



**Safa Al Ahmad, Journalist and Filmmaker, Golden Pen of Freedom Award Ceremony Speech,
Glasgow, Scotland, 1 June 2019**

“I feel both honoured and heartbroken to accept this award on behalf of Jamal Khashoggi.

Since last October many of us who knew him have been in a daze. Not able to comprehend...

What was done to him.

Why the Saudi government deemed his words so dangerous he had to be brutally murdered. His body disappeared. Just to silence him.

I can't imagine the anguish his family is going through.

But his death is more than a private trauma for his family.

His murder has become our collective trauma.

The Saudi government hoped that Jamal's murder would scare the rest of us.

Would silence us.

Instead, those who were silent started to speak out. Realising that their words are powerful, even threatening to this government.

Lina, Alia and Waleed Al-Hathloul were compelled to talk out about their sister Lujain.

She was tortured by waterboarding, electrocution and sexually assaulted in a secret prison.

She was among the feminists who were arrested last May; just before the lift of the ban on women driving that they worked so hard for.

Mousa Al-Sadah is speaking out for his mother Naseema. Another courageous activist. She has been held in solitary confinement and without trial for nearly a year.

Areej Al-Sadhan, finally broke her silence about the forced disappearance of her brother Abdulrahman. It has been over a year now. And still no news of him.

Instead of the silence they were hoping for, Jamal's death has become a catalyst.

He made us find each other. Support each other. Inspired connections that were impossible before. To reach across our ideological divides as Saudis and start talking.

Unified in the sense of horror of what Saudi Arabia has become and what will be its future.

Jamal's death has also brought back the attention of the world to the warcrimes committed by the Saudi coalition for over 4 years in Yemen.

That the Saudi government's blatant disregard for human rights has spilled across its borders.

Bombing schools, hospitals, weddings and funeral homes.



Killing thousands. Starving millions.

The Saudi government thinks it can act with impunity. And so far... it has been proven right.

Jamal's death goes unpunished. The devastating war on Yemen continues.

And we are left alone. Speaking our truth to power.

Wondering which one of us will be the next to be disappeared. Tortured. Killed.”

Safa al-Ahmad is a journalist and film-maker who has directed documentaries for PBS and the BBC focusing on uprisings in the Middle East. Her film [Saudi's Secret Uprising](#) was the first documentary of its kind to document the historically unprecedented protests in the kingdom. An investigation that took over a year was the first documentary to be jointly produced and simultaneously aired by BBC English, Arabic and Farsi. Her work on Yemen spans almost a decade and reflects the bloody trajectory of the conflicts within the country and their international impact. In *The Fight for Yemen*, which was produced for the BBC and PBS's Frontline, Safa was one of the few journalists reporting to international news organizations from the ground during the crisis between Houthi rebels, militant groups, and the government. Her follow-up film *Yemen Under Siege*, which took a close-up look at the staggering human toll of the conflict in Yemen, took home two Emmy Awards in 2017.

She is also the winner of the 2015 Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Award for Journalism, the El Mundo award for journalism for her body of work in 2015, the [2015 Canadian Journalists for Free Expression \(CJFE\) International Press Freedom Award](#) and the Association of International Broadcasting (AIB) Best International Investigation for her film *Saudi's Secret Uprising* in 2014. She was twice a finalist for the Rory Peck Sony Impact Award 2012-2014. Her writing on the Arab uprisings was published in an anthology *Writing Revolutions* published by Penguin which won an English Pen award.

Safa is a board member of the [Frontline Freelance Register](#), and advocates for the safety and welfare of freelance journalists who are exposed to risk in their work.