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Palestinian journalist receives PEC 2024 prize



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The Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) awarded its annual prize for the protection of journalists to Palestinian journalist Iyad Alasttal. This recognition comes amidst the unprecedented loss of over 150 Palestinian and Lebanese journalists since October 7, 2023, marking one of the highest tolls in such a short period in a conflict. The PEC dedicated the prize to the memory of these journalists who risk their lives daily.

Iyad Alasttal, a journalist from Gaza, was forced to flee due to Israeli reprisals following the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. Alasttal, who launched the *Gaza Stories* project in 2019, has been chronicling life in Gaza and reporting for French and Western media outlets. During the war, he survived an Israeli strike in Rafah, southern Gaza, and spent five months under relentless bombardment before seeking refuge with his family in France in February 2024.

At the award ceremony, Alasttal said, "Behind each Palestinian journalist victim is a family, friends, and a history. Banning international journalists from Gaza while targeting those within makes it impossible to bear witness to the suffering there. This imposes a single narrative – that of the Israeli army – demonizing Gaza's inhabitants and justifying massacres."

PEC President Blaise Lempen emphasized the importance of independent investigations into crimes against journalists, referring to UN Security Council Resolution 1738, which condemns deliberate attacks on media professionals. He also highlighted the Geneva Conventions' mandate to protect civilians without discrimination. Lempen called for accountability, stating, "Fighting impunity for crimes against journalists is integral to preserving the right to independent, pluralistic information."

The PEC prize, established in 2009 and funded by the Jordi Foundation, includes a monetary award of 5,000 Swiss Francs. This year's ceremony, hosted by the French Ministry of Culture in Ferney-Voltaire, celebrated Alasttal's courage.

In previous years, the award was presented to Arnaud Ouédraogo (2023), Russian journalist Ekaterina Glikman (2022), and Indian journalist Nava Thakuria (2021).



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