



The 18th  
**GENEVA SUMMIT** for  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
and **DEMOCRACY**

**18 FEBRUARY 2026**



**UNITE AGAINST TYRANNY.  
RISE FOR FREEDOM.**

**MEDIA KIT**

# INVITATION FOR INTERVIEWS

The 18th Annual Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy will take place in Geneva on February 18, 2026.

**To schedule virtual or in-person interviews, please contact Naomi-Belen Aubert by email at [media@genevasummit.org](mailto:media@genevasummit.org).**

The Geneva Summit is a major annual event that shines a spotlight on urgent human rights situations requiring global attention. It provides human rights heroes, activists, former political prisoners, and the family members of current political prisoners with a unique platform to testify about their struggles for democracy and freedom while building an international community to challenge dictatorships.

The event is attended by hundreds of dissidents, victims of human rights abuses, diplomats, journalists, student leaders, and other concerned citizens. Thousands more watch online.

The Geneva Summit is sponsored by a coalition of over 30 human rights NGOs from around the world. It has been featured in media around the globe, including CNN, AFP, AP, DW, The Wall Street Journal, and The Australian.

# PROGRAM

18 FEBRUARY 2026

- 10:00      **WELCOME**  
**Hillel Neuer**, Executive Director of United Nations Watch,  
on behalf of 30 cosponsoring NGOs
- 10:10      **OPENING ADDRESS:**  
**CARRYING ON NAVALNY'S LEGACY**  
**Yulia Navalnaya**, Chair of the Human Rights Foundation  
and the Anti-Corruption Foundation, founded by her late  
husband, Alexei Navalny
- 10:25      **THE PRICE OF EXPOSING CORRUPTION IN VIETNAM**  
**Hue Nhu**, Vietnamese pro-democracy and anti-corruption  
activist, former political prisoner
- 10:35      **HONG KONG'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM IS NOT OVER**  
**Chloe Cheung**, Youngest Hong Kong democracy activist on  
Beijing's "Wanted Persons" list
- 10:45      **SILENCED FOR REPORTING:**  
**ZIMBABWE'S WAR ON THE PRESS**  
**Blessed Mhlanga**, Zimbabwean journalist,  
former political prisoner
- 10:55      **ESCAPING NORTH KOREA TO FREEDOM**  
**Kim Yumi**, North Korean defector,  
escaped by boat with family in 2023
- 11:05      **EMPTY CHAIR: KIDNAPPED AT AGE SIX,**  
**THE STORY OF THE 11TH PENCHAN LAMA**  
**GENDUN CHOKYI NYIMA**
- 11:10      **SUDAN ATROCITIES: SEEKING ACCOUNTABILITY**  
**Mutasim Ali**, Sudanese human rights advocate, Legal  
Advisor at the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
- 11:20      **DEFYING THE KREMLIN'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE**  
**Marina Ovsyannikova**, Journalist who famously interrupted  
live Russian TV news broadcast with a sign protesting  
Putin's war on Ukraine
- 11:45      **2026 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS AWARD**  
**Marzieh Hamidi**, Afghan-Iranian Taekwondo athlete,  
advocate for women's rights in Afghanistan
- 12:15      **LUNCH**

- 14:30 **KEYNOTE: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN BELARUS**  
**Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, President-elect of Belarus, forced into exile by Lukashenko after 2020 rigged election
- 14:45 **PANEL: COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION**  
*Moderator: Hillel Neuer*, Executive Director of United Nations Watch / **Leopoldo Lopez**, Venezuelan dissident, former political prisoner, co-founder of the World Liberty Congress / **Masih Alinejad**, Iranian journalist and women's rights activist, repeated target of attempted assassinations, co-founder of the World Liberty Congress
- 15:15 **MINORITIES UNDER FIRE IN SYRIA**  
**Aram Aqil**, Kurdish minority rights activist, former ISIS hostage
- 15:25 **EMPTY CHAIR: RUSSIAN POLITICAL PRISONER MIKHAIL KRIGER**
- 15:30 **VENEZUELA'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM**  
**Pedro Urruchurtu Noselli**, Venezuelan opposition advisor, wanted for arrest on politically motivated charges, who took refuge for over 400 days inside Argentine embassy in Caracas
- 15:40 **ART AND RESISTANCE: STANDING UP TO CUBA'S DICTATORSHIP**  
**Yúnior García Aguilera**, Cuban playwright and democracy activist
- 15:50 **THE CCP'S WAR ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**  
**Grace Jin Drexel**, Cuban playwright and democracy activist
- 16:00 **2026 COURAGE AWARD**  
Accepted by **Masih Alinejad**, on behalf of The Heroes of Iran
- 16:30 **CALL TO ACTION**
- 16:40 **END OF #GENEVASUMMIT2026**



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# YÚNIOR GARCÍA AGUILERA

ON CUBA

Yúnior García Aguilera is a Cuban playwright, writer, and activist for human rights and democracy.

García Aguilera was one of the organizers of the peaceful protest by artists in front of the Ministry of Culture in Havana on November 27, 2020. After participating in the demonstrations of July 11, 2021, he was detained for more than 24 hours and released under a precautionary order.

Upon his release, he founded the Archipiélago Civic Platform, a citizen initiative that organized peaceful demands for political change and the release of political prisoners in Cuba. The platform planned the Civic March for Change that was scheduled for November 15, 2021.

In the months leading up to the march, he was subjected to prolonged state harassment: repeated interrogations, threats from the Havana Provincial Prosecutor's Office, constant surveillance, internet and telephone service cutoffs, and acts of repudiation outside his home that included symbolic violence and direct threats against him and his family.

On November 14, 2021, his home was surrounded by paramilitary forces and Communist Party officials. For more than twelve hours, he, his wife, and his mother-in-law remained under siege, while the windows of the house were covered with Cuban flags and they were prevented from leaving.



On November 16, 2021, he was forced to leave Cuba with his wife. He currently resides in Spain, where he was granted political asylum.

Professionally, he is the founder of the Trébol Teatro group, where he wrote and directed more than a dozen plays, including Sangre, Pasaporte, and Jacuzzi. His works have been published and performed in Cuba, Argentina, the United States, Spain, Germany, and France. He is also a columnist for the independent Cuban newspaper 14ymedio.

## MORE

 [@yuniortrebol](https://twitter.com/yuniortrebol)

 [Voice of America — Cuban Dissident Vows to Keep Battling 'Brutal Tyranny' of Regime](#) (November 18, 2021)

 [CNN — Cuban Activist Yúnior García Aguilera Arrives in Spain](#) (November 17, 2021)

 [Deutsche Welle — Cuban Dissident Yúnior García Flies to Spain](#) (November 17, 2021)



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# MUTASIM ALI

## ON SUDAN

Mutasim Ali is a legal advisor at the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights and the co-author of an independent legal analysis on alleged breaches of the Genocide Convention in Sudan.

A survivor of the Darfur genocide, Ali was born in 1987 in Daba Naria, near El-Fasher. While studying in Sudan, he founded a grassroots student movement opposing the regime's persecution of Darfurians and was imprisoned three times, enduring severe torture. During the genocide, he learned that his family had been displaced to a camp and that many relatives and childhood friends had been killed. He ultimately chose exile so he could continue his advocacy, fleeing first to Egypt and then to Israel as a refugee.

Ali later pursued advanced legal studies in the United States, earning an LL.M. in International & Comparative Law at George Washington University. He is currently a Doctor of Juridical Science candidate at American University Washington College of Law, where his research focuses on peacemaking and constitution-making in post-conflict states. He is the co-author of *A War on Children, a World Complicit*, and is a prominent voice calling for justice and accountability for atrocities unfolding in El-Fasher and across Sudan.



## MORE

 [@mutasimali3](https://twitter.com/mutasimali3)

 [Deutsche Welle — The Dire Situation in Sudan's Besieged City of El-Fasher](#) (August 7, 2025)

 [National Post — Coalition Urges 'Wake-Up Call' to Address Genocide in Sudan](#) (November 25, 2025)

 [BBC — Mutasim Ali on the "War on Children" in Sudan](#) (October 17, 2025)



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# MASIH ALINEJAD

ON IRAN

Masih Alinejad is founder of the My Stealthy Freedom campaign against the compulsory hijab, a women's rights activist, author and journalist.

Born in Iran, she was jailed at 18 for her writings against the Islamic Republic. She became a journalist at the ILNA news agency and at Hambastegi, a reformist newspaper where she exposed corruption among Iranian members of parliament. She later became a columnist for Etemad Melli, a daily newspaper founded by presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi.

She left Iran in 2009, escaping arrest after fraudulent presidential elections that saw the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In 2014, she created the My Stealthy Freedom campaign to provide a platform for Iranian women to protest compulsory hijab rules.

In 2019, three of Alinejad's family members were arrested by Iranian authorities for her activism abroad. In 2021, an Iranian plot to kidnap her from her New York home was foiled by American intelligence services. The following year, she narrowly escaped an assassination attempt orchestrated by the IRGC. In October 2025, two Russian mobsters involved in the plot were convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Among her many accomplishments, she is co-founder and President of the World Liberty Congress, and co-founder of United Against Gender Apartheid. After 8 years of leading Tablet, a political satire show on Voice of America, she now hosts The World



According to Masih, a podcast exploring democracy, human rights, and the global struggle against authoritarianism.

Her activism and its personal toll are documented in the award-winning film *Be My Voice* (2021), directed by Nahid Persson Sarvestani. Her leadership has earned her prestigious honors, including Time Magazine's Woman of the Year (2023), the Oxi Courage Award, the Washington Institute's Scholar-Statesman Award. She was also the inaugural recipient of the Geneva Summit's International Women's Rights Award in 2015.

## MORE

- [Geneva Summit 2015 Women's Rights Award with Masih Alinejad](#)
- [@AlinejadMasih](#)
- [The New York Times — Man Sentenced to 15 Years for Role in Plot to Kill Iranian Dissident](#) (January 28, 2026)
- [The Wall Street Journal — Q&A: Masih Alinejad on Iran](#) (January 19, 2026)
- [Le Parisien — Masih Alinejad, opposante iranienne : « La désobéissance civile contre ce régime criminel est inarrêtable »](#) (April 26, 2024)



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# ARAM AQIL

## ON SYRIA

Aram Aqil is a Kurdish human rights defender who has dedicated his work to exposing extremism and defending minority rights.

Aqil's commitment to human rights is deeply personal. In 2014, while working as a video journalist documenting ISIS crimes during the Syrian Civil War, he was taken hostage by ISIS and held for 280 days. After his release in a prisoner exchange in 2015, he fled to Germany and wrote *In Our Midst*, a best-selling book published in German and Dutch in 2017.

Over the past nine years, Aqil has led and coordinated numerous civil society initiatives focusing on documenting human rights violations, preventing extremism, and advocating for minority rights. He has represented Kurdish civil society in many diplomatic forums. He is also a member of the WeAreMENA Network.

In September 2025, he moderated a panel on the situation of the Druze community in Syria at a UN Human Rights Council side event. He currently leads the NGO Yekmal e.V. in Germany, and serves on the Council for Participation and Diversity in the state of Bremen.



## MORE

 [@aram\\_aqil](https://twitter.com/aram_aqil)

 **Swiss Info** — In Geneva, Syrian Minorities Demand Protection and Federalism (September 11, 2025)

 **Deutsche Welle** — [Masoud's List - From 'IS' Victim to Terrorist Hunter](#) (October 17, 2017)

 **The Independent** — [The Former ISIS Captive Tracking Down Jihadists in Germany](#) (October 8, 2016)



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# CHLOE CHEUNG

## ON HONG KONG

Chloe Cheung is a Hong Kong pro-democracy activist.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, she joined the city's pro-democracy movement at age 14 during the 2019 protests, witnessing first-hand the police violence, mass arrests, and dismantling of civil liberties that reshaped her generation. After the imposition of the National Security Law, she entered self-exile in 2020 to continue her advocacy abroad.

In London, she joined the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, leading global campaigns calling for the release of political prisoners, safeguarding Hong Kongers from transnational repression, and urging democratic governments to impose targeted Magnitsky sanctions on officials responsible for human rights abuses in Hong Kong.

In December 2024, Hong Kong authorities issued a HK\$1 million bounty for her arrest under the National Security Law, making her one of the youngest activists ever targeted. She has since faced intimidation, surveillance, online sexual harassment, and has been followed by suspicious individuals in London—part of a wider strategy to silence exiled Hong Kong dissidents.

Despite these threats, Cheung continues to speak out by addressing major international platforms, including the Oslo Freedom Forum, and engaging with global media—including the BBC, CBC, Channel 4, The Guardian, The New York Times, Sky News, The Wall Street Journal, and more.



At just 20 years old, Chloe Cheung received the 2025 Magnitsky Award for Outstanding Young Human Rights Activist for her exceptional bravery, leadership on the international stage, and unshakeable commitment to a future in which Hong Kong's people can live free from fear and repression. In 2025, Cheung was also shortlisted for the Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Award (Campaigning) for her role in defending silenced communities and holding perpetrators to account.

### MORE

 [@Chloe\\_chc\\_25](https://twitter.com/Chloe_chc_25)

 [The Guardian — 'I Don't Expect to Live a Normal Life': How a Leeds Teenager Woke Up With a Chinese Bounty on Her Head](#) (August 11, 2025)

 [The Free Press — She Fled Repression in Hong Kong. Will the UK Betray Her?](#) (July 31, 2025)

 [BBC — The A-level Student Who Became an Enemy of the Chinese State](#) (February 16, 2025)



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# MARZIEH HAMIDI

## ON AFGHANISTAN

Marzieh Hamidi, born in Iran in 2002 to a family of Afghan exiles, is an elite taekwondo athlete and a powerful voice for women's rights. She spent her childhood between Iran and Afghanistan, and was in Kabul when the Taliban seized power in August 2021. To secure her future in sport and escape growing repression, she was forced to flee, a departure made possible thanks to the support of ELLE magazine. Rebuilding her life in France, she now trains at INSEP with the French national team.

Far from becoming an activist, Marzieh has been deeply committed to the fight for women's rights from a very young age. Her voice, sharp and courageous, has made her a symbol of resistance against oppression. She speaks out on the international stage, from the French National Assembly to UNESCO, to denounce the Taliban and defend the rights and freedom of young women.

Her strength and integrity have captured international attention, with features in Vanity Fair, Le Figaro, L'Équipe, CNN and others.

Since September 2024, Marzieh has been living under 24/7 police protection in France due to explicit threats of death and rape, delivered online and by phone, directly linked to her activism. These threats are now the subject of an ongoing investigation.

Despite the danger, she refuses to be silenced. Through both sport and advocacy, she continues to fight for justice, for freedom, and for every young woman who dares to raise her voice.



In September 2025, she released her book "Ils n'auront pas mon silence" co-written with Baptiste Bérard Proust and published by Robert Laffont, one of France's leading publishing houses.

### MORE

 [@MarziehHamidi](#)

 [Le Figaro — Elle vit cachée en France, sous protection policière : Marzieh Hamidi, l'athlète afghane qui veut terrasser les talibans](#)  
(September 18, 2025)

 [France 24 — Taekwondo Star Hamidi Sacrifices Her Freedom to Battle the Taliban](#)  
(January 24, 2025)

 [CNN — 'We Have Your Location': The Taliban Death Threats Hounding This Afghan Woman](#)  
(October 13, 2024)



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# GRACE JIN DREXEL

## ON CHINA

Grace Jin Drexel is the daughter of Pastor Ezra Jin, founder of Zion Church in China. Zion Church is one of the largest and most prominent underground churches in China, with nearly 100 branches across 40 cities and more than 10,000 regular worshippers.

In October 2025, the Chinese government detained Pastor Jin and 27 other church leaders as part of the largest crackdown against underground churches in China in the last 40 years.

Since Pastor Jin's arrest, Grace has emerged as a leading advocate for her father's release, speaking out in international media, such as the BBC, CNN, and The Washington Post. Her advocacy has drawn significant international attention and pressure, prompting the U.S. State Department to publicly call for Pastor Jin's release.

Grace previously worked as a research associate at the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, where she focused on freedom of expression and religious freedom.



## MORE

-  [France 24 — Daughter of 'Underground' Pastor Urges China for His Release](#)  
(November 3, 2025)
-  [CNN — Her Dad Was Detained in China for Leading a Church. She Hopes Trump Can Free Him in Meeting With Xi](#)  
(October 29, 2025)
-  [BBC — China Arrested 30 Christians. Some Fear it's the Start of a Bigger Crackdown](#)  
(October 15, 2025)



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# LEOPOLDO LÓPEZ

## ON VENEZUELA

Leopoldo López is a Venezuelan dissident, former political prisoner, and co-founder of the World Liberty Congress.

From 2000–2008, López served two terms as mayor of the municipality of Chacao, finishing his mandate with a 92% approval rate. He also won third place at the World Mayor Awards and the 2007 and 2008 “Premio Transparencia,” awarded by Transparency International.

In 2009, he founded the Voluntad Popular political party and has served as its national coordinator ever since. In 2014, he was unjustly detained by the Maduro regime and was sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment. He spent four years in a military prison, a year and a half in house arrest, and another year and a half in the Spanish embassy in Caracas under political asylum. In October 2020, López escaped from Venezuela through Colombia to join his family in Spain.

In 2022, he co-founded the World Liberty Congress, which seeks to serve as a counterweight against the global autocratic alliance by connecting non-violent, pro-democracy activists and leaders from across the globe.

From exile, López continues his fight for Venezuela’s democracy and freedom. While in prison, López was able to write two books: *Preso pero Libre* and *Venezuela Energética*. He has also published articles in major media outlets, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, and *Le Monde*, among others.



López has received several international awards, including the Harvard Alumni Achievement Award (2014), the Sakharov Prize for Freedom and Thought (2017), the NED’s Democracy Award (2013), the Geneva Summit Courage Award (2016), the Freedom and Democracy Award (2021), the Florida Governor’s Award (2017), the Bruno Leoni Award (2017), and the Libertad Cortes de Cádiz of the Cádiz City Hall (2015).

## MORE

 [@leopoldolopez](https://twitter.com/leopoldolopez)

 [CNN](#) — [CNN speaks to Venezuelan opposition leader](#) (December 3, 2025)

 [Reuters](#) — [Venezuela AG Requests Interpol Red Notice for Opposition’s Leopoldo Lopez](#) (January 13, 2025)

 [The Wall Street Journal](#) — [Opposition Leader Leopoldo López Flees Venezuela for Exile in Spain](#) (October 25, 2020)



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# BLESSED MHLANGA

## ON ZIMBABWE

Blessed Mhlanga is a distinguished journalist in Zimbabwe, celebrated for his fearless reporting and dedication to press freedom. He heads the news department at Heart & Soul TV (HStv) and hosts the platform's flagship talk show, "FreeTalk." Through his reporting, Mhlanga has consistently worked to uncover the truth and demand accountability from those in power.

On February 24, 2025, Mhlanga was charged with incitement to public violence after covering press conferences by Blessed "Bombshell" Geza, an outspoken critic of President Emmerson Mnangagwa who had called for the president's resignation over corruption.

Mhlanga was held in pre-trial detention for 73 days. Despite repeated appeals, he was denied bail three times. Mhlanga's arrest and detention were widely condemned by media rights groups, with critics arguing it was a deliberate move to suppress independent journalism in Zimbabwe. On his fourth request for bail, in May 2025, Mhlanga was finally released.

Following his release, Mhlanga has become an outspoken advocate for press freedom, documenting his imprisonment and highlighting the escalating repression faced by journalists in Zimbabwe.



Mhlanga received the Zimbabwe Election Reporting Award's "Best 2018 Election Reporter" prize for an investigative piece examining the 2018 voters' roll, which revealed interference aimed at securing victory for Emmerson Mnangagwa.

### MORE

 [@bbmhlanga](https://twitter.com/bbmhlanga)

 [Columbia Journalism Review — 'It Was Hell on Earth': Zimbabwean Journalist Blessed Mhlanga on His Imprisonment \(August 20, 2025\)](#)

 [RSF — Zimbabwe: RSF calls on judicial authorities to acquit journalist Blessed Mhlanga \(May 13, 2025\)](#)

 [France 24 — Zimbabwe : un journaliste libéré sous caution après deux mois de détention \(May 6, 2025\)](#)



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# YULIA NAVALNAYA

ON RUSSIA

Yulia Navalnaya is a freedom fighter, human rights activist, and the widow of Alexei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader who was murdered by the Putin regime in February 2024.

For over two decades, Yulia has been a steadfast supporter of her husband's fight for democracy, justice, and the rule of law in Russia. While Alexei campaigned against Vladimir Putin's regime, exposing corruption and advocating for political reform, Yulia maintained a key role behind the scenes. She managed family life and often acted as her husband's most trusted confidant, enduring his repeated arrests, threats, and attempts on his life.

Yulia's life changed dramatically after Alexei survived a poisoning attempt in 2020 and was later imprisoned upon his return to Russia. Since then, she has become more visible on the international stage, taking on a larger public role in advocating for his release and promoting the cause of democracy in Russia. Following Alexei Navalny's death, Yulia vowed to carry on his fight for a freer Russia.

Today, Yulia is one of the key figures in the Russian opposition. She serves as the Chairwoman of the Human Rights Foundation and the Chairwoman of the Advisory Board of the Anti-Corruption Foundation.

Yulia has been recognized internationally for her human rights and democracy advocacy, including receiving Central European University's Open Society Prize, Deutsche



Welle's Freedom of Speech Award (shared with the Anti-Corruption Foundation), and the Athenagoras Human Rights Award. She has also been honored with Politiken's Freedom Prize and the Magnitsky Human Rights Award, among many others.

## MORE

 [@yulia\\_Navalnaya](https://twitter.com/yulia Navalnaya)

 [Politico — Alexei Navalny's Wife and Political Heir Still Has 'Big Hopes' for Russia](#)  
(December 11, 2025)

 [BBC — Tests Show Navalny Was Poisoned in Jail, His Widow Says](#)  
(September 17, 2025)

 [Le Parisien — Ioulia Navalnaïa, veuve d'Alexeï Navalny : « Rien n'arrêtera Poutine »](#) (October 22, 2024)



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# HUE NHU

## ON VIETNAM

Hue Nhu is a Vietnamese democracy and anti-corruption activist. After being a public school teacher for sixteen years, she began her activism in 2018 when she joined the nationwide movement against Build–Operate–Transfer (BOT) projects, denouncing corruption and the illegal placement of toll stations. Her peaceful activism led to harassment, arrests, and violent repression by Vietnamese authorities.

In 2019, she was repeatedly abducted, interrogated, and assaulted by security forces—including a brutal attack while livestreaming a protest that caused a miscarriage—before being arrested on charges of “disturbing public order” and sentenced to 39 months in prison. During her detention, she endured physical and psychological abuse and spoke out against inhumane prison conditions, contributing to reforms for female prisoners.

Released in January 2023, she resumed her activism by documenting prison abuses, supporting families of prisoners of conscience, and cooperating with independent media and NGOs. Her renewed efforts led to intensified repression.

On May 13, 2024, she was abducted and coerced into signing confessions, and later that month, after narrowly escaping another attempted abduction, she fled the country.

Since June 2025, she has lived in Germany as a political refugee. From exile, she continues



to advocate for imprisoned activists in Vietnam at international forums—including most recently at the European Parliament—calling for human rights and accountability in Vietnam.

### MORE



[/dangnhuuetb](#)



**Dan Tri** — [Dang Thi Hue Has Been Charged and an Arrest Warrant Has Been Issued](#) (November 6, 2025)



**Voice of America Vietnamese** — [RSF Speaks Out About the Prosecution of Journalist Doan Bao Chau](#) (January 7, 2025)



**Radio Free Asia** — [International Writers' Group Urges Vietnam to Stop Harassing Activist](#) (October 22, 2024)



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# PEDRO URRUCHURTU NOSELLI

ON VENEZUELA

Pedro Urruchurtu Noselli is a Venezuelan political scientist, professor, and activist who serves as Coordinator of International Affairs for the political party Vente Venezuela and as International Relations Coordinator for opposition leader Maria Corina Machado and President-elect Edmundo González through the unified ConVzla campaign. Through these roles, he has been at the forefront of Venezuela's democracy movement—making him a target of political persecution by the Maduro regime.

As a result of his work on González's presidential campaign, in March 2024—facing imminent arrest on fabricated charges—Urruchurtu sought asylum at the Embassy of Argentina in Caracas. He was held hostage there by the regime for more than 400 days, until his rescue through a precise and remarkable international operation led by the United States in May 2025.

From within the embassy, during 14 months under the most difficult conditions—including lack of basic services such as water, food, and medicine—and despite the constant siege and harassment by political police forces, Urruchurtu continued to direct the international relations of the opposition campaign. He maintained active contact with governments, foreign ministries, parliaments, political and social organizations, and allies of the Venezuelan democratic cause.



Urruchurtu has been internationally recognized for his leadership and courage in the struggle for democracy and freedom. He is the recipient of the 2024 Göttel Prize awarded by the Swedish International Liberal Centre (SILC), the 2024 Freedom Award from the International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY), and the 2025 Freedom Award from the International Republican Institute (IRI), among others.

## MORE

 [@Urruchurtu](#)

 [AP News — Venezuelan Opposition Figures Trapped in Argentine Embassy Speak for First Time Since Leaving It](#) (May 25, 2025)

 [Courrier International — L'énigmatique "sauvetage" des opposants vénézuéliens réfugiés dans l'ambassade d'Argentine](#) (May 9, 2025)

 [Financial Times — Venezuelan Dissidents Escape to US in 'Epic Operation'](#) (May 7, 2025)



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# MARINA OVSYANNIKOVA

ON RUSSIA



Marina Ovsyannikova is a Russian journalist and former editor in the international news department at Channel One, Russia's state-controlled television network.

On March 14, 2022, less than a month after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she stunned audiences worldwide by interrupting Channel One's flagship evening program *Vremya* with an on-air protest, holding a sign that read: "No War. Don't believe the propaganda. They're lying to you here."

For this act of conscience, Ovsyannikova was arrested and interrogated, fined twice, and charged under Russia's "disinformation" laws targeting criticism of the military. Placed under house arrest and facing up to 10 years in a penal labor colony, she escaped days before trial—cutting off her electronic monitoring bracelet and fleeing Russia with her daughter with assistance from Reporters Without Borders (RSF). She ultimately reached Paris, where France granted her political asylum following President Emmanuel Macron's public offer of protection.

In October 2023, a Russian court sentenced her in absentia to eight and a half years in a penal colony and imposed a 10-year internet ban, reportedly over her statements about child casualties in Ukraine drawn from UN statistics which the Kremlin regards as fake news. In October 2025, Russian authorities added her to the country's "foreign agent" registry.

From exile, Ovsyannikova continues to speak out against Russia's war on Ukraine, exposing the authoritarian propaganda she once helped produce. She is the author of *Russians Against the War: Six Seconds on Air*.

## MORE

✂ [@newslady19](#)

📰 [Le Parisien — Condamnée en Russie, la nouvelle vie en France de Marina Ovsyannikova, la « journaliste à la pancarte »](#) (March 17, 2024)

📰 [BBC — Marina Ovsyannikova: Anti-War Russian Journalist Sentenced in Absentia](#) (October 4, 2023)

📰 [Le Monde — Former Russian TV Journalist Marina Ovsyannikova in Exile: 'Only Fear and the Insanity of War Remain'](#) (February 18, 2023)



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# SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA

ON BELARUS



Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is the Head of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus and is the country's President-elect, widely recognized as the winner of the August 9, 2020, presidential election against autocrat Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Independent observers concluded that she won a vote marred by widespread fraud and followed by violent repression.

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Tsikhanouskaya was among the first leaders to condemn the aggression, openly support Ukraine, and initiate an international anti-war campaign. She has consistently called for stronger sanctions against both Vladimir Putin's and Lukashenka's regimes.

As the leader of Belarus's democratic forces, Tsikhanouskaya has built critical democratic institutions in exile. She established the United Transitional Cabinet to coordinate strategic decisions and launched the Coordination Council, an elected proto-parliament representing Belarusians worldwide.

She has visited more than 40 countries, advocating for the release of over 1,300 political prisoners, securing humanitarian assistance, and promoting a peaceful democratic transition through free and fair elections. Tsikhanouskaya has been de facto recognized by many governments as the legitimate leader of Belarus and has met with global leaders including Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen, Donald Trump, Justin Trudeau, Friedrich Merz, and Maia Sandu.

Under her leadership, Belarusian democratic forces have strengthened partnerships with the European Union, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and other allies. She also initiated a Contact Group with the Council of Europe to keep Belarus on the global agenda.

Tsikhanouskaya entered politics in 2020 after her husband, Sergey Tihanovski, was arrested for announcing his candidacy. Dismissed by Lukashenka as a "housewife," she united the opposition and inspired the largest peaceful protest movement in Belarus's history. Between 2020 and 2025, she became a global symbol of democratic resilience and principled leadership, earning major international awards and multiple Nobel Peace Prize nominations.

## MORE

-  [Belarus: Fearless in the Face of Tyranny with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya](#)
-  [@Tsihanouskaya](#)
-  [Euro News — Dictators 'Testing the Borders of Europe,' Belarus Opposition Leader Tells Euronews \(December 8, 2025\)](#)
-  [The Guardian — 'My Husband is Free!' Belarus Opposition Leader Freed After Nearly Five Years in Jail \(June 21, 2025\)](#)
-  [Le Monde — Le combat de l'opposante biélorusse Svetlana Tsikhanovskaïa pour se faire entendre \(April 28, 2023\)](#)



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# KIM YUMI

## ON NORTH KOREA

Kim Yumi is a North Korean defector who escaped with eight members of her family to South Korea in 2023.

Born and raised in Haeju, South Hwanghae Province, a coastal military area, she grew up surrounded by state propaganda and intense surveillance. Living near a naval base, she found rare opportunities to access outside information, secretly watching South Korean news programs and television—an experience that helped her understand the freedoms denied to North Koreans and the truth the regime works to conceal.

In search of a better future, Kim and her husband organized a daring escape for their family by boat in the middle of the night, risking their lives to reach South Korea.

Now living in Seoul, she has founded Lumina, a non-profit organization dedicated to bridging cultural divides between the two Koreas through content creation and various initiatives. She is also actively involved in raising awareness about the realities of life in North Korea, particularly through her YouTube channel.



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-  [/@KimYumiTV](#)
-  [The Dispatch](#) — [From North Korea, a Messenger](#) (June 16, 2025)
-  [Radio Free Asia](#) — [“I Didn’t Want to Pass On the Fourth Generation of Hereditary Succession,” North Korean Defector Testifies at Oslo Forum](#) (June 2, 2025)
-  [Human Rights Foundation](#) — [Inside the Prison State](#) (November 3, 2025)