

# Unesco/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize awarded to 3 imprisoned Iranian women journalists

On the eve of the 30th United Nations (UN) World Press Freedom Day, the 2023 Unesco / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded to three imprisoned Iranian women journalists, Nilofar Hamedei, Elaheh Mohammadi and Narges Mohammadi.



Source: © Unesco [Unesco](#) The 2023 Unesco / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize has been awarded to three imprisoned Iranian women journalists

Created in 1997, the annual [Unesco/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize](#) honours a person, organisation or institution which has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and/or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger. It is the only such prize awarded to journalists within the UN System.

It is named for Guillermo Cano Isaza, the Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogotá, Colombia, on 17 December 1986, and funded by the Guillermo Cano Isaza Foundation (Colombia), the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation (Finland), the Namibia Media Trust, Democracy & Media Foundation Stichting Democratie & Media (The Netherlands), and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Unesco is the UN agency with a mandate to ensure freedom of expression and the safety of journalists around the world. It coordinates the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#), which marked its 10th anniversary with a global conference in Vienna, Austria this year

“We are committed to honouring the brave work of Iranian female journalists whose reporting led to a historical women-led revolution. They paid a hefty price for their commitment to report on and convey the truth. And for that, we are committed to honouring them and ensuring their voices will continue to echo worldwide until they are safe and free,” says Zainab Salbi, chair of the international jury of media professionals.

At last night’s ceremony in New York, Audrey Azoulay, director general of Unesco, says, “It is now, more than ever important to pay tribute to all women journalists who are prevented from doing their jobs and who face threats and attacks on their personal safety. Today we are honouring their commitment to truth and accountability.”



Open the Knowledge Journalism Awards to spotlight the continent and African journalists

3 May 2023



## The three laureates

Nilofar Hamedei writes for the reformist daily newspaper *Shargh*. She broke the news of the death of Masha Amini following her detention in police custody on 16 September 2022. She has been detained in solitary confinement in Iran’s Evin Prison since September 2022.

Elaheh Mohammadi writes for the reformist newspaper, *Ham-Mihan*, covering social issues and gender equality. She reported on Masha Amini’s funeral, and has also been detained in Evin Prison since September 2022. She had previously been barred from reporting for a year in 2020 due to her work.

Hamedei and Mohammadi are joint winners of both the 2023 International Press Freedom Award by Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE), and Harvard’s 2023 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. They were named as two of *Time* magazine’s 100 Most Influential People of 2023.

Narges Mohammadi has worked for many years as a journalist for a range of newspapers and is also an author and vice-director of the Tehran-based civil society organisation Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC).

She is currently serving a 16-year prison sentence in Evin Prison. She has continued to report in print from prison and has also interviewed other women prisoners. These interviews were included in her book *White Torture*. In 2022, she won the Reporters Without Borders’ (RSF) Courage Prize.



Whose responsibility is journalists' safety - media houses, civil society, government, or society as a whole?

Danette Breitenbach 8 Feb 2023



## Women journalists under threat

Globally, women journalists and media workers face increasing offline and online attacks and are subject to disproportionate and specific threats.

The gender-based violence they are exposed to includes stigmatization, sexist hate speech, trolling, physical assault, rape and even murder.

Unesco advocates for the safety of women journalists and collaborates with partners to identify and implement good practices and share recommendations with all parties involved in countering attacks against women journalists, as recognised by numerous UN resolutions.

In 2021, Unesco published [The Chilling](#), a study on global trends in online violence against women journalists, which demonstrated the extent of attacks against women journalists and the impact on their well-being, their work and press freedom at large.

Unesco works with partners to develop practical tools for journalists, media managers and newsrooms to respond to online and offline abuse. It also partners with specialised organisations to train women media workers on the ground and through online training courses, and works with security forces to sensitise them on freedom of expression with a gender focus.

Unesco raises global awareness through events such as World Press Freedom Day (3 May) and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (2 November) held annually.



## Journalist imprisonments highest recorded in years

15 Dec 2022



## World Press Freedom Day

2023 year marks the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day.

World Press Freedom Day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in December 1993, following the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference. Since then, 3 May, the anniversary of the Declaration of Windhoek is celebrated worldwide as World Press Freedom Day.

While there has been substantial progress towards achieving a free press and freedom of expression around the world, media freedom, safety of journalists and freedom of expression are increasingly under attack, which impacts the fulfillment of other human rights.

The international community faces multiple crises: conflicts and violence, persistent socio-economic inequalities driving migration, environmental crises and challenges to the health and well-being of people all around the world.

At the same time, disinformation and misinformation online and offline proliferate, with serious impact on the institutions underpinning democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

It is exactly to counter these critical situations and threats, that press freedom, safety of journalists and access to information take centre stage.

The right to freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a prerequisite and a driver to the enjoyment of all other human rights.

This year's [Special 30th anniversary celebration](#) of World Press Freedom Day is, therefore, a call to recentre press freedom as well as independent, pluralistic and diverse media, as key to the enjoyment of all other human rights.