

Press Release
Nov. 30, 2021

Humaira Rasuli Receives the 2021 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award

The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) announced today (11/30) that the 2021 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to Afghanistan lawyer Humaira Rasuli.

Humaira Rasuli is an Afghan human rights lawyer and the co-founder and executive director of the Women for Justice Organization (WJO). She started participating in social activism when she was 16 years old and a refugee in Pakistan. After returning to Afghanistan, she led lawyers, gender experts and activists in WJO to increase women's access to justice, uphold the rule of law in Afghanistan, and investigate some of the most emblematic sex crime cases in the country. She also formerly led Medica Afghanistan which is another women's rights organization that provides psychosocial counseling and legal support to female survivors of sexual violence.

To ensure the protection of female rights within the Afghanistan judicial system, Humaira Rasuli was instrumental in pushing for major law reform, including the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and the criminal procedural reform. Afghan women have gradually been able to receive justice from judicial procedures due to the work of Humaira Rasuli and the organizations she leads, and she was named Best Female Leader by the Afghanistan Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2010.

TFD Chairman You Si-Kun said this year's Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award is awarded to Humaira Rasuli in recognition of her contributions and endeavors to promote Afghan women's rights. Chairman You hopes that this year's award will further inspire the world to pay closer attention to human rights in Afghanistan, especially women's rights. He also hopes it will encourage human rights defenders and those who have been deprived of human rights, and demonstrate that there are still many people around the world that support them and to not lose hope.



Article 2 of the TFD’s “Guidelines of the Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award” states that “[supporting] democratic development and promote human rights in the Asia region” is the foundational mission for establishing the Award.

National Democratic Institute President Derek Mitchell, one of the final review panelists, said honoring a female Afghan lawyer who defended women and others under “exceptionally challenging cultural circumstances” is timely given the recent Taliban takeover. “Humaira’s credentials are impeccable and worthy of TFD’s honor. Recognizing her will send an important signal to women throughout Asia,” said President Mitchell.

Dr. Shin Hae Bong, board member of Japan’s Human Rights Now, also a final review panelist for this year’s Award, said that given the security situation and the status of women in the country as well personal threats Humaira Rasuli has been faced with, her leadership and commitment deserve particular commendation.

Humaira Rasuli was named the Award winner by a two-stage reviewing process (See Annex I). The TFD convened a preliminary review panel meeting facilitated by TFD President Huang Yu-lin to discuss and shortlist the finalists. The finalists’ names and credentials were then sent to the final review panel for a final decision. This year’s nominees included individuals and organizations from Afghanistan, Hong Kong, India, Mongolia, and Thailand that have made respective contributions in the fields pertaining to human rights protection and democracy promotion.

Due to COVID-19, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy will not be hosting a physical award ceremony this year. Pre-recorded videos instead will be published on the TFD official website and social media platforms on Dec. 10, the International Human Rights Day.

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Annex I

Preliminary Review Panel

1. Mr. Kao Yu-Jen, Chairman, 21st Century Foundation
2. Dr. Wei Chien-Feng, Supervisory Board Member, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
3. Dr. Michael Hsin-Huang Hsiao, Distinguished Research Fellow, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica
4. Dr. Eric Yu, Professor, Department of Political Science at National Chengchi University
5. Ms. Chi Hui-jung, Former Chief Executive, Garden of Hope Foundation / Control Yuan Member
6. Ms. Rebecca Wang, Former Chairperson, Taiwan Aid
7. Dr. Huang Yu-Lin, President, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

Final Review Panel

1. Mr. Derek Mitchell, President, National Democratic Institute
2. Mr. Arch Puddington, Senior Scholar Emeritus, Freedom House
3. Mr. Pierre Haski, President, Reporters Without Borders
4. Dr. Shin Hae Bong, Board Member, Human Rights Now
5. Mr. Antoine Madelin, Director of International Advisory, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
6. Hon. You Si-Kun, Chairman, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
7. Dr. Huang Yu-Lin, President, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy