

AI Index: PRE 01/234/2011
03 May 2011

Ugandan rights activist wins top human rights award

A Ugandan woman who has defended the rights of her country's marginalized lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community has been honoured with a prestigious human rights award, Amnesty International said today.

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera was announced on Tuesday as the winner of the 2011 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, the main award of the international human rights movement.

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera is the founder and executive director of Freedom and Roam Uganda, a leading LGBT rights organization.

"Recognizing Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera with this Martin Ennals Award reflects her immense courage as an outspoken voice for human rights amidst a climate of hatred and despicable violence towards lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people in Uganda," said Erwin van der Borgh, Amnesty International's Africa Program Director.

In recent years human rights organizations including Amnesty International have documented numerous cases of discrimination, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, torture and other ill-treatment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in Uganda, and against activists exposing violations against the LGBT community.

On 26 January, Ugandan gay rights activist David Kato was murdered after the Ugandan tabloid Rolling Stone published a "gay list" and called for the people named in the list to be hanged.

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera's name also appears on the list.

Despite ongoing harassment, threats and attacks for her work, Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera has continued to advocate publicly and in the media on behalf of Uganda's LGBT community. Fears for her personal safety have led her to shift from house to house, never staying too long in the same place.

The ceremony of the Martin Ennals Award will take place in Geneva's Victoria Hall later this year.

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) is a unique collaboration among 10 of the world's leading human rights organizations to give protection to human rights defenders worldwide.

The jury is composed of the following NGOs: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, International Federation for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, Front Line, International Commission of Jurists, German Diakonie, International Service for Human Rights and HURIDOCS.

Previous laureates: Muhannad Al-Hassani, Syria (2010), Emad Baghi, Iran; Mutabar Tadjibaeva,

Uzbekistan; Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, Burundi and Rajan Hoole-Kopalasingham Sritharan, Sri Lanka; Akbar Ganji, Iran and Arnold Tsunga, Zimbabwe; Aktham Naisse, Syria; Lida Yusupova, Russia; Alirio Uribe Muñoz, Colombia; Jacqueline Moudeina, Chad; Peace Brigades International; Immaculée Birhaheka, DR Congo; Natasha Kandic, Yugoslavia; Eyad El Sarraj, Palestine; Samuel Ruiz, Mexico; Clement Nwankwo, Nigeria; Asma Jahangir, Pakistan; Harry Wu, China.

Patrons of the Martin Ennals Award: Asma Jahangir, Barbara Hendricks, José Ramos-Horta, Adama Dieng, Leandro Despouy, Louise Arbour, Robert Fulghum, Irene Khan, Theo van Boven and Werner Lottje†.