



**UNCOV-
ERING**

STORIES

**CELE-
BRATING**

BRAVERY

Contents

04	Message from the President
06	Message from the Chair Gala
08	About ECNM
12	Freedom of Expression Index
14	Journalist Killed in 2024 - 2025
20	2025 Award Winners
25	2025 Gala Sponsors
26	Thank You

Canada's national news agency proudly supports ECNM and the courageous journalists at home and abroad who share our commitment to free expression.

THE CANADIAN PRESS 





President

Michelle Shephard



Message from the president

For over 40 years, ECNMG has been a leading voice both in the advancement of journalism and in the monitoring and defence of free expression in Canada and worldwide. During that time, we have helped to grow both the largest international network of free expression groups and some of the key programs of the membership that contribute to the achievement of our bold mission.

Never has that mission been more important than it is today, as the world finally emerges from a terrible pandemic that has aided and encouraged the enemies of free expression in their efforts to suppress independent reporting and avoid accountability. I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of ECNMG's volunteer Board of Directors and Committee members and other supporters who have contributed to our work.

Never was our fund more critical to saving the lives and livelihoods of journalists facing persecution for their work.

Never were ECNMG's international connections more critical to the fight for a free and independent press than in the years which saw a growing number of Western party leaders abandon the causes of free speech in favour of the politics of fake news and divisive ethnic and religious confrontation.

Tonight's Gala, which highlights all these important issues, and provides ongoing funding for our work, would not be possible without your support and without the collaboration of many partners in the work we do.

We proudly share this evening's honours with our partners among news organizations, digital media, individual journalists, and other advocates. And especially, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank all of you for your generous support for this event and for our work.

Michelle Shephard

President



Gala Chair

Carolyn Off



Message from the Gala Chair

Last year set a new all-time high for the number of journalists in detention around the world. The Association Protecting Journalists estimates that incarceration of media workers spiked by 20 percent over the previous year. Iran, China, Myanmar, Turkey and Belarus were the worst offenders, in that order.

Elsewhere, anger directed at pandemic protocols, plus the economic fallout in Europe from Russia's war of aggression have created ideal conditions for autocrats. They use it as a cover to go after the media.

Journalists are faced with a relatively new threat that knows no boundaries or borders. Online intimidation and violence have reached epidemic proportions for media workers, overwhelmingly for women and especially racialized women. Advice that they should accept violence as part of the job is rejected by these women, who are subjected to a daily bombardment of vile attacks and hatred. Filipino journalist Maria Ressa, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, at one point tallied 90 death threats an hour toward her. The objective of the trolls is to hound these women out of the public space.

ECNM has joined forces with other organizations to demand support in newsrooms and also legal action for these reporters.

Thank you for your contribution to the work of ECNM. You have provided funds that allow us to help journalists in distress around the world and to buttress efforts to help those who face violence and intimidation. We can't do it without you.

Carolyn Off

Chair, 2025 ECNM Gala

About ECNMG

Excellence in Canadian News Media (ECNM) defends free expression and those with the courage to seek and report the truth. ECNM has deep roots in journalism. For more than 40 years, we have championed free media and the role it plays in creating a just and equitable society. Our organization supports and upholds the rights of all global citizens to hold leaders to account, to ask hard questions, and to use their voices to speak the truth.

8

About ECNM



Journalists in Distress Fund

ECNM's Journalists in Distress Fund provides humanitarian assistance to journalists whose lives and well-being are threatened due to their work. Since its creation in 1999, the fund has disbursed over \$300,000 around the world to help journalists and their families obtain emergency necessities like medical care, legal aid and travel to safe countries in times of distress. We also work with our free press partners around the world as part of the international Journalists in Distress Network.



Advocacy Work in Canada and Abroad

ECNM campaigns for stronger access to the information system in Canada. We actively intervene in legal cases to create better protections for press freedom and free expression in Canada. We advocate for persecuted and murdered media workers around the world and track cases of journalists being arrested or charged about their work.

The Organization

ECNM is a non-profit organization and it relies on the support of individuals and organizations to support journalism and free expression. We have more than forty years of experience advocating for the rights and freedoms of the media, both abroad and in Canada. Since early 2018, ECNM has been managing its operations on a volunteer basis, without full-time staff. ECNM is proud to have a dedicated Board of Directors and active volunteer committees.

Our International Affairs Committee, works to support a free press around the world, highlighting abuses against journalists and advocating for change, while lobbying governments to take action.

Our Canadian Issues Committee actively monitors policy, legal and other developments across the country, in real time, to address matters that pose or may pose a threat to free expression and the interests of journalists and our independent media in all forms.

Our Digital Issues Committee, monitors and responds to the special challenges affecting Canadian media and their audiences that arise from new media and the changing information technology environment. Committee membership will be announced in the near future.

ECNM's annual gala, "Celebrating Bravery and Uncovering Stories" is the primary fundraising event of the year. At ECNM, we are deeply grateful to our chair, our members, donors, sponsors, and supporters who make possible this important work in protecting and promoting journalism and free expression. We honour all our partners among news organizations, digital media, individual journalists, and other advocates. Without their support and collaboration, ECNM's important work protecting and promoting free expression could not continue.

Follow us: @ECNM (X, Instagram, LinkedIn)



ECNM Highlights

Here are some of the milestones we've achieved, thanks to your support.

41

For 41 years ECNM has been a leading voice for the advancement of journalism and free expression while defending the rights of journalists and contributing to the development of press freedom throughout the world.

25

This is ECNM's 25th gala held to honour and raise funds for courageous journalists. This would not be possible without the support of our members, donors, sponsors and advocates.

Attacks on Journalists by US Law Enforcement

For 41 years ECNM has been a leading voice for the advancement of journalism and free expression while defending the rights of journalists and contributing to the development of press freedom throughout the world.

COURT RULES FOR JOURNALISTS ACCESS TO FAIRY CHEEK PROTESTS

This is ECNM's 25th gala held to honour and raise funds for courageous journalists. This would not be possible without the support of our members, donors, sponsors and advocates.

ADVOCATING FOR AFGHAN JOURNALISTS

This is ECNM's 25th gala held to honour and raise funds for courageous journalists. This would not be possible without the support of our members, donors, sponsors and advocates.

FAST-TRACK VISA PROGRAM FOR JOURNALISTS IN NEED

This is ECNM's 25th gala held to honour and raise funds for courageous journalists. This would not be possible without the support of our members, donors, sponsors and advocates.

Freedom of Expression Index

Freedom of Expression Index

19

Canada is ranked 19 out of 180 countries on the 2024 Freedom of Expression Index, remaining in the top 20 but falling five places from the year before.

14

Of the 180 countries in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, only 14% are classified as a good place for the media. The remaining 86% are classified as satisfactory, problematic, difficult or very serious situations for the media.

10

The 10 worst countries for press freedom in the world in 2024 included Syria, Iraq, Cuba, Vietnam, China, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Eritrea, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

28

Of the 180 countries included in the Freedom of Expression Index, 28 saw dire press freedom violations in 2022.

Sources: 2024 World Press Freedom Index: Reporters without Borders



Journalist Killed

2024 - 2025

The the total number of journalists
and media workers killed in the
course of their work is 41.

14



Journalists Killed in 2024 - 2025

Brazil	Givanildo Oliveira, reporter
	Dom Phillips, freelance reporter
Chad	Evariste Djailoramdji, broadcast reporter
	Narcisse Orédjé, broadcast reporter
Chile	Francisca Sandoval, broadcast reporter
Colombia	Rafael Emiro Moreno Garavito, broadcast reporter
Haiti	John Wesley Amady, broadcast reporter
	Wiguens Louis-Saint, online reporter
	Maximilien Lazard, online reporter
	Frantzen Charles, online and broadcast reporter
	Tayson Lartigue, online and broadcast reporter
	India Rohit Biswal, print reporter
Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory	Shireen Abu Akleh, broadcast reporter

Mexico	Alfonso Margarito Martínez Esquivel, photographer
	Heber López Vásquez, online reporter and editor
	Armando Linares López, online reporter and editor
Myanmar	Pu Tuidim, editor
	Aye Kyaw, photographer
Philippines	Federico Gempesaw, broadcast reporter
	Jhannah Villegas, online, broadcast and print reporter
	Percival Mabasa, broadcast reporter and columnist
	Renato Blanco, broadcast reporter
Somalia	Ahmed Mohamed Shukur, broadcast reporter and camera operator
	Mohamed Isse Hassan, broadcast and online reporter, producer
Somalia	Abdullah, online reporter and photographer
Turkey	Güngör Arslan, editor, publisher and commentator

Ukraine

Yevhenii Sakun, camera operator

Brent Renaud, camera operator,
photographer, producer

Oleksandra Kuvshynova, producer

Pierre Zakrzewski, camera
operator and photographer

Oksana Baulina, online reporter

Maks Levin, photographer

Mantas Kvedaravičius, camera
operator and producer

Zoreslav Zamoysky, online reporter

Vira Hyrych, producer

Viktor Dedov, camera operator

Oksana Haidar, online reporter

Ihor Hudenko, photographer

Frédéric Leclerc-Imhoff,
camera operator

Chad

Evariste Djailoramdji,
broadcast reporter

Narcisse Orédjé, broadcast reporter



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS CONGRATULATES THE 2025 ECNM GALA AWARD WINNERS

ap.org

Award Winners

Award Winners

Fin Depencier

Fin DePencier is a Canadian journalist and documentary producer specializing in international affairs and conflict reporting.

Based in Yerevan, Armenia, DePencier has covered wars and coups in Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In addition to writing for C2C Journal, his writing has appeared in Palladium and his documentary work has appeared on Zartonk Media, Atlas News and CTV's W5, as well as being widely posted on social media.

In fall 2020 DePencier was enrolled in Ryerson University's Bachelor of Business Management program when war erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He dropped everything and flew into Armenia to document the crisis, which led to a job with locally-based Zartonk Media. After this he filed dispatches from the Lebanese-Syrian border region and investigated an attempted coup in Kazakhstan in which hundreds were killed. In February 2022 DePencier flew into Ukraine just 48 hours before Russia's invasion began and spent the war's most chaotic weeks reporting from in-country.

Celebrating Bravery

20



Desmond Cole

Desmond Cole is a Canadian journalist, activist, author, and broadcaster who lives in Toronto, Ontario.

He was previously a columnist for the Toronto Star and has written for The Walrus, NOW Magazine, Torontoist, The Tyee, Toronto Life, and BuzzFeed. Cole's activism has received national attention, specifically on the issues of police carding, racial discrimination, and dismantling systemic racism.

Cole was the subject of a 2017 CBC Television documentary, *The Skin We're In* and also hosted a radio show on News talk 1010 from 2015 to 2020. His first book, *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*, was released in January 2020 and became the bestselling Canadian book that year.



Brett Forester

Brett Forester is a reporter with CBC Indigenous in Ottawa.

He is a member of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation in southern Ontario who previously worked as a journalist with the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Forester's reporting amplifies the voices of Indigenous individuals and communities, allowing them to share their perspectives, experiences, and concerns directly with the public. This helps to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous cultures and experiences. His reporting sheds light on important issues for Indigenous people that don't get enough attention in the mainstream media. By bringing these issues to the forefront, Forester helps to raise public awareness of the issues facing Indigenous communities.



Mansour Shouman is a Canadian-Palestinian journalist documenting humanitarian efforts during the Israel-Hamas war.

As international journalists are prevented from entering the Gaza Strip, people are turning to citizen journalists like Shouman. His ability to speak Arabic & English is one of the factors leading to his decision to return to Palestine to report on the conflict and communicate with the outside world.

Shouman, an engineer with degrees from the University of Calgary and Queen's University, who obtained Canadian citizenship in 2006, relocated to Palestine with his wife and five children from Calgary in 2022. Despite his family's relocation to the UAE, Shouman chose to remain in Gaza to assist in reporting on the situation. In the months that followed, he used social media as a platform to provide daily updates on the conflict, reaching millions of English-speaking individuals. He has reached millions of English speakers through daily social updates and his interviews with CBC, CTV, and Global News.



Sponsors

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Contributing

Thank You

To our wonderful volunteers and
partners who helped us with the
2025 Gala — **THANK YOU!**

Thank You

Gala Committee

Morteza Abdolalian

Adrienne Arsenault

Jet Belgraver

Victoria Benton

Rosa Damonte

Havoc Franklin

Halli Gallo

Meagan Glowacki

Dino Harambasic

Peter Jacobsen

Margo Kelly

Hunter Lavigne

Carole MacNeil

Badri Moridani

Trish Murphy

Carol Off

Amanda Panacci

Karyn Pugliese

Kiumars Rezvanifar

Michelle Shephard

Ginger Shewell

Alex Shinnan

Frank Switzer

Phil Tunley

David Wills

Guest Hosts

Elamin Abdelmahmoud

Nil Köksal



**Reddit applauds the
2025 ECNM Gala
award recipients**

Brett Forester

Desmond Cole

Fin DePencier

Mansour Shouman

**and all other journalists
and media championing
free expression.**

Visit
reddit.com/orgsecnminvite
to learn more about our
new community for orgs.