

Winners of legal journalists' awards

The 2009 Webber Wentzel Legal Journalist of the Year Awards were awarded earlier this week in Illovo, Johannesburg.

Winners

- Print and online category, which included blog entrants for the first time

1st prize - Franny Rabkin, *Business Day*; and R50 000

1st runner-up - Prakash Naidoo, *Financial Mail*

2nd runner-up - Kim Hawkey, *Sunday Times*

- Broadcast category, which included radio and TV

1st prize - Hazel Friedman, SABC3's *Special Assignment* and R50 000

1st runner-up - Stephen Grootes, Primedia's *Eyewitness News*

2nd runner-up - Mandy Wiener, Primedia's *Eyewitness News*

High praise

Competition judge, Tawana Kupe, dean of humanities at Wits University and professor of its School of literature, language and media studies said Rabkin's entries display lively and intelligent understanding of legal issues. "Her work deals with some of the major legal controversies we have seen over the past year or so, but goes beyond the immediately obvious, and unpacks some of the legal controversies behind stories in the news. It takes a sophisticated understanding of the law to spot - and write about - the different interpretations of the meaning of prosecutorial independence on display in a range of rulings, as she does in 'Zuma saga puts constitution to the test'."

The other competition judge, Franz Kruger, acting director of the Wits Radio Academy and senior lecturer in journalism at Wits University said Friedman's entries were exemplary pieces of legal journalism and journalistic excellence. "In the pieces she tackles the heinous crimes of child sexual abuse in ways that are deeply informative and ethical."

Judges Kruger and Kupe noted that picking winners was particularly difficult because of the quality of the entries.

Peter Grealy, partner at Webber Wentzel, said that the awards underlined the high standards of legal analysis and reporting in South Africa. "It's vital that we acknowledge the role played by journalists in promoting knowledge of the judiciary and understanding of the civil and criminal justice system."

The awards took place on Wednesday, 11 November 2009.

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