



John R. Aubuchon Award honors Press Freedom

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In 2005, the National Press Club named its Freedom of the Press Award after John R. Aubuchon, a Maryland Public Television reporter and former White House correspondent who was NPC president in 2002. Aubuchon died in 2003 at age 57. The honorees are listed below.

The award descriptions are based on NPC releases, the publications of the honored journalists, and other sources as noted.

2024

Mississippi Today

Mississippi Today is currently involved in a legal case to protect privileged documents used in producing a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation and named in an ensuing defamation case brought by the state's former governor. The case has wide-ranging implications for press freedom in the United States, including journalist-source protections. The outlet won a 2022 Pulitzer Prize for its investigation into a \$77 million welfare scandal that revealed how the state's former governor, Phil Bryant, used his office to benefit his friends and family. Bryant then sued Mississippi Today and its CEO Mary Margaret White in July 2023, claiming that the series defamed him. The case is ongoing.

Wael Al-Dahdouh

As Gaza Bureau Chief for Al Jazeera, **Wael al-Dahdouh** was severely injured when fired upon by a drone being controlled by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) while driving to cover the bombing of a school in Khan Yunnis. He has suffered deep tragedy while reporting round the clock from Gaza; while reporting on the air about an IDF missile strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp, he learned that among the victims were 11 relatives including his wife and two children. His remaining son Hamza, also a reporter for Al Jazeera, was killed by an IDF-operated drone while reporting from Gaza. Still, Dahdouh continued to fight to keep his bureau open. Eventually, the Al Jazeera feed was taken off the air in Israel. The AJ bureau in Israel was closed and just recently the AJ bureau in Ramallah was stormed by IDF forces and shut down.

2023

Evan Gershkovich

Evan Gershkovich is a reporter for The Wall Street Journal, where he covers Russia, Ukraine, and the former Soviet Union. In March 2023, he was arrested in Russia while on a reporting trip and accused of espionage, making him the first American journalist detained in Russia on such charges since the Cold War. The Journal vehemently denies the

Niloofer Hamedani and Elaheh Mohammadi

Iranian journalists **Niloofer Hamedani and Elaheh Mohammadi** were among the first journalists to report on the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. Amini's death set off some of the largest demonstrations in Iran in years, and Hamedani and Mohammadi's coverage led to their unjust arrest. After being detained for 13 months, both women were sentenced in October to more than a dozen years in prison for what we know to be false charges of national security conspiracy and collaborating with the United States. [**Watch journalist Jason Rezaian accept the award on behalf of Hamedani and Mohammadi.**](#)

2022

National

Josh Renaud

Josh Renaud is a developer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. He was targeted by Missouri Governor Mike Parson as a criminal hacker after his reporting revealed a vulnerability in a state education website. That vulnerability had left the Social Security numbers of public educators exposed and Renaud's diligence led to the security flaw being corrected.

International

Rana Ayyub

Rana Ayyub is an investigative journalist living in India and a Washington Post Global Opinions contributor. She is being recognized for her courage while the Indian government has invasively undermined her rights and freedom of expression in response to her critical reporting.

2021

National

Danny Fenster

Fenster, managing editor of Frontier Myanmar, was taken into custody at Yangon International Airport as he was on his way home to Detroit, Michigan to see family. He is currently under investigation in connection with a previous employer, Myanmar Now, which had its license revoked by a Myanmar government intent on silencing news outlets. Fenster had resigned from Myanmar Now 10 months prior to his arrest. He remains in Insein Prison until his trial. During a video hearing he told his lawyer he had become infected with the coronavirus while in detainment and was denied medicine.

International

Haze Fan

Fan, a Chinese citizen who was working for Bloomberg, had been covering global business as a news assistant when she was detained in December 2020 by the Beijing National Security Bureau on unfounded allegations of engaging in criminal activities that jeopardized national security. Her case, which remains under investigation, comes as dozens of foreign journalists have been forced to flee amid increased hostilities between China and international media outlets.

2020

National

Linda Tirado

Tirado, an author and freelance photographer, was honored for her courage and tenacity in the face of risk. Tirado was taking pictures of a street protest in Minneapolis on May 30 when a policeman's foam bullet hit her left eye, costing Tirado most of her sight in that eye.

International

Maria Ressa and the Rappler team

2019

National

Mackenzie Mays

Mays, a reporter for POLITICO, was honored for her reporting while working for McClatchy's Fresno Bee. Mays doggedly pursued the truth in the face of harassment from powerful people, including Congressman Devin Nunes, who tried to tar Mays in broadcast ads and with a 38-page mailer that contained a photo of Mays. He never sought a correction for her reporting.

International

Aasif Sultan

India

Sultan, a journalist with the Kashmir Narrator monthly magazine, was imprisoned in 2018 and was accused of aiding insurgents in Kashmir though he merely reported on them. The region's turbulence came amid a crackdown by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Authorities interrogated Sultan about his sources and asked him to become an informant.

2018

National

Chuck Plunkett

Plunkett, an editor at the Denver Post, was honored for criticizing the paper's owners for extracting profits from the paper that surpassed industry standards. Plunkett prepared a six-page editorial section with a lead editorial headlined: "As Vultures Circle, the Denver Post Must be Saved." Plunkett resigned a month later. (National Press Club)

International

Jamal Khashoggi

The Washington Post

Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian journalist, Washington Post columnist and U.S. resident, was killed in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by agents of the Saudi government. The murder sparked international outrage and prompted a United Nations investigation that concluded Khashoggi's death "constituted an extrajudicial killing for which the State of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is responsible." ([Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/10/26/saudi-arabia-responsible-for-killing-journalist-khashoggi-uh/2018/10/26/))

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo

Reuters

The two reporters were convicted in Myanmar in September 2017 after reporting in Rakhine State on the murders of Rohingya men and boys by security forces. They were charged with possessing state secrets and sentenced to seven years in jail. Authorities are widely believed to have planted secret documents on them to entrap them. They were released in May 2019. (NPC)

2017

National

The White House Correspondents' Association

The WHCA was honored for its "tireless – and often thankless" – efforts to maintain lines of communication with government leaders and to advocate for public access amid a hostile and resistant political environment. (NPC)

International

The press corps of Mexico

threats and fled to the U.S. But after months in detention in El Paso, he returned to Mexico, where he has been in hiding. Mexican journalist Emilio Gutiérrez Soto fled to the United States in 2008 after he received a report that Mexican military personnel were trying to kill him for his reporting. His requests for asylum have been denied and his case is under appeal. (NPC)

2016

National

Tim Tai

Tai, a student photojournalist, was honored for his professional and courageous demeanor when an angry crowd of activists confronted him at the University of Missouri while on assignment for ESPN to cover protests that prompted the resignation of the university president. (Multiple sources)

International

Mahmoud Abou Zaid

Egypt

Zaid, a photojournalist known as Shawkan, was imprisoned in 2013 after he photographed Egyptian security forces involved in a deadly suppression of street protests. Shawkan, who has Hepatitis C, was finally released in March 2019. He remains under police observation and his movements are restricted. (NPC)

2015

National

Jason Rezaian

Austin Tice

Rezaian, the Tehran bureau chief for The Washington Post, was arrested by Iranian Security Forces while in his home in Iran in July 2014. He was tried on charges of espionage and subjected to what then NPC President John Hughes described as a “sham” trial. He was released in January of 2016. (NPC)

Tice, the only American journalist now being held overseas, disappeared in Syria in August 2012. He is a George Polk Award winner and worked for McClatchy, the Washington Post and CBS. U.S. officials believe Tice, a former U.S. Marine officer, is being held captive by the Syrian regime or its allies. (NPC)

International

Khadija Ismayilova

Azerbaijan

Ismayilova, who has reported for Radio Free Liberty/Radio Free Europe and other news organizations, was jailed in December 2014. Ismayilova has written about the financial dealings of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and alleged corruption in his government. She was released in May 2016 after 537 days in jail. (NPC)

2014

National

Joseph Hosey

PATCH.com

Hosey, a Patch.com reporter in Illinois, was held in contempt of court last year by an Illinois county judge for not disclosing the name of a source who provided him with police reports about a grisly double murder in Joliet, Ill. In 2014, an appellate court reversed the contempt order. (NPC and [Columbia Journalism Review](#))

International

Ahmed Humaidan

His interrogators subjected him to psychological torture and threatened to kill him. (NPC)

2013

International

Zeynep Kuray

Turkish reporter

Kuray was working for the Istanbul daily newspaper, Birgun, in December 2011 when she was arrested for reporting the arrests of pro-Kurdish journalists and attorneys. She was released in April 2013, but her charges remained pending and she has been periodically detained since. (NPC and [Committee to Protect Journalists](#))

2012

National

James Risen

Risen, a New York Times reporter, was honored for a career of reporting on government secrecy, from warrantless surveillance to a botched program to give Iran flawed nuclear weapons designs. In 2012 he also fought a subpoena seeking him to disclose an anonymous source for a 2006 book, “State of War.” In 2014, the Justice Department said it would not force Risen to testify. (NPC)

International

Marie Colvin, Remi Ochlik & Anthony Shadid

The three journalists were honored for giving up their lives in pursuit of their reporting in Syria. Shadid, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner at The Washington Post, died after an asthma attack in Syria while reporting on the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad. Colvin, who had worked for Britain’s Sunday Times for a quarter century, and Ochlik, a French freelance photojournalist, were killed by shelling in the besieged Syrian city of Homs. (NPC)

2011

National

Lara Logan

Logan, the CBS News chief foreign affairs correspondent and also a correspondent for “60 Minutes,” won for her account of her horrific sexual assault while covering the uprising against Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Her report on “60 Minutes” prompted dozens of other victims to speak out about attacks that occurred in similar mobs or as reprisals for reporting or while being held in captivity. (NPC)

International

Dorothy Parvaz

Parvaz, an al Jazeera journalist, was honored for enduring terrifying conditions while detained in Syria. While in jail she heard the sounds of savage beatings. She spent 19 days in detention unable to contact family or colleagues before being sent to Iran. (NPC)

2010

National

Charles Davis

Davis won for his work shedding light onto parts of national, state and local governments that many officials prefer to hide from the press and the public. Davis led the National Freedom of Information Coalition, an organization headquartered at the Missouri School of Journalism that funds open-government groups around the country. (NPC)

International

Kouhyar Goudarzi

2009

International

Lasantha Wickrematunge

Wickrematunge, founder and editor of the Sunday Leader in Sri Lanka, was killed in January 2009 while on his way to work. Wickrematunge's newspaper regularly questioned the government's and the military's actions in the civil war Tamil Tiger rebels. Before his murder, Wickrematunge prepared a column in the event of his death: "When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me," he wrote. ([The Guardian](#))

2008

National

Toni Locy

USA Today

Locy was honored for her determination to protect her sources. Locy was fined \$5,000 a day by a federal judge for refusing to reveal her sources for stories she wrote for USA Today in 2003 about the 2001 anthrax attacks. In November 2008, a court of appeals vacated the contempt order against her after the underlying case was settled. (NPC release and [Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press](#))

International

Qi Chonghuai

Qi won for reporting on local Chinese officials involved in abuse and corruption. A journalist for 13 years for several online and print publications in China's Shandong province, Qi was sentenced to four years in prison for alleged fraud and extortion. He has been beaten by police on several occasions. (NPC)

2007

International

Anna Politkovskaya

Russian journalist

Politkovskaya won for her fearless reporting on the activities of the Russian military in Chechnya. She was assassinated in her Moscow apartment building on Oct. 7, 2006. The killing spurred demonstrations in Moscow, and vigils still occur on the anniversary of her death. (NPC)

National

Pete Weitzel

Weitzel won for his work with numerous foundations to promote freedom of information. A former managing editor of the Miami Herald, Weitzel founded the Florida First Amendment Foundation, the National Freedom of Information Coalition and the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government. (NPC)

2006

National

Tom Curley

The Associated Press

Curley, president and CEO of The Associated Press, won for his efforts to raise awareness and strengthen support for freedom of information issues. Curley was credited with mobilizing news leaders to work for a federal shield law and to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act and for directing the AP Washington bureau to open press briefings, reduce source anonymity and fight government secrecy. (NPC)

Ganji, an Iranian journalist, won for his scrutiny of top government officials in his country. He spent six years in prison for his reporting on the government's role in murders of writers and intellectuals. The reports were assembled in a book, "Dungeon of Ghosts." (NPC)

2005

National

Matthew Cooper

Time Magazine

Judith Miller

The New York Times

Cooper and Miller won for refusing to divulge confidential sources in connection with the disclosure of the identity of covert CIA operative Valerie Plame. Miller served nearly three months in jail. Cooper agreed to testify only after receiving permission from his source. Miller was released after her editors said her source also released her from confidentiality. In 2007, Lewis Libby Jr., a top adviser to Vice President Cheney, was convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with Plame's disclosure. President Trump pardoned Libby in 2018. ([WashPo](#) and [NPR](#))

International

Journalists of Ukraine

Independent journalists of Ukraine were honored for defying state-controlled media and risking their safety to help overturn a fraud-riddled presidential election. The judges cited Olena Prytula, co-founder of Ukrayinske Pravda, the leading online newspaper in Ukraine, and Natalya Dmitruk, a sign-language interpreter on state-run TV, who told viewers in sign language that the election coverage on the channel was "lies." (NPC)

2004

National

Dan Christensen

Miami Daily Business Review

Top of Form

Christensen won for his reporting on secret court cases in the U.S. District Court in Miami. Among them was the case of an Algerian-born U.S. resident who was detained secretly after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Christensen also discovered that a defendant in a drug trafficking conspiracy had been secretly prosecuted and convicted. ([Society of Professional Journalists](#))

International

Zahra Kazemi

Awarded posthumously

Freelance

Kazemi, an Iranian-Canadian photojournalist, died in July 2003 after sustaining head injuries while in custody. She had been detained for taking photographs of student protests outside a Tehran prison. After more than three days of questioning, she was taken to a hospital where she died 14 days later. Later, the Iranian government officially admitted that she had been beaten. ([Associated Press](#))

2003

National

Liz Szabo

2002

National

Daniel Pearl

Awarded posthumously

The Wall Street Journal

Pearl was killed after being taken hostage in January 2002 by Islamic extremists in Pakistan. He had been reporting on “shoe bomber” Richard Reid and had made arrangements to meet with a spiritual leader when he was abducted. His death was confirmed a month later. Four of the kidnappers were convicted on July 15, 2002. ([The Daniel Pearl Foundation](#))

International

Saira Shah

CNN Productions

Shah, the daughter of an Afghan writer, won for her documentary “Beneath the Veil,” which explored her father’s home and life under the Taliban. At one point, she secretly taped footage of Afghan women being publicly executed in a football stadium. ([The Washington Post](#))

2001

National

Andy Davis, Chad Hayworth, George Arnold & Tracie Dungan

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

After defying a local judge’s gag order in an attempted murder case, the Democrat-Gazette in 2000 was cited with contempt of court. Aligning itself with a coalition of news organizations, it sought relief from the Arkansas Supreme Court, which ultimately found the gag order was overly broad and a “gross abuse of discretion.” (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

2000

National

Paul Watson

The Los Angeles Times

Watson won for his “A Witness to War” coverage as the lone North American reporter in Kosovo during most of NATO’s 78 days of airstrikes. Foreign journalists had been expelled from Kosovo, but Watson returned a day later. He witnessed the destruction caused by the strikes, the Serbian retaliation and the mass deportation of ethnic Albanians. ([Los Angeles Times](#))

International

Sander Thoenes

The Financial Times

Thoenes was killed in September 1999 in East Timor while covering the conflict in Indonesia. Thoenes, a 30-year-old Dutch citizen, was shot after coming across uniformed gunmen. Investigators believe he was killed by a notorious Indonesian Army battalion. He was the first foreign reporter to die in East Timor since 1975. ([Committee to Protect Journalists](#))

High money, Herb Jackson, Paul Rogers, Eric Fearing, John Gorenson, Richard Cowen.

The Record

The staff of the Bergen Record for “Behind Closed Doors” — a three-month investigation of 92 North Jersey towns that the newspaper said found examples of “officials using various methods to stretch the law in order to meet in private, and examples of sketchy minutes that failed to describe what went on in closed sessions.” (The Bergen Record)

1998

National

Debby Krenek

The New York Daily News

Krenek, the Daily News’ editor in chief, won for a body of work by the newspaper, including its fight with New York City’s Giuliani administration over concealed information, its campaign to open family court, its efforts to ensure full access to death penalty cases and enforcement of New York’s Freedom of Information law. (NPC)

International

Christine Anyanwu

The Sunday Magazine

Anyanwu, the Sunday Magazine founder and publisher, was imprisoned from May 1995 to June 1998 for publishing commentary about the 1993 annulment of Nigeria’s democratic presidential election. (NPC)

1996

National

Kathy George

Seattle-Post Intelligencer

George won for a legal battle that helped bring about the resignation of a judge who had threatened to jail her for contempt. George had written about political motivations behind the judge’s appointment. The judge held her in contempt for refusing to answer questions about an unrelated story. But the state Supreme Court stayed the contempt order and Washington’s governor acknowledged concerns about the judge’s background. The judge resigned. (Seattle Post Intelligencer)

International

Aliza Marcus

Reuters World Service

Marcus was accused by the Turkish government of inciting racial hatred for her reporting on the evacuation of villagers from their homes in southeastern Turkey where the government was confronting a separatist Kurdish guerrilla group. She was acquitted by a Turkish court for lack of evidence. (The Washington Times)

1995

National

David DeKok

The Patriot News , Harrisburg, Pa

John Walcott & Brian Duffy

U.S. News & World Report

clanquestine service. (NPC)

International

Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf

The Yemen Times

Saqqaf, founder and publisher of the English language weekly, the Yemen Times, won for his coverage of the Yemeni civil war, which contradicted the government on casualty figures and on the origins of the conflict. The press club honored him noting that as a result of his work, “he was imprisoned and beaten.” (NPC)

1994

National

Joe Rigert & Maura Lerner

Minneapolis Star Tribune

Rigert and Lerner won for a series of stories titled, “Money vs. Mission,” produced after an extensive investigation and a fight to gain access to public records. The reporters examined whether gifts and other special sources of money were influencing the mission of the University of Minnesota. The series prompted an internal university inquiry, an FBI probe, and an indictment. The university also replaced the top leadership of the university’s medical school. (NPC)

International

Kalala-Mbenga Kalao

La Tempete Des Tripiques, Zaire

Kalao wrote a series of stories that revealed that seven out of 10 officers in the armed forces of Zaire belonged to the same ethnic group as the president. Kalao was arrested, beaten and held for 27 days. He was let go after an appeal over Zaire radio by a member of the board of directors of the Committee to Protect Journalists. (NPC)

1993

National

Lynn N. Duke

The Ledger Lakeland Fla.

Duke’s reporting for The Ledger was honored for “forcing open the record on secret government negotiations.” The newspaper went to court and won rulings that opened negotiations in a school desegregation case. (The Ledger)

International

Taher Shriteh

Reuters

Shriteh was cited for his coverage of turbulence in the Gaza Strip in the face of harassment by Israeli authorities. Shriteh, a Palestinian, was arrested and held by the Israeli army or Shin Bet security service five times for his reporting. In 1991 he was jailed for reporting translations of fliers distributed by supporters of the Palestinian intifada. (Source – The Mideast Mirror)

Special: Leonard H. Marks

As treasurer of the World Press Freedom Committee, Marks helped fight efforts in UNESCO in the 1980s to license journalists. He also sought to eliminate “insult laws” that can mean jail terms for journalists whose writings are deemed an insult to national leaders.

1992

National

university to open campus crime reports after a school athlete was accused of rape. Media organizations hailed the ruling for helping shed light on campus crime. ([The New York Times](#))

International

Kamran Khan

The News Karachi Pakistan

Kamran Khan, who worked part time for The Washington Post, was stabbed in September 1991 after he received threatening calls to stop writing anti-government stories. The threats began after Kahn wrote about police abuses in Pakistan’s southern Sindh province. Khan recovered from his injuries. ([Washington Post](#))

Special: Terry Anderson, Associated Press

Anderson, AP’s chief Middle East correspondent, was abducted in March 1985 in Beirut by Hezbollah militants. He was released in December 1991, after 2,455 days in captivity. Anderson was held hostage longest of the roughly 100 foreigners abducted during Lebanon’s civil war. (NPC)

1991

International

Byron Barrera Ortiz

Central American News agency

Byron Barrera Ortiz, a Guatemalan journalist, was shot and wounded in October 1990 in Guatemala City. His wife was killed in the attack. He was director of the Central American News Agency, and vice president of the Guatemalan Journalists Association. Until June 1988, he had been the editor of the weekly newspaper, La Epoca, whose offices were fire bombed by men believed to be members of the security forces. The newspaper never reopened. ([Amnesty International](#))



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