Press Release

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Investigative Journalist Khadija Ismayilova Named 2017 Right Livelihood Award Laureate

Outstanding Azerbaijani investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova has been announced a Laureate of the 2017 Right Livelihood Award, widely known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’.

Ismayilova is commended “for her courage and tenacity in exposing corruption at the highest levels of government through outstanding investigative journalism in the name of transparency and accountability”.

The announcement was made today at the International Press Centre at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs by Ole von Uexkull, Executive Director of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation, and Maina Kiai, Jury member and former UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Upon receiving the news, Ismayilova commented: “It is an honour for me to be chosen for such a prestigious award. I happily accept the award on behalf of all journalists and human rights defenders of my country, who continue to work despite difficult conditions.”

Ismayilova is responsible for uncovering a wide range of corrupt and lucrative business deals involving president Aliyev’s family members. She has provided irrefutable evidence of corruption at the highest levels of Azerbaijan’s government, which also involved multinational companies like TeliaSonera. Significantly, her articles have uncovered how the wealth of the nation has been plundered, routed abroad and used to influence European politicians.

Ismayilova also addresses Azerbaijan’s poor human rights record, consistently raising the issue of political prisoners in the country and providing their families with moral and material support. She has been subjected to smear campaigns, harassment, fabricated criminal charges, and has served one and a half years in prison. As the government continues to intimidate and jail journalists with an alarming frequency, Ismayilova remains resolute in courageously writing and speaking out for greater government accountability and good governance in Azerbaijan.

Ole von Uexkull commented: “Khadija Ismayilova is one of the most courageous and skilled investigative journalists of her generation. Despite imprisonment, threats and smear
campaigns, she has not given up investigating the authoritarian Azerbaijani government and ruling elite. Thanks to her dedicated work, we now know how deeply European politicians and businesses are implicated in corruption and bribery related to Azerbaijan."

The 2017 cash award of SEK 3 million (EUR 315,000) is shared equally between Khadija Ismayilova, the human rights lawyer Colin Gonsalves (India) and activist Yetebebersh Nigussie (Ethiopia) who is promoting the rights of people with disabilities. This year’s honorary award goes to the American lawyer Robert Bilott, responsible for one of the most significant victories for environmental law and corporate accountability of this century.

Ole von Uexkull has said: “This year’s Laureates protect the rights and lives of citizens across three continents. With their courageous work for human rights, public health and good governance, they tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges at their very core. At a time of alarming setbacks for democracy, their successes show us the way forward towards a just, peaceful and sustainable world for all.”

Contact:
For further information and to arrange interviews with Khadija Ismayilova or other Laureates, please contact Johannes Mosskin, Director of Communications, mobile: +46 (0)70 43 71 148, e-mail: johannes@rightlivelihood.org

Further details on the Laureates, alongside high-resolution photographs and videos are available at: www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/2017

About the Award:
Established in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award honours and supports courageous people and organisations offering visionary and exemplary solutions to the root causes of global problems. In total there are now 170 Laureates from 69 countries. In addition to presenting the annual award, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation also supports the work of its Laureates, particularly those whose lives may be in danger due to the nature of their activities.

About the selection process:
Anyone can propose candidates to be considered for a Right Livelihood Award. Through this open nomination process, the Foundation receives a clear indication of what citizens around the world consider to be the most pressing issues of our time, and the individuals who dedicate themselves to solving them. After careful research by the Foundation’s research team, reports on the current proposals are submitted to the Foundation’s board
and international Jury. The Jury meets annually in September to select the Recipients. This year, the jury considered 102 nominations from 51 countries.

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