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Chechen Human Rights Defender receives Martin Ennals Award

Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, will present the 2004 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) to Lida Yusupova of the Grozny office of Memorial in a special ceremony in Geneva on April 7. The ceremony will be broadcast live as a special edition of the Swiss TV programme ZigZag Café. Claudia Roth, Germany's Commissioner for Human Rights will also be present at the Ceremony.

A woman's courage:

Lida Yusupova is the coordinator of the Grozny office of the Moscow-based human rights organization Memorial. This small group is one of the few human rights organisations still operating in Chechnya and providing the world with crucial information on violations of human rights. Lida collects testimonies from those victims who dare to come to the Grozny office, but also goes herself to the places where killings and disappearances have occurred. She accompanies the victims to the Russian Army and Security Services to make their claims and provides what legal assistance is possible given the limitations of the judicial system in that part of Russia.

The Chairman of the jury of the MEA, Hans Thoolen, called Lida "one of the most courageous women in Europe today". He said that "there is complete consensus among all human rights organizations on the jury that Lida deserves the award for her tireless efforts in a situation of war and extreme danger, with increased risk for women".

Background:

MEA: the main award of the human rights movement:

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) is a unique collaboration between ten of the world's leading non-governmental human rights organisations. The jury is composed of the following: Amnesty International, International Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, World Organisation Against Torture, German Diakonie, International Service for Human Rights, International Alert, Huridocs, Defence for Children, and the International Commission of Jurists. The previous 10 recipients of the MEA are: Alirio Uribe Muñoz, Colombia (2003); Jacqueline Moudeina, Chad; Peace Brigades International, Immaculée Birhaheka, DR Congo; Natasa Kandic, Yugoslavia; Eyad El Sarraj, Palestine; Samuel Ruiz García, Mexico; Clement Nwankwo, Nigeria; Asma Jahangir, Pakistan; and Harry Wu, China (1994).

Martin Ennals (1927-1991) was an influential figure in the modern human rights movement. He was the first Secretary-General of Amnesty International and the driving force behind many other organisations. His deep desire was to see more cooperation and solidarity among NGOs: the MEA is evidence that this is possible.

Swiss Television will broadcast the ceremony live at 13h00. The programme will be re-transmitted by TV5 to millions of viewers.

Photos available at: www.martinennalsaward.org/lida

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