

Announcing the launch of the Resilience Network

Monday, December 2, 2024, TORONTO: Journalists for Human Rights and Equitas are proud to support our partners at Resilient Societies for the Toronto launch of the **Resilience Network**, a global initiative that empowers exiled democracy, civil society, and human rights advocates to continue their advocacy and civic engagement in a safe and supportive environment.

The Resilience Network aims to help exiled activists and human rights defenders to adapt and reorganize, build professional networks and skills, integrate into new environments, and build solidarity to counter the growing repression of civic space. Proving placement in host institutions will be a central component of this initiative.

"The launch of the Resilience Network is a milestone in our collective effort to support exiled democracy advocates and human rights defenders in rebuilding their lives and continuing their vital work," said **Maiwand Rahyab**, founder and CEO of Resilient Societies. "At a time when civic space is under attack globally, the Resilient Network provides a lifeline for these courageous individuals who refuse to be silenced."

The Resilience Network's launch in Toronto will be celebrated at the event '**Solidarity Across Borders**', a discussion forum taking place at Massey College on Wednesday, December 4, 2024. The forum will shine a spotlight on the challenges faced by exiled activists and human rights defenders in Canada, the need to support their continued activism, and Canada's responsibility in ensuring their ability to do so.

"By fostering solidarity and creating opportunities, the *Resilience Network* advances Canada's commitment to protecting civic space and democracy," said **Nurjehan Mawani**, Chair in Global Engagement at Massey College. "Together, we can turn challenges into opportunities and ensure that those forced to flee are empowered to lead and inspire change from wherever they are."

The keynote address will be delivered by **Hon. Ratna Omidvar**, former senator and a globally recognized leader on issues of migration, diversity, and inclusion.



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Other distinguished speakers at the event include **Nurjehan Mawani**, **Maiwand Rahyab**, **Payam Akhavan**, inaugural chair of Human Rights at Massey College; **Rachel Pulfer**, President of Journalists for Human Rights; **Odette McCarthy**, Executive Director of Equitas; and journalist **Omayra Issa**, who will serve as the MC for the event.

"We are witnessing war, prolonged conflicts, and climate-driven displacement. Spaces for constructive dialogue are shrinking. These realities are contributing to a rise in the transnational repression of human rights defenders," said **Odette McCarthy**. "Through human rights education, Equitas remains committed to supporting exiled human rights defenders as they strive to strengthen community resilience."

Rachel Pulfer will moderate a panel discussion featuring **Sadia Zaman**, CEO of Inspirit Foundation, **Mostafa Al-Asar**, Egyptian journalist and CJFE/Massey College journalism fellow, **Sheng Xue**, democracy activist and writer, and **Chris Eaton**, COO of the Aga Khan Museum and interim Chair of Resilient Societies.

"At Journalists for Human Rights, we've seen firsthand the powerful impact of supporting international journalists to regain their ability to report on their countries of origin," said **Rachel Pulfer**. "We must stand against silencing and censorship if we are to confront tyranny and protect democracy."

Additionally, the event will feature an art exhibit by ArtLords, showcasing the work of independent Afghan artists.

Resilient Societies is an emerging Canada-based global platform dedicated to empowering civil society activists and human rights defenders, especially those operating from 'closed' or 'closing' civic spaces, or in exile. By building resilience, enhancing voice and agency, and raising the credibility and relevance of civil society activists and human rights defenders from such environments, Resilient Societies contributes to reversing democratic backsliding and shrinking civic spaces.

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