

2000 - Nizar Nayyouf, Syria



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Laureate of the UNESCO / Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2000

The 2000 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded on 17 March 2000 to Syrian journalist Nizar Nayyouf by UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura on recommendation of an international jury of media professionals.

Mr Nayyouf, editor-in-chief of the Sawt al-Democratiyya (The Voice of Democracy), published by the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedom in Syria (CDF), and a contributor to the Al-Hurriya weekly has been in prison since January 10, 1992. He was sentenced to ten years of forced labour for belonging to the banned CDF and for disseminating "false" information. Weakened by torture and held in solitary confinement in the military prison of Mezze in Damascus, Mr Nayyouf's health is reported to be in an alarming state.

In 2001, at the occasion of the Jury session, the Chairperson of the jury, Oliver Clarke, voiced grave concern about Nizar Nayyouf: "We are deeply concerned for the very survival of Nizar Nayyouf. We understand that his condition has deteriorated and that his life is in danger", Mr Clarke said. The jury issued a statement saying: "We, the members of the jury, hereby kindly request the Director-General of UNESCO to continue his efforts and discussions with the Syrian authorities so that a solution can be reached for the release of Mr Nayyouf on humanitarian grounds."

Mr Nayyouf has been released on 6 May 2001.