

*Zahra Nader's speech:*

I want to Thank you CFWIJ and CJFE for giving me this opportunity to stand on this stage, and to speak about a difficult topic for any journalist: **what we have lost**.

I grew up in Kabul after the Taliban regime was defeated in 2001. We had no electricity or running water, but the schools were open. And that was enough for us to build our future.

I am standing here because I had the opportunity to get an education, a right that is now denied to all women and girls in Afghanistan since the Taliban took over in August 2021.

I am here, accepting this award not only on my own behalf, but on behalf of women journalists in Afghanistan who are being **systematically erased**, who have **lost** the ability to continue their work in public because they are women.

The truth that we cover these days is brutal. It burns to the bone. It traumatises you. It is a nightmare that haunts us even in daylight.

Yet some refuse to accept **loss** at the hands of the Taliban.

Every day, my colleagues at Zan Times keep the world informed about what is happening in Afghanistan. They endure the brutal and traumatizing reality of life under Taliban rule, knowing that if the Taliban caught them, then they would be tortured, imprisoned and god knows what would happen to them.

I wish they could be here and accept this award **with me** because, truly, it is their courage and commitment to truth that make our work possible.

Tonight, I am here with one request. We need each and every one of you to speak up about what is happening in Afghanistan, **about the worst women's rights crisis of our time**.

We must be clear about what is at stake: it is not only about the **loss of** women's rights in Afghanistan, it is **also** about the **loss of** women's rights around the world. For what the Taliban deny today, others can deny tomorrow.

Please speak up and also support those who continue to report the truth.

Thank you,