

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Chechen Human Rights Defender wins most prestigious award of human rights movement**

The Martin Ennals Foundation announced today that Lida Yusupova has been selected as the winner of the 2004 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA).

Lida Yusupova is since 3 years the coordinator of the Grozny office of the Moscow-based human rights organisation Memorial. It is a small office with only 6 staff members and one of the few human rights organisations still operating in Chechnya, providing the world with crucial information on violations of human rights in this Russian republic.

Lida collects testimonies from those victims who dare to come to the Grozny office but also goes herself out to the places where killings and disappearances have occurred. She accompanies the victims in their claims to the Russian Army and Security Services and provides legal assistance to the extent that the judicial system still functions 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 states that "there is complete consensus among all human rights organisations that Lida deserves the award for her tireless efforts in a situation of war and extreme danger, with increased risk for women". Moreover, the Grozny office has to function in almost complete isolation, the access to Chechnya for international NGOs, intergovernmental organisations and independent media being very restricted. Last year Lida's office was the target of a direct attack by the army but the staff has continued its indispensable monitoring work.

The ceremony will take place in Geneva on 7 April 2004. It will be transmitted live by Swiss Television and re-transmitted by TV5 to millions of households.

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) is a unique collaboration among ten of the world's leading non-governmental human rights organisations. The Jury is composed of the following: Amnesty International, Defence for Children, German Diakonie, Human Rights Watch, Huridocs, International Alert, International Commission of Jurists, International Federation for Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights and the World Organisation Against Torture. 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; Harry Wu,

China (1994).

Martin Ennals (1927-1991) was instrumental to 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.

For more information on the MEA: [www.martinennalsaward.org](http://www.martinennalsaward.org)

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