

Yemen: Radhya Al-Mutawakel chosen as Human Rights and Freedom of Speech Defender for October 2017



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The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), Maharat Foundation, and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), in cooperation with IFEX, have chosen the prominent Yemeni human rights defender **Radhya Al-Mutawakel**, President of Mwatana Organization for Human Rights, to be the Defender of Human Rights and Freedom of Speech for October 2017, as part of the campaign “Supporting Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Expression.”

Radhya Al-Mutawakel graduated from the Faculty of Public Relations in 1998 and received a Diploma in Women’s Studies from the Center for Women's Studies and Applied Research in 1999 and a Masters in Political Science in 2006.

During the years 2000-2004, she worked at the National Commission for Women in Yemen with responsibility for several areas, the most important being public relations and women's political participation. She worked with women from various political parties to promote the presence and participation of women in political life.

In 2004, she worked in the field of human rights, first through the Yemeni Organization for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms. She started working against the Sa'adah war in northern Yemen and against the arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances that took place against the backdrop of the war by the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

In 2007, she and her colleague **Abdulrasheed Al-Faqih** (later to be her husband) founded and managed Mwatana Organization for Human Rights, which obtained an official permit in 2013. From 2007 until 2010, she continued to participate in campaigns against the Sa'adah war and against unfair arrests and trials, as well as violations by the parties of the war to international

humanitarian law and international human rights law. She also worked to document the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh's violations against journalists and human rights defenders, as well as violations of peaceful sit-ins of the southern movement.

In 2011, as head of Mwatana Organization, she worked in cooperation with international organizations such as Human Rights Watch to document and highlight the abuses by the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh against the peaceful sit-ins that took place against him in more than one province of Yemen, as well as against the violations of various armed parties across the country.

In 2013-2014, she participated with Open Society Foundation as a researcher in monitoring and documenting the civil damage of drones in five Yemeni governorates. This work resulted in a joint report by the Open Society Foundation and Mwatana on “{HYPERLINK <http://www.mwatana.org/en/1442015397>}.”

Since 2015, she has worked as President of Mwatana Organization for Human Rights -which has expanded to have field researchers in 18 Yemeni governorates and now includes a team of 60 people, half of them women- on extensive field monitoring and documentation of human rights HYPERLINK }violations by various parties to the conflict. More info is available on in Arabic and English.{<http://www.mwatana.org/en>"

In the first half of 2017, Radhya Al-Mutawakel traveled around the world on a long advocacy mission, in which she visited many European countries, in addition to the United States. She participated in many important international meetings and events, including briefings at the United Nations Security Council on 30 May 2017, where she was the first Yemeni woman to present a briefing at the Security Council. She has contributed to pushing the Human Rights Council at its 36th session in Geneva to adopt an international mechanism to investigate violations carried out by all parties to the war in Yemen.

Radhya Al-Mutawakel has contributed to the writing of numerous articles on various topics in a number of international sites and newspapers, such as Amnesty International, the Guardian, Just Security, and other websites. She has been quoted by many international newspapers from the US, Sweden, and France as well as Arab media. She also spoke about Yemen in many television channels, such as the BBC, democracy now, free and others.

The campaign “Supporting Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Speech,” that was launched in February 2017, chooses every month to highlight a case of a human right defender. Tunisian journalist **Naziha Rjiba (Om Zied)** was chosen as the human right defender for February, then blogger **Ahmed Mansoor** from the United Arab Emirates was chosen as the human right defender for March, lawyer **Gamal Eid** from Egypt was the human right defender for April, **Hanaa Edwar** from Iraq was chosen as the human right defender for May, the three journalist from “Azamn” newspaper in Oman - **Ibrahim Al-Maamari**, **Yousef Al-Haj**, and **Zaher Al-Abri** – were chosen as human right defenders for June, the Moroccan journalist **Ali Anouzla** was the human right defender for July, activist **Jamil Dakwar** from Palestine was the



human right defender for August, and prominent Lebanese human rights defender **Wadad Halawani** was chosen for September 2017.

For more information on how to take part in this campaign please visit the websites of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) {[HYPERLINK "http://www.anhri.net"](http://www.anhri.net)}, Maharat News {[HYPERLINK "http://www.maharat-news.com"](http://www.maharat-news.com)}, and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights {[HYPERLINK "http://www.gc4hr.org"](http://www.gc4hr.org)}