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Martin Ennals Award
June 2nd 2022

Salle communale de Plainpalais, Geneva
and broadcasted online

www.martinennalsaward.org

MARTIN ENNALS FOUNDATION
NARRATIVE REPORT 2022

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

All politics is local, it often said. But 2022 brought home the notion that *all politics is global*, at least for the Martin Ennals Award Laureates 2022, for the city of Geneva and the international human rights system. Three extraordinary situations made the point: a new variant of COVID now known as Omicron; the UN High Commissioner's report on China's treatment of Uighurs; and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

At the peak of the fifth COVID wave in January 2022, two out of five residents of Geneva were either infected or residing with a positive case of Omicron (and therefore quarantined). The Martin Ennals Award Ceremony 2022 was postponed. While the end of winter saw Geneva's human rights diplomacy resume almost at a 'new normal' (hybrid) level, around the world, COVID-related measures limiting freedoms and tightening civic space were maintained in the name of public safety.

In parallel, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR), came under increasing pressure regarding a planned visit to the Xinjian region of China and an unpublished report on human rights abuses committed there by the Chinese authorities. Many civil society organizations and Member States vehemently criticized what they saw as omissions by the High Commissioner at the time, Michele Bachelet, concerned that her visit to that country and the delay in releasing the report would cement Chinese impunity for violations against the Uighur minority.

But when the report was released just minutes before the end of the High

Commissioner's mandate on August 31, the severity of its conclusions -- which described China's treatment of the Uighurs as "crimes against humanity" -- positively surprised many organizations. The experience revealed the arsenal of tools China has at its disposal to defend its interests at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). But the OHCHR China report, should it lead to a meaningful follow-up by the UNHRC, could also renew confidence in the multilateral system's ability to hold even its most influential members to account.

The winter months also brought news of a vicious Russian invasion of Ukraine, another systemic shock to multilateralism. The UNHRC session of April 2022 was quick to condemn Russia's invasion and even suspend its membership in the Council. While this sent a positive message about systemic coherence and accountability, the lion's share of diplomatic time and energy throughout 2022 were dedicated to Ukraine -- leaving other issues to fester.

These experiences have direct and indirect effects on human rights defenders. The erosion of trust between parties in the multilateral system, the growing influence within the system of large states with alternative agendas, the COVID game-changer, and the war in Ukraine, have deeply affected how the international mechanisms can (or cannot) respond to human rights activists at risk on the ground.

Outside UN capitals, the rush to replace sources of oil and gas have tipped the diplomatic balance even further in favor of oil-producing states boasting some of the

worst human rights records. Inattention and backlog in the international mechanisms allow crises in Myanmar, Syria, and Burkina Faso to worsen; or crackdowns on human rights to occur with no consequences, for example in Vietnam, Bahrain, and Egypt.

That said, it remains difficult to summarize the state of human rights defenders as a group. Based in 40 countries around the world, a dynamic of progress and reversals was evident across the Martin Ennals Award network of activists in 2022 – while in Uganda a draconian law which would have punished ‘deviant sexual behavior’ was fought off by civil society, in Russia and Chechnya several Martin Ennals defenders went underground to avoid incarceration or worse.

Defenders everywhere must be able to count on global actors to fulfill their role of documenting, evaluating, and holding governments to account on human rights. And that international NGOs will be there to activate protection mechanisms in the worst-case scenarios. Defenders know that only local *and* global efforts working in lockstep will bring to fruition human rights.

2022 brought many opportunities for the Martin Ennals Foundation to grow further into its role as a bridge between local activists and global Geneva, as described in this report. While we cannot ensure that the global part of the equation will

function as it should, we can offer defenders the promise of a helping hand to reach international human rights diplomacy. And while we cannot ensure local activists will be spared reprisals for their work, we can continue to inform the international mechanisms of the experiences of Martin Ennals Award winners, assisting these in turn to be as responsive as global politics will allow.

We are lucky in that our Board, donors, the Jury member organizations, and a few close partners walk side-by-side with us in this journey. Without their support and advice, Martin Ennals Foundation and our Laureates could not have achieved so much in 2022. From our small team to all of you, our warmest thanks!



MEF team with Vietnam Delegation 2022

Martin Ennals Foundation and Award in a nutshell

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) honors individuals and organizations that have shown exceptional commitment to defending and promoting human rights, despite the risks involved. It strives to provide them with much needed protection, raising their public profile and gathering international support for their work.

The Award was named in honor of the human rights entrepreneur and Secretary General of Amnesty International, Martin Ennals. An independent Jury of ten leading human rights organizations selects the recipients to the Award.¹ The Martin Ennals Foundation (MEF), based in Geneva (Switzerland), acts as a secretariat to the process, organizer of the Award ceremony and publicity, and lead for the supporting activities offered to defenders. There are currently over 60 defenders associated to the Martin Ennals Award in more than 37 countries.

What does the Award do for defenders?

At its core, the MEA was designed to provide protection to defenders at risk. The Award consists of a substantial financial prize (between CHF 20,000 – 30,000), as well as tailor-made opportunities for advocacy, training and networking hosted by the MEF. The resulting publicity surrounding the Award provides a boost to defenders and significantly improves their profile, which contributes to positive outcomes for fundraising, personal wellbeing, and coalition-building. The Foundation's ambition is that, through the galvanization of support, the MEA protects not only specific HRDs but also strengthens all HRDs who work in hostile and dangerous environments.

What were our objectives in 2022?

Our primary objective in 2022 continued to be to enhance the influence of HRDs on the international scene and over human rights diplomacy. In addition, we focused our efforts on reviving the Award's presence in Geneva, after two years of primarily virtual activities imposed by COVID restrictions. Key strategic goals in 2022 included:

- ✓ Return of the Geneva Residency offering advocacy support and skills-building opportunities for defenders in Geneva, Bern, Paris, and Berlin;
- ✓ Convening the Martin Ennals Defenders' Network to a first-ever regional meeting in the Middle East;
- ✓ Creating new opportunities to give visibility to the City of Geneva's role in our projects;
- ✓ Raising awareness amongst local youth about human rights and human rights defenders

¹ Amnesty International, Bread for the World, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, Frontline Defenders, HURIDOCS the International Federation of Human Rights, the World Organization Against Torture, the International Service for Human Rights, and the International Committee of Jurists.

1. MARTIN ENNALS AWARD CYCLE 2022

The Award is a year-long project: starting with a Call for Nominations, the selection and announcement of Laureates to the Award results in a publicity campaign, the celebration of an Award Ceremony, and finally, advocacy and training activities for the winners.

Meet the Martin Ennals Award Laureates 2022

Three driving forces of the human rights movement were the winners of the 2022 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders. Selected by the Jury from a pool of 50 nominees, the Laureates 2022 stood out for their inspirational examples and entrepreneurialism in the promotion of human rights in Vietnam, Burkina Faso, and Bahrain.



“

I hope that some of my writings will touch someone, help them realize the truth and maybe change how they think about society

Pham Doan Trang
Martin Ennals Laureate 2022
Vietnam

Pham Doan Trang is a leading journalist and democracy advocate in Vietnam, where the Communist Party has left little room for opposition voices. She directed independent media outlets to raise awareness of fundamental rights, galvanizing many other journalists and human rights defenders to speak up. She was one of the most hunted activists in her country before being arrested in October 2020. On 14 December 2021, Pham Doan Trang was sentenced to nine years in prison for “conducting propaganda against the state”.

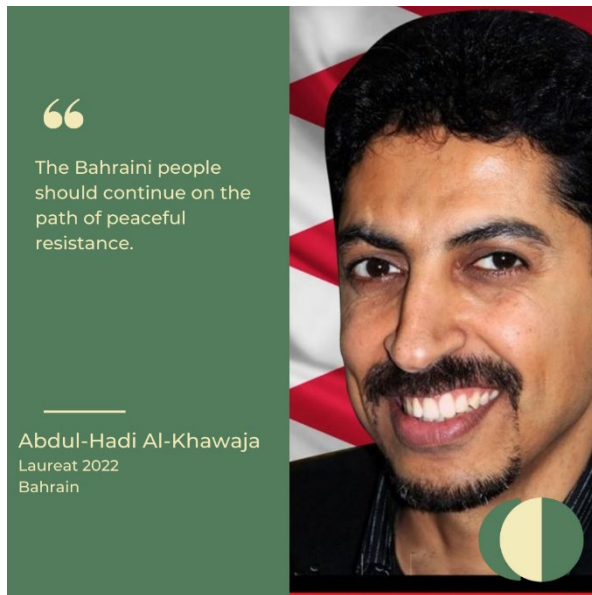
Dr. Daouda Diallo is a trained pharmacist-turned-human rights activist in Burkina Faso. The founder of the civil society coalition CISC, he documents human rights violations in a country rocked by violent crossfires between government forces, local paramilitary groups, and Islamist factions. He carries the torch for justice and accountability to victims of the violence and their families. Dr. Diallo's message of unity amongst different ethnic groups and faiths provides inspiration to a country struggling with extreme poverty, hunger, and weak governance.



“

It is necessary to fight against stigmatization and discrimination between communities by involving all Burkinabes who are willing to find solutions to the crisis.

Dr. Daouda Diallo
Laureate 2022
Burkina Faso



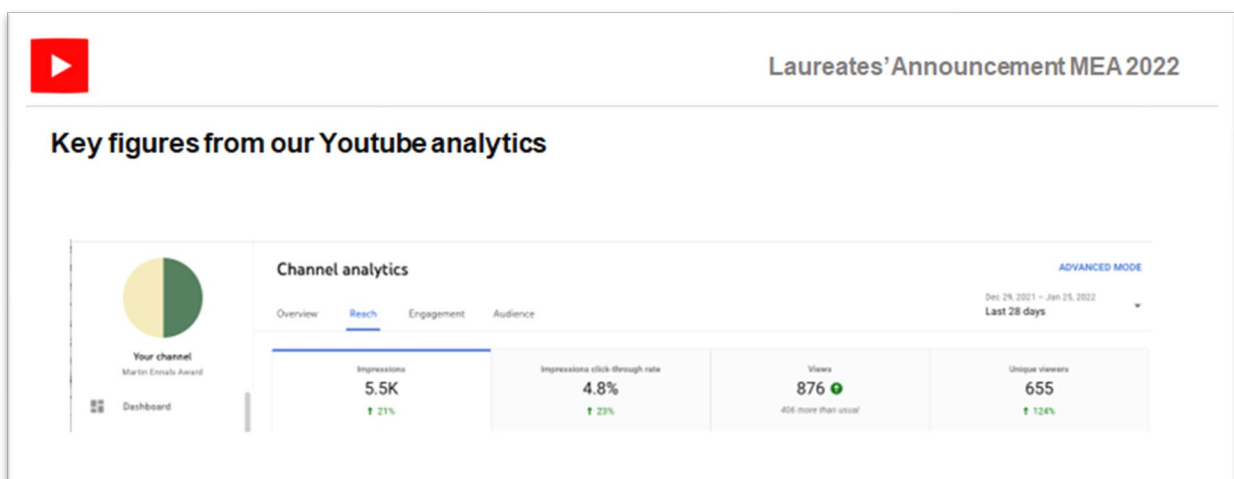
Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja is a charismatic architect of Bahrain’s human rights movement and a leader of the 2011 protests calling for democracy and greater freedom in the Gulf region. Al Khawaja is not only an activist, but also a social entrepreneur who founded some of the first human rights research and defense organizations in the region, which still exist today. He was beaten badly and arrested in 2011, sentenced to life in prison. He inspires future generations in Bahrain to continue to fight despite his now decade-long imprisonment.

2. Protective Publicity

A fundamental pillar of our impact model is the delivery of publicity around a defender, which can raise awareness of their cause and generate support with local, regional, and global audiences. This visibility can translate into ‘protection’ for a defender, in that it raises the price to pay should persons try to harm or silence the defender. Protective publicity by the Martin Ennals Foundation has many axes – from media work to the production of be-spoke films and articles, to social media campaigns.

Laureates’ Announcement

On January 19th, 2022, the Foundation held a press conference to announce the names of the Award winners, for the second year in a row, entirely online. With COVID returning in full force to many regions, the livestreamed press conference allowed for a safer participation attracting +150 attendees.



The Foundation was proud to announce three Laureates this year – rather than three Finalists to the Award. After deliberating with the MEA Jury and donors for several years, the decision to put all winners of the Award on an equal footing was welcomed by the audience.

Livestreaming on YouTube had the advantage of creating more traffic to the Foundation's YouTube channel in the month of January 2022.

Website

Part of our protective publicity strategy is to continuously increase the notoriety of the Award and the Foundation. The Laureates' announcement attracted a new and old audience to one the Foundation's main platforms, our website, which received +4000 new visitors in the month of January. By close of June 2022, shortly after the Award Ceremony, the Foundation's website had received +14,000 new visitors primarily from their mobile phones (60%).



It was notable that two of the three countries of our 2022 winners were represented in the Top 10 countries of origin of our website traffic, with the most visitors coming from Vietnam, the USA, Switzerland, and Burkina Faso (in 10th place). This result points to one of main conclusions for the 2022 protective publicity campaign, that we successfully raised awareness about the Laureates in their countries and regions of origin.

Press Coverage

As in previous years, the Foundation launched a campaign for visibility and awareness of the Laureates and their causes immediately following their announcement. From January through June 2022, approximately 330 media mentions (articles in print or online) were published

about the 3 Laureates. In French-language media, Dr. Diallo's story and that of Pham Doan Trang were particularly well-covered.

Social Media

The Foundation continues to invest and grow our presence on social media, with renewed strategies in 2022 to expand our audiences on Facebook and Instagram, while harnessing Twitter to attract 'human rights influencers' with our top-quality content.



With over 460 publications across our platforms, the Foundation's following grew steadily throughout the year, with +30% increase.

From single visuals to carrousels, teasers or reels, **multiple types of assets** were developed to raise awareness about the MEA 2022 Laureates and to promote the online and offline Ceremony. An innovation was to present the tailor-made **Residency Programs for each Laureate** with the main actors of the HR movement in Geneva. During the month of May, one week was **dedicated to each Laureate** to present their cause and their country.

Lessons learned 2022

Social media success is a numbers game: algorithms curating content for users to consume give preference to more active users or accounts, who churn out content constantly. Meaning, the more you post, the higher up your organization figures in the algorithm, translating into better coverage of users. MEF has prioritized high-quality content which works well to grow our audience on Twitter. However, for Facebook and Instagram, our audience growth is limited by Meta's blocking of our paid advertising, which they consider 'too political'.

3. Award Ceremony

In 2022, the organization of the Award Ceremony was handed over to the Foundation almost entirely by the City of Geneva. The new arrangements implied that the Foundation staff would take the lead on the planning and logistics, with supervision and inputs from the City staff.

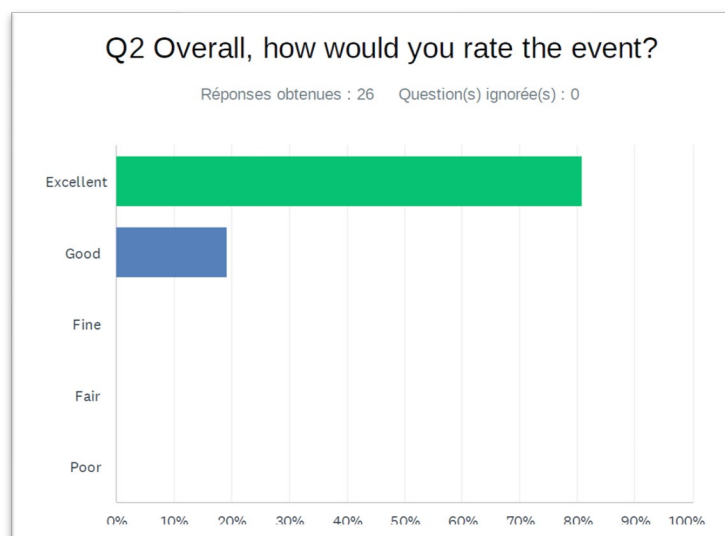
This presented an exciting new challenge to the Foundation, which was not without some uncertainty given the return of the COVID pandemic to Europe in the fourth trimester of 2021 and early 2022. First planned for February and then postponed to June 2022, the Ceremony finally took place on June 2nd at the Salle Communale de Plainpalais in the presence of the Laureates, their representatives and family members.



After a year's absence, the Laureates and audience greatly appreciated to return to an in-real-life format. The mother of Pham Doan Trang and the wife and daughters of Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja were honored with rounds of applause, and their personal journeys while lobbying for the release of their family members clearly moved the audience. The film about Dr. Daouda Diallo, with footage from Burkina Faso just before the January 2022 coup and graphic recreations of the Yirgou massacre, was greatly appreciated by the audience.

The Ceremony was the occasion to honor a defender who was unable to receive the Martin Ennals Award in time. Father Stan Swamy – a Jesuit priest and human rights activist based in India – had been nominated to the 2022 Award but died tragically after an unjust imprisonment by Indian authorities. He was 83 at the time of his imprisonment and suffered from Parkinson's disease. Father Stan was given an homage by a close friend and colleague, Father Xavier Soreng, who represents the order of Jesuit priests active in the promotion of human rights of the Adivasi indigenous tribe, in Jhandakar province, India.

A survey following the Ceremony confirmed that the format, content, and length of the event are pleasing to the audience.



Lessons learned 2022

Far fewer people attended the Ceremony (250) versus the expected registration (750). The reasons for the audience's relative absence may be several – the return to in-real-life events has been slow for some sectors with many still worried about COVID infections; competition from other events; or insufficient marketing of the Ceremony may be some of the reasons behind the lower-than-expected turnout.

Livestream of the Ceremony

One of the goals of our protective publicity strategy is to increase awareness of the defender in their regions and countries of origin. A livestream of the Ceremony is one of the ways in which the MEA reaches across borders to celebrate defenders.

In 2022, the Ceremony was again livestreamed on 4 platforms in 2 languages, with approximately 14,000 viewers. Amongst the audience, 2,000 persons viewed the Ceremony in full. We registered the countries of origin of our Laureates as the top sites of viewership of the livestream, indicating that the strategy of reaching across borders could pay off. This was partly possible to the fact that none of the countries in question – Vietnam, Burkina Faso, Bahrain, or India – can maintain permanent limitations on the free internet (though India is known for its abuse of temporary internet shutdowns).

Livestreaming Figures

From Facebook event

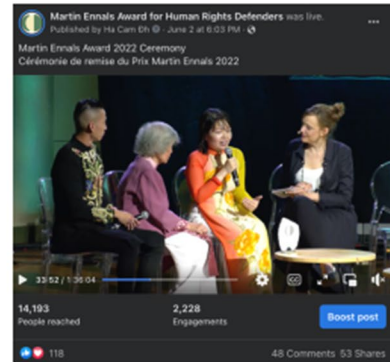
Among the top 6 geographies of viewers are **Vietnam, India and Burkina Faso.**

Reach: 14,176 persons

Views: 4.7 K persons – 3 seconds views
541 persons – one-minute views

Engagement: 2,227 comments, like & shares

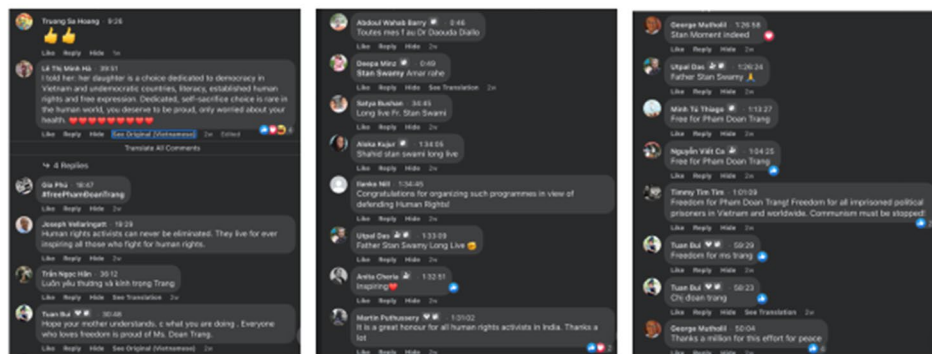
Top countries: 1. Vietnam ; 2. USA ; 3. Switzerland ;
4. India ; 5. France ; 6. Burkina Faso



One of the more gratifying results of the Ceremony livestream was to open the conversation happening inside the Salle in Geneva, to the global audience. Up to 2,000 messages of support were written to the Laureates during the livestream, coming primarily from Vietnam, India, and Burkina Faso.

Livestreaming – Engagement

Many positive and encouraging comments were shared during the livestreaming primarily from Vietnam, India and Burkina Faso.

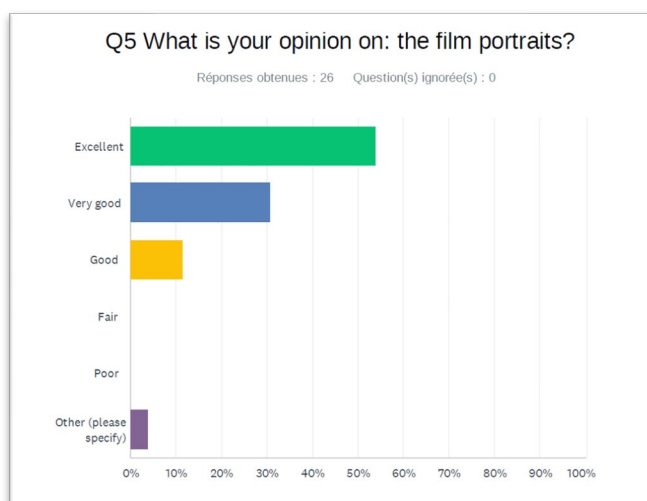


Film portraits

One of the highlights of the Ceremony and our most important investments are the film portraits produced for each of the Laureates. We continued our collaboration with Noor Images in 2022, adapting the concept behind the films to include archival footage of the detained Laureates (Pham Doan Trang and Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja) as well as original footage filmed in Burkina Faso. The films featured graphic art or 'live drawing' to recreate critical scenes from the past.

As in 2021, our goals with the films were to humanize the Laureate, portraying them in a positive light that everyone can relate to, as well as to present their cause and inspire viewers to join them.

At the close of 2022, we will receive anonymous feedback from the Laureates on their films which we will also compare with the views of the films on our YouTube channel. In the meantime, we surveyed the Ceremony audience for their impressions of the films which were largely positive:



4. GENEVA RESIDENCY 2022

The postponement of the Ceremony to June allowed the Foundation to envision a hybrid Geneva Residency approach, combining online activities in the months from January to June, with an on-site program of activities in Geneva, tailor-made for each defender. The Geneva Residency programs began in October 2021, when we requested from each Laureate feedback on their priorities for capacity-building, advocacy, and personal care. Based on their replies to that survey, the Foundation staff set out to build opportunities that would advance the Laureates' stated goals.

Highlights for Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja

The daughters of the Laureate, Maryam and Zeynap Al-Khawaja traveled to Switzerland for one week to conduct some advocacy activities and attend the Ceremony. Their first stop was a trip to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, in Bern, where they met with the diplomatic officers in charge of the relations with Bahrain.

A highlight of their Geneva Residency was a roundtable on June 1st hosted jointly with the Geneva Human Rights Platform on “Strategies for Resisting Long-term Detention of Defenders”. The event, which was also accessible online, was made possible through collaboration with the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, as well as with two MEA Jury members, the World Organization Against Torture and Human Rights First.



Maryam Al-Khawaja featured as a speaker during the roundtable, during which many proposals were made on how to better campaign for release of prisoners of conscience, such as her father. A summary of the roundtable was converted into an article and posted on the Foundation's website and social media.

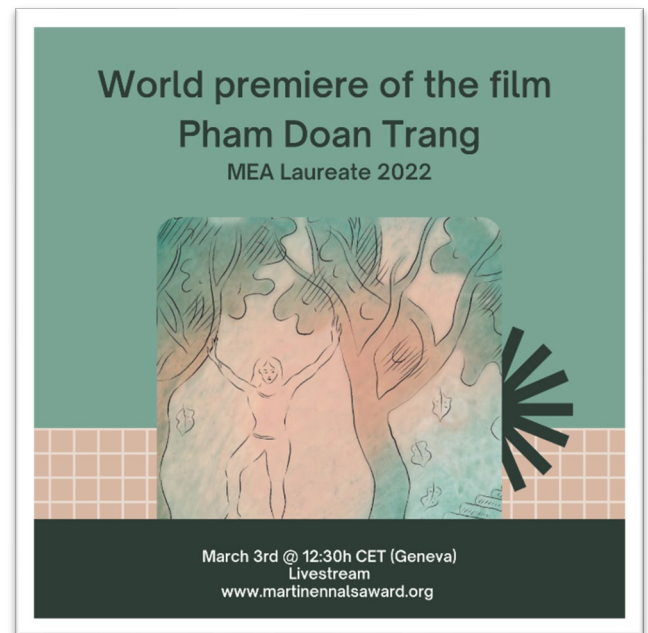
Martin Ennals Foundation also convened a strategy session for the Al-Khawaja family with a dozen civil society organizations who have been active on their case over the years. The result of the strategy session will feed into the family's next steps in the campaign for Abdul-Hadi's release – created later that year as #freeabdulhadi.

Highlights for Pham Doan Trang

With Trang in jail, it was her former colleagues from the Vietnamese democracy movement and most especially her mother, Bui Thi Can, who traveled to Geneva to receive her prize and conduct advocacy meetings. The team participated in two communications training sessions, which were very well-received, in preparation for the press conference and Ceremony.

In March, the Foundation hosted a 'world-premiere' of the film portrait on Pham Doan Trang was livestreamed in the margins of the Geneva Human Rights Forum and Film Festival 2022 (FIFDH). The festival had named Trang as one of two 'honored defenders' for the year's edition. The world premiere of her film was followed by a conversation about the state of freedom of expression in Vietnam between her former colleague from the Luat Khoa online magazine, Will Long, and Adam Ahmed, Advocacy Lead for Forum Asia in Geneva.

A highlight of the Vietnam committee's visit to Geneva was an 'Interested Delegations' Meeting' hosted by the Mission of the European Union to the UN institutions in Geneva, on 30th of May. The session featured remarks by Trang's colleagues on the state of human rights in Vietnam and was moderated by the Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, Sam Zarifi. Over 20 European missions attended the session.



Equally as important as this encounter, was the reception given to Bui Thi Can, Trang's mother, at the diplomatic Mission of the USA in Geneva. The US Ambassador for Human Rights, Michele Taylor, recognized Trang as one of the International Women of Courage Award 2022 winners (a US State Department recognition).

This meeting resulted in the US Delegation's decision to intervene on the floor of the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, held during the UN Human Rights Council session of May 2022. The USA delegate called for attention to the case of Pham Doan Trang and her release by the Vietnamese authorities.

These contacts proved to be very timely when, as expected, Bui Thi Can was detained by the Vietnamese authorities on her return to Hanoi. She was stopped before leaving airport

immigration and questioned for several hours. Embassies from Europe and the USA were actively awaiting her release and in communication with the Vietnamese authorities, until she was allowed to leave the police station on June 11th.

Highlights Daouda Diallo

Daouda Diallo signaled early on that he was eager to take advantage of as many opportunities as offered by the Award as possible. His Geneva Residency began with communications training and a security diagnostic conducted by a new partner to MEF, the organization Open Briefing, leading to a security plan for Daouda addressing several levels of risk.



Diallo featured as the keynote speaker during an event co-hosted by the Foundation and the Club Diplomatique de Geneve entitled "*Paix et Securite dans le Sahel*" (Peace and Security in the Sahel), on June 7th. Speakers included experts on the Sahel region from the Humanitarian Dialogue Centre and the World Organization Against Torture. But the audience most appreciated the Burkinabe drums that played during the reception following the panel.

To build his network and identify new resources, MEF set-up many many meetings with swiss-based organizations active on the Sahel Advocacy – including Swisspeace, the Kofi Annan Foundation, and the think-tank Democratic Control of Armed Forces. To advance his fundraising base, the Foundation helped Diallo connect with the Danish mission to the UN, as well as the private Swiss donor Peacenexus, and the Federation de Cooperation Genevoise, where a briefing was held in his honour with participation from 25 Geneva-based CSOs active in the Sahel.

Diallo also gave a guest lecture to masters' students of the University of Geneva. His talk on the triple crisis in the Sahel – political, humanitarian, and environmental – was attended by 20 students who were treated to lunch by the Foundation.

Following his visit to Geneva, Dr. Diallo was invited to visit Berlin by our Jury member, where he was the keynote speaker during the annual "*Werner Lottje Lecture*" hosted by the German National Human Rights Institute and Bread for the World, an MEA Jury member.

Unfortunately, just before his return to Ouagadougou, Diallo was the subject of very serious threats by groups calling for his death and violence against the Peule ethnicity (of which he is a representative) on social media. Although these calls were denounced by the Government, our recommendation and that of his security consultant (Open Briefing) were to prolong his stay in Europe. Dr. Diallo returned to Ouagadougou as planned, but this time was met at the airport by a committee led by the Minister of Justice of his country, as well as dozens of supporters. One of the important follow-up points to his Geneva Residency, will be the implementation of a 'security plan' drawn up by Open Briefing and Dr. Diallo together, with support from the MEF.



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[#Direct]: Arrivé de Dr Daouda DIALLO, Lauréat Prix Nobel des Droits Humains accueilli à l'aéroport international de Ouagadougou par les pl...

Like Comment Share 145 · 24 Comments · 2.1K Views

L'excellent Dicko was live.
June 20 at 10:28 PM · 🌐

[#Direct]: Arrivé de Dr Daouda DIALLO, Lauréat Prix Nobel des Droits Humains accueilli à l'aéroport ...
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Most relevant

Issaka Sonde
Toutes mes félicitations aux autorités pour la qualité de l'accueil réservé au Dr Daouda Diallo, SG du CISC.
1w

Salif Boly · 2:43
Félicitations
1w

Awa Diallo · 6:33
Mes vives félicitations ❤️
1w

Idrissa Dicko · 4:58
Félicitations à lui
1w

Abdoulaye Barry
Félicitations à lui et grand merci à vous pour le direct

Lessons learned 2022

*There are **dozens** of organizations working on peace and human rights in Geneva – curiously, they do not always talk to each other. MEA is a joint project of many organizations; therefore we frequently find ourselves asking for collaboration with like-minded organizations. In 2022, we discovered at least 25 civil society organizations and multilateral institutions working on Burkina Faso – who did not know of each other's work! The Roundtable event was therefore an opportunity for us to facilitate connections.*

5. WHAT WAS OUR IMPACT ?

The impact of the Award will be felt for many years to come, but within the year of announcing their win, Martin Ennals Foundation collects a variety of information about results and impact which we are pleased to present in the following pages.

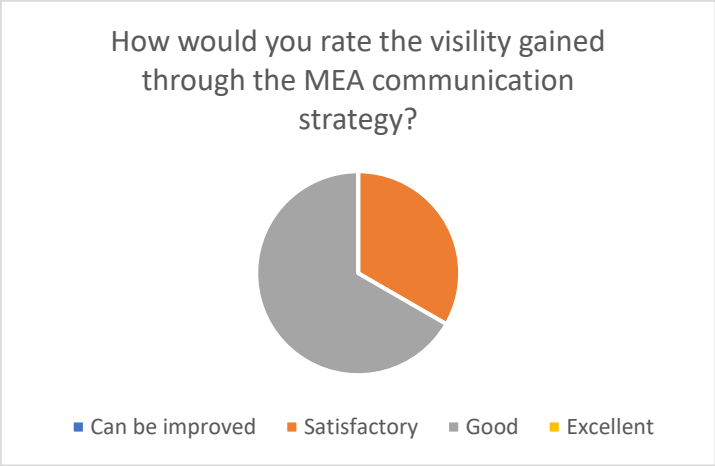
In Vietnam, Trang's entourage reports that the Award did influence her situation in detention positively – she was moved to another prison where family visitation is possible, and she was allowed to play her guitar there. Her mother was allowed to visit her after 2 years in July. She found Trang's health diminished, but her spirits high. We expect additional sporadic visits to be allowed from here going forward, but her entourage insists the medical treatment in prison will be inadequate.



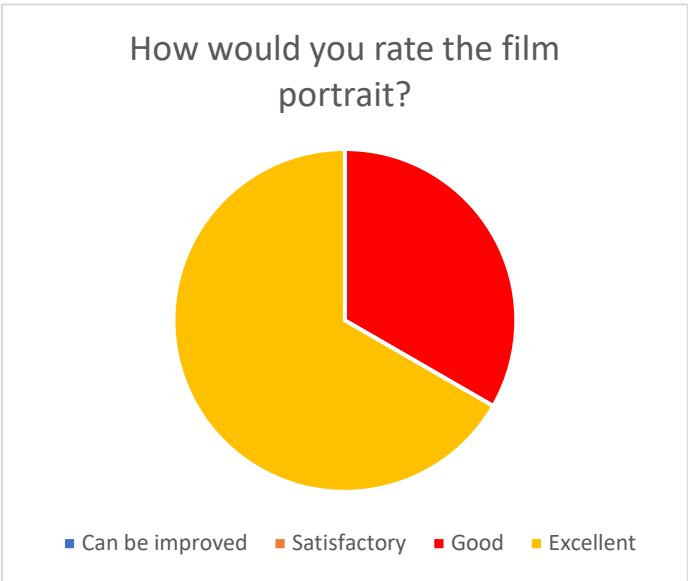
In Q3, MEF connected Pham's team to the Berkeley Human Rights Law Clinic. The collaboration between them led to research, documentation, and advocacy on the cases of 12 detained human rights defenders in Vietnam, including Trang, for presentation at the Geneva and New York-based human rights mechanisms throughout 2022 and into 2023. The outcomes of their work were delivered in a report to New York-based Member States who were called upon to vote on the potential membership of Vietnam to the Human Rights

Council for the 2023-2024 period. Vietnam’s candidacy was highly criticized but ultimately their bid was successful.

Trang’s colleagues highlighted the utility of the meetings with diplomatic missions while in Geneva as well as the contact with Berklee Human Rights Clinic: *“(From the Geneva Residency) we got a lot of introductions and recognitions that we could follow up on our works. For Vietnam this is a huge step. The collaboration with Berkley is excellent and we are still working with them. I am forever grateful for this opportunity.”*



After the visit to Switzerland, the #freeAlKhawaja campaign took off, as a coalition of organizations working together for his release. The strategy focused on Denmark, other European states and the USA authorities who could influence the Kingdom of Bahrain. Unfortunately, Bahrain retaliated clearly by denying an appeal against additional charges brought against Abdul-Hadi for breaking a chair in jail (which he did in protest against being denied phone calls to his daughters). His daughters point to these negative reactions as proof that the Bahraini authorities do feel the pressure: *“Unfortunately, Abdul-Hadi’s conditions have worsened. But this means that the publicity and pressure is working, we just need more of it!”* In the context of energy market disruptions, the campaign is uncertain whether its approach will be successful in the short-term.



We learned the daughters believe the roundtable on long-term detention and advocacy meetings in Geneva were interesting useful to their cause. As to what more we could do, they asked that we reshare and publicize the campaign.

A bright spot for the Al-Khawaja family was the return of one daughter to Switzerland in November, to attend the Martin Ennals Seminar on the Middle East – a first-ever reunion of Award winners. Zeynap Al-Khawaja

was reunited there with Nabeel Rajab, her father’s partner and co-founder in the Bahrain Human Rights Center. They had not seen each other for 9 years.

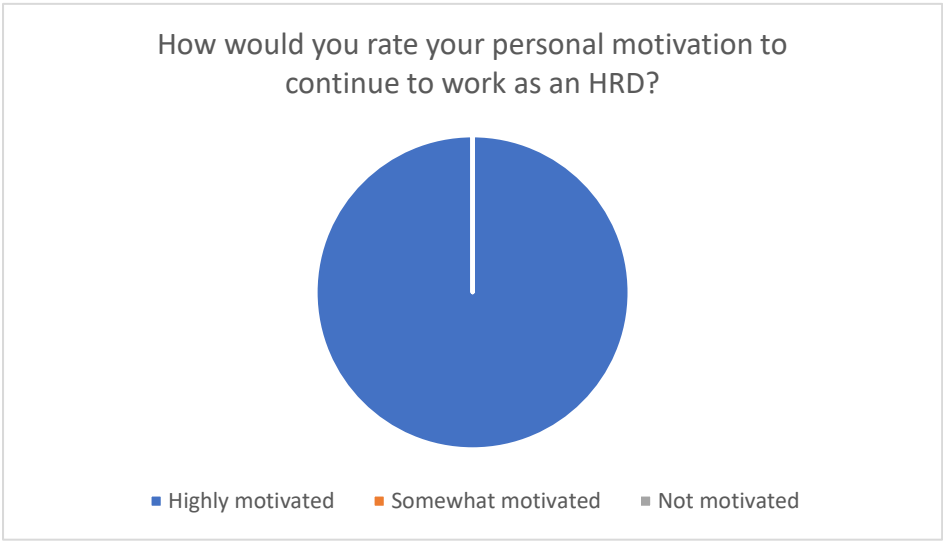
At the time of writing of this report, MEF has learned that Trang’s case has attracted the attention of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Committee of the US Congress, as has Abdul-Hadi’s case.

Daouda for his part faced many upheavals since his return to Burkina Faso. In October a new coup d’etat removed one temporary military administration to install another one. Daouda joined the bi-annual gathering in Dublin of human rights defenders, hosted by Frontline Defenders; and he has successively been invited to join the government as a Minister (he declined), or to appear as a speaker and expert on the deteriorating situation locally.

Daouda believes the Award influenced his standing as a civil society leader in Burkina Faso and abroad. *“We are taken more seriously than before, people are listening to us.”* Daouda hopes that the networking with civil society and foundations in Geneva could pay off and he wishes that MEF could give more support to CISC (led by Daouda) for fundraising. The security and communication trainings Daouda received were rated as highly valuable for him.

Security training was particularly useful in light of a report and documentation of a new massacre of civilians by militias, published by the CISC in early January 2023. The report unearthed damning evidence of the massacre, which occurred in October 2022. Threats then turned real when gunmen turned up to take Daouda away from the CISC offices. After they destroyed the premises, they followed him to several new locations, until he took measures to go underground. At the time of writing, Daouda is in safe undisclosed location, having activated his security plan, and many organizations are vigilant in his regard, including embassies based locally and the local representation of the OHCHR.

The impacts from the Award will continue to grow as time passes, and we expect to keep abreast of developments regularly through our new capacity to follow former winners of the Award. For this short-term snapshot, however, we are especially pleased to read the self-assessment of the Laureates/representatives on how they feel following the Award experience:



6. MARTIN ENNALS DEFENDERS' NETWORK

The Martin Ennals Defenders' Network is a long-standing aspiration of the Foundation. We set out in 2019 to build a permanent offering of support and activities which could meet the objective of promoting the long-term sustainability of exceptional human rights defenders with professional and personal growth through a peer coaching program; and opportunities for collaboration between defenders around common causes, shared themes, and fellow defenders in need. Our initial efforts organized small actions of solidarity in 2019; in 2020 and 2021, our plans were interrupted by COVID and reconverted into virtual formats. The Network as a permanent platform for defenders associated to the Award took a clearer shape only in 2022 with a second cohort of peer-coaches, the first-ever regional gathering of former winners of the Award, and a more strategic approach to linking defenders around the world to the goings-on of international Geneva.

Peer-coaching cohort 2022

The process of engaging the MEA's defenders in a dynamic of personal care and mutual support has been both enriching and challenging for the Foundation. While at a rational level HRDs agree they need to take better care of themselves, the practical steps to realize this goal, such as reserving time for the coaching sessions or following the two required workshops of the peer-coaching programme, are often overshadowed by day-to-day routines and urgent tasks that emerge in their calendars. MEF therefore takes an approach of encouraging them against all odds and showing as much flexibility as possible towards their busy schedules.

"As women we are pushed to say "yes" to every request. The peer-coaching experience has allowed me to say "no" without feeling guilty."

- 2021 cohort HRD from LATAM

The launch of the 2022 program and the closure of the previous cohort took place in March, with 10 new participants (6 women/4 men) and 6 from the 2021 group. The initial two workshops which familiarize the defenders with self-coaching and peer communication were delivered in smaller linguistic groups over the month of April. Since then, the program conducted 5 peer-coaching and 3 mentor-coaching sessions (where the professional coach meets with a defender individually) with the new cohort. They are on track to conclude the full program by March 2023, at which point a new group will be invited to begin.

"It feels good to be heard and to know that others care about you and face similar problems."

- 2021 HRD from Asia

The 2022 cohort recruitment process was complex since some of the HRDs, who were interested in the program, struggled to find the time to participate in the initial training workshops. After a few weeks, we realized that four out of the 10 defenders taking part in the program could not continue. One of them had serious safety concerns and three more could not attend the sessions for personal or professional reasons. MEF reallocated the resources

that are not being used to former defenders that were part of the 2021 cohort and who are benefiting from mentor coaching. These “resiliency hubs” open to the 2021 participants have met twice. These are facilitated meetings where new and previous participants can exchange.

“In the peer-sessions I realized I haven’t taken vacation in many years, and I understood the toll I am paying for this non-stop commitment.”

- 2021 cohort HRD from LATAM

The program will conclude officially in March 2023 with an online diploma ceremony, but the coaching may continue! We foresee offering a continuation of the mentor coaching with professionals for those who complete the first year of the program.

Skills'-building : Digital security training

MEF offered three online workshops on digital security in collaboration with Peace Brigades International. 15 defenders (9 women, 6 men) from LATAM, Africa and Asia participated in this training on data protection, use of VPNs and strategies to protect their profiles on social media and recommendations in case of digital attacks. The workshops were highly interactive, with the last one becoming a “digital clinic” for the participants. After the training, participants could complete a survey (7 received out of 15 participants). The results show that a majority benefitted from the training with the following outcomes: a) 5 out of 7 started using their phones and computers more securely through file and voice/text encryption; b) 6 out of 7 learnt how to bypass censorship and monitoring; c) 6 out of 7 reviewed their usage on social media to increase safety.

Bridging the local and global in Geneva

One of the Defenders’ network most important objectives is to provide a permanent bridge which MEA defenders can employ to reach international human rights diplomacy occurring in Geneva. The MEF team therefore sought to connect MEA winners to ongoing advocacy occurring in Geneva or other European capitals by matching existing opportunities with defenders in need, or with defenders who represent causes and interest groups. The approach led to some initial promising results as described in the following paragraphs. Overall, the concerned defenders expressed their sensation of being reconnected with Geneva and of having ‘guides’ to find their way to the relevant interlocutors. We expect as well that Genevan human rights diplomacy was revitalized with the perspectives and testimonies of grass-roots actors.

- o Campaign and release of Yu Wensheng, MEA2021

The MEA 2021 Laureate – Chinese human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng – was scheduled to be released from a four-year prison term in March 2022. Leaving prison had become an imperative for his wife and support team as Wensheng’s health deteriorated in prison over recent years: his right-hand was badly damaged under mysterious circumstances and his

teeth had begun to fall away, with little medical attention provided. Concerns grew in the months before release that the Chinese government would further punish Wensheng by bringing new charges against him (which has happened to other prisoner's of conscience).

Together with his wife, Xu Yan, the ISHR, the Concerned Group of Human Rights Lawyers Hong Kong, and a wide coalition of civil society and diplomatic actors, MEF lobbied actively throughout the close of 2021 and early 2022 for Yu Wensheng's release. Our actions were discreet – meetings and letters to diplomatic missions – as well as overt, on social media and through our newsletter and website, to call attention and increase pressure for his release. We were delighted to learn on March 1st 2022 that he safely left prison and reached a reception area in Beijing where his wife and supporters were waiting for him.

A few months later, Xu Yan, his wife, informed us of even happier news: that they are expecting another child!

- Visit of the HCHR to Bangladesh

Adilur Raman Kahn has been under house arrest in Bangladesh for 5 years but in June his organization – Odhikar – was deregistered as an officially recognized non-governmental organization by the Bangladeshi authorities. According to Human Rights Watch, Odhikar has been documenting human rights violations in Bangladesh since 1994 and its application for NGO status renewal was pending since 2014. A coalition of organizations, including the MEF, signed a **Joint submission to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michele Bachelet, on the deteriorating situation in Bangladesh ahead of her mission to the country in August 2022.** The reports documents the culture of impunity, extra-judicial killings, and reprisals against HRDs in Bangladesh, including specific actions taken against the 2014 MEA's Laureate Adilur Rahman Khan.

- Reconnecting Huda al-Sarare to the Yemen file at the UNHRC

The Foundation organized an advocacy trip for Huda in late October 2022, during which she was able to a) meet with the Working group on Enforced Disappearances in Geneva and share evidence that she has been gathering over the past two years of continued disappearances in southern Yemen; b) deliver an oral statement at the 51st session of the Human Rights Council on the disappointing lack of a mandate to monitor human rights abuses in Yemen; and c) meet with diplomatic missions (Germany, Switzerland) to insist on the importance of a strengthened mechanism at the HRC. A report drafted by Huda and her colleagues, containing information on numerous cases, was delivered to a select group of diplomatic missions in Geneva. She also visited the ProVictimis Foundation to explore potential funding opportunities for her project to train volunteer legal aides who can help document and files cases of abuses occurring in remote towns and regions of the country.

Although the context in which Huda conducted her advocacy was very pessimistic (in that the Yemen mandate was already voted down in 2021), she insisted on the importance of participating in the experience. "We will come back every year until the mandate is renewed and until these crimes are accounted for," Huda told us.

Lessons learned 2022

Matching defenders to ongoing opportunities at the UN requires a high-degree of situational awareness about the goings-on of the international mechanisms. Some valuable opportunities came only too late, leaving little time to 'plug in' MEA winners. Or, the MEA defenders could not fully access the opportunity because of their busy lives back home in the field. Thus, our approach must adapt with better advance planning, and a more thorough evaluation of the defenders' capacity to leverage the diplomatic circuit.

- **Reprisals against MEA defenders**

Our Network project allows MEF to monitor and follow-up with defenders who may find themselves under renewed or constant threats. Below is a selection of actions we undertook to support MEA defenders who expressed desire for international attention on their situations.

Asmaou Diallo (Laureate 2015): Asmaou's organization (AVIPA) is going through a critical moment in their history, as the reporting to the International Criminal Court regarding the 28 September 2009's massacre, when the Guinean military attacked peaceful demonstrators, is about to come to the courts locally. Asmaou confided her fear to MEF that individuals associated to the government, military and police in 2009 about to be charged in the case would have a strong interest that proceedings be discontinued, or that its promoters – such as AVIPA – be punished. In October the offices of AVIPA were looted by unknown actors, and though complaints were filed, police work revealed very little about this clear attack. In response to Asmaou's concerns over her safety, MEF responded by: a) requesting counseling on protection to Front Line Defenders; b) arranging an encounter between Asmaou and representatives of the Swiss Embassy in Abidjan, following the looting of AVIPA's offices in Conakry. c) requesting OMCT emit an urgent appeal on the situation of AVIPA and; d) including Asmaou a continuation of the coaching sessions.

Mona Seif speaker at the UNIGE Geneva Human Rights Talks: MEF's collaboration with the University of Geneva materialized in this event, where Mona was invited to share hers and her brother's struggles in Egypt. As the COP27 advanced in Egypt, Alaa Abdel El Fatah imprisonment for 9 years became a rallying point for diverse human rights organization.



Mona's interview focused on challenges to the exercise of freedom of expression in different contexts and was the opportunity to rekindle visibility on Alaa's case in the Swiss press and on social media.

Social media campaigns: The Foundation strengthened the visibility of several Laureates through its social media platforms throughout 2022, with short videos and news on Mona Seif, Ilham Tohti, Asmaou Diallo, Nasrin Sotoudeh, Huda Al Sarare, Emaddine Baghi and Adilur Rahman Khan.

- **Regional gathering MENA**

While digital technologies do a great deal to facilitate the activities of the Defenders' Network, there are also limits to what can be achieved online. The Foundation set its sights on delivering a modest gathering in person of defenders with the overall objective of facilitating connections and relationships between defenders of the same region, which can serve as a source of inspiration, support, and knowledge for them.

12 defenders (6 women/6 men) took part in the seminar from 21 to 24 November 2022 in Geneva. The initial choice of Tunis as the venue had to be modified due to the instability in the country and the safety concerns of several defenders. MEF decided to hold the meeting outside Geneva, which was a challenge in terms of budget, but offered a conducive environment for the meeting.

Four workshops (on effective campaigns, fundraising, personal resilience, and women's experiences in the human rights movement) were interspersed with advocacy opportunities and recreational activities around Geneva. The evaluation by the participants was highly encouraging, giving it 4.5 out of 5 stars. They identified potential avenues for joint work in the region and most importantly, new friendships were formed between fellow defenders from the same region, with similar objectives and facing similar obstacles and risks.

The seminar dedicated an evening with diplomats and international policy-makers to discuss the challenges of supporting a Middle Eastern human rights agenda in the context of silence by key states that could play an important role in demanding accountability and respect of commitments by authoritarian governments in MENA.

The feedback we received reaffirms the idea that in person meetings are essential to strengthen the connection among defenders, to create an

appropriate atmosphere to learn from one another, and to share the burden of painful experiences. After two years of mainly online exchanges, we realized how much this type of encounters are needed. In the same way, we also experienced a high level of engagement and satisfaction when events are centered around the priorities of the participants and are held in their own language, as was the case of 30% of our programme.



7. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROJECT

With support from the Department for Education of the Canton of Geneva (Departement de l'instruction publique de Geneve), our human rights education project "*Defendre les droits humains, ici et ailleurs*" was offered to 12 high-school level classes in 2022. Some 260 students across 4 schools joined the workshops hosted in the framework of the project by Amnesty International Switzerland and True Heroes Films.

This year's edition retained a focus on raising awareness with youth about human rights and defenders more specifically, as well as exposing them to the communications techniques essential to human rights defense.



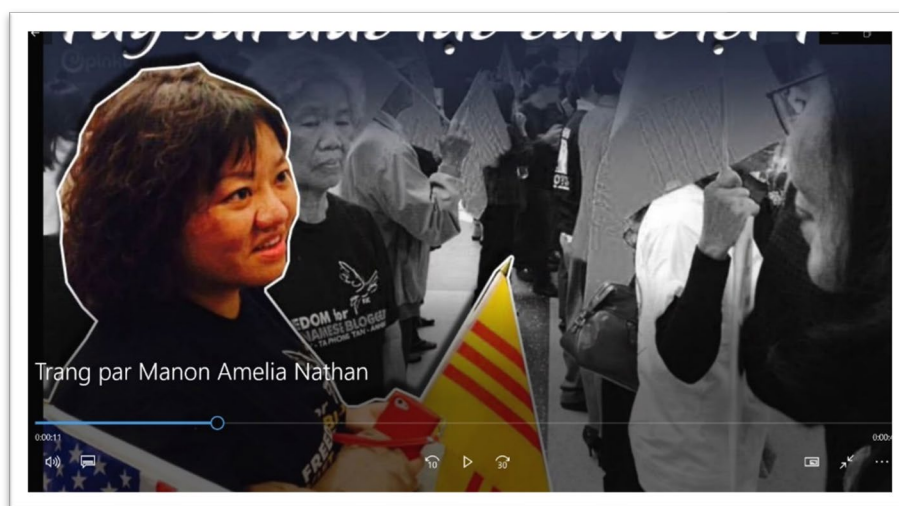
An innovation was to invite the students to base their final video projects on one of the 2022 Laureates. This step was challenging for the students -- and for the MEF -- in that their efforts could be channeled into 'live' cases of defenders at great risk.

At the close of the 2022 edition in April, MEF arranged for the students to meet (virtually, because of COVID restrictions on travel) with one of the Laureates 2022. One teacher wrote to us with the following feedback:

"I think it's great that the students worked directly on the three winners of the Martin Ennals Award this year. It shows them the topicality and importance of the struggle for human rights. The presentation of their work at the closing meeting is very valuable, it is a culmination with a form of recognition that gives visibility to their work."

Although the project was rated highly by the students and teachers in general, the feedback we received indicated a decrease in the smooth delivery by the project partners. The 2022 calendar of workshops was complicated by many COVID-related absences: of teachers, students, and trainers! The need to reschedule many activities and the repetition of a virtual encounter with the defenders, probably dampened the initial enthusiasm with the project.

At one school in particular, a teacher noted that the content was not as cutting-edge for her students. She wrote to us: "*In my opinion, the technical details of the video production have little relevance in the context of my course. The students are more interested in discussing the content of the videos, the message to be conveyed.*" This feedback has led the project partners to brainstorm on improvements we can introduce for the following year, for example, more challenging content.



Screenshot of a student film on Pham Doan Trang

8. JURY OF THE MARTIN ENNALS AWARD

The MEA Jury met three times in the 2022 cycle – first, in the summer 2021 to debrief on the result of the Nominations campaign and agree steps for improved ‘marketing’ of the Award. A second meeting took place in August 2021 to select the 2022 Finalists (at the time it was not certain the change would be made to a 3 Laureates formula). A third meeting was held just before the Ceremony on June 1st and was dedicated to updating the Jury on the Foundation’s strategy and finances, and the general state of the Award. The Jury heard from Foundation staff and Board on some of the progress and challenges facing the Award in the implementation of its 2019 strategy. The group discussed how the Jury plays a role in the branding and quality of the nominees to the Award. The Jury members exchanged information on former winners of the Award, a new tradition of their meetings.

Over the European summer months, the Foundation launched a new cycle of the Award with an open call to Nominations. The candidates were reviewed by the Jury throughout the months of July and August, and a top-ten list voted on by September. Jury member organizations developed due diligence reports on the top nominees, which were considered during their final meeting in September. 3 new Laureates were selected from Venezuela, Chad, and Kashmir for the MEA2023.

9. FOUNDATION FINANCES AND GOVERNANCE

After two successive deficits in 2019 and 2020, the Foundation was pleased to close the financial year 2021 with a modest profit. However, two grants closed in 2022 and the close of the year revealed a new deficit, with spending hovering at CHF 494,000 and expenses of CHF 535,000 (slightly more than the expected amount of expenses as budgeted at start of 2022, which essentially reflect additional costs assumed by the Foundation when the responsibility of organizing the Ceremony was largely transferred from the hands of the City of Geneva to the Foundation). Two donors agreed to enhance or advance donations to the Foundation so

accounts could be covered, and together with our remaining reserves, we were able to close the year. However, this third deficit essentially absorbs all reserves, leaving the Foundation in further financial precarity.

For this reason, the Director of the Foundation engaged a fundraising consultant at end of year with the task of providing short-term recommendations which could lead to improved results of minimum +CHF 100.000 in 2023.

A new project for the Board was the development of the 'Association des amis du Prix Martin Ennals', an organization which was officially created at close of 2021 to support the fundraising and networking of the Foundation. The 'Association' will be able to receive donations from individuals and companies, pending the development of guidelines for receiving such donations by a Board committee. In 2022, the Board Chair led the development of a website for the Association.

Together with Karla Avelar (MEA2017) the Foundation developed a draft 'letter of engagement' which would provide a framework for the relationship between the Foundation and Award Laureates during the year of their win and beyond. Additionally, the Foundation staff and Board members launched collaboration in June 2022 on the development of new policies on safeguarding, to frame our interaction with children or that of MEA Defenders who may be in contact with minors.

Finally, the Board formed a new committee to prepare the 30th Anniversary celebration of the MEA, in 2024. A concept note drawn up by the President of the Board proposes a week-long celebration with panels, roundtables, educational activities, and a large gathering of the historic winners of the Award, in Geneva.

Lessons learned 2022

Volunteers and interns are an integral part of our team, and we must make sure to give them sufficient guidance so they can be successful in their roles.

MEF's interns are recruited at the main Geneva-based universities – they are cosmopolitan citizens with an interest to learn more about human rights defense, philanthropy, or program administration. Several volunteers supported the homage to Father Stan Swamy – students and Geneva- residents of Indian origin lent a hand to the Foundation to prepare leaves and even food for Foundation events.

A very special MEA volunteer is Karla Avelar – MEA Finalist 2017 – who lives in Geneva since she requested asylum the year of her Award. Karla is studying French and math, as part of her plan to pay the bills by working as an assistant accountant. Karla spent six months as an administrative assistant with the Foundation – and we miss her!