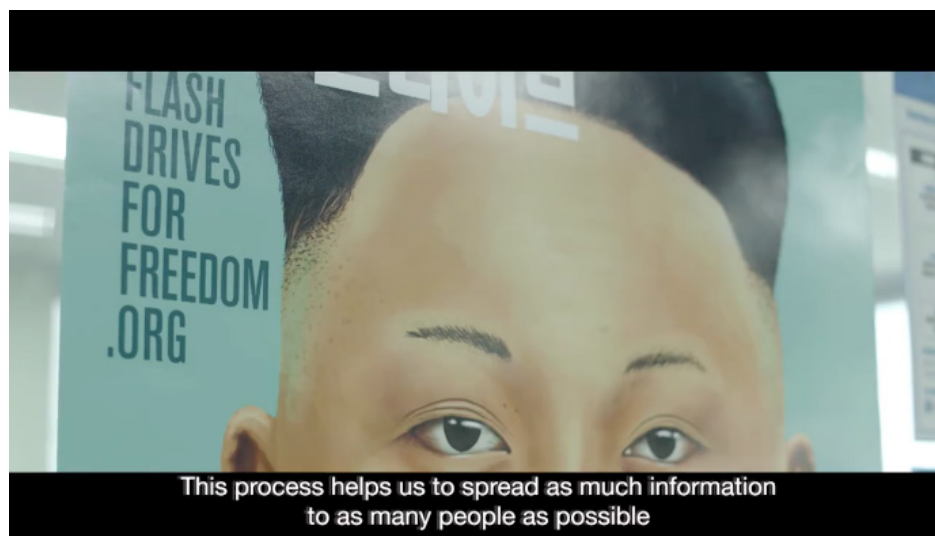
Read the rest of the article here: <http://www.theverge.com/2014/8/4/5966185/silicon-valley-hacks-north-korea>

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



On this day in 1950, President Harry Truman ordered American troops to enter South Korea to help the country repel the invasion by North Korean troops. Sixty-seven years later a group of exiles is waging a secret war with North Korea by smuggling information to the imprisoned population—one USB at a time

996K Views

The Economist published a video on efforts to get information into North Korea, and prominently featured the HRF program Flash Drives for Freedom. This video has accrued over 996,000 views, bringing human rights issues to mainstream audiences.

Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/XVRQpfXGQyc>

Challenging the Supporters of Tyranny

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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 클래드스타인(31) 미 인권재단(HRF) 전략기
서울 광화문 인문회관(프레스센터)에서 미 인권재단인
텐에서 그를 만났다.

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

이 단체 주축로 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.



Jenta som slo seg fri



GRAND HOTELL, OSLO (VG) Maria er oppvokst i Taliban-land. Som fireåring brente hun alle kjolene sine, og begynte å kle seg som gutt. Sporten ble hennes vei til frihet. Denne saken handler om:

Maria Toorpakai Wazir (26) er profesjonell squashspiller, fra Waziristan i Pakistan. Men mest av alt er hun en frihetskjemper. Neste uke deltar hun på Oslo Freedom Forum, menneskerettighetskonferansen som samler aktivister fra hele verden.

12 år gammel vant Maria en styrkeløftkonkurranse hjemme i Pakistan – som gutt. I klassen under 16 år, delt inn etter vekt. Mange av guttene hun vant over, var både eldre og høyere enn Maria. Men hun var sterkest.

Kort tid senere oppdaget hun squash. Det ble hennes store lidenskap. Det var da det ble avslørt at hun ikke var gutt. Innehaveren av squashsenteret ville ha fødselsattest for å skrive henne inn. Heldigvis var han en fordomsfrå mann, som ble begeistret over endelig å få inn en jente.

Men omgivelsene var ikke like fornøyd. Maria og familien ble utsatt for trusler og trakassering. Til slutt stengte Maria seg inne, frustrert og deprimer. I tre år slo hun ballen i veggen hjemme, mens hun hver dag skrev flere titalls brev til squash-trenere ute i verden, med bønn om hjelp. Svaret kom til slutt fra en av verdens beste spillere – fra Canada. 21 år gammel flyttet hun dit, og trente med ham i mange år.

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 sesenta, cuyo legado bautizó la famosa "Doctrina Betancourt", y que con los años fue codificado en distintos instrumentos jurídicos internacionales bajo el nombre de "cláusula democrática": lo mismo que quiere aplicar Macri hoy.

Chávez y Maduro han desmantelado las instituciones democráticas de Venezuela, brindado oxígeno a la única dictadura totalitaria del continente y adormecido cualquier posibilidad de acción en favor de la democracia a cargo de la OEA. Por el contrario, Rómulo Betancourt trabajó incansablemente para consolidar la democracia de su país, aislar diplomáticamente a todos los autoritarismos de la época y despertar a la OEA de su indiferencia frente a las víctimas tanto de las dictaduras militares anticomunistas respaldadas por Estados Unidos, como de los gobiernos comunistas y movimientos guerrilleros auspiciados desde Cuba y la Unión Soviética.

En un acto que Macri debería emular, Betancourt explicó su doctrina durante su primer mensaje al Congreso en 1959:

"Regímenes que no respeten los derechos humanos, que conculquen las libertades de sus ciudadanos y los tiranicen con respaldo de policías políticas totalitarias, deben ser sometidos a [un] riguroso cordón sanitario y erradicados mediante acción pacífica coligada de la comunidad internacional."

Al igual que un declaro su intención de estilo soviético respeto a su segundo la República Honduras



Le Oslo Freedom Forum réunit des opposants à des régimes autoritaires, des businessmen et des pontes de la tech. Pour la neuvième année consécutive, il s'agitait de partager témoignages, idées et stratégies pour défendre les droits humains.

complot mondial pour la démocratie

18 nov 2015



Des journalistes lors d'une manifestation pour la liberté de la presse, le 10 janvier 2016

Le public de l'Oslo Freedom Forum est invité depuis la scène. Seul, Tutul y raconte son histoire, celle d'un "gamin qui aimait bien lire" devenu journaliste. Il lance en 2004 une maison d'édition au Bangladesh, pour donner une plateforme à mes amis et partager nos idées. Ses textes sont de sensibilité laïque et profane : "On aimait parler de ce qui est tabou, comme l'homosexualité". En octobre 2015, une milice islamiste défonce la porte de son bureau de Dhaka dans l'intention de l'abattre - l'attaque est coordonnée, un autre éditeur athée sera tué ce jour-là dans le pays. Blessé au visage de plusieurs coups de machette, Tutul fuit au Népal dans un état critique. Neuf de ses confrères sont morts ces deux dernières années dans des attaques semblables. Tutul boîtie et n'entend plus que d'une oreille, mais ce jour-là à Oslo, il se tient droit. Sa demande d'asile en Norvège est en cours. "Le Bangladesh a une longue tradition de sécularisme. Les habitants ont le cœur sur la main", dira-t-il plus à l'écart. Le pop lui manque. Il parle de Toulouse, la dernière ville française où il s'est rendu, et des Editions de l'Asymétrie, qui publient ses livres. L'Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF), qui s'est tenu du 22 au 24 mai, c'est le "Davos des dissidents", selon The Economist. Trois jours de rencontres entre opposants - membres d'ONG, écrivains, activistes, politiques... - à des régimes autoritaires et des gros bonnets de la tech. Imaginer le patron de Twitter rencontrant les Pussy Riot, Julian Assange et Aung San Suu Kyi - tous sont d'anciens intervenants. Les 266 personnes ayant déjà pris la parole en neuf éditions ont purgé au total 260 années de prison (et trois sont actuellement incarcérées). A l'OFF, on débat de comment combattre le despotisme, la corruption, le fanatisme religieux. Au programme de cette année s'ajoutent les fake news, qui ont ébranlé les démocraties les plus stables. "Merci, Trump, de nous avoir réveillés... Le monde entier sait maintenant que la démocratie, c'est fragile", dira Garry Kasparov, ancien champion d'échecs, opposant à Poutine et président de l'Human Rights Foundation qui organise l'événement, lors d'un toast au Grand Hotel d'Oslo. ▶

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