

Imprisoned Egyptian photojournalist to receive UN press freedom prize

A photojournalist who has been in jail for nearly five years after being arrested for covering a demonstration in Cairo has been selected to receive this year's press freedom prize from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

An independent jury of media professionals selected Mahmoud Abu Zeid, known as Shawkan, for the 2018 [UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Press Freedom Prize](#), which will be awarded on 2 May in connection with [World Press Freedom Day](#).

"The choice of Mahmoud Abu Zeid pays tribute to his courage, resistance and commitment to freedom of expression," Maria Ressa, President of the jury, said in a [press release](#).

According to UNESCO, Shawkan has been in jail since 14 August 2013 when he was arrested while covering a demonstration at Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square in Cairo. In early 2017, the prosecutor in his case reportedly called for the death penalty.

His arrest and detention have been deemed arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, and contrary to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The \$25,000 Prize recognizes a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence or promotion of press freedom, especially in the face of danger.

It is named in honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper, El Espectador, in Bogotá, on 17 December 1986. It is funded by the Cano Foundation (Colombia) and the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation (Finland).

UNESCO will lead the 25th celebration of World Press Freedom Day next week in Accra, Ghana. The global theme for this year is "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law," and covers issues such as media and the transparency of the political process and the independence and media literacy of the judicial system, as well as contemporary challenges of ensuring press freedom online.