

## Nominations announced for 2007 Martin Ennals Award

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The jury of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) has announced the nominations for the 2007 Award. The MEA, created in 1993, is granted annually to an individual or an organization who has displayed exceptional courage in combating human rights violations.

Since 2005, the jury has publicly announced the leading candidates for the award as they are all in urgent need of protection. This year's nominees are:

### **Pierre Claver Mbonimpa (Burundi)**

Pierre Claver Mbonimpa set up his own human rights organization (APRODH) to address the plight of the 9,000 detainees waiting for trial for years in the country's overcrowded jails. He is often on the radio, speaking out about violations of the rights of Burundians. He has been threatened by the government and rumours of his arrest or death often circulate in the capital.

### **Comité Permanente por la defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CPDH) (Colombia)**

The CPDH was established in 1979 to defend, protect and promote human rights. Its task of denouncing abuses is particularly difficult as they are being committed in all the regions of the ongoing internal armed conflict. Since its creation, 64 members of the CPDH have been killed, including several presidents. Its offices are often searched.

### **Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO)**

The EHRCO was established in 1991 to strive for a democratic system, to promote the rule of law and to monitor human rights violations in Ethiopia. Because of its work, several members have been arrested and harassed by the government's security forces, while others were forced to leave the country or to disengage from their human rights activities. A reduced staff courageously continues its operations.

### **Lydia Cacho Ribeiro (Mexico)**

A journalist and president of the Women's Assistance Centre (CIAM), in Cancun, Mexico, Lydia Cacho Ribeiro has been fighting against the impunity with which state officials and ordinary people abuse the rights of women and children. As a result of her work, Lydia has been jailed and threatened with rape and death. She is forced to travel everywhere with bodyguards.

### **Rajan Hoole and Kopalasingham Sritharan (Sri Lanka)**

As co-founders of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) (UTHR(J)), Rajan Hoole and Kopalasingham have addressed human rights abuses by both the government and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE). At great personal risk they have reported on the effects of armed conflict on children, women, minorities and displaced persons. Often alone in exposing abuses by all parties, both men are under death sentences from the LTTE and their co-founder, Rajani Thiranyagama was assassinated. They have been forced to work underground.

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The candidates were carefully selected by the 10 human rights organisations that constitute the jury. The jury will announce the final MEA laureate on 4 May and there will be an award ceremony in Geneva (at the Bâtiment des Forces Motrices) on 2 October.

### **Background**

The MEA jury is composed of the following organizations: Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; Human Rights First; the International Federation for Human Rights; the World Organization Against Torture; the International Commission of Jurists; German Diakonie; the International Service for Human Rights; International Alert; and HURIDOCS.

The previous laureates are: Akbar Ganji, Iran, and Arnold Tsunga, Zimbabwe (2006); Aktham Naisse, Syria (2005); Lida Yusupova, Russia (2004); Alirio Uribe Muñoz, Colombia (2003); Jacqueline Moudeina, Chad (2002); Peace Brigades International (2001); Immaculée Birhaheka, DR Congo (2000); Natasa Kandic, Yugoslavia (1999); Eyad El Sarraj, Palestine (1998); Samuel Ruiz García, Mexico (1997); Clement Nwankwo, Nigeria (1996); Asma Jahangir, Pakistan (1995); 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.

**For further information, please see:**

Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders official site:  
<http://www.martinennalsaward.org/>