

International Press Freedom Awards announced

The Committee to Protect Journalists and press freedom supporters from around the world celebrated journalists from Brazil, India, Nicaragua, and Tanzania at the 29th annual International Press Freedom Awards in New York last week. CPJ presented the 2019 Gwen Ifill Award to veteran Pakistani journalist, Zaffar Abbas.



IPFA winners, New York.

All the honorees work in developing democracies that have experienced a deterioration in their respective press freedom environments, and they have had to fight in the face of censorship and threats to bring stories and information to their communities. Earlier this week, the awardees [met with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence](#) to raise concerns about threats to press freedom around the globe, including rhetoric about “fake news” from leaders in their countries.

“This is the 29th CPJ gala. Some of you were here at the first one. You knew then that a free press is the underpinning of democracy, and that it cannot be taken for granted,” said veteran U.S. journalist and IPFA host Shep Smith. “If the events of the past decade have shown us anything it is that independent journalism is more necessary than ever.”

A.G. Sulzberger, publisher of The New York Times, presented the award to [Lucía Pineda Ubau](#), news director of 100% Noticias, and [Miguel Mora](#), the outlet’s founder and director, who were freed on June 11 after six months behind bars in Nicaragua. Miami Herald investigative reporter Julie K. Brown—who earlier this year broke stories on Jeffrey Epstein’s sex trafficking—presented the award to freelance investigative journalist [Neha Dixit](#), who has also reported on sex trafficking scandals in India. [Maxence Melo Mubyazi](#), a champion of online freedom of expression in Tanzania, was presented with his award by veteran journalist and former CPJ board chair [Sandra Mims Rowe](#). Folha de S. Paulo reporter [Patrícia Campos Mello](#) received her award from Colombian journalist and CPJ board member [Maria Teresa Ronderos](#), who founded a Latin American cross-border investigative reporting center.

[Zaffar Abbas](#), editor of the Pakistani daily Dawn, was presented with the 2019 Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award by [Lester Holt](#), anchor of “NBC Nightly News” and “Dateline NBC” and a CPJ board member. The award is named in honor of the late journalist and CPJ board member Gwen Ifill, and is presented annually

an individual who has shown extraordinary and sustained achievement in the cause of press freedom.

“Today, the U.S. media is under pressure from another leader who disparages and undermines journalists every turn. As our honorees have affirmed, that rhetoric is empowering autocratic leaders around the world who are cracking down with greater ferocity,” said Joel Simon, CPJ’s executive director. “And so the question arises, how should journalists respond to this pressure? If the past is any indication, they should speak out and report the news as they see fit. They—you—should report the news with fairness, accuracy, integrity and rigor.”

At an emotional point early in the evening, the room gave a standing ovation to Reuters journalists [Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo](#), who attended the event. The two were released earlier this year after spending more than 500 days behind bars in Myanmar for their reporting.

The event, held at the Grand Hyatt New York, raised nearly \$2.7 million, with support from the evening’s dinner chairs, the Emerson Collective’s Laurene Powell Jobs and Peter Lattman. The evening also included an appeal matched by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Kicking off the appeal, host Smith announced that he would personally donate \$500,000 to CPJ.

During the night, CPJ also collected messages of support for imprisoned journalist and 2012 awardee Azimjon Askarov of Kyrgyzstan, which will be delivered to him in prison. Supporters can also fill out a message to Askarov on CPJ’s [website](#) to show their solidarity.

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