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2022 International Women of Courage Award Recipients Announced: U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken to Host Virtual Award Ceremony on March 14, Featuring Remarks by First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden

MEDIA NOTE

OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

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On Monday, March 14, at 10:00 a.m. EST, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken will host the annual International Women of Courage (IWOC) Awards in a virtual ceremony at the U.S. Department of State. The 2022 IWOC Award ceremony will honor a group of twelve extraordinary women from around the world who are working to build a brighter future for all. The First Lady of the United States, Dr. Jill Biden, will deliver remarks in recognition of the courageous accomplishments of this year's IWOC awardees.

Out of an abundance of caution due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in order to practice safe social distancing, the ceremony will be pooled press coverage only and will be live streamed on www.state.gov.

Now in its 16th year, the Secretary of State's IWOC Award recognizes women from around the globe who have demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership in advocating for peace, justice, human rights, gender equity and equality, and the empowerment of women and girls, in all their diversity – often at great personal risk and sacrifice. Since March 2007, the Department of State has

recognized more than 170 women from over 80 countries with the IWOC Award. U.S. diplomatic missions overseas nominate one woman of courage from their respective host countries and finalists are selected and approved by senior Department officials. Following the virtual IWOC ceremony, the awardees will participate in an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) Virtual exchange to connect with their American counterparts and strengthen the global network of women leaders. The 2022 awardees are:

Rizwana Hasan – Bangladesh

Rizwana Hasan is a lawyer who demonstrates exceptional courage and leadership in her mission to protect the environment and defend the dignity and rights of marginalized Bangladeshis. Through landmark legal cases over the past 20 years, Hasan has changed the dynamic of development in Bangladesh to include a people-centered focus on environmental justice. In her capacity as Chief Executive of the public interest law firm Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, she has argued and won monumental cases against deforestation, pollution, unregulated ship breaking, and illegal land development. In 2009, Hasan was named as one of 40 Environmental Heroes of the World by TIME magazine and was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2012 for her activism. In the years since, she has continued her crucial work in the courtroom to combat environmental degradation and the local effects of climate change, despite significant resistance from powerful interests and threats of violence to herself and her family.

Simone Sibilio do Nascimento – Brazil

Simone Sibilio do Nascimento is one of Brazil's most prominent prosecutors and a former civil police delegate and Captain of the Military Police. Ms. Sibilio do Nascimento has served as a prosecutor for 18 years with Rio de Janeiro State's Public Ministry (MPRJ), where she plays a vital role in combating organized crime and public corruption, militias, and drug trafficking. As the lead prosecutor in several high-profile cases, Ms. Sibilio do Nascimento has demonstrated her willingness to tackle controversy and expose gender-based violence and attacks on social activists. She is the first woman to lead MPRJ's specialized unit tasked with combating organized crime. In 2019, she received the Attorney General's medal of honor, the organization's highest commendation.

Ei Thinzar Maung – Burma

An inspiring and influential pro-democracy voice who emerged as a symbol of peaceful public resistance just days after the February 1, 2021, coup d'état, Ei Thinzar Maung serves as Burma's pro-democracy opposition NUG Deputy Minister for Women, Youths, and Children Affairs. Her human

rights activities on behalf of minority groups, including Rohingya, have long promoted the vision of an inclusive multi-party democracy for Burma that respects human rights; she was imprisoned in 2015 for protesting a law that included a ban on student unions and teaching in ethnic minority languages. Post-coup, her work to support peaceful pro-democracy activism like the Civil Disobedience Movement and youth engagement has resulted in the regime issuing a warrant for her arrest. Although forced into hiding, she remains committed to democracy and continues to work for a strong, inclusive, and democratic Burma that respects human rights.

Josefina Klinger Zúñiga – Colombia

Josefina Klinger Zúñiga is a courageous Afro-Colombian human rights and environmental defender from Nuquí, Chocó, a rural municipality in western Colombia with a majority Afro-Colombian and Indigenous population. She has dedicated her life working in a country that can be dangerous for human rights and environmental defenders, where more than 80 percent of deaths in Colombia are linked to the economic exploitation of land and natural resources, including illegal mining, deforestation, and the drug trade. Ms. Klinger Zúñiga founded Mano Cambiada (“Changed Hand”) in 2006 to promote sustainable eco-tourism in Chocó and empower the local community in the historically conflict-affected region along the Pacific coast. Her dedication to fighting environmental threats to economic rural stability is rooted in her inspiration to defend the dignity and rights of marginalized communities, break down barriers to promote positive change and empower the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous population, and teach a new generation of leaders how to manage environmental resources and cultural assets to produce sustainable incomes and keep them away from illegal armed groups and narcotrafficking organizations.

Taif Sami Mohammed – Iraq

Taif Sami Mohammed assumed the Deputy Finance Minister position in 2019 and simultaneously holds this position as well as Director General of the Budget Department. She has worked at the Ministry of Finance for approximately 36 years, starting initially as a budget analyst in 1985 and working her way up to Deputy Director General of the Budget Department in 2005, when she became the Director General of the Budget Department. A front-line leader against corrupt practices, Ms. Mohammed is known as the “Iron Woman.” A political independent, Ms. Mohammed has been integral in preventing and deterring budget corruption in Iraq. Ms. Mohammed received a Bachelor of Economics from the University of Baghdad (1985). She also has a diploma from the Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait, focused on planning and development (1989-90).

Facia Boyenoh Harris – Liberia

Facia Boyenoh Harris is a life-long activist for women's rights and against gender-based violence in Liberia. As a co-founder of the Paramount Young Women Initiative, she has worked for decades to address the pervasive sexual assault and harassment of school-aged girls, create opportunities for education, and provide leadership training for the next generation of female leaders. She is also a community organizer, from co-founding the Liberian Feminist Forum to facilitating coordination among female advocacy groups, to fostering neighborhood activism, where she organizes groups on issues as wide-ranging as political participation, sanitation, and rape. Ms. Harris's courageous activism—which in some cases have been met with threats and harassment—began in the wake of two brutal civil wars, and in a context where rape, female genital mutilation/cutting, and sexual harassment continue to threaten girls and women of all ages. Currently, Ms. Harris is the Director for Outreach and Sensitization of Liberia's Freedom of Information Act-enforcing Independent Information Commission.

Najla Mangoush – Libya

Appointed on March 15, 2021, Najla Mangoush became the first woman Foreign Minister of Libya and the fifth to hold such a position in North Africa. During Libya's 2011 Revolution, Dr. Mangoush headed the National Transitional Council's Public Engagement Unit which dealt with civil society organizations. A conflict-resolution expert, Dr. Mangoush has served as Libya country representative for the U.S. Institute of Peace and as a program officer for peace-building law at the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution in Arlington, Virginia. Dr. Mangoush trained as a lawyer at Benghazi University (then Garyounis University) where she later worked as an assistant professor of law. She studied under a Fulbright Scholarship in the United States, where she graduated from the Center for Justice and Peace Building at Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia, and later, Dr. Mangoush obtained a Ph.D. in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University.

Doina Gherman – Moldova

Doina Gherman has served in the Moldovan Parliament since 2019, where she has championed efforts to promote women's inclusion and protect survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. She is the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) deputy chair, head of the PAS Women's Organization, chairs Parliament's Foreign Policy and European Integration Commission, and previously served in Parliament's Human Rights Commission. Before entering Parliament, she worked as an inspector in Moldova's Customs Service and taught Communication and Branding at the Institute of Sciences in Education. Ms. Gherman earned a master's degree in Management from the Moldovan Academy of Public Administration and a bachelor's degree in foreign languages from Balti State University. She

speaks Romanian, Russian, French, and English.

Bhumika Shrestha – Nepal

Transgender activist Bhumika Shrestha has advocated for gender minorities' rights and social justice in Nepal since 2007. Despite the entrenched social stigma and historical biases against transgender persons, Ms. Shrestha helped lead the movement for gender minority recognition, as Nepal faced enormous political upheaval and rebirth. Thanks in large part to her activism, in 2007, Nepal's Supreme Court ruled that individuals could be identified as a third gender on citizenship documents, and in the spring of 2021, she successfully changed her citizenship from "other" to female. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Shrestha advocated with the Government of Nepal to ensure the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community were met at the policy level. At the same time, she worked at the grassroots level to ensure medical, economic, and mental health needs were being met.

Carmen Gheorghe – Romania

Since 2013, Carmen Gheorghe has been the president of E-Romnja, an NGO that promotes Roma women's rights. From 2008-2019 she worked as a project manager, expert, and trainer on LGBTQI+, gender, and Roma issues for several reputable NGOs in Romania, including the "Impreuna" Agency for Community Development, the Roma Education Fund, the LGBTQI+ rights NGO ACCEPT, the Center for Education and Human Rights, and the Resource Center for Roma Communities, a spin-off organization of the Open Society Foundation. Prior to this, Dr. Gheorghe worked as an expert for the National Agency for Roma, a governmental agency in charge of developing policies for Roma communities. She has a bachelor's degree in Public Administration (2006), a master's degree in Gender Studies (2008), and a Ph.D. in Political Science (2014) from the Bucharest-based National School of Political Science and Public Administration.

Roegchanda Pascoe – South Africa

In South Africa, a country grappling with high rates of organized crime, gender-based violence, and murder, Roegchanda Pascoe has courageously advocated for peace, justice, and economic inclusion in the historically underserved and violent Cape Flats of Cape Town. Despite multiple attempts on her life and continued threats from violent criminals, Ms. Pascoe continues to create safer communities, especially for women and children who have been traumatized by violence, and to train the next generation of community advocates. She has called on the President of South Africa, local government, and police to increase crime prevention, intervention, and fight corruption; and she has bravely convened gang leaders and community members for conflict mediation.

Phạm Đoan Trang – Vietnam

Phạm Đoan Trang is an internationally recognized author, blogger, journalist, and human rights defender who, through her writing and interviews, uses thoroughly researched legal arguments to advocate for human rights, rule of law, and the inclusion of all voices in political spaces in Vietnam. Ms. Trang authored books and co-founded numerous community-based organizations focused on the expansion of political participation and promoting human rights, good governance, and access to justice. As a journalist, she bravely reported on social issues previously untouched by the Vietnamese media. Ms. Trang has received numerous international awards for her work. She was arrested on October 6, 2020, and sentenced to nine years in prison on December 14, 2021, for purportedly “making, storing, or disseminating propaganda against the people’s administration” in relation to her writings and peacefully expressing her opinions.

Given the virtual nature of this year’s IWOC Awards ceremony, the awardees will not be available for in-person interviews. However, media outlets may e-mail **MediaRequests@state.gov** to schedule virtual interviews with the awardees. We also invite you to use the hashtags #IWOC2022 and #WomenOfCourage on social media for news and updates on this year’s awards. For any IWOC inquiries, please contact the Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues (**SGWI_PA@state.gov**). For any IVLP inquiries, please contact (**ECA-Press@state.gov**).

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