

IWPR's Syria Coordinator Shortlisted for Landmark Freedom of Speech Prize

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Writer and mentor recognised for groundbreaking work on the frontlines of the conflict.

IWPR Syria project coordinator Zaina Erhaim has been shortlisted for the prestigious Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Awards 2016.

Erhaim, 30, is a multiple award-winning journalist who returned to her war-torn country and the city of Aleppo in 2013.

Her work has involved training about 100 citizen reporters, around a third of them women, who are now among the very few able to provide eyewitness accounts of events on the ground.

Last year she filmed a ground-breaking documentary, *Syria's Rebellious Women*, telling the stories of young activists who are dedicated to helping their country in the midst of conflict.

Erhaim also helps support local independent media right on the front lines of the Syrian civil war.

In 2015 she won a landmark prize, the **Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism**.

Her own on-the-ground reporting offers unique insights into the harshness of life in Aleppo. (See for example **Child's Play in Aleppo Graveyard** and **Whose Side Was That Plane On?**)

Zaina also writes regularly for *The Economist* and has contributed to the *Guardian* and Arabic-language media like *Orient TV*, *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*.

Born in Idlib and educated in Damascus, Erhaim was finishing a degree in international journalism in London just as unrest began in Syria in 2011. She spent two years as a broadcast journalist with the BBC before joining IWPR and returning to northern Syria.

IWPR has worked in Syria since 2007, supporting journalists, civil society groups, and youth and female activists. Its **Damascus Bureau** platform is a space for news, comment and reportage written by Syrians. Since February 2015, the **Women's Blog** has carried pieces by new writers with no background in professional journalism, talking about the hardship of daily life and the horrors of war. Erhaim has been instrumental in bringing these stories out.

Another IWPR contributor, Azerbaijani journalist Idrak Abbasov, won the 2012 Index On Censorship prize for journalism.

Abbasov, who writes articles and works as a journalism trainer for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, was recognised for his investigative reports on corruption and violence in Azerbaijan.

Winners are honoured at a gala celebration in London and join Index's Awards Fellowship programme.

"Censorship is not something that happens 'somewhere else'," said Jodie Ginsberg, CEO of Index on Censorship. "It occurs on a daily basis in every country, in every part of the world. The shortlist honours those who are among the bravest and most creative in tackling such threats."

This story was produced by **Syria Stories** (previously Damascus Bureau), IWPR's news platform for Syrian journalists.

Location: [Syria](#)

Topic: [Journalism](#)

Focus: [Project Highlight](#)

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