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PRESS RELEASE

Paris, September 27, 2021

Afghan Lawyer Latifa Sharifi Selected Recipient of the 2021 UIA/LexisNexis Rule of Law Award

Ms Latifa Sharifi, an Afghan lawyer of the Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), a historic Afghan women's association, was designated recipient of the 2021 UIA Rule of Law Award in cooperation with LexisNexis by the UIA Governing Board.

Ms. Sharifi was among the three Finalists of the Award selected by the Nomination Committee, along with prominent human rights lawyers **Mohamed El-Baqer (Egypt) and Saif UI-Malook (Pakistan)**, both of whom have consistently demonstrated unrelenting dedication and commitment to upholding the Rule of Law and human rights, despite overwhelming personal and professional hardships, including great risk to their personal safety and that of their families.

As a lawyer, Ms Latifa Sharifi particularly assisted women victims of domestic violence in divorce proceedings and helped them find refuge. Because of her defense of women, Ms Sharifi has repeatedly been threatened and intimidated because of her professional activities, and she has been forced to work clandestinely.

With this Award, UIA and LexisNexis recognize Ms. Sharifi's courageous commitment to ensuring effective access to justice to women, a commitment for which she is regrettably in imminent danger of retaliation.

Ms Sharifi was refouled at Kabul airport on Sunday, August 15, where she went with her husband and her three children, in an attempt to flee abroad. Her youngest child was injured in the process of trying to escape the airport. Ms Sharifi is currently hiding, and she and her family remain in grave danger.

As Ms Jacqueline R. Scott, Director General of UIA-IROL (UIA institute for the Rule of Law) noted: *“We sincerely hope that this Award will raise attention with respect to her grave and precarious current situation and, we hope, help her obtain the international support and protection she and her family need”*.

The Nomination Committee of the 2021 Award, composed of UIA and LexisNexis representatives, also decided to grant a Special Mention to express unconditional support for and solidarity with all Afghan women lawyers and judges who, as Ms Latifa Sharifi, have so courageously worked to uphold the Rule of Law and human rights and to build and reinforce the justice system in Afghanistan.

The Award will be presented at the opening ceremony of the 2021 UIA Congress to be held in Madrid on Thursday, October 28, 2021.

The UIA Rule of Law Award in cooperation with LexisNexis

The UIA Rule of Law Award in cooperation with LexisNexis is a symbolic prize that aims to acknowledge and publicise award-recipients for their commitment and actions. Since its creation, it has been successively awarded to the Malaysian Bar, in 2016; to Saidbek Nuritdinov, President of the Union of Advocates of the Republic of Tajikistan, in 2017; to the Honourable Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, in 2018; to French lawyer, Bertrand Favreau, President of the IDHAE, in 2019, and to European Lawyers in Lesvos (ELIL), in 2020.

More about the UIA

UIA is the global and multi-cultural organisation for the legal profession, established in 1927 and now with members in 110 countries, which provides professional development, learning, promotes the rule of law, defends the independence and freedom of lawyers worldwide, and emphasizes friendship, collegiality and networking among members.

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