

Press Release

M100 Media Award to the Iranian “Women, Life, Freedom Movement” / Ursula von der Leyen gives laudatory speech

- Award ceremony on 14 September at the Orangery Sanssouci in Potsdam/Germany
- Iranian activist Shima Babaei accepts M100 Media Award
- Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, gives laudatory speech
- Opening speech by the Indian author and essayist Pankaj Mishra

Potsdam, 4 August 2023. This year's M100 Media Award will be presented to the **Iranian Women, Life, Freedom movement**. The award honours courageous women and girls – and also men – who protest against oppression and for freedom and human rights in their home countries. They are risking their freedom and their lives in these protests to protest against decades of gender inequality and discrimination against women in Iran. By honouring the Life, Women, Freedom Movement of Iran, M100 supports the struggle for fundamental freedoms, and advocates for an immediate end to state violence and the safe release of thousands of politically imprisoned citizens.

The award ceremony will take place on **Thursday 14 September at 6pm at the Orangery in Park Sanssouci in Potsdam**.

The award will be accepted on behalf of the movement by the Iranian women's rights activist, **Shima Babaei**, who has been living in exile in Belgium since 2020.

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, will deliver the laudatory speech.

The Award ceremony will be hosted by TV journalist **Pinar Atalay**.

[\(Press photos for download here\)](#)

Potsdam's Lord Mayor, Mike Schubert: "The awarding of the M100 Prize to the Iranian Women, Life, Freedom movement sends a strong signal for the strengthening of democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The protests for women's basic rights, which are not only taken for granted in the Western world, have attracted worldwide attention in recent months. It is impressive how courageous and strong the protesters are, expressing their will for change in the knowledge of impending unjust and inhumane punishments. In Shima Babaei, we see the example of a courageous woman who had to flee from harsh punishments and incapacitation, and who fights from exile for the rights and freedom of Iranian women. Their commitment reminds us that we must always stand up for those who have no voice. Let's continue to fight together for a more just and free world, where everyone's voices are heard and women everywhere have equal rights and opportunities."

The M100 Media Award has been presented at the international media conference M100 Sanssouci Colloquium since 2005. Previous recipients include **Lord Norman Foster, Bernard Kouchner, Bob Geldof, Ingrid Betancourt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Kurt Westergaard, Vitali Klitschko, Charlie Hebdo, Roberto Saviano, Natalia Sindeeva, Nicola Sturgeon, Alexei Navalny** and the **people of Ukraine**.

About Shima Babaei:

Shima Babaei, born on 28 August 1994 in northern Iran, has been fighting against the oppression of women and the wearing of the hijab in her country since 2017. At the time, she was studying interior design in Tehran and joined the "White Wednesdays" protest movement, which

was launched on Facebook in May 2017 by the US-based women's rights activist and journalist, Masih Alinejad: The protesters took to the streets every Wednesday dressed all in white, with some of them taking off their hijabs and waving them like a peace flag, as well as posting photos of their open hair on social media.

Shima Babaei became one of their most prominent representatives and synonymous with the Iranian "Girls of Revolution Street". She was twice locked up in the notorious Evin prison, where she had to spend long periods in solitary confinement. She was denied access to legal counsel. Facing a six-year prison sentence and a travel ban, Shima fled Iran with her husband in 2018.

In December 2021, her father, Ebrahim Babaei, a veterinarian and also a human rights activist, tried to flee Iran. After being arrested several times and tortured with beatings for protesting against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and supporting his daughter, he was caught trying to escape near the border and imprisoned again. He has since disappeared.

With the resurgence of Iran protests a year ago and the founding of the Women, Life, Freedom Movement, sparked by the **violent death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini** in police custody on 16 September 2022, Shima Babaei became one of the central voices in the Iranian diaspora. In November 2022, she and three other Iranian activists, including Masih Alinejad, were received by French President Emmanuel Macron at the Élysée Palace.

Shima Babaei continues to fight from exile against gender discrimination and compulsory hijab in her homeland. And for the release of her father.

M100 SANSSOUCI COLLOQUIUM

At the preceding M100 Sanssouci **Colloquium "Between Ambition and Disarray – The Future of Democracy"**, around 70 international editors-in-chief, academics and representatives from politics and civil society will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of democracy, reasons for global democracy fatigue, strategies for strengthening democratic resilience and the future of journalistic media in times of rapid technological progress and disinformation.

The opening address will be delivered by the Indian essayist and writer **Pankaj Mishra**, who became internationally known in 1995 for his non-fiction book "Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India". His latest book "Friendly Fanatics" is a collection of essays in which he questions the myth of the "superior West" and describes how much this myth "leads astray". Find out more about Pankaj Mishra [here](#).

A list of confirmed participants can be [found here](#).

You can find the [agenda here](#).

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