



**CARTOONISTS RIGHTS
NETWORK INTERNATIONAL**

Dr. Robert Russell
Executive Director
Cartoonists Rights Network International
P.O. Box 7272
Fairfax Station, VA 22039 USA
Email: director@cartoonistsrights.org
(703)543-8727

PRESS RELEASE

Washington, D.C., August 13, 2014 -- Mr. Joel Pett, President of Cartoonists Rights Network International (CRNI) announced that the CRNI Board of Directors has selected Indian cartoonist Kanika Mishra and Palestinian cartoonist Majda Shaheen as the co-recipients of our 2014 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning.

Mishra and Shaheen are the first women cartoonists to be given the Courage Award in its 15 year history.

Each year CRNI gives this coveted award to a cartoonist who has demonstrated exceptional courage in the face of significant personal and professional threats resulting from his or her exercise of free speech.

Our policy on the Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning:

- We award a cartoonist in grave danger
- We do not award cartoonists who advocate violence or hate
- We do not award a cartoon
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Kanika Mishra is a resident in the city of Mumbai, who received numerous threats, including death threats against her and her family, for her cartoons lampooning the legal troubles of popular cult leader Asaram Bapu. When Kanika got word that Bapu had been accused of raping the 16-year old daughter of two of his followers, she reacted in the most powerful way she could, tweeting and posting to her Facebook page a cartoon satirizing the blind faith Bapu's supporters displayed in their guru, resulting in the first round of threats against her. She responded with additional cartoons, including one of the reputed holy man being hauled off to jail.

Media reaction to Kanika's controversial cartoons was swift, including requests for interviews from *India Today* and India's most watched news channel, *Aaj Tak*. This surge in media coverage led to a groundswell of new threats and harassment from Bapu's supporters. Throughout the siege, she continued to take on Bapu's outrageous hypocrisy through her cartoons.

Palestinian cartoonist Majda Shaheen works in a region known for its extreme volatility and intractable political conflicts, which often explode into violence. After posting a cartoon depicting her critical view on the relationship between Ismail Haying, the senior political leader of Hamas, and the Al-Quds Brigades, the latter group's official website posted a request for details regarding Majda's exact whereabouts, with the aim of intimidating her and her family. One response featured a picture of another woman bearing the same name, wrongly identified as Majda, with the word 'Execution' placed on it.

Numerous additional death threats followed. Other groups rose to her defense, resulting in a rare public discussion of the rights of all Palestinians to free expression, as well as a demonstration of its perils.

This year's ceremony will take place on October 11th in San Francisco, California USA during the annual convention of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists.