



Press Release

Stockholm, 24 September 2018

Thelma Aldana & Iván Velásquez Named Honorary 2018 Right Livelihood Award Laureates

The Laureates of this year's Right Livelihood Award, widely known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize', have been announced today in Stockholm, Sweden. This year's Honorary Award goes to anti-corruption champions **Thelma Aldana** (Guatemala) & **Iván Velásquez** (Colombia).

Aldana & Velásquez are recognised by the jury *"for their innovative work in exposing abuse of power and prosecuting corruption, thus rebuilding people's trust in public institutions."*

Upon receiving the news, Thelma Aldana commented: "The Right Livelihood Award is a recognition of the struggle of the Guatemalan people against corruption, and that it is possible to combat these criminal activities. The construction of a true democracy in Guatemala requires an independent and strengthened judicial system."

Thelma Aldana & Iván Velásquez have been at the forefront of one of the most successful anti-corruption efforts seen anywhere in the world. Since 2014 and 2013 respectively, Aldana and Velásquez have led the Public Prosecutor's Office and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), an Independent body established by an agreement between the Guatemalan government and the UN. Through their leadership of these institutions, they have spearheaded the campaign to tackle deep-rooted criminal networks and corruption that have plagued Guatemala for decades.

Iván Velásquez commented: "This prize comes at a particularly dramatic moment in the fight against impunity and corruption. It is very important because it will turn the eyes of the world to Guatemala, and hopefully, also provide international solidarity with those who are committed to the transformation of the country."

In a country still reeling from the effects of 36 years of internal conflict, Aldana & Velásquez have demonstrated a historically unique model of joint international and local legal action that sets a benchmark for other countries with similar problems. The cooperation between them and the institutions they have represented has resulted in several high-profile and sensitive criminal investigations, most notably the La Línea corruption case, which led to 60 prosecutions, including the arrest of then President Otto Pérez Molina and his Vice President Roxanna Baldetti.

Aldana & Velásquez have played a crucial role in shaping a defining era in Guatemalan history, while also rebuilding trust in public institutions. As a consequence, they have faced sustained resistance and endured great personal risk. Their courageous and exemplary work has so far



resulted in more than 60 criminal structures identified, more than 310 convictions, and 34 proposed legal reforms.

After ending her four-year mandate as Attorney General in May 2018, Aldana has been living outside of Guatemala for security reasons. While Velásquez's mandate as CICIG's commissioner runs until September 2019, president Jimmy Morales, on 4 September 2018, banned him from entering the country and urged the UN Secretary-General to propose new candidates for the position. At the moment of this announcement, Guatemala's Constitutional Court and the UN have supported Velásquez as head of CICIG, and tens of thousands of Guatemalan citizens are taking to the streets in protest.

The announcement was made 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 Amelie von Zweigbergk, board and jury member of the Foundation, following the decision by an [international Jury](#) that considered 107 nominations from 50 countries.

Ole von Uexkull commented: "The work spearheaded by Aldana and Velásquez is a unique model of effective cooperation between the national and UN levels to establish good governance. We urge President Jimmy Morales to allow this Guatemalan success story to continue."

The 2018 cash awards of SEK 1 Million (EUR 96,000) each go to the following Laureates:

- Civil and human rights defenders [Abdullah al-Hamid, Mohammad Fahad al-Qahtani and Waleed Abu al-Khair](#) (Saudi Arabia), who share an Award.
- Farmer [Yacouba Sawadogo](#) (Burkina Faso)
- Agronomist [Tony Rinaudo](#) (Australia)

The Award Presentation will take place in Stockholm on 23 November, followed by public events and high-level meetings in Geneva, Zurich and Berlin.

Contact

For further information and to arrange interviews with the Laureates, please contact:

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Further details on the Laureates, alongside high-resolution photographs and videos, are available at: rightlivelihoodaward.org/2018

About the Right Livelihood Award Foundation

Established in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation honours and supports courageous people and organisations offering visionary and exemplary solutions to the root causes of global problems. The Swedish Foundation sees its role as being the megaphone and shield for the Laureates, and provides them with long-term [support](#). It seeks to help [protect](#) those Award recipients whose life and liberty are in danger. The Foundation has Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council.

The Right Livelihood Award is annually presented to four Laureates. Unlike most other international prizes, it has no categories. The Award recognises that, in striving to meet the human challenges of today's world, the most inspiring and remarkable work often defies any standard classification. In total there are now [174 Laureates from 70 countries](#).

About the selection process

Anyone can [propose candidates](#) to be considered for the Right Livelihood Award. After careful investigation 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.

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