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PRESS RELEASE

Paris, 24 July 2023

Céline Bardet, the international lawyer and war crimes investigator, has been designated the winner of the 2023 UIA/LexisNexis Rule of Law Award

UIA's Governing Board, acting on a proposal from the UIA Rule of Law Award's Jury in cooperation with LexisNexis Legal & Professional, has decided to award the 2023 Award to Ms Céline Bardet, a French international lawyer specialising in war crimes and President and founder of the association, "We Are Not Weapons of Wars" (WWoW).

The award is in recognition of Céline Bardet's intense and ongoing commitment to the fight for justice for international crimes, as well as her efforts to combat sexual violence in crisis and conflict zones.

Céline Bardet began her career at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and later worked at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on issues of terrorism and organised crime. Commencing in 2004, Céline Bardet decided to devote herself to long-term field missions in dozens of countries, establishing very close contacts with victims and focusing, in particular, on post-conflict justice, war crimes and security issues.

In 2007, she was appointed Legal Director and Adviser to the Principal Deputy High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina (ORH), working with victims and local institutions to advance the war crimes trials process. Following her extensive experience in the Balkans, she published "Zones Sensibles: une femme contre les criminels de guerre" (Sensitive areas – A woman against war criminals) in 2011.

In 2013, Céline Bardet advised the Libyan Minister of Justice on the drafting of a pioneering law recognising rape as a war crime and giving rape victims the status of war victims. In 2018, she collaborated on the documentary "Libye Anatomie d'un crime" (Libya – the anatomy of a crime), revealing the system of mass rape perpetrated by armed groups operating in Libya, also on men.

Céline Bardet is now a recognised independent expert on justice and security issues. She works regularly as a consultant on projects funded by the European Commission and the United Nations, in particular on complex criminal issues such as war crimes, corruption, terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime, post-conflict justice, and sexual violence in conflicts. She is also an associate judge at the Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile – the national court of asylum, in Paris.

In 2014, Céline Bardet founded the NGO "We Are NOT Weapons OF War" (WWoW) dedicated to fighting sexual violence in conflicts by proposing a new way of working on the ground with victims. The NGO has adopted a holistic approach, focusing on three pillars: public information, the sharing of legal expertise to support local institutions in the fight against impunity, and support and rehabilitation for victims. She works in particular with Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Denis Mukwege.

WWoW has developed the encrypted and secure Web-App "BackUp", which enables victims to report who they are and where they are located. The App also saves their evidence and testimonies. ¹. Now operational, this digital tool is being deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ukraine. In connection with this work, Ms Bardet was awarded the [2018 Margaret Coup de Cœur Award](#).

"We sincerely hope that this award will help draw international attention to the valuable work undertaken by Ms Bardet and inspire other members of the legal community to support her and follow her example by engaging in this type of civil society-led initiative in their own countries and beyond," said Ms Urquiola De Palacio, UIA President.

"It was a privilege for LexisNexis to partner with the UIA to establish this award back in 2016 and I commend this year's recipient Céline Bardet for her commitment and dedication to advancing the Rule of Law," Nigel Roberts, VP Global Associations LexisNexis, VP LexisNexis Rule of Law Foundation

The 2023 UIA/LexisNexis Rule of Law Award will be officially presented to Céline Bardet at the UIA Congress to be held from 25 to 29 October 2023 in Rome, Italy.

More about the UIA

UIA is the global and multi-cultural organisation for the legal profession, established in 1927 and now with members in 110 countries, which provides professional development, learning, promotes the rule of law, defends the independence and freedom of lawyers worldwide, and emphasizes friendship, collegiality and networking among members.

For more information go to: www.uianet.org - uiacentre@uianet.org
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¹ <https://www.uianet.org/fr/actualites/we-are-not-weapons-war-interview-de-celine-bardet-par-me-alain-grosjean-secretaire>