

FREEDOM OF PRESS COMMITTEE REPORT MARCH 2025

March 1, 2025

Fr: Ilgin Yorulmaz (FoP Committee Co-Chair)

Participants: David McNeill (Committee Chair); Ilgin Yorulmaz (Committee Co-chair); Randy Schmidt (Member and Board Liaison); Eric Johnston (Member); Isabel Reynolds (Member); Justin McCurry (Member); Andy Sharp (Member)

Freedom of Press Committee convened via email in February to discuss the following issues:

ISSUING NOTICES

After consultation among the members of the committee, including the Board liaison Randy Schmidt, the committee felt the need to reissue the rules for publishing freedom of press statements (See Appendix I.)

REVISED AND CLARIFIED RULES OF NOMINATION

The committee agreed on the need to revise and clarify the rules to streamline and unify the process of nomination, review and selection of awardees in every category. We prepared a template largely based on the previous years' practices (See Appendix II.)

2025 FREEDOM OF PRESS AWARDS CEREMONY

We have had a robust nomination process which ended March 1 and received a healthy number of nominees this year.

The Committee expects to meet on **March 3rd** to discuss the nominees.

The awards ceremony is planned for May 27 at 7 p.m. at FCCJ. We plan to organize the evening in coordination with GM Wayne Hunter.

BUDGET FOR 2025

Awards ceremony and prizes: By its nature, the committee's activities do not necessarily generate or spend cash. As such, the committee's budget requirements are modest and include, for example, awards' trophies. However, if the members of the Board wish to hold a more elaborate awards ceremony, complete with dinner and other activities, the Committee will be more than happy to assist GM Wayne Hunter.

Respectfully Submitted,

David McNeill (co-chair)
Ilgin Yorulmaz (co-chair)

Appendix I: ISSUING FREEDOM OF PRESS STATEMENTS

1: Once written, FoP notices will be checked by the Board liaison before publication and, where necessary, will be referred to the president. Only in the last resort, when it is felt by the liaison that a notice could embarrass or compromise the club, will notices be sent to the board. Routine Board checks of notices could slow down publication of notices, which depend on timeliness.

2: The FoP committee is responsible for checking and vetting candidates for the FoP award. The board recognizes that the committee has been appointed for precisely the purpose of selecting candidates and where necessary ruling out others. Should the Board feel the need to overrule FoP selections the onus should be on the Board to explain why.

3: The FoP requests that a conflict-of-interest clause be inserted into the rules for both the FoP Award and the Swadesh DeRoy Memorial Scholarship, as requested by the Cabinet Office.

Appendix II: RULES FOR FREEDOM OF PRESS NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

As part of its mission as a koeki shadan houjin (public interest corporation), the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, through its Freedom of the Press Committee, annually recognizes outstanding individual journalists and media organizations contributing to upholding the values of a free press in the Asia-Pacific region and Japan.

The award is the highlight of FCCJ's efforts to promote free speech and free exchange of information, which include issuing statements to condemn particularly serious cases of censorship, harassment or unlawful detention affecting journalists in the region and inviting speakers to highlight such problems in Japan and Asia.

1. A Freedom of the Press Japan Award given to an individual or media organization (print, broadcast or exclusively online) for coverage of any Japan-based or Japan- related issue over the previous year that demonstrated a strong commitment to freedom of the press and elevated Japanese media standards. This could be anything from tackling a taboo subject to an exposé of a political or financial scandal, or reporting in the face of official or other forms of pressure or intimidation. The reporting doesn't necessarily have to be investigative in nature to meet the criteria.

2. A Freedom of the Press Asia Award given to an individual or media organization (again - print, broadcast or online) based in the region that meets the same requirements as above. We hope this category will help us forge closer ties with other FCCs in Asia, particularly in countries where journalists are under serious and continual attack.

3. At the discretion of the committee and the FCCJ Board of Directors, a Lifetime Achievement Award may also be given to an individual whose reporting (in print, broadcast or online) has been of outstanding quality over an extended period, not limited to the year leading up to the award.

Step 1: A request for nominations is sent out to all members with a deadline for submissions by March 1 2025 (the committee reserves the right to revise this date).

Members who wish to put forward a person or organization for one or more categories are required to explain, briefly, why they have nominated them and preferably attach some samples of their work.

Step 2: The Committee studies the nominations and selects the winners in each category, depending on the number of candidates.

Step 3: The Board of Directors is briefed by the Committee on the winners.

Important: If the number or the quality of nominations does not meet the Freedom of the Press Committee's standards in any given year, the Committee reserves the right to include its own nominations. To avoid conflicts of interest, no member of the Committee or the Board may nominate his or her own organization or colleagues, but Committee members can vote for them if nominated by another member. To encourage nominations and for ease of voting, nominations can be made and votes cast online by members who cannot physically attend the Committee meeting or are not present in Japan at the time. The prize for each award is an engraved item of glassware and/or a certificate and a year's free membership of the FCCJ. The runner-up in each category receives a certificate. The awards are presented at an FCCJ event on media freedom in Japan and Asia to enable us to talk to the recipients about their work and, ideally, generate media coverage here and elsewhere in the region. Unless they happen to be in Japan at the time, the Asia-Pacific winner and runner-up will take part remotely.