FAQ: Learn more about the Martin Ennals Award Nomination Process

What is the Martin Ennals Award?

The Martin Ennals Award (MEA) is an international Award given to human rights defenders in urgent need of protection. Many defenders who are nominated for the Award face serious risks – for example, they are in jail or at risk of detention; they have been prevented from carrying out their work by authorities or businesses, or they have disappeared. The Award seeks to protect these defenders by highlighting their work through the media and mobilizing international support for them. The presentation of the Award is accompanied by significant advocacy and outreach activities in favor of the human rights defenders concerned. The winners are also given a financial prize to use at their discretion.

Who can be nominated?

Self-nominations for the MEA are not accepted. Human rights defenders or organizations can be nominated by a third party, as long as the motivation is substantiated and the candidate meets the MEA criteria, namely being a human rights defender at risk. Past Laureates include lawyers, journalists, civil society activists and even a Buddhist monk.

Who is the Jury of the Martin Ennals Award?

Ten of the world's leading human rights organizations form the fully independent Martin Ennals Award Jury. Together, they are the backbone of the Martin Ennals Award: Amnesty International, Bread for the World, the International Commission of Jurists, the FIDH, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, HURIDOCS, the World Organization against Torture and the International Service for Human Rights.

What is the role of the Jury?

The Jury is responsible for assessing the candidates' applications and selecting the Finalists to the Award. The Jury provides expertise and research capacity in the conduct of due diligence on the defenders and the contexts they work in. Moreover, the member organizations of the Jury collaborate with the Foundation in providing support and protective publicity to the selected human rights defenders.

What is the role of the Regional Panel?

In order to reflect the cultural and geographic diversity of the human rights movement, a network of regional human rights organizations consults on the nomination process. Regional NGOs – which have grown in number and importance over the last decade – provide first-hand knowledge and expertise on the contexts in which MEA candidates work. In certain cases, they also maintain personal contact with the candidates. They play an important role in distributing the call for applications within their regional networks and in triggering media attention on the shortlisted Finalists.

How does the nomination process work?

The nomination process lasts for about two months. From the moment the MEA nomination campaign is launched, nominations can be submitted via the [MEA website](). When the deadline for sending applications is surpassed, the Martin Ennals Foundation staff proceeds to a first review of the candidates, prior to handing over the applications to the Jury. The Jury then has the responsibility to screen every application and prepare a shortlist of up to ten candidates. Those ten are each given to a rapporteur among the members of the Jury. Each rapporteur conducts a thorough assessment of the candidate's work, personal situation and achievements for human rights. The assessments are compiled in individual reports, which are then shared with all Jury members. In a final meeting and through in-depth discussions, the members of the Jury select the three "Finalists" to the Award. The whole nomination process takes approximately six months.

What are the criteria on which the Jury selects the Finalists?

The main considerations are the quality of the work of the Defenders and their need for protection. The Jury also considers who would benefit most from the Award and the public attention it brings. Gender and geographic considerations also play a role in the evaluation. The Jury is guided by the courage human rights defenders demonstrate in their work, the determination and commitment shown by the selected defenders in spite of the attacks, threats and harassment they face, and their commitment to non-violent means.

What if a candidate doesn't want to be part of the MEA Finalists?

At the end of the nomination process, all three shortlisted candidates are informed about their nomination and reconfirm their agreement to be part of the Martin Ennals Award cycle.

What happens after the nomination process?

The Martin Ennals Foundation works hand in hand with each of the Defenders to identify their needs (protection, digital security, self-care, advocacy, etc.) and prepare the MEA public announcement. A film is usually produced about each of them, and an outreach and media campaign is organized to publicly announce the three Finalists of the Award. Around February each year, the Martin Ennals Foundation organizes an Award Ceremony with the City of Geneva. On this occasion, the name of the Laureate is revealed.

What does the Award encompass?

All of the winners receive an important financial prize intended to support his or her work in the field of human rights. However, the importance of this Award to human rights defenders is not restricted to its financial aspect. The international recognition and credibility of the Martin Ennals Award contributes to their protection, as does the support of prominent figures such as the [United Nations High Commissioner for]()

Human Rights, the City of Geneva, the Republic and Canton of Geneva and other partner organizations.

What happens after the Martin Ennals Award Ceremony?
The Martin Ennals Foundation has developed several programs to further empower human rights defenders in their work and enable the younger generation to develop its own human rights skills. In the months following the Ceremony, the Laureate and the two Finalists are offered to take part in the "Geneva Residency" and the "Defenders Network" programs.