

**For immediate release on**

December 2, 2022

Contact: Sara Palmer, [sara@mesana.org](mailto:sara@mesana.org)

## Middle East Scholars Announce 2022 Academic Freedom Award Recipients

*Six Palestinian research and human rights organizations honored for their decades-long pursuit of academic freedom, courageous resilience, and contributions to the field of Middle East Studies.*

The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) is pleased to announce the six recipients of the 2022 Academic Freedom Award: **Addameer, Al-Haq, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International - Palestine, Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees**. MESA presented the Award to the organizations virtually during its 56<sup>th</sup> [annual meeting](#) in Denver, Colorado.

The six Palestinian research and human rights organizations work across a range of issues that include advocating for children killed or imprisoned by Israeli authorities, economic and agricultural sovereignty, direct support to poor and marginalized communities in Palestine, and legal aid.

“For decades, international scholars and human rights advocates have relied on well-researched and meticulously-documented reports from these six organizations,” MESA President **Eve Troutt Powell** said of the awardees. “They have continued to do their critical work in the occupied West Bank and Gaza while facing enormous pressure from the Israeli government, especially in the last year since Israel [banned](#) them, [ransacked and shut down](#) their offices, and [detained](#) their staff.”

The criminalization and closure of the six Palestinian organizations not only violates numerous statutes of international law and globally recognized standards of academic freedom, but it also uses intimidation and violence to control how Palestinian students, scholars, researchers, and institutions do their work, and their ability to collaborate with international organizations, universities, and colleges.

“These organizations have a track record of contributions to the field of Middle East Studies and exhibit courageous resilience despite years-long intimidation tactics including Israeli court battles, forced office closures, and multiple raids,” said **Troutt Powell**.

“With this award, MESA adds its voice to those of more than 1,000 [international human rights groups](#), public officials, institutions, and unions in support of these six critical Palestinian organizations, and in condemning the Israeli government’s forced closures and criminalization of human rights work.”

LIST: MESA’s 2022 Academic Freedom Award Recipients

- [Addameer](#) – Founded in 1991, Addameer (Arabic for “conscience”) Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association is a Palestinian non-governmental, civil institution that works to support Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli and Palestinian prisons.

- [Al-Haq](#) — An independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organization, Al-Haq is based in Ramallah, West Bank. Established in 1979 to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the organization has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- [Bisan Center for Research and Development](#) — Established in 1989, Bisan Center for Research and Development is a non- governmental, nonprofit, democratic and progressive Palestinian civil society organization that works to support poor and marginalized Palestinians in their struggle to advance their socioeconomic rights in the context of national liberation, through the production and application of critical development knowledge, and the building of partnerships with progressive bodies and entities.
- [Defense for Children International - Palestine \(DCIP\)](#) — An independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.
- [Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees](#) — A progressive feminist community organization founded in 1980, the Union works to improve the status and empowerment of Palestinian women to ensure true equality between men and women and social justice for all groups of society.
- [Union of Agricultural Work Committees \(UAWC\)](#) — Established in 1986 by a group of agronomists, the UAWC is one of the largest agricultural development institutions in Palestine. A progressive civil society organization, UAWC contributes to the agricultural sector’s development by empowering Palestinian farmers.

See [here](#) for a list of past Academic Freedom Award winners.

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*[Middle East Studies Association \(MESA\)](#) is a non-profit learned society that brings together scholars, educators and those interested in the study of the region from all over the world. From its inception in 1966 with 51 founding members, MESA has increased its membership to nearly 2,700 individuals and serves as an umbrella organization for fifty institutional members and thirty-nine affiliated organizations.*

MESA’s [Committee on Academic Freedom \(CAF\)](#) seeks to foster the free exchange of knowledge as a human right and to inhibit infringements on that right by government restrictions on scholars. The United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide the principal standards by which human rights violations are identified today. Those rights include the right to education and work, freedom of movement and residence, and freedom of association and assembly.