



Press Release

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Saudi Human Rights Trio Named 2018 Right Livelihood Award Laureates

The Saudi Arabian civil and human rights defenders, Abdullah al-Hamid, Mohammad Fahad al-Qahtani and Waleed Abu al-Khair, have been announced Laureates of the 2018 Right Livelihood Award, widely known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’.

Abdullah al-Hamid, Mohammad Fahad al-Qahtani and Waleed Abu al-Khair are honoured by the Jury *“for their visionary and courageous efforts, guided by universal human rights principles, to reform the totalitarian political system in Saudi Arabia”*. It is the first time that a Right Livelihood Award goes to Laureates from Saudi Arabia.

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.

Ole von Uexkull commented: *“As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates 70 years, it is shameful to see how world leaders side with the repressive ruling family of Saudi Arabia instead of the courageous reformists who are promoting democracy and equality in the country. al-Hamid, al-Qahtani, and Abu al-Khair are a great source of inspiration and hope not only to people in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, but to anyone who believes in humanity.”*

The trio, who share one of this year’s four Awards, have stood defiant in their pursuit for reforms in a country where the royal family maintains a tightly controlled monopoly of power and has joined forces with ultra-conservative Wahhabi clerics to support their totalitarian rule.

The three Laureates have challenged this authoritarian system through peaceful methods, calling for universal human rights and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. They are demanding the separation of powers and equality for all, including the abolishment of male guardianship which deprives women of their most basic rights. As a consequence of their courageous struggle for a more pluralistic and democratic society, the three men have been imprisoned and are all currently in jail.

In 2013, al-Hamid and al-Qahtani were sentenced to 11 and 10 years’ imprisonment on charges including *“inciting disorder by calling for demonstrations”* and *“forming an unlicensed organisation”*. Abu al-Khair was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment in 2014 for charges including *“disobeying the ruler”* and *“harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organisations”*.



al-Hamid and al-Qahtani are academics and co-founders of one of the few Saudi human rights organisations, the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), which is currently banned in the country. Abu al-Khair is best known for his legal defence of prominent Saudi activists like Raif Badawi, and for founding another now-banned human rights organisation, Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (MHRSA).

Their visionary and inclusive approach to shaping a positive future for their home country has been, and continues to be, a great source of inspiration for many people in Saudi Arabia and the wider Gulf region.

The other two 2018 cash awards go to the following Laureates:

- Farmer [Yacouba Sawadogo](#) (Burkina Faso)
- Agronomist [Tony Rinaudo](#) (Australia)

The 2018 Honorary Award goes to anti-corruption champions [Thelma Aldana](#) (Guatemala) & [Iván Velásquez](#) (Colombia).

The three cash awards are worth SEK 1 Million (EUR 96,000) each and will be used to support the Laureates' successful work. The prize money is not for personal use.

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

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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