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IWMF Announces 2007 *Courage in Journalism* Award Winners

Lydia Cacho of Mexico, Serkalem Fasil of Ethiopia, and the Iraqi Women Reporters of McClatchy's Baghdad Bureau Win *Courage in Journalism* Awards from the International Women's Media Foundation

Peta Thornycroft of Zimbabwe is Lifetime Achievement Winner

Washington, DC – A Mexican journalist who travels with guards because of ongoing threats to her life, a group of women reporters who every day risk their lives to cover the war in Iraq and an Ethiopian publisher who gave birth to a son while confined to a vermin-infested jail cell for her work are the recipients of this year's International Women's Media Foundation *Courage in Journalism Awards*.

"These women have shown dedication and bravery in reporting and in their commitment to journalism," said Judy Woodruff, chair of the IWMF *Courage in Journalism Awards*. "They tell tough stories that need to be told, and in doing so, help defend freedom of the press."

Winners of the 2007 *Courage in Journalism Awards* are:

- **Lydia Cacho**, 43, correspondent for CIMAC news agency and feature writer for *Dia Siete* magazine in Mexico . Cacho, a journalist for more than two decades, has endured numerous death threats because of her work reporting on domestic violence, organized crime and political corruption. In 2004, Cacho published *The Devils of Eden*, a book based on her research on child pornography among Mexican politicians and businessmen. A year later, she was arrested on libel charges and driven to a jail 20 hours from her home in Cancun , with officers hinting that there was a plan to rape her. In recent years, she has written extensively about pedophiles. In February 2006, a tape recording of a conversation between a businessman and a Mexican governor discussing a plan to have her arrested and raped was obtained by the media. Several years earlier, in 1998, Cacho was raped and beaten in the bathroom of a bus station. She doesn't know if the attack was related to her work. On May 8, while Cacho was testifying at the trial of a pedophile she has written about, her car was sabotaged. Cacho is also a human rights advocate; she is the founder and director of the Centro Integral de Atencion a las Mujeres in Cancun , a crisis center and shelter for victims of sex crimes, gender-based violence and trafficking.
- **Serkalem Fasil**, 26, of Ethiopia . The former co-owner and publisher of the weekly newspapers *Asqual*, *Menilik* and *Satenaw*, Fasil was one of 14 editors and reporters of independent and privately-owned newspapers arrested after publishing articles critical of the government's actions during the May 2005 parliamentary elections. The journalists were accused of genocide and treason, charges that could bring life imprisonment or the death penalty. While in jail, Fasil gave birth to and cared for a son, who was premature and underweight due to inhumane conditions and lack of proper medical attention. She was released from prison in April 2007.
- Six Iraqi women journalists of McClatchy's Baghdad bureau: **Shatha al Awsy, Zainebe Obeid, Huda Ahmed, Ban Adil Sarhan, Alaa Majeed** and **Sahar Issa**. Constantly under duress, these women dodge gun battles and tiptoe around car bombs to do their jobs in the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. They are targeted for their work, and so are their families. Their homes have been destroyed and they've lost family members and friends. Each day they risk their

lives just to get to work. They are driven by the desire to report accurately the situation in Iraq , to tell others what is happening in a world that is dissolving around them.

The IWMF also announced that it will present its *Lifetime Achievement Award* to **Peta Thornycroft**, 62, of Zimbabwe. Thornycroft has been a journalist for 35 years. One of the few remaining independent journalists in Zimbabwe, she reports on human rights abuses, farm occupation, the state of the country as commodities become scarce and inflation rises, and government repression. A foreign correspondent for British, American and South African news media, she renounced her British citizenship and became a citizen of Zimbabwe after the government ruled that all journalists working in Zimbabwe had to be citizens of the country. Thornycroft has been accused of terrorism and barred from court proceedings, and in 2002 she was arrested while investigating reports of a campaign against members of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. At the same time, she has led journalism training initiatives benefiting thousands of southern African journalists.

Created in 1990, the IWMF *Courage in Journalism Awards* honor women journalists who have shown extraordinary strength of character and integrity while reporting the news under dangerous or difficult circumstances. This year's awards will be presented at ceremonies in New York on October 23 and in Los Angeles on October 30.

The International Women's Media Foundation was launched in 1990 with a mission to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide. The IWMF network includes women and men in the media in more than 130 countries worldwide.

For more information about the winners or about the *Courage in Journalism Awards*, visit the IWMF website at www.iwmf.org.