

# RAW WAR

REACH ALL WOMEN IN WAR



ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA  
AWARD 2011

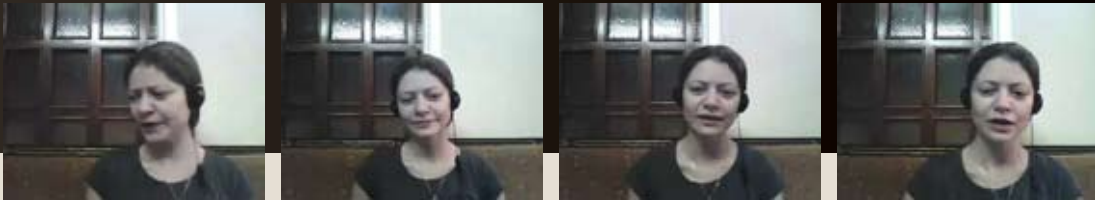
Friday 7 October 2011 marks the fifth anniversary of the murder in Moscow of Anna Politkovskaya, the campaigning Russian journalist and outspoken government critic, who exposed the brutal treatment of civilians in Chechnya at the hands of both the Russian forces and the Moscow-supported Chechen officials. Although there have been recent developments in the investigation of her murder, 5 years on however, the perpetrators and the ones who ordered her murder, have still not been brought to justice. The impunity continues.

To mark the anniversary of Anna Politkovskaya's murder and to honour Anna and other women like her in the world, **RAW in WAR (Reach All Women in WAR)** annually presents the Anna Politkovskaya Award to a woman human rights defender from a conflict zone in the world who, like Anna, stands up for the victims of this conflict, often at great personal risk. Anna lived a life of courage and truth-telling in the face of grave danger, just like her friend and the first recipient of the Anna Politkovskaya Award, **Natalia Estemirova**, who was abducted and killed on 15 July 2009 in Chechnya.

RAW in WAR aims to **support women human rights defenders** working in countries in war and conflict, and to help end abuse and persecution against them, as well as to strengthen their work in areas of conflict, or "forgotten conflict", where there is limited or no support from the major humanitarian agencies and organizations. **Mariana Katzarova** founded RAW in WAR in 2006, after working as a journalist and human rights advocate in the war zones of Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya, including 10 years as the Russia Researcher for Amnesty International.



**Razan Zaitouneh**



## 2011: THIS YEAR'S AWARD RECIPIENT

The winner of RAW in WAR's fifth annual Anna Politkovskaya Award is **Razan Zaitouneh** from **Syria**. Razan is a 34-year-old human rights lawyer from Syria who has gone into hiding after being accused by the government of being a foreign agent - for her reporting on the internet and to foreign media daily accounts of the atrocities against civilians in Syria. The government has imposed a strict ban on access for foreign journalists and human rights advocates to Syria and Razan's information website - SHRIL - became the main source of information abroad about the killings and torture of civilians by the army and police in Syria. Razan has worked with the Human Rights Association of Syria to monitor and expose domestic human rights violations.

Here she describes the day that she went into hiding: 'On March 23, after the massacre at the Omari mosque in Dera'a, to which protesters had retreated. That day security forces surrounded the mosque and brutally attacked it. I gathered information from Dera'a and passed it on to international media. Subsequently, Syrian state television defamed me as a foreign agent. So I knew they would come to get me soon. I gathered the most necessary things and left my apartment'. Razan gathers her information for the foreign media through a network of political activists and human rights defenders.

On 12 May 2011 government security agents entered the home of Razan Zaitouneh and searched it, while seeking to arrest her. It is reported that when they failed to find her, they arrested her husband, Wa'il Al-Hamada, who was held incommunicado in an unknown location for almost three months and reportedly tortured. He was released on 31 July 2011. The arrest of Wa'il Al-Hamada followed the arrest on 30 April of his brother, 'Abd-al- Rahman Al-Hamada, a 20-year-old student. The two men were apparently held as pawns to force Razan Zaitouneh to surrender herself to the government and to punish her for her human rights work. Razan Zaitouneh's elderly parents have also been reportedly forced to hide to escape arrest.

Razan Zaitouneh was born on 29 April 1977. She graduated from law school in 1999 and in 2001 started her work as lawyer. She has been a member of the team of lawyers for defense of political prisoners since 2001. In the same year, Razan was one of the founders of the Human Rights Association in Syria (HRAS). In 2005, Razan Zaitouneh established SHRIL (the Syrian Human Rights Information Link), through which she continues to report about human rights violations in Syria. Since 2005, Razan Zaitouneh is also an active member of the Committee to Support Families of Political Prisoners in Syria. Razan Zaitouneh has conducted interviews with international media networks condemning the acts of the Assad regime, such as the torture and murder of 13-year-old Hamza al-Khateeb, a young boy who had attended a protest against the regime with his father. She advocates for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to be referred to the International Criminal Court since his ordered security crackdowns on protests throughout the country

killed reportedly more than three thousand civilians. “We want the whole world to know what’s going on,” **Zaitouneh** says. “We all know the truth. We all know that the only terrorist group in the country is this regime, who has been killing its own people for more than four months, who has been arresting dozens of thousands of people only because they want their freedom.”



## PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS

### 2010: Dr Halima Bashir (Darfur / Sudan)

As Halima was on her way to the award ceremony, she received various threats which meant it was no longer safe for her to collect the award herself. Channel 4 news presenter, Jon Snow, instead presented a short interview with her, one that RAW had exclusively filmed with Halima, a day before.

At the age of 24 she became her villages' only doctor. When the conflict in Darfur broke out in 2003 she ran into trouble with the authorities for telling a reporter that the government should help all Darfuri people regardless of their ethnicity. The Sudanese secret police came for her. She was told to be silent or face the consequences. Then in early 2004 while working as a doctor, Halima personally witnessed grave atrocities against women and girls committed by the Janjaweed militia. As she treated the child victims of gang-rape, she refused to stay silent once again, and gave detailed witness statements



to United Nations representatives. As a result, she herself was abducted by Sudanese soldiers, held hostage and gang-raped for three days, to punish her for speaking out and exposing the rape of women and girls by the Janjaweed. They told her they would let her live because “we know you’d prefer to die”. Knowing she would no longer be safe in Sudan, she fled the country, and sought asylum in the United Kingdom. Halima has published an award-winning book, co-written with journalist Damien Lewis entitled, ‘Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur’ (2009). She continues courageously to advocate for justice for the women and girls in Sudan, despite the danger to her own life. Halima was the first to break the silence surrounding Sudanese cultural taboos on sexual violence and became a voice of strength, resilience and courage around the world.

### **2009: One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality (Iran)**

The One Million Signature Campaign is unique group of women who are risking their lives to collect one million signatures in support of a petition to change the current laws which discriminate against women in Iran. Many of the women have faced imprisonment, torture and abuse in detention, they have been banned from travelling abroad and their lives have been in danger, but this treatment has not stopped the determination in their struggle for equality. The award was accepted by Leila Alikarami, an Iranian human rights lawyer.

Shortly after the award was received, it was reported that one of the arrested campaigners, Nafiseh Azad, had been acquitted in a ruling issued by an appeals court. Zohreh Arzani, the lawyer representing Nafiseh Azad in this case explained that: “given the fact that collection of signatures is not a crime according to Iranian law, and given that other Campaigns have been created during this same period focused on defending the rights of Palestinians and objecting to war, the charge of spreading of propaganda against the state with respect to the civil and peaceful activities of the Campaign is not a legally founded charge”. The One Million Signatures Campaign reports of over 100 arrests of campaigners who have not yet been released. The campaign refuses to let these arrests be forgotten. It gives frequent updates of the prisoners when the information is made available to them in attempt to make the world aware of the daily injustices against women in Iran. The courage of these women has earned them the love and admiration of human rights supporters at home and around the world.

### **2008: Malalai Joya (Afghanistan)**

Malalai Joya (33) was the youngest elected member of Afghanistan’s national parliament in 2005 and past elected delegate for Afghanistan’s historic constitutional assembly, the Loya Jirga. At the age of 25, she spoke out against ex-mujahedeen warlords, who dominated Afghanistan’s constitutional assembly and now are members of the country’s national parliament. Her life has been in danger ever since she spoke in the Loya

Jirga in 2003 and challenged the warlords by demanding that they were brought to justice for the crimes they committed against civilians, in particular women, in Afghanistan. Despite the dangers she faces, Joya continues to fight against the warlords and says that no amount of intimidation will stop her efforts. As a result of her work, Malalai has received many death threats and survived four assassination attempts. She moves from house to house on a daily basis to avoid attacks. Since receiving the award in October in 2008, Malalia has visited numerous countries around the world to give talks and engage in debates about the political situation in Afghanistan. In 2009, her book, *Raising My Voice*, was published. The same year, while travelling around the US and Canada, she attended anti-war rallies and gatherings calling for the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. In 2010, the *New Statesman* placed Malalai Joya on the list of 'The 50 people who matter today' - to quote, "Joya is a symbol of opposition, not just against the Taliban and misogyny, but against corruption and imperialism. She is one of the few symbols of hope for Afghanistan's future".

### **2007: Natalia Estemirova (Chechnya / Russian Federation)**

Natalia Estemirova, was a close friend and colleague of Anna Politkovskaya, as well as a courageous human rights defender and freelance journalist, who worked in Chechnya for the human rights organization, Memorial. Natalia was Anna's most frequent companion during travel and investigations in Chechnya. They investigated a number of cases together – about which Anna wrote for *Novaya Gazeta* and Natalia wrote for Memorial's website and for local newspapers. Originally trained as a historian, after university Natalia taught history in Chechen schools. Then in 1991 she became one of the leaders of a teachers' strike demanding better pay and better conditions. During the armed conflict between the Russian Republics of Ingushetia and North Ossetia in 1992, Natalia helped bring refugees to safety and helped free hostages. During the first war in Chechnya, Natalia collected testimonies from civilians tortured by the Russian forces in unofficial detention facilities, the so-called "filtration camps".

On 15 July 2009, Natalia was kidnapped in Grozny and found shot dead in neighbouring Ingushetia. To this date, her killers and the ones who ordered her murder, remain unfound. The Chechen Government has faced huge criticism over its perceived failure to properly investigate her death. Natalia was a brave and courageous woman, who despite the threats on her life, continued to tell the truth and expose human rights abuses on both Russian and Chechen sides. As journalist CJ Chivers of the *New York Times* once eloquently wrote about Natalia, "Grozny was a wasteland, physically, morally, psychologically. Ms. Estemirova was almost otherworldly. She inhabited a separate Chechnya, a region where dignity might prevail".



## COMMITTEE OF SUPPORTERS

A group of more than 100 influential cultural and political leaders joined the Committee of Supporters for the RAW in WAR Anna Politkovskaya Award. Among them are: Nobel Women's Initiative, Mairead Maguire, Betty Williams, Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Tatiana Yankelevich, President Vaclav Havel, Jon Snow, John Pilger, Amy Goodman, Jeremy Bowen, Andre Glucksmann, Gloria Steinem, Sergey Kovalyov, Alexei Simonov, Vladimir Bukovsky, Svetlana Gannushkina, Lyudmila Alekseeva, Karinna Moskalenko, Malalai Joya (2008 Award winner), Leila Alikarami (2009 Award winner), Dr. Halima Bashir (2010 Award winner), Gillian Slovo, Eva Hoffman, Adam Michnik, Oleg Panfilov, Tom Stoppard, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Natasha Kandic, Elisabeth Rehn, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Mariane Pearl, Azar Nafisi, Asma Jahangir, Carl Gershman, Hina Jilani, Susan Sarandon, Jane Birkin, Sophie Shihab, Naomi Klein, Sister Helen Prejean, Ariel Dorfman, Vanessa Redgrave, Eve Ensler, Michael Cunningham, James Lecezne, John Sweeney, Jonathan Schell, Noam Chomsky, Marina Litvinenko, Lucy Ash, Sussan Deyhim, Heidi Bradner, Desmond O'Malley, Anne Nivat, Annabel Markova, Lord Frank Judd, Lord Nicolas Rea, Lord Anthony Giddens, Lord Nazir Ahmed, Baroness Shirley Williams, Baroness Molly Meacher, Baroness Vivien Stern, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Yakin Erturk, Elena Kudimova, Andrey Nekrasov, Meglena Kuneva, Peter Gabriel, Stina Scott, Anna Stavitskaya, Dubravka Ugresic, Katrina vanden Heuvel, Victor Navasky, Aidan White, Holly Near, Joan Baez, Elizabeth Frank, Elizabeth Kostova, Bill Bowring, Irena Grudzinska Gross, Jenny Diski, Monica Ali, Isa Blyden, Nayereh Tohidi, Claire Bertschinger, Tsvetana Maneva, Terry Waite and many others.

On the **Anna Politkovskaya Awards**, **Azar Nafisi**, author, "Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books", said: *"It's quite extraordinary, as well as natural, that we should celebrate the work of Anna through celebrating other courageous **women who** come from such different nations, back grounds, and speak different languages but all **share a common language in their desire for freedom**. Not just for themselves but for all victims of oppression."*



# ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA AWARD 2011

*“...what we share in humanity transcends languages, nationalities, and borders, just as tyranny and corruption share the same essence although they differ in details. ...Each step forward towards peace and justice in any part of the world benefits all humanity. I would like to remind the world that the Syrian people, who were victims to all those crimes yet still patient and persistent, are people who deserve much more than complicit silence, or timid criticism from those who have failed to refer this regime to the International Criminal Court despite acknowledging its crimes.” – **Razan Zaitouneh***



RAW in WAR (Reach All Women in War)

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