

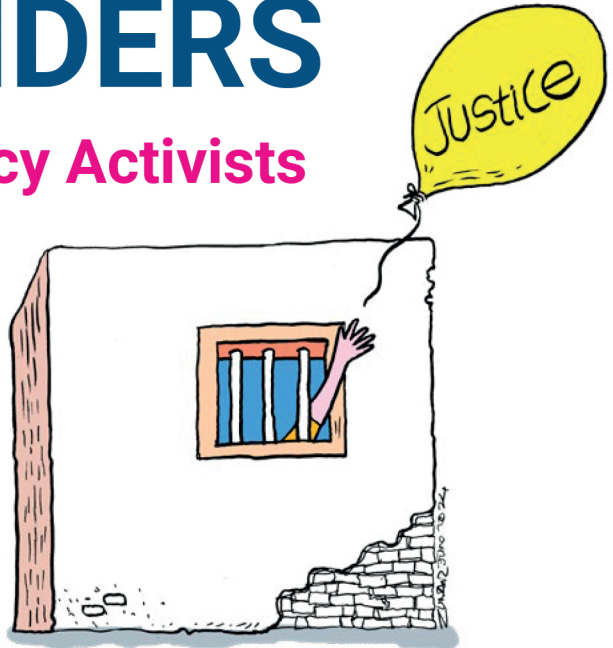


FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION For Freedom.

UP!
for democracy

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Pro-Democracy Activists





**“PEOPLE WHO STAND UP
FOR DEMOCRACY
IN AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS
NEED AND DESERVE
OUR SUPPORT.”**

SABINE LEUTHEUSSER-SCHNARRENBERGER

Many brave individuals risk their lives to fight for democracy in their countries. They remain unwavering in their convictions, striving for a life in freedom for themselves and others free from fear, constant surveillance, and the risk of being persecuted and imprisoned for expressing any political views.

We are reminded of Alexei Navalny’s tireless efforts against corruption and autocracy in Russia, his unbroken courage after the Russian intelligence service’s poison attack, and how he continued to inspire others from within the penal colony until the intolerable living conditions and solitary confinement there led to his death – a fate seemingly accepted by the regime. Navalny sacrificed his life for a democratic Russia. Many other Russian opposition figures are imprisoned, subjected to inhumane treatment and torture. This

includes Vladimir Kara-Murza, who survived two poison attacks but was sentenced to 25 years in a penal colony for his political activism. He was recently released as part of a prisoner exchange, along with Ilya Yashin and others.

Narges Mohammadi, the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, continues to fight in Iran – even behind bars – against the brutal Iranian regime of oppression and violation of women’s and human rights. The perseverance of Kara-Murza and Narges Mohammadi highlights the profound impact that the voice of an individual can have in the global struggle for human rights and democracy.

The challenges facing human rights defenders and advocates of democracy are immense, as they are for the courageous women fighting for justice and equality. They often face not only state-sponsored violence, persecution, and imprisonment but also insidious tactics on an international level. Authoritarian regimes employ surveillance, harassment, and even transnational attacks to silence dissidents who have sought refuge abroad, brazenly violating international law – a fact that does not trouble Putin and his cronies. These actions significantly undermine the foundations of global human rights protection and democratic structures.

There is an unprecedented need for support and initiatives at the international level. Dictators must be confronted with all the legal and political tools available. This includes sanctions, enforcement of international criminal law, and political support for democracy and freedom activists, as well as creating public awareness.

The voices advocating for democracy should be amplified. Strengthening the current international order is crucial for the systematic protection of victims and the preservation of humanity's invaluable heritage – the democratic form of government.

In this publication, you will learn more about the personal lives, motivations, beliefs, actions, and ongoing struggles of courageous dissidents and human rights defenders, as well as their thoughts on increasing protection and support, and the current regional and global discourse. They are fighting not only for their respective countries but also for the universal values of freedom, justice, and human dignity.

I invite you to read this publication. May you be inspired by these remarkable individuals to support human rights.

UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

– AN EXCERPT –



Article 1

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.

Article 2

Each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms [...].



Article 7

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance.

Article 8

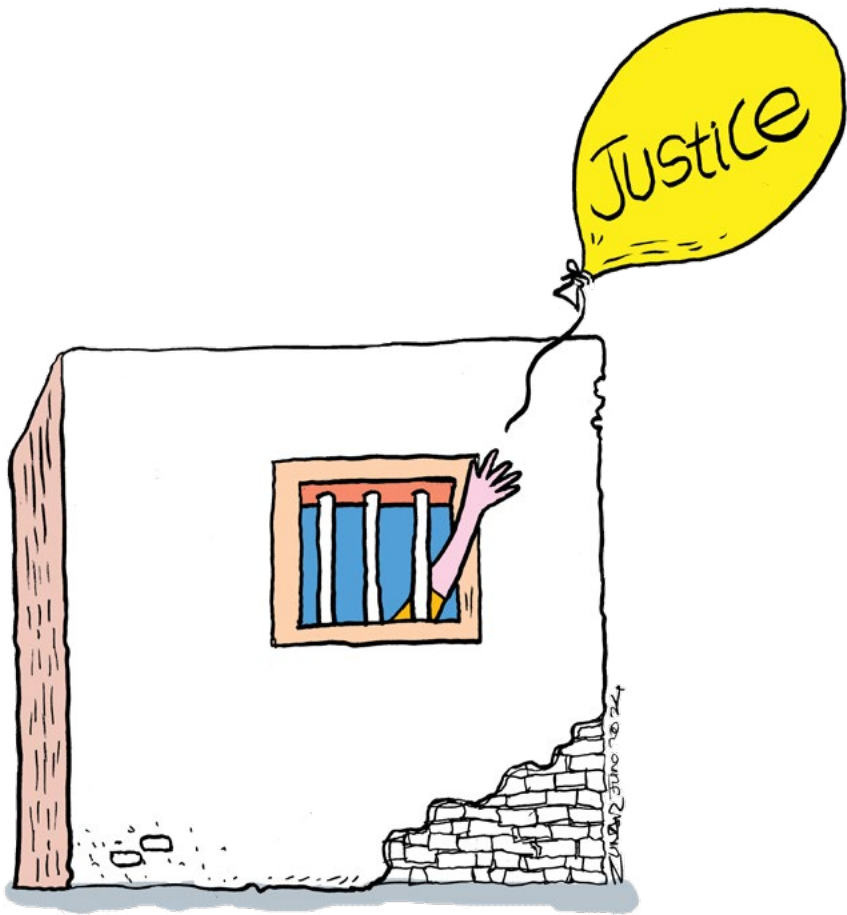
Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to have effective access, on a non-discriminatory basis, to participation in the government of his or her country and in the conduct of public affairs.

Article 12

Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 18

1. Everyone has duties towards and within the community, in which alone the free and full development of his or her personality is possible.
2. Individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations have an important role to play and a responsibility in safeguarding democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributing to the promotion and advancement of democratic societies, institutions and processes.



IRAN

NARGES MOHAMMADI

“I call on supporters of democracy worldwide to rise and create a global force.”

Narges Mohammadi is a 2023 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, women’s rights, and pro-democracy activist from Iran. She studied applied physics at the International University in Qazvin. As a student, she co-founded the independent student organization “Roshangaran,” leading to her arrest twice due to her opposition to the government. Starting her journalism career in 1996, she wrote about students and women’s movements, eventually joining the journalists’ union. She also co-founded several independent organizations. Despite losing her job due to her activism, she worked as an engineering inspector for nearly 10 years before being fired by an order from the Ministry of Information. Her human rights activities led to multiple arrests, solitary confinement, and a cumulative prison sentence exceeding 32 years. She established several human rights institutions, including the Women’s Citizenship Center and “Abolishing Death Penalty Step by Step.” In 2023, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her fight for women’s and human rights, with her twins, Ali and Kiana, accepting the prize on her behalf as she remains in prison.



**Read here
the interview!**





**Read here
the interview!**

AFGHANISTAN

FAWZIA KOOFI

“My motivation for my work is the need of my people, especially of the women in Afghanistan”

Fawzia Koofi is an Afghan politician and human rights advocate who served as Vice President of the Afghan National Assembly and participated in peace negotiations in Doha. Her advocacy for women’s rights began in 1995 after the Taliban barred women from education. Elected to Parliament in 2005, Koofi became the first female Deputy Speaker and chaired the women and human rights committee. She led initiatives to improve conditions for imprisoned women, prevent violence against women and children, and promote education. From 2016 to 2019, Koofi was a key figure in the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Human Rights Committee. In 2021, the Taliban placed her under house arrest, but she managed to escape. Now, she travels globally, advocating for Afghan women’s rights and raising awareness about the security consequences of neglecting Afghanistan. Recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Koofi is the author of “The Favored Daughter” and has received numerous international awards. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Kabul University and a master’s from the Geneva School of Diplomacy.



1/10/24
Sharon
2024



EGYPT-TUNISIA

MOHAMMED MOSTAFA

“Tunisia was the last hope for democracy in this region.”

Mohammed Mostafa is an Egyptian human rights and democracy activist, and a researcher in the field of freedom of expression, students' rights, and academic freedom. Mostafa has extensive experience working with civil society organizations like the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, and the Law and Society Unit at the American University of Cairo, where he designed programs on economic, social, and cultural rights and monitored human rights developments. Currently, he is the Executive Director of the Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms. Mostafa has authored numerous reports, policy briefs, and opinion articles. He has also coordinated campaigns and workshops related to student rights and freedoms. In Tunisia, while in exile, he edited many reports on institutional human rights violations on freedom of expression, and the right to peaceful assembly.



Read the
article here!



Read the
article here!

HONG KONG

RAY WONG TOI-YEUNG

“My Battle for Human Rights.”

Ray Wong was born and raised in Hong Kong and has been actively involved in grassroots activism from a young age. In 2015, Ray founded the political group „Hong Kong Indigenous“, whose slogan „Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of our times“ became the motto of the 2019 protests. During his time in Hong Kong, he was arrested multiple times for his activism and charged with „incitement to riot“, a charge that can carry a sentence of up to ten years. Ray fled Hong Kong in 2017 and was granted asylum in Germany. Since then, he lives and studies in Göttingen. Ray Wong is involved in multiple organizations: He is an advisor to Hong Kong Watch, as well as a co-founder and editorial board member of the first Hong Kong diaspora magazine, Flow HK. In 2022, he co-founded „Freiheit für Hongkong e.V.“, an organization that plays an important role in Germany in raising awareness and engaging with policymakers.

persecution



ZUNAD
6/20/2024



“Turn your anger into a positive one, and fight!”



**Read the
article here!**



SERBIA

RAŠA NEDELJKOV

“Democracy is a continuous peaceful struggle and a never-ending process of change.”

Raša Nedeljkov is Program Director of the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) in Serbia. He has been managing CRTA's programs since 2013. Since 2016, he has been acting as a Chief of the CRTA's election observation mission, responsible for the overall coordination and leadership of the mission's teams and operations within the monitoring of election campaigns and voting processes during the presidential, parliamentary, city, and several local elections in Serbia. As a result of these experiences, Raša acquired a broad understanding of electoral processes and procedures and has been actively supporting free, fair, and democratic elections. He also has extensive expertise and knowledge of the country's media environment and citizens' perceptions, attitudes, and habits in consuming information and media outputs. Besides the public representation of CRTA and its findings, Raša provides analyses, training expertise, and consultancy on the state of play of institutions' performance and development, accountability, transparency, and good governance in Serbia and the region to a wide range of organizations and institutions.

RUSSIA

ILIA YASHIN

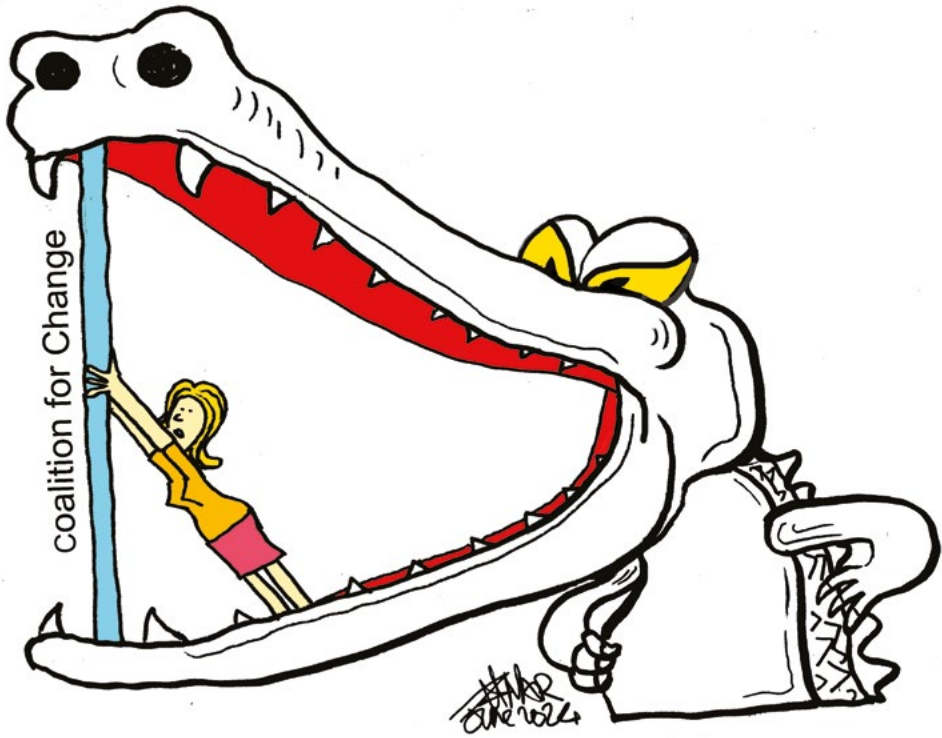
“I would like to see Russia as a peaceful, free, and just state.”

Ilya Yashin is a Russian politician and opposition leader, who began his political career in the early 2000s and co-founded the political movement „Solidarity“ in 2008. Ilia has authored numerous analytical reports exposing government corruption, including the report entitled: „Putin. War,“ which he published after the death of Boris Nemtsov - continuing Nemtsov’s work. Ilia served as the head of the Council of Deputies of one district in Moscow. In 2012, he won the municipal elections with his „Solidarity“ team, forming a majority. During his tenure, he notably refused to use official transport, converting it into a social taxi for district residents. In June 2022, Illia was arrested for speaking out against the war in Ukraine and reporting on the atrocities in Bucha. As a result, he was sentenced to 8.5 years in prison. During his imprisonment, he continued to speak out against the war. At the beginning of August 2024, he was released as a political prisoner as part of an exchange. The interview was conducted during his imprisonment.



Read here
the interview!





ZIMBABWE

MAUREEN KADEMAUNGA

“My passion is to see a free Zimbabwe where there is equality and inclusion.”

Maureen Kademaunga is a Zimbabwean democracy activist and feminist, currently serving as a Member of Parliament in Zimbabwe. Her activism began in 2005 as a student leader in the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) at the University of Zimbabwe. Since then, she has actively confronted the regime through protests and campaigns. In 2016, Maureen became a leading voice in citizens' movements like #thisflag and #tajamuka, which drew international attention to Zimbabwe's failing governance and democracy deficits. In 2019, she returned to mainstream politics as Secretary for Public Service and Social Welfare in the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance and its successor, the Citizens Coalition for Change, where she managed the human rights portfolio. Party members frequently face violence, torture, and harassment. Maureen is the mother of a teenage girl, an avid reader, and a lover of freedom. She holds a degree in sociology and political science and conducts research as an independent expert, contributing to the Carnegie Research Network for Civic Activism.



Read here
the interview!

KARL
KARL LAGERFELD



Read here
the interview!

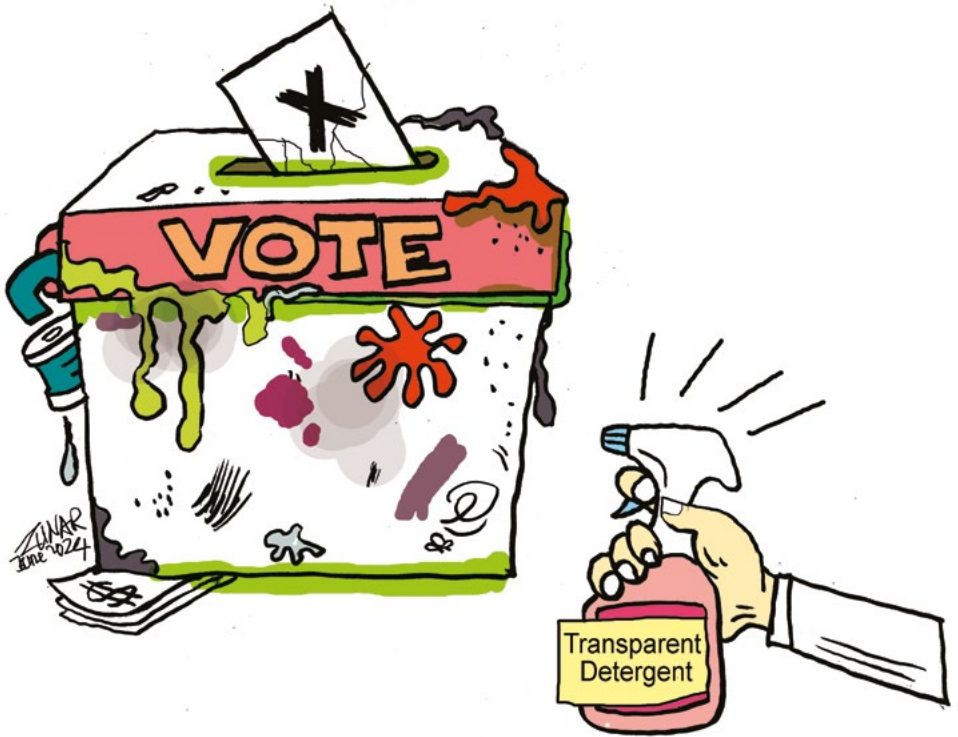
ROMANIA

FLORIN BĂDIȚĂ

“I am certain that in the future, democratic principles and the fight against corruption will be deeply ingrained in Romanian society.”

Florin Bădiță, now a well-known activist and architect of street protests in Romania, began his activist journey rooted in a desire to promote democracy, defend human rights, and fight injustice. His first protest was in 2006 against a draft law on cults. This event marked the beginning of his transition from protester to organizer, inspired by the tangible impact of collective action. The tragic Colectiv nightclub fire in 2015, which claimed 64 lives, catalyzed the founding of Corupția Ucide/Corruption Kills, pushing for accountability and systemic change, whilst the 2017 OUG 13 protests turned out to be the largest protest in the country #rezist. Recognized as Forbes' 30 under 30 and the European Personality of the Year in 2018, these accolades provided him visibility and a platform for his activism.







Read here
the interview!



ZIMBABWE

ELLEN SHIRIYEDENGA

**“Zimbabwe’s problems are political
and hence require a political solution.”**

Ellen is an opposition legislator and political and elections activist. She has been an activist for over 20 years since Zimbabwe’s democratic struggle began in 1999 with the formation of the main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was then rebranded as Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) in 2022. Ellen is an elections expert having presided over three election cycles as Director and Deputy Director of Elections in the opposition movement. She is a Marketer and Development Practitioner and is pursuing a Master’s program in Election Policy and Administration.

PHILIPPINES

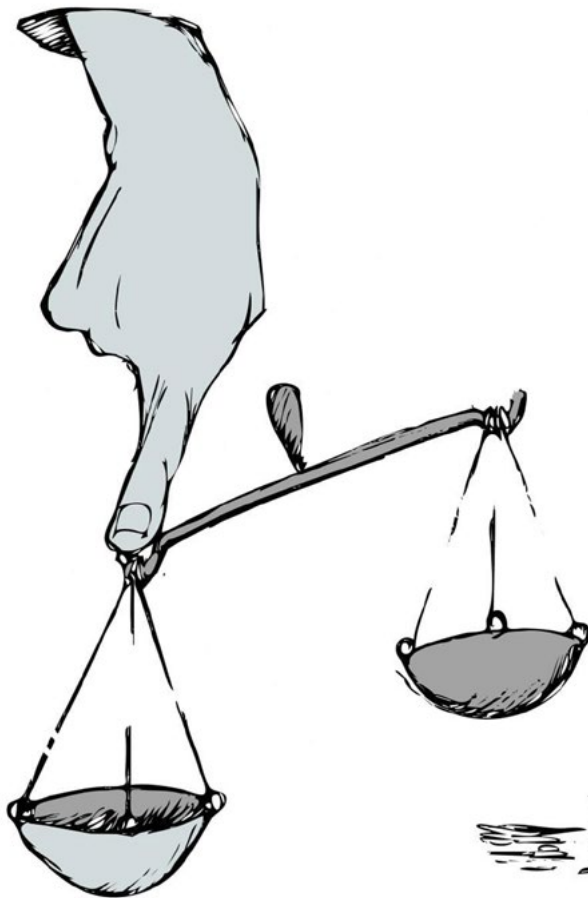
LEILA M. DE LIMA

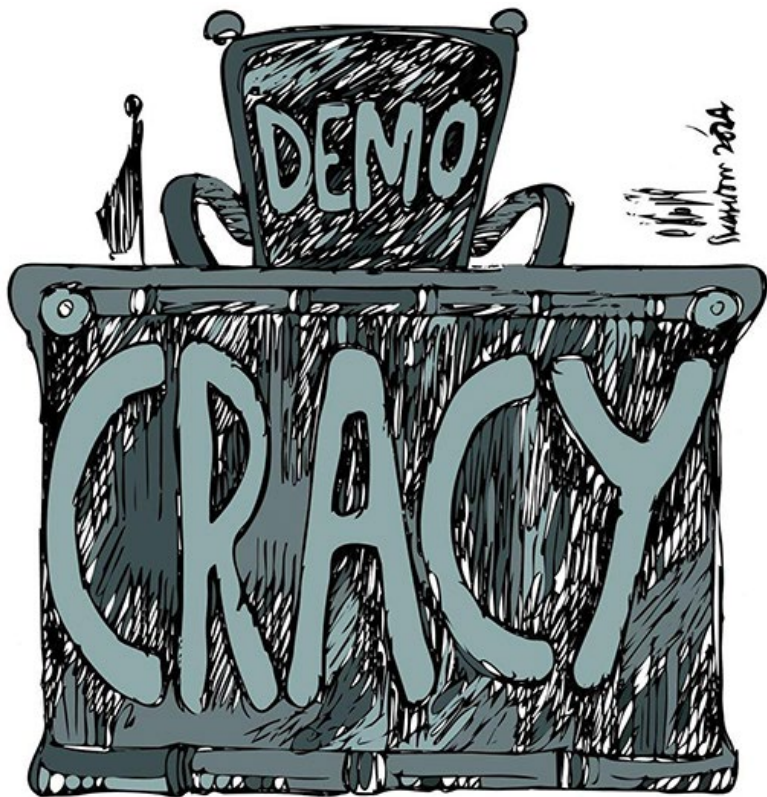
**“Always fight for what you think is right
no matter what the cost.”**

Leila M. de Lima is a Filipina lawyer and human rights activist. She served as Chair of the Commission of Human Rights (CHR) from 2008 to 2010, as Secretary of Justice from 2010 to 2015, and as Senator from 2016 to 2022. As a Senator, Leila M. de Lima started investigations on the extra-judicial killings committed in the so-called “War on Drugs”, which the former president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, launched after assuming office in 2016. In her role as the CHR Chair, she opened an inquiry into Duterte’s involvement in extrajudicial executions during his time as Mayor of Davao City. On politically motivated charges, she was arrested in February 2017 and has been held in detention for more than six years. In May 2022, two key witnesses retracted their testimony in the government’s case against Leila M. de Lima. She was released on bail on 13 November 2023, and finally acquitted on 24 June 2024. She is now the spokesperson of the Liberal Party.



Read interview
here!





TAIWAN

CHEN CHU

“Authoritarianism and totalitarianism remain a threat to our democracy, and the fight against them continues unchanged.”

Chu Chen is President of the Control Yuan and Chairman of the National Human Rights Committee in Taiwan. She has been a pivotal figure in Taiwan’s democratization. For her advocacy of democracy, she was imprisoned for over six years and even sentenced to death. Later, she later became a prominent leader in the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), uniting its members towards a common goal. In 2000, she served as the Minister of the Labor Council in the Executive Yuan. Moreover, in 2010, she was elected Mayor of Kaohsiung City and appointed Secretary-General to the President in 2018. Today, she continues to tirelessly advocate for human rights and democracy both in Taiwan and globally.



Read here
the interview!





Read here
the interview!



NICARAGUA

FÉLIX MARADIAGA

“I will never stop longing for a country of tolerance and freedom, where everyone, regardless of our differences, can live together in peace.”

Félix Maradiaga is a Nicaraguan academic, political activist, and human rights advocate committed to restoring democracy in his country. From 2004 to 2006, he served as the youngest Secretary General of the Ministry of Defense before Daniel Ortega’s rise to power. Earlier, from 1997 to 2003, he led efforts supporting ex-combatants and war victims in Nicaragua. After leaving government in 2006, he founded a center promoting non-violence and pro-democracy activism, prompting accusations from the Ortega regime of undermining government interests. During the 2018 protests against Ortega, Maradiaga survived two assassination attempts and faced fabricated charges. In 2021, he announced his presidential candidacy but was arrested, held in inhumane conditions, including solitary confinement, and sentenced to 13 years for „conspiracy to undermine national integrity.“ Released in 2023, he was stripped of his citizenship and flown to the U.S. with other political prisoners. Maradiaga now serves as a university professor and president of the „Foundation for the Freedom of Nicaragua,“ continuing his advocacy for political prisoners and democracy in Nicaragua.



EGYPT-TUNISIA

THE DÉJÀ-VU

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HONG KONG

FROM HONG KONG TO GERMANY

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SERBIA

ANGER IS IN THE EYE OF AN OBSERVER

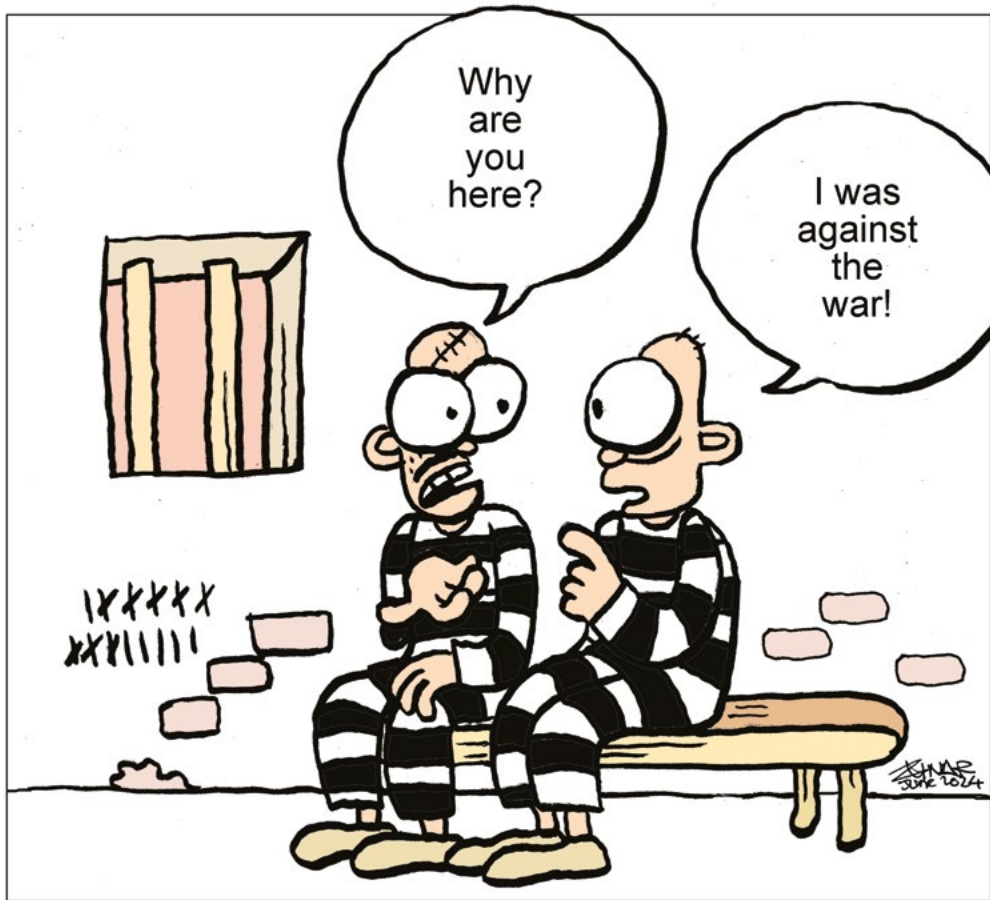
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BELARUS

FOUR YEARS AFTER MAJOR PROTESTS

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