

Laudatio for Recorder¹

The New Journal of Human Rights Award was conceived as a public recognition of achievements that defend human freedom and dignity. Equally, the Award sought to draw attention to the people themselves; to those who, through generosity, tenacity, and expertise, give substance to the ideas of freedom and dignity. In 2025, for the first time, the winner of the NJHR Award is not a person, but an institution. This time, the merits for "exceptional achievements in promoting human freedom and dignity"—to use the standard, general wording of the citation—can no longer be found within an individual biography. They are the result of a community that has gained a professional identity.

The decision to give the NJHR Award to Recorder was taken by consensus among the magazine's editors and previous winners of the prize. We mention this to emphasize the shared feeling that, as an exception, this once, it was time to honor a moral and intellectual community. We owe the documentary *Justiție capturată* (*Justice Captured*) to this community, led by authors Andreea Pocotilă and Mihai Voinea. The record viewership, from the 382,000 at the time of the documentary's broadcast on TVR1 to the over 5 million views recorded in the following days on Recorder's official channel, proved the power of investigative journalism. Its content produced an avalanche capable of changing the status of magistrates in Romania. The revelations, the result of a year and a half of investigation, have set society in motion to an unprecedented extent. Recorder's message mobilized political leaders, from ministers to parliamentarians and the president, judges, prosecutors, and representative institutions such as the High Court of Cassation and Justice and the Superior Council of Magistracy, journalists, academics, and the people who protested in front of the courts. Most of them defended the independence of the judiciary. A few, those "exposed" in the documentary *Justice Captured*, contested it and thereby did nothing but confirm the value of the work of the authors, Andreea Pocotilă and Mihai Voinea. Recorder thus championed, with unprecedented power, one of the main human rights: the right to justice.

The popularity enjoyed by Recorder in recent months is the result of an organizational effort that Recorder's initiators began in 2017. In their explanation dated May 29, 2025, entitled "Eight years of Recorder. A report for readers," Mihai Voinea and Cristian Delcea outlined the publication's operating principles: "Transparency is fundamental value for a media organization that is financed by contributions from the public"; "Our sources of funding have always been visible to anyone who wanted to find out about them. Recorder has never received money from any political party, and this has remained true over the past year. We have not accepted any electoral advertising in any form." Another principle with dual, professional and ethical, motivations has guided Recorder journalists through the turbulent waters of political life:

¹ Those awarded *The New Journal of Human Rights* Award for outstanding achievements in promoting human freedom and dignity receive a diploma, a sculpture created by artist Radu Fulga and a sum of money. *The New Journal of Human Rights* is financially supported by Andreea and Radu Mareș through their company Plastics Bavaria Equipment & Systems srl. They are also covering the cost of the award this year.

"The press must bring the truth to light, not strategize the moment of publication or wait for the number of irregularities in the biographies of politicians to reach parity in order to achieve perfect impartiality." The values of fairness and independence, manifested both in statements and in deeds, give Recorder the power to inspire confidence to the public and create real, reasonable fear in the opponents to Romanian democracy. Recorder's results are an expression of the people who are part of it and, at the same time, of this impressive institutional model.

The documentary *Justice Captured* is just the culmination of journalistic work that can be described as "successful" in its entirety. Recorder's documentaries and investigations have been part of the Romanian press's treasure trove for many years. We recall just a few high-impact examples that have shaken public opinion and several institutions. The Nordis series investigated what has been called "the most powerful political-real estate clan" in the country. The publication's headlines are almost always short summaries: "*The land of real estate schemes. The reforms promised by the state after Nordis have been watered down*"; "*Who else benefited from trips paid for by Nordis: luxury vacations for politicians, journalists, and ANAF officials*"; "*Two more private jet flights hidden by Marcel Ciolacu. The prime minister flew his entire family on Nordis planes.*"

The Recorder editorial team's courage in tackling the most sensitive topics was evident in its investigations of religious organizations in Romania. The documentary "Catedrala Umilirii Neamului" (The Cathedral of National Humiliation) caused a real scandal, both for its content and its title. The financial empire of the Romanian Orthodox Church was investigated in another journalistic masterpiece: "Clanul Marelui Alb" (The Clan of the Great White). The sensitive topics investigated by Recorder included the influence of the Romanian Intelligence Service on Romanian institutions, abuse by the police, and intolerable situations in the healthcare system. The topic of corruption is so frequent in Recorder's portfolio because corruption is so prevalent in the country.

We would like to highlight the empathy shown by the Recorder editorial team towards social causes. Investigations have been published on abandoned children, the cruel treatment of abused minors, the hunting of some pensioners in Oradea for their property, who died under suspicious circumstances, and the humiliation and assault of a homeless man in Timișoara in the courtyard of the local police station. The publication has welcomed and promoted charitable initiatives.

What emerges from a systematic inventory of what Recorder has done and continues to do exceeds even the imagination of its most loyal supporters. The editors of the *New Journal of Human Rights* and the previous winners of the NJHR Award have long been supporters of the publication. But now, delving deeper into its deeds and achievements has led us to complete admiration. We believe that the most authentic way to end this *Laudatio* is to applaud: "Bravo, Recorder!" The fact that the Recorder journalists have accepted our Award is an honor for us.