

## First X-Cultural Reporting Award Presented at Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Rio

Rio de Janeiro, May 29<sup>th</sup> 2010 – The First X-Cultural Reporting Award was officially presented today at the UN Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Rio de Janeiro. Organized by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the International Center for Journalists, the Awards were presented by Riz Khan of Al Jazeera English.

Top honors went to Ruth Eglash of *The Jerusalem Post* and Hani Hazaimah of *The Jordan Times*. Their columns on the state of relations between Israel and Jordan 15 years after normalization received a great deal of coverage and generated a lively debate.

Asmaa Fathy of Egyptian magazine *El Mawqef Al Arabi*, Aleksandar Milosevic of *Daily Serbia*, and Tarek Mounir of Egyptian newspaper *Al Raai* took second place for their innovative Web site Hijabskirt Info ([hijabskirt.info](http://hijabskirt.info)). The site creatively tackles biases in fashion and culture in both the Western and Muslim worlds.

Third-place winners, Naveed Ahmad of Pakistan's Geo TV, Syria-based Alia Turki Al-Rabeo of the Kuwaiti newspaper, *Awan*, and Ruzanna Tantushyan, a free-lancer from the United States, produced another outstanding multimedia Web site called Silent Heroes ([www.silent-heroes.net](http://www.silent-heroes.net)) that profiles individuals who challenge stereotypes across cultural divides.

The reporting teams were formed at a conference on Freedom of Expression in the Digital Age held in Alexandria, Egypt, in February, supported by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation and administered by ICFJ, with the support of the Alexandria Library. Meeting over a period of three days, 45 journalists participated in hands-on workshops on writing opinion pieces and using new digital tools. They engaged in vigorous debates on stereotypes, loaded language and graphic images. They also heard from a wide range of experts on everything from covering Islam in the Western media to the growing use of social networking in the Muslim world.

Prior to the conference, many reporters took part in ICFJ's five-week online course on digital media that for the first time was taught in Arabic and English. Comments from the participants were translated each day, sparking lively discussions.

"There's no better way to break cultural barriers than by creating lively, informed journalism that bridges the cultural divide," said Emmanuel Kattan, senior communications adviser of the UN's Alliance of Civilizations. "These joint reporting projects are setting the example."

### The winners are:

**First Place:** Why We Can't Write This Story by Eglash and Hazaimah. The team set out to investigate Israeli and Jordanian young people's perceptions of each other, 15 years after the two countries signed a peace treaty. They found startling evidence that the education systems in both countries foster prejudice and misunderstanding. They decided the results of their reports would be too inflammatory to publish in either country, and the final product addressed why they could not tell the story. Their work appeared in The Huffington Post, *The Jerusalem Post*, Palestine Note, The Common Ground News Service and Radio Chicagoland. The Huffington Post has asked the team to write a regular column, while Radio Chicagoland wants them to produce a monthly show. European organizations are also expressing interest in financing a Web site to be run by the pair that focuses on social issues.

**Second Place:** Hijabskirt Info by Fathy, Milosevic and Mounir. This trio produced a multimedia Web site analyzing the difference in cultural perceptions, starting with the Muslim hijab and the Western miniskirt. The *Montenegro Daily News* and AllVoices.com featured articles on this project.

**Third Place:** Silent Heroes by Ahmad, Al-Rabeo, and Tantushyan. This multimedia project profiles Maath Al Barmawy, a Syrian living in Karachi, Pakistan. He helps Pakistani workers find jobs abroad, given the country's high unemployment rate. Stories in the package ran in 19 news outlets in the Middle East and Pakistan, including Urdu News, Iraqi123.com, and the Voice of America's Urdu Service.

Judging the awards were Joyce Barnathan, president of ICFJ; Emmanuel Kattan of the Alliance of Civilizations; Riz Khan, presenter of the Riz Khan Show on Aljazeera English; Daanish Masood, media and partnerships officer of the Alliance of Civilizations; Hoda Osman, an Egyptian-American investigative reporter and journalism trainer; and Eric Weiner, former NPR foreign correspondent and *New York Times* bestselling author. To read about all of the projects, visit [www.icfj.org/foeda](http://www.icfj.org/foeda).

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**The International Center for Journalists (ICFJ)**, a non-profit, professional organization, promotes quality journalism worldwide in the belief that independent, vigorous media are crucial in improving the human condition. Aiming to raise the standards of journalism, ICFJ offers hands-on training workshops, seminars, fellowships and international exchanges to journalists and media managers around the globe. For more information, visit [www.icfj.org](http://www.icfj.org).

**The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** is an initiative of the UN Secretary-General which aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. The Alliance was established in 2005, at the initiative of the governments of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the United Nations. In April 2007, the UN Secretary-General appointed Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, as High Representative for the Alliance. The UNAOC is supported by a Group of Friends – a community of more than 100 member countries and international organizations and bodies. Working in partnership with governments, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector, the Alliance is supporting a range of projects and initiatives aimed at building bridges among a diversity of cultures and communities.

**The Anna Lindh Foundation** is an organization shared by the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean, to bring people together to improve mutual respect between cultures, and to support civil society working for a common future of the Region. Since its launch in 2005, the Foundation has developed a region-wide Network of over 3000 civil society organizations. In the field of media, the Anna Lindh Foundation has pioneered the region-wide “Anna Lindh Mediterranean Journalist Award”, now in its fourth edition, which has recognized the positive contribution of journalists across the Region to reporting across cultures and on issues of cultural diversity. For more information on the Anna Lindh Foundation log on to: [www.euromedalex.org](http://www.euromedalex.org)

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