

TLN

TRANSATLANTIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK

2021 Gala Dinner and Award Ceremony

FMI

FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA INITIATIVE

National Press Club, Washington, D.C., December 7, 2021

Event Highlights

“State of the Media” Inaugural Panel Discussion



From Right to Left: **Emily Wilkins** of Bloomberg Government moderated the inaugural “State of the Media” panel discussion with **Mujo Selimović**, publisher of the Oslobodjenje Media Group (Bosnia and Herzegovina), **Natalie Sedletska**, journalist - Radio Free Europe (Ukraine), and **Phillip J. LaVelle**, Executive Director at the United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

Click [here](#) to listen the entire panel discussion.



**Dr. Sasha Toperich,
TLN Executive Vice President**

“From improvements in legal assistant frameworks for the protection of journalists, role of social media in delivering news, support for independent reporting challenged by autocratic rule in various countries in these regions, to the phenomena of cancel culture, of fake news and ramifications of those, in the digital age, we intend to contribute addressing these issues with our effort. We are also conscious that preservation and protection of media freedoms requires constant vigilance in the United States and other democracies committed to those freedoms.”



Dr. Michael Haltzel, TLN Chairman



“We at TLN are constantly striving to maximize the impact of our activities. Often that involves venturing into controversial thematic territory, such as Freedom of the Media, the subject of tonight’s awards and panel discussions. It is often said that people don’t appreciate their freedom until they lose it. Our five awardees are exemplars of courage —individuals who are struggling to prevent societies’ having to regain that freedom. Later in the evening you will hear of the exploits of these journalists in some detail. I would only underscore now what a privilege it is for us to recognize the work of Jackson Diehl, the Al Jazeera Media Network and Fairouz Ziani, Natalie Sedletska, Michel El Murr, and my dear friend Mujo Selimović. I hope that the awardees – and the publicity they receive through television, and social and print media—will serve as

role models for other freedom-loving journalists around the globe. For our part, TLN plans to make the Freedom of the Media Awards Dinner an annual event and to put on conferences and seminars to highlight this indispensable element of democracy.”

Click [here](#) to listen the full remarks by Dr. Michael Haltzel.



Lisa Nicole Matthews, President, The National Press Club

“Another case we continue working on is that of journalist Austin Tice. You may have noticed Austin’s picture on the monitor as you came through our lobby tonight. Austin has been held for nine years in Syria. And while our government and Austin’s family are doing all they can to bring him home—they also need our help. Back in August the National Press Club created a Change.org petition that currently has nearly 150,000 signatures asking the White House to prioritize Austin’s case. We can use your help. Sign the petition, participate in the events when they happen. Follow the news on Austin’s case. Your retweets and likes help power the narrative of Austin’s story and demonstrate support in tangible ways.”

Click [here](#) to listen the full remarks by Lisa Matthews.



Dr. Daniel S. Hamilton, TLN President

“Journalism at its best casts a light—on oppression, on threats to freedom of expression, on the conditions, challenges and opportunities individuals encounter in their daily lives. TLN is proud to honor journalism at its best with our 2021 awards.”

Julie Pace, Executive Editor and Senior Vice President, Associated Press



“...Our news department at AP has 250 locations around the world in 100 countries and I think that that global footprint is more important than ever before, even at the moment when we have technology that allows anyone to become citizen – journalist, to tweet information, to post photos, to post videos. That content, of course, is tremendous asset. It is given more people an ability to tell their own stories. But I think there remains a deep power in on the ground expertise of our journalists – and other news organizations, like ours. I think often about the specific thing the world wouldn’t see without on the ground presence of AP journalists and other independent journalists. For example, the world have not known about the conditions of slaves in southeast Asia who were held captive by the global powerful seafood. The world wouldn’t see the independent imagery that our video and photojournalists are able to transmit from North Korea, one of the world most restrictive countries in the world....”

Click [here](#) to listen Julie Pace’s full remarks.

Ghida Fakhry, Anchor

***Inside America with Ghida Fakhry* and *Bigger than Five*, TRT World**



“Fake news per se is hardly a new phenomenon. What is relatively new, is the vehicle, the vectors of its propagation: the internet; social media; and powerful algorithms and troll farms. It is a dire reality of the social media world we live in. And it has become not just a novel kind of propaganda —it is increasingly being used to attack; to sow discord; and to undermine society’s trust in news reporting. Although it is troubling to see the way many politicians here in the United States and around the world have weaponized the term to sow distrust in what we do; to undermine the integrity of journalists — again: this is not new either. The fake news is not just an offshoot of social media. Fabricated or inaccurate or manipulated news was always around. Old-fashioned propaganda. We have lived with fake news forever. But the difference is that we are entering an era where it is becoming more and more difficult to discern truth from fiction. And the velocity with which fake news spreads, directly to consumers, to the citizenry, hardly leaves time to test it. That is what separates today’s fake news from good old fashion propaganda”.

Click [here](#) to listen Ghida Fakhry’s full remarks.



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Jackson Diehl, Deputy Editorial Page Editor, *The Washington Post*, wins **TLN Freedom of the Media Gold Medal for Public Service for a United States based news organization/individual** for his outstanding commitment to the highest standards of journalism, including his advocacy for persecuted journalists and political activists on four continents.



**Fairouz Ziani
&
Al Jazeera Media Network**

wins the TLN Freedom of the Media Gold Medal for an international news organization / individual for a “Day in Wuhan”—an exceptional documentary report with exclusive footage from Wuhan (China) during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Al Jazeera follow-up investigative stories continued to bring important news and shed more light about the Covid-19 pandemic that helped people around the world to better understand and be better prepared to confront this global pandemic.



Fairouz Ziani
(Principal News Presenter, Al Jazeera Channel)

“Love it or hate it, Al Jazeera has forever changed the media landscape of the Arab world.”



On behalf of Al Jazeera Media Network, Abderrahim Foukara (Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief) **receives the award from Daniel S. Hamilton, TLN President.**

Michel El Murr, MTV Lebanon CEO (Lebanon) wins TLN Freedom of the Media Award for International Reporting for his role in defense of freedom, pluralism, and sovereignty of Lebanon.

“Awards for Media Freedom do not come easy. Preserving fundamental freedoms and pushing the envelope of freedom of expression come at a bloody, heavy price. Our daily survival battles become even more crucial when put in the context of Hezbollah, a “militia” (or rather, a terrorist organization) —armed and financed by Iran since 1983— that built a mini-state now way stronger and wealthier than the disintegrated Lebanese state itself, and the corrupt ruling elite – a “mafia” that impeded good governance and abused public services and funds, for personal interest.

Can democracy, liberties, and freedoms coexist with an armed security apparatus, that undermines state sovereignty, threatens Lebanon’s relationships with the international community and the Arab world? Can Lebanon really survive under the hegemony of an armed security apparatus who single handedly decides on “war & peace”, the fate of cabinet meetings, elections, and the investigation into the Beirut’s Port blast, among others?

My concern today is that the HOPE is fading. So, it is extremely important that we keep the flame of HOPE alive—especially among Lebanon’s bright youth. We count on you and on many friends in the United States and around the world to make the difference. Together, we can, and we will save Lebanon!”

Click [here](#) to listen Michel El Murr’s full remarks.



Natalie Sedletska, Journalist–Radio Free Europe (Ukraine) wins TLN Freedom of the Media Award for Explanatory Reporting for her courageous stand against corruption within the government and judiciary in Ukraine.



“I am sure it will inspire many young and upcoming journalists in my country to engage and contribute to a freedom of the media, independent reporting for a better quality of life for our citizens. This award is an accomplishment that would not be possible without my colleagues from Schemes investigative team, supported by the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Also, I want to use this opportunity to remember my colleague Vladyslav Yesypenko, RFERL contributor, and another dozen reporters who are currently in jail in Crimea, occupied by Russia. Journalism is not a crime. Thank you all for your support to my country, as this evening is yet another testament to our strong friendship and partnership between the United States and Ukraine”

Click [here](#) to listen Natalie Sedletska’s full remarks.

Mujo Selimović, Publisher of the Oslobodjenje Media Group (**Bosnia and Herzegovina**) **wins TLN Freedom of the Media for Commentary and Criticism** for his ongoing commitment to expose corruption, cronyism, and political control of the judiciary in Bosnia and Herzegovina that continues to cripple society.

“This award belongs to all journalists working at Oslobodjenje Media Group striving every day to bring out the most accurate news for our citizens.”

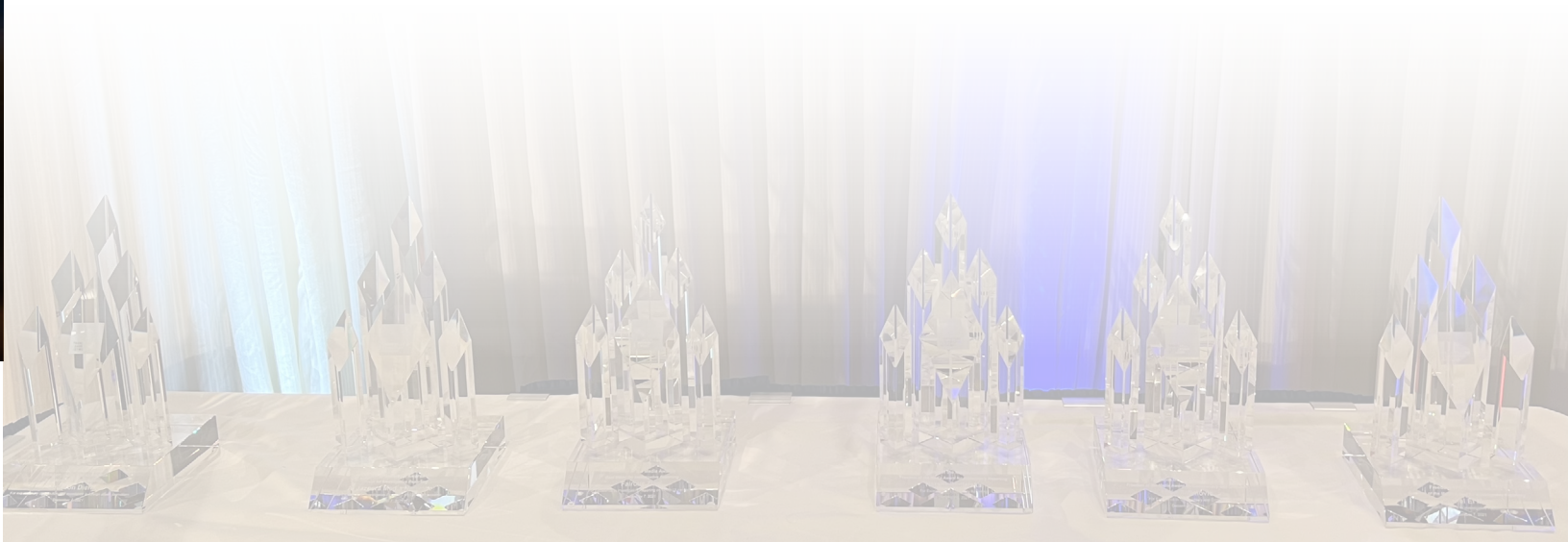


TLN 2021 Freedom of the Media Gold Medal Awardees Panel



Jackson Diehl (*The Washington Post*), **Ghida Fakhry** (*TRT World*), and **Abderrahim Foukara** (*Al Jazeera Media Network, USA*)

Click [here](#) to listen the entire panel discussion.





Transatlantic Leadership Network's Freedom of the Media Gala Dinner & Award Ceremony at The National Press Club, Washington D.C., December 7, 2021.

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