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Front Line Defenders Announces Recipients of 2022 Awards for Human Rights Defenders at Risk

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May 25, 2022 — *Human rights defenders from five countries have been named as recipients of the 2022 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk. This year's winners are:*

- **Liah Ghazanfar Jawad**, Afghanistan
- **WHRD**, Belarus
- **Ameira Osman Hamid**, Sudan
- **Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)**, Zimbabwe
- **Javier del Tránsito and María del Tránsito Salvatierra**, Mexico

The Annual Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk was established in 2005 to honor the work of human rights defenders (HRDs) who are courageously making outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of the human rights of others, often at great personal risk to themselves. The Award focuses international attention on the work and struggles of HRDs, providing a greater national and international platform to speak about and advocate for the human rights issues they are defending.

Human rights defenders from five global regions (Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe and Central Asia, and Middle East & North Africa) have been named as laureates of the 2022 Front Line Defenders Award. The winners are working on issues including women's and children's rights, protection against gender based violence, racial justice, labor and education rights, and enforced disappearances. In each case, working in contexts where states have cracked down on human rights defenders, the HRDs have faced various forms of harassment, threats, and violence, and some have been detained and charged. Each has demonstrated incredible courage, grace, and perseverance.

Front Line Defenders established the annual award in 2005, recognizing one HRD annually. In 2018, the organization expanded the award program to recognize five winners from around the world. After two years of virtual ceremonies, winners will gather in Dublin for a prestigious award ceremony honoring them among esteemed guests, and will have the opportunity to conduct advocacy visits in Dublin and Brussels with a number of regional and international advocacy bodies. The ceremony will take place on 27 May 2022 at 08:30AM, at the EPIC Immigration Museum in Dublin, and will be live streamed on Front Line Defenders [YouTube channel](#). The Patrons for the 2022 Award are: Senator Róisín Garvey, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, Gary Gannon TD, Cormac Devlin TD, Ivana Bacik TD, and Sean Crowe TD.

“We are honored and humbled to present the Award to those who are on the front lines of some of the most profound current human rights crisis,” said Andrew Anderson, Executive Director of Front Line Defenders. *“It is important to celebrate the work of the Award winners responding to the*

situation Afghanistan, Belarus, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Mexico, and whose accomplishments exemplify that one person's actions can truly help to inspire and create a better world.”

Winners receive support on digital and physical security, advocacy, visibility, well-being and more. On 27 May, five short videos on the work and impact of the awardees will be launched. The winners will also be honored in a special print edition of [Cypher](#), a digital comics 'zine that illustrates the stories of HRDs. Contributors to **Cypher** include artists Martha Muñoz Aristizabal (Mexico), Malaz Abdullah (Sudan), Sayed Mohammad Hussaini (Afghanistan), and Mudiwa Kimberly Marasa (Zimbabwe).

The 2022 Front Line Defenders Award Recipients

*** Due to security concerns, Front Line Defenders will not be publicly announcing the identity of the award winner from Belarus.*

Asia-Pacific

Liah Ghazanfar Jawad- Kabul, Afghanistan

Liah Ghazanfar Jawad is an Afghan woman human rights defender based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Over the past three decades, she has been the Executive Director of [Feminine Solidarity for Justice Organization](#) and has advocated for women's rights, raised awareness against sexual harassment in the workplace, forced marriage and child marriage, and provided psychological and medical treatment for victims of torture. She has done pivotal work towards raising the voices of women across Afghanistan for education, peace, and stability in the country.

She was also a member of several human rights committees whose work resulted in the enactment of the Children's Law and laws prohibiting torture, violence against women, and sexual harassment. She worked on projects for access to justice in prisons for victims of torture, documentation of torture in national prisons, and providing psychotherapy and medical treatment to victims of torture in prisons. She received the Malalai Medal in 2015 from the government of Afghanistan as recognition of her human rights work.

In response to her work, she faced many threats against herself and her family. Despite being forced to relocate previously due to threats, she is determined to continue her human rights work after the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Liah is currently in Afghanistan and continues to support women victims of violence and persecution and advocate for their rights and protection. She has provided vital support including services, psychotherapy, and medical treatment for more than 80 displaced and threatened WHRDs, and HRDs, a majority of whom are women.

Ameira Osman Hamid -Sudan

Ameira Osman Hamid is a woman human rights defender in Sudan, an engineer, and the Chairperson of the "No to Women Oppression" Initiative. Ameira has [consistently advocated](#) for democracy, human rights, and women's rights. Since its establishment in 2009, the NWO Initiative launched campaigns against the Public Order Law, which would dictate what was proper for women to wear and how to act in public life while also allotting power to citizens to report such behaviors.

The NWO Initiative was founded after Sudanese journalist Lubna Ahmed Al-Hussein and 13 other women were arrested and faced flogging for wearing trousers in public (a violation against the Public Order Law). In November 2019, the law was finally repealed. The Initiative also works with other NGOs and civil society organizations for the advocacy and advancement of women's rights.

Ameira herself was previously a victim of human rights violations – in 2013, she was detained after she refused to put on her headscarf. Ameira and the NWO have launched numerous campaigns against the Public Order Law. For her work, Ameira has been a victim of unjust arrests and detention. In 2002, she was charged for wearing trousers, and in January 2022 she was taken from her house in Khartoum to an unknown location by armed security officers before being released on bail a week later. Nevertheless, Ameira never deterred from her mission and actively participated in peaceful demonstrations.

Africa

[Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe \(ARTUZ\) - Zimbabwe](#)

The **Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)** is a trade union working for the improvement of poor wages and the working conditions of rural teachers as well as the right to education in rural areas of Zimbabwe. Founded in 2009, the union now counts about 35,000 members and operates in 10 provinces.

Since the beginning of the Zimbabwe crisis and the perceived waning of support for the ruling ZANU-PF party, professional unions, HRDs and civil society in general have been targeted when they became vocal about poor governance, corruption, the deterioration in human rights and other issues. ARTUZ members have been arrested and attacked for their work.

ARTUZ has pushed for the adoption of the Education Equalization Fund, which would support young girls and pregnant girls in receiving an education. The union also developed and distributed the Remote Teaching Toolkit, which trained 1,800 teachers on remote teaching techniques during the pandemic. In 2015, ARTUZ launched the Safe Schools campaign to prevent schools from being used as political means. In 2018, the union sued the electoral commission for denying teachers the right to vote during elections.

In the past 12 months, the union handled 132 cases of teachers who were forcibly transferred for being members of the union. 220 members have been arrested, detained and beaten by state security forces. In January 2022, 16 teachers who were part of a group of peaceful protestors protesting for a living wage were beaten, arrested and incarcerated. They were released on bail on Jan. 17, 2022.

Americas

[Javier del Tránsito and María del Tránsito Salvatierra - Guanajuato, Mexico](#)

Javier and María del Tránsito, human rights defenders from Salvatierra, Guanajuato, Mexico, had dedicated their lives to teaching. When the crisis of disappearances – a widespread phenomenon in

Mexico whereby people are taken/disappear without warning – increased in their area and personally affected them, they shifted their energy to activism.

According to data from the National Search Commission (CNB), this year 372 people have been reported as disappeared in the state of Guanajuato. On Feb. 29, 2020, Maria and Javier's daughter Guadalupe, also a teacher, went missing. In February 2021, Guadalupe's body was identified in a clandestine grave along with 80 other bodies. This highlighted the crisis that the government had failed to adequately address.

After finding their daughter, Javier, María Tránsito, and Javier's son (Javier Junior) continued searching for other disappeared persons. Javier Barajas Junior joined the State Search Commission to support other families of missing persons. Lamentably, this human rights work led to Javier being killed on May 29, 2021, by individuals linked to the disappearance of his sister. Javier and María del Tránsito then left the state to protect themselves.

Despite their personal pain and threats they faced, Javier and María del Tránsito have continued to demand truth and justice. They work with collectives searching for the disappeared and have shared their situation with the CED Committee, embassies and other authorities. They have promoted actions to make visible the plight of the families of the disappeared, the consequences of the illegal flow of arms from the USA, and risks faced by defenders.

About Front Line Defenders

Front Line Defenders is an international human rights organisation founded in 2001 in Dublin, Ireland, with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders by addressing their protection needs through grants, networking, capacity building and access to the protection mechanisms of the UN, the European Union and its member states. Front Line Defenders has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and Associate Status with the Council of Europe. Front Line Defenders has been awarded the 2018 United Nations Human Rights Prize.

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