

1997 - Gao Yu, China



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Laureate of the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 1997

On 21 March 1997, the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded by an independent international jury to the Chinese journalist Gao Yu. "The jury was unanimous in choosing Gao Yu who has been fighting for years for press freedom in her country.

She has paid, and is still paying, with her own freedom for her commitment to media independence which UNESCO supports," said Jury President and French journalist Claude Moisy, President of UNESCO's Advisory Group for Press Freedom.

According to the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), which nominated the Chinese journalist, Gao Yu began her career in 1979 as a reporter for the China News Service. In 1988 she became deputy editor-in-chief of Economics Weekly, run by dissident intellectuals. She also worked as a freelance journalist for several newspapers in China and Hong Kong.

In November 1988, she published an article in Hong Kong's Mirror Monthly which the Mayor of Beijing called the "political programme" of the "turmoil and rebellion." He labelled Gao Yu an "enemy of the people." She was detained in 1989 following the Tiananmen protests and released 14 months later because of health problems.

She was arrested again on October 2, 1993 and sentenced in November 1994 to six year imprisonment for "leaking state secrets."