

MARTIN ENNALS AWARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Annual report 2020

Martin Ennals Foundation



The Martin Ennals Award Ceremony 2020



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Introduction



Created in 1992, the Martin Ennals Award provides a burst of support and visibility to outstanding human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk. Over the years, more than 50 HRDs in +20 countries have been recognized by the Award. We believe firmly that defenders are a critical, but vulnerable, piece of the international human rights system: by providing information from the field, by documenting abuses, searching for the missing, or by promoting education and policy, defenders simultaneously defend what has been achieved and lay the groundwork for respect of the human rights of everyone, everywhere.

Defenders often challenge the interests of powerful governments and social or economic groups. All too often, they pay high prices for their commitment to human rights. From intimidation to harassment,

censorship, jail, beatings, defamation, or even death – defenders face difficult choices in their pursuit of human rights objectives.

Which is why we at Martin Ennals Foundation (MEF), and the ten members of our independent Award Jury, believe ardently that they deserve our constant support.

Our approach to working with HRDs has evolved over the years. Today, we offer our support to HRDs through three primary components: a substantial financial prize, which defenders are free to employ as they wish; a prestigious ceremony, media and PR support to enhance defenders' visibility; and training and advocacy opportunities geared to strengthening the networks and sustainability of defenders. In this report the reader will hear a great deal of statistics about media results and digital reach; about needs assessments and events; as well as feedback drawn directly from our key audiences. Together these sources of information will paint a picture of the impact of our support on defenders and on the international human rights movement.

2020 was a year of important growth, innovation and risk-taking for MEF –



despite the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, we largely pursued our original plans for the year. By the close of 2020, the Foundation had successfully completed its annual Award ceremony, delivered on the first Geneva Residency and human rights education pilot project.

In Q2, MEF launched a nominations campaign for the 2021 edition of the Award, receiving a higher-than-usual amount of quality candidacies. The Foundation hired a part-time Program Officer to support the “Martin Ennals Defenders Network”. Fundraising, reporting and development of our programs occupied a significant portion of the Foundation’s resources throughout the months of Covid-19 quarantines.

While it was not clear at first how, the pandemic also pushed the staff, the Foundation Board, and Jury to adapt. Our small team grew accustomed to virtual work, making the most of cloud-based platforms for communication and document storage (which had luckily been put into place over 2019). We took advantage of the pandemic conditions to dedicate more time to renewing relationships with the members of the Regional Panel,

constructing a database of contacts, and reestablishing communication with former Laureates. The MEF Board and Jury conducted their business over several virtual encounters, likewise, advancing rules and policies to frame the Award’s impact for years to come.

Ultimately, the pandemic helped us recognize one of our core strengths: as a small Foundation, we can more easily adapt to changing conditions. From the Board to the Jury and staff, we all decided to make the most of the adversity.

We hope you find our report an interesting and insightful look into how Martin Ennals Foundation supports and promotes human rights defenders.

Isabel de Sola
Director



1. Outlook for Human Rights Defenders 2020

The year 2020 has been nothing short of transformational and deeply unsettling: containing the Covid-19 pandemic occupied the world's attention and resources, with some countries consumed by the economic fallout, while others struggled to attend the sick, and everyone fought to gain the upper hand on the outbreak.

The pandemic had multiple impacts on the global human rights movement and defenders. First, the disease revealed authoritarian tendencies in the governments of some countries and strengthened this pre-existing trend in others. 'Combatting the virus' became the rationale for emergency restrictions on basic rights – freedom of movement, freedom of speech, privacy – that in many instances were neither proportionate nor time bound. Human rights defenders (HRDs) found themselves confined in many countries: unable to circulate freely, many HRDs were less able to gather and share information, conduct documentation, protest, or search for the missing. As the extraordinary lockdowns occurring worldwide led to inevitable human rights abuses, HRDs

were less capable of witnessing and recording these events. Many detained HRDs were unnecessarily made vulnerable to contagion with the virus in suboptimal prison conditions, including several Martin Ennals Award winners. Others lost their sources of livelihood and fell into economic precarity.



A masked protester at the Women's Rights March in Geneva, June 2020

Martin Ennals Laureates worldwide reported witnessing and experiencing these trends during the confinement. At the time of writing, many of them are working to the best of their capacities in countries still locked down because of COVID. (Likewise, the Foundation itself remains under semi-confinement into the first quarter of 2021).

The international human rights system and framework which the Martin Ennals Award is intricately tied to has also been affected by the pandemic. The UN



Human Rights Council 43rd session in March 2020 was halted abruptly as Switzerland ordered confinements for all citizens. Though some work continued virtually throughout Q2, the focus of attention was primarily on the health-related impacts of the disease and emergency measures. Some observers worried that critical committee work on topics other than the pandemic was abandoned momentarily.

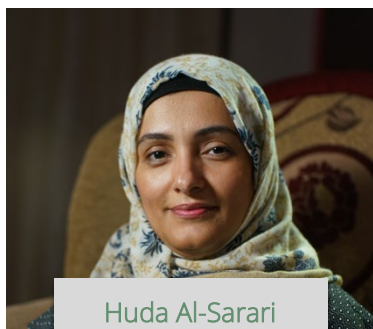
The UN quickly reestablished conferences in a mixed format of virtual and physical meetings, which will stay in place for the foreseeable future. This could have several effects for the

participation of civil society in the international architecture: on the one hand, with everyone participating virtually, the playing field is 'leveled', so to speak. Civil society who would have faced difficulties travelling to conferences and meetings, may now have an equal shot at participation. On the other hand, the UN has been obligated to reduce the amount of time civil society speakers are allotted; complex systems of signing-up online for speaking slots have increased competition. These measures may ultimately curtail civil society participation, and therefore, the access of HRDs to these mechanisms.

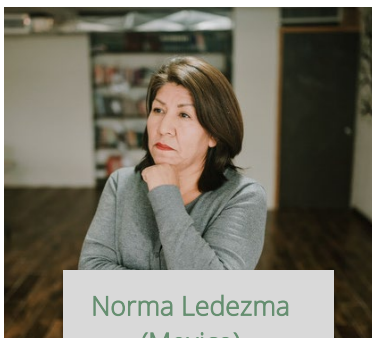


2. Meet Three Exceptional Women HRDs

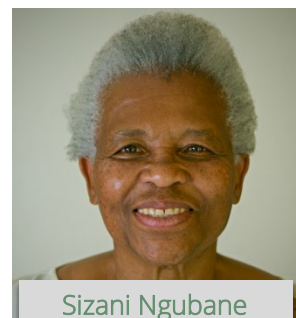
In late November 2019, we announced the Finalists for the MEA 2020 Award with a press briefing hosted by the Correspondents Association of the United Nations (ACANU) in Geneva. A global media and digital campaign was launched on 26 November 2019 to begin raising the visibility and profile of our 2020 Finalists – all three of whom were women for the first time in MEA history.



Huda Al-Sarari
(Yemen)



Norma Ledezma
(Mexico)



Sizani Ngubane
(South Africa)

- In **Yemen**, where the conflict is ongoing since 2015, **Huda Al-Sarari**, a Yemeni lawyer, unveiled the existence of several secret detention centres where the worst violations of human rights were committed under the tutelage of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) forces: 200 cases of torture, disappearances or even extrajudicial executions of men and boys were documented under her leadership.
- In **South Africa**, women face discrimination, the worst expression of which is widespread gender-based violence. In rural communities, women frequently have their land expropriated and are deprived of access to education and justice. Grassroots activist “Gogo” **Sizani Ngubane** founded the Rural Women’s Movement, an organization of more than 50,000 women from rural areas. She fought successfully for over 40 years for the recognition of their rights.
- In **Mexico**, the civilian population pays a high price for the weakness of the rule of law which is at the root of widespread violence and impunity. Women are the primary victims, with more than 3,500 femicides committed each year. **Norma Ledezma**, who is the mother of one of the victims, puts all her energy into supporting families seeking access to justice in the state of Chihuahua.



Our outreach efforts – either in the media or advocacy – highlighted some of the specific issues and risks faced by women human rights defenders (WHRD) because of their activism. In the words of Huda Al-Sarari, *“It is extremely difficult to be a human rights defender in Yemen, and it is even more difficult for a woman. In a society ruled by men, I have to prove myself ten times more than a man.”*

SDGs focus

With three women at the center of our 2020 cycle, MEF contributed to **SDG 5: Gender Equality**, in addition to our core work for **SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**. Sizani Ngubane’s focus on land rights and indigenous persons in South Africa allows the MEA2020 to shine a spotlight on **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**.



3. Martin Ennals Award Ceremony 2020

The Martin Ennals Award Ceremony 2020 was a success with more than 600 people in the audience, and a livestream reach of +11,000.

The combined efforts of the MEF team and the City of Geneva delivered an uplifting event with human rights and defenders at center stage. Ms. Huda al-Sarari was

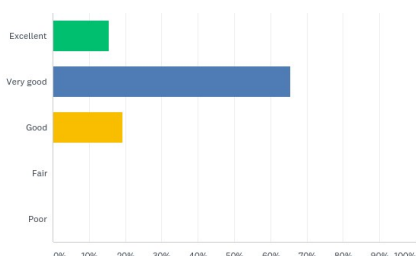


named the Martin Ennals Laureate 2020 for her documentation of over 200 cases of enforced disappearances of men and boys by UAE forces in Yemen.

Audience Survey

Q1: Overall, how would you rate the event?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



Powered by SurveyMonkey

To evaluate the ceremony and gather information on what could be improved, MEF conducted an online survey in both French and English after the ceremony. With 64 responses, the general appreciation of the ceremony ranges from «very good » to

« excellent ». The vast majority of participants confirmed they would recommend the ceremony to their network (+80%) and were satisfied or very satisfied with the way they were greeted, the venue, speakers, film portraits, the music and cocktail reception.

In terms of activity sectors, the most represented sectors in the audience were civil society and international organizations. The strong participation of civil society was an encouraging sign, in so far as one of our objectives since 2019 was to further anchor the ceremony locally, while also ensuring its attractiveness for international Geneva.



The results lead MEF to reconfirm the value of the Award ceremony for the City of Geneva, in particular: the ceremony acts as an important milestone in the yearly calendar which brings together three sectors who are essential in the human rights landscape, but who operate in different spheres: the diplomatic sector, civil society and local authorities.


A full read-out of the ceremony survey is available in Annex 1.




4. Protective publicity

WHAT IS PROTECTIVE PUBLICITY?


Results January - July 2020






MEDIA WORK

Up to **200 articles** regarding the Finalists were published during and after the MEA ceremony, with leading locations in Switzerland and the EU.




SOCIAL MEDIA

Our reach on social media platforms is growing organically, but quickly -- especially during the MEA ceremony. One post alone -- Huda's acceptance speech -- garnered **110K impressions**.




LIVESTREAM OF THE CEREMONY

Up to **12,000 viewers** around the world followed the ceremony online from our YouTube and Facebook events - particularly in Chihuahua, home of one MEA Finalist.



FILM PORTRAITS AND CLIPS

A film portrait and shorter clips for social media were commissioned for each MEA2020 Finalist. They were viewed **several thousand times**, with Huda's short film achieving **61K views** alone.



KEEP THE SPOTLIGHT ON DEFENDERS

We use our communication platforms to highlight the work and situations of former MEA winners. In 2020, MEF raised awareness online about **5 detained defenders, Mona Seif in Egypt, and Luon Sovath in Cambodia**.

WWW.MARTINENNALEAWARD.ORG
@MARTINENNALE

Once the Finalists to MEA 2020 were announced, MEF communications team partnered with each defender to establish what type of publicity would help them most. Our protective publicity strategy combines several elements to achieve maximum visibility on the Finalists and their causes, including through:

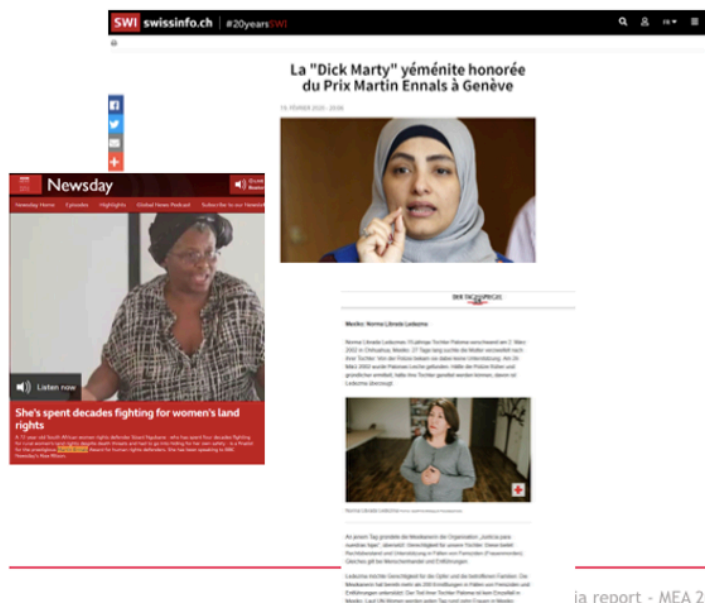
- ✓ Traditional media work
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Livestream of the ceremony
- ✓ Audio-visual materials

Broadly speaking, communications regarding the ceremony 2020 achieved good results on most fronts and increased the visibility on the Finalists. A common theme throughout our campaigns was the emphasis on women human rights defenders and the slogan "3 Exceptional Women".

The positive communication results are also the fruit of our collaboration with communications teams in each of the 10 Jury members, as well as our Regional Panel and other friendly organizations. Combining resources for publicity was key to breaking through the overload of information which can distract social media audiences.



4.1 Media coverage



- MEA2020 achieved **130 mentions** in the media with top locations in Europe, Switzerland and Sweden.
- Articles in prestigious mediums include La Tribune de Geneve, Taggespiegel, Le Courier, BBC World Radio, France24, the Daily Mail, El Confidencial.
- MEA2020 performed well considering the adverse context with breaking news about the coronavirus and the USA elections.

ia report - MEA 2020

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Following a press conference on February 10th, the MEA achieved 130 mentions in the media, with top locations including Switzerland and Sweden. A week after the ceremony, up to 200 outlets had published articles about the Finalists including in Swiss media (La Tribune de Genève, Le Courier) and International media (BBC, France24, Reuters Foundation news, The Daily Mail, El Confidencial).

Lessons learned

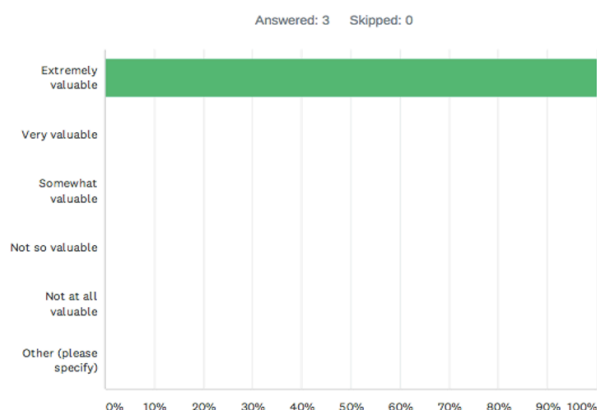
MEF communication team concluded that not enough of their resources were focused on drumming up interview and media spots for the Finalists. In 2021, more efforts will be invested in traditional media work with a view to improving coverage of the Award in the regions of the Finalists.



The Finalists themselves rated the communication strategies very highly:

Martin Ennals 2020 Geneva Residency feedback form

Q12 How valuable for your work was the communication strategy around the Award, including the press conference (February 18), press interview or other opportunities for media visibility facilitated by the Foundation?



4.2 Audio-visual materials

As in previous editions, MEF commissioned film portraits of the MEA Finalists. The longer film portraits (7-9 minutes) were complemented by shorter 'Jury films' (featuring members of the MEA Jury speaking about the Finalists) and smaller video clips (2 minutes) for social media.

Our survey tools confirm that the films were well-received by the Award ceremony audience and the Finalists. Online, the different types of films received several hundreds or thousands of views each. Huda's short social media film was the most successful with more than 61k views recorded by the end of February 2020.



Results of Audio-visual materials MEA 2020

Huda Al Sarari

	Views	Average viewing time	Number of views of 3 seconds
Jury film	More than 36K	1:03	36K
Portrait film	260	1:59	34K
Social Media film	More than 61K	0:09	-

Norma Ledezma

Jury film	More than 33K	1:06	33K
Portrait film	248	2:34	11K
Social Media film	More than 12K	0:12	-

Sizani Ngubane

Jury film	Almost 400	1:08	250
Portrait film	328	2:59	284
Social Media Film	More than 1K	0:07	-

Lessons learned

The data indicate that online viewers prefer the shorter versions of the films. The short amount of time that online users viewed the social media films (6-12 seconds average) points to the limitations of transmitting this type of film on digital platforms. Though the viewing times were 'longer' than the social media average, the Finalists' films did not capture digital audiences as completely as when they are viewed live, during the Award ceremony. Nonetheless, our 2020 Finalists rated the film portraits highly at 4.5 out of 5 stars.



4.3 Social media

One of the important innovations for MEF in 2020 was the improvement of our digital presence through Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts and a new approach to online community management. In the run-up to the ceremony, our digital platforms performed well:

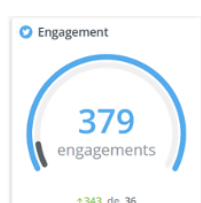
Facebook

MEF logged a sharp increase in terms of audience, followers and engagement during the ceremony campaign in February 2020 (and compared to the November 2019 campaign). Our page added +442 followers, increased reach by +317%, and our posts garnered +250% in engagement. The live post announcing the MEA 2020 Laureate, Ms. Huda al-Sarari, achieved a reach of over 110k. The total reach of this post, between 17.02.20 and 24.02.20 was up to 241'318 in audience.



Post showing Ms. Huda al-Sarari's acceptance speech

Social Media



Tweet impressions
110K ↑226.3%

Profile visits
1,900 ↑493.8%

Mentions
198 ↑1,314.3%

Twitter:
Compared to Nov. 2019 campaign:

- +226% increase of total reach
- +953% increase in engagement
- +10% new followers
- +1300% increase of #MartinEnnals mentions
- Retweets by human rights 'influencers'

Media report - MEA 2020

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Twitter

MEF's Twitter handle registered a sharp increase in terms of audience, followers and engagement during the ceremony campaign in February 2020 and compared to the November 2019 campaign. The best performing country on

Twitter was Yemen, where a young and active virtual audience celebrated their fellow country-woman's win.



The ceremony **Livestream** on Facebook and YouTube achieved up to 12,000 reach and 366 interactive engagements, with a top viewing location identified as Chihuahua, Mexico (home of MEA Finalist Norma Librada Ledezma). However, the average amount of time of the viewer on our livestream on Facebook was logged at 0.32 seconds, while on YouTube average viewing time was over 6 minutes – data points which require interpretation. They could indicate that the online ceremony audience is less engaged with the content, or that the ceremony format – designed for physical audiences – is less engaging for the online viewer.

Website

The MEF website underwent some technical improvements in Q3 and Q4 2019. In the run-up to the ceremony and afterwards, we logged +80% new visitors, and +6'900 page views, confirming the importance of our website for public diplomacy and informational purposes.

Website

- +80% new visitors
- +6'900 page views
- 2'02" average session duration
- 50% visitors from Switzerland
- Language: 40% English / 30% French



Media report - MEA 2020



5. Geneva Residency 2020

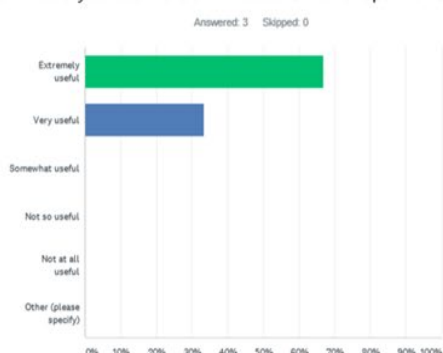
In February 2020 we piloted the Geneva Residency concept: a two-week stay in the “world capital for human rights”, during which the MEA 2020 Finalists benefited from opportunities for 1) learning more about the tools that can be useful for their work as human rights defenders, 2) improving their advocacy impact by developing their network on the international stage, and through advocacy opportunities where they could make their voices heard; 3) Personal care focus, including time for resting and psychological support sessions. To offer this enriching stay in Geneva, the Foundation developed partnerships with over a dozen organizations, associations, and professionals in Switzerland. According to the feedback received from the Finalists’ anonymous survey, this first Geneva Residency offered them the possibility to create synergies with critical stakeholders for their work.

5.1 Workshops in communications and digital security

Workshops were imparted by our partners Claire Doole Communications and HURIDOCS to sharpen the Finalists’ skills in these key subjects. The Finalists 2020 practiced delivering speeches, speaking at a mock press conference and developing their own soundbites. Digital security and the management and protection of data — and thus of themselves — was the focus of the Finalists 2020 workshop with HURIDOCS.

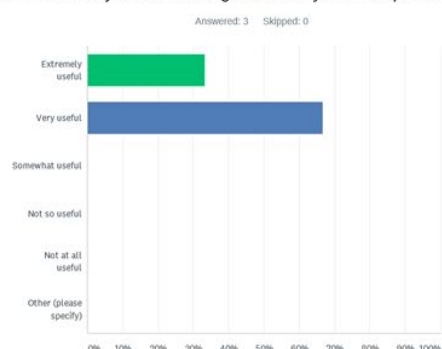
Martin Ennals 2020 Geneva Residency feedback form

Q9 How would you rate the Communications workshops with Claire Doole:



Martin Ennals 2020 Geneva Residency feedback form

Q10 How would you rate the Digital Security workshop with Huridocs:



Lessons learned from the first Geneva Residency

In 2021, we plan to extend the learning component of the Geneva Residency so that it can occur before, during and after the Finalists’ visits to Geneva. This would be aligned with capacity-building best practices which include a consultation process on priority areas for the Finalists, and the development of skills and knowledge over several iterations.



5.2 Personal care

Working as a human rights defender is a full-time job that allows little time for rest, and above all, can cause anxiety, stress or even burn-out. MEF thus partnered with several medical professionals and associations to offer a « personal care » component to the Geneva Residency that could provide MEA Finalists with psychological support and self-care techniques for emotional resilience in their professions.

We arranged between 2-4 sessions for each Finalist with psychologists specialized in the accompaniment of professionals returning from war zones or dangerous contexts. Each of them was able to speak in their own mother tongue during these sessions. A restorative yoga session was held at the end of the Geneva Residency to give the Finalists (and the team) a moment of pure relaxation before they leave.

Lessons learned from the pilot

Similarly to the 'learning' component of the Geneva Residency, the MEF team believes that the personal care component could be even more effective if structured over several months, rather than over two weeks. For the 2021 edition, therefore, the MEF will aim to establish a personal care offering that is not restricted to the Finalists' visit to Geneva.

5.3 Advocacy during the Geneva Residency 2020

MEF partnered with each Finalist to design a program of events and meetings during their Geneva Residency so they could further advocate for their causes and expand their international networks. By the time they departed Geneva, each had met several diplomats, UN officers, academics or practitioners that could help them advance their human rights advocacy. Some highlights included the closed-door gathering for Ms. Huda al-Sarari and the five members of the Yemen contact group, hosted by the Irish Mission to the United Nations in Geneva; the encounters between Huda, Sizani and the team of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs; and Norma's trip to Oslo.



MEF team coordinated these events, investing heavily to establish collaboration and ensure their high-quality, Other opportunities which added value to the Finalists experience include:

- ✓ Press conference with key-local and international media (3 Finalists together)
- ✓ Meeting and discussion at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with representatives of various Special Procedures and regional teams
- ✓ Luncheon with the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador, Bahia Tazib-Lie

Advocacy activities with Huda al-Sarari, Laureate 2020:



Sizani Ngubane and Huda al-Sarari visit the Swiss capital, Bern.

- ✓ IHL Talks at the Geneva Academy of International and Humanitarian Law
- ✓ Invitation by Bread for the World to Berlin for the Werner Lottje Key-note Lecture
- ✓ Meeting with Mena Rights Group
- ✓ Closed-door briefing organized by the Irish Mission to the UN
- ✓ Meeting and discussion with Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland staff members in Bern
- ✓ Roundtable with Swisspeace in Bern

Advocacy activities with Sizani Ngubane, Finalist 2020:

- ✓ In-class presentation at the University of Geneva's master course on international law
- ✓ Meeting with DOCIP (research center on indigenous persons human rights)
- ✓ Meeting and discussion with Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland staff members in Bern
- ✓ Roundtable with Swisspeace in Bern
- ✓ Meetings with relevant teams at OHCHR
- ✓ Meeting with the Africa team of the World Economic Forum



Advocacy activities with Norma Ledezma, Finalist 2020:



Norma Ledezma shares her story with the Latin American Breakfast group of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.

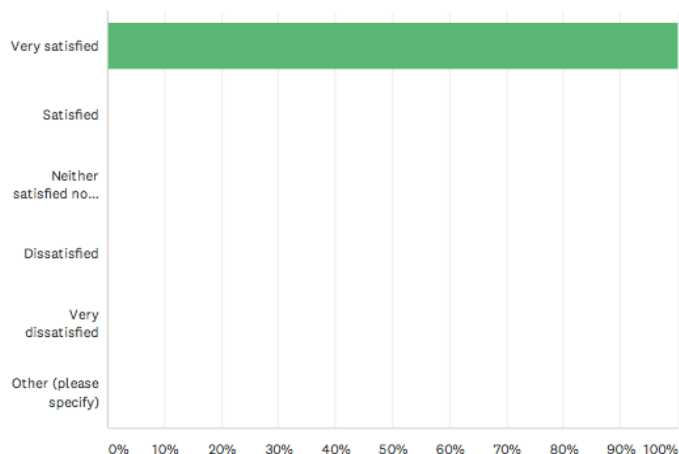
- ✓ Conference on gender-based violence organized by the City of Geneva
- ✓ Trip to Norway organized by Norwegian Human Rights Fund & Amnesty International Norway
- ✓ Breakfast meeting at the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, hosted by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
- ✓ Meetings with relevant teams at the OHCHR

We asked the Finalists for feedback on how to improve the Geneva Residency: the three were unanimous in their response that their schedules were rich but demanding and they needed more time to rest in between activities.

Martin Ennals 2020 Geneva Residency feedback form

Q13 How satisfied were you with the meetings organized by the Foundation on your behalf with professionals in Geneva or elsewhere?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0





6. Update on the 2020 Nominees

6.1 Huda al-Sarari, Laureate 2020



Among the 2020 Finalists, Huda was the most at risk when she arrived in Geneva. After the murder of her son and numerous threats throughout 2019, she fled Yemen and settled temporarily in Cairo. At the end of the Geneva Residency, Huda expressed her fear to go back to Egypt and thus stayed in Geneva until a solution was found. Huda has since settled in Oman. At the end of December 2020, MEF was thrilled to learn she successfully gathered her three remaining children with her in Muscat. Huda remains active in her advocacy for human rights in Yemen.

6.2 Sizani Ngubane “Gogo”, Finalist 2020

To our great dismay, Sizani passed away after being infected with COVID in late December 2020. MEF maintained close contact with Sizani after the ceremony 2020, partly to assist her with complications arising from a property she had been forced to abandon, and the poor health of her granddaughter. She resumed



her advocacy activities in late 2020 and unfortunately contracted COVID. At the time of writing this report, MEF has provided a portion of Sizani's remaining prize money for funeral arrangements and is in discussion with local actors on how to further support her family. Mama Gogo told us her visit to Geneva was “one of the most wonderful experiences” of her life. We will be forever grateful to have met her!



6.3 Norma Ledezma, Finalist 2020



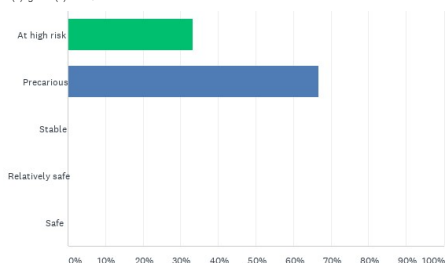
Norma tells us that the Award provided her with the emotional and financial resources to ‘renew’ her organization, *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas*. After an initial period locked down in Mexico, Norma got back to work with a strengthened team and better infrastructure. She was infected with COVID in Q3 but recovered fully.

6.4 What was our impact on the 2020 Finalists?

Evaluating the protective effect of the Award is a complex endeavor and requires a short, medium and long-term approach to gauge changes in the safety and well-being of recognized defenders. In the second half of 2020, we began a collaboration with researchers based at universities in the UK to evaluate the overall impact of the MEA for defenders and the human rights movement. In anticipation of their results, we also asked the Finalists to tell us what they thought about the impact of the Award on their safety. Their responses give us a short-term snapshot of our impact, which we aim to compare over time with more regular surveys of our beneficiaries.

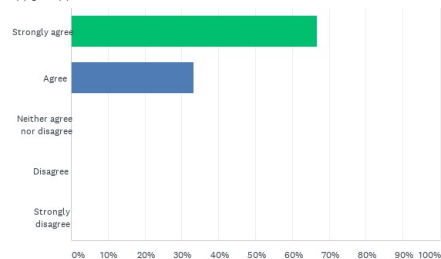
Q2: How would you describe your personal safety situation before the announcement of your nomination to the Martin Ennals Award 2020?

Réponses obtenues : 3 Question(s) ignorée(s) : 0



Q15: Do you agree that the Martin Ennals Award has a protective effect on your personal safety?

Réponses obtenues : 3 Question(s) ignorée(s) : 0





7. Human rights education pilot project 2019-2020

An additional innovation in 2020 was the human rights education pilot project developed with the Département de l'instruction publique (Higher education authority - DIP) of Geneva, and our partners Amnesty International and True Heroes Films.

MEF believes that raising awareness about human rights and their defenders among younger



generations is key to 'buy-in' of citizens, and therefore to the sustainability of the movement. Our educational project was « piloted » with 4 high school classes in the Geneva area between January and February 2020. 80 students participated in two workshops focused on human rights and communications tools— one run by Amnesty International, and the other run by True Heroes Films — and then, were invited to the 2020 ceremony. To conclude the project, students met for personal conversations with the 2020 Finalists in their classrooms.

Content of the pilot

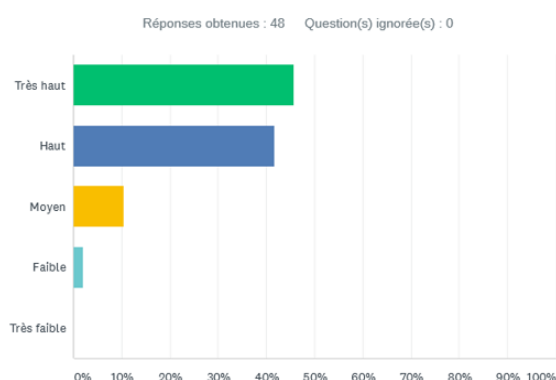
- ✓ **Workshop 1 with Amnesty International (early January):** this interactive workshop offered an introduction to human rights through the stories of individual defenders. The workshop introduces students to the tactics and communication tools that can be used to protect activists.
- ✓ **Workshop 2 with True Heroes Films (end of January):** this workshop introduced the use of film and images in defending human rights. Students practiced using cameras and interview techniques to humanize defenders.
- ✓ **Invitation to the ceremony:** students attended the MEA2020 Ceremony with their teacher, (mid-February).
- ✓ **Meeting the MEA Finalists (end of February):** to conclude the project, students were given the unique chance to meet and interview our three 2020 Finalists, as well as the 2019 Laureate. Students were encouraged to ask questions and to explore the Finalists' motivations for defending rights.



Lessons learned

MEF staff evaluated the pilot with an online anonymous survey for teachers and students. The results of the survey were promising: Students rated the pilot experience very highly: up to 90% of them described the results as “very useful” and “highly useful”.

Q5 Quel est, selon vous, le degré d'utilité de l'ensemble du programme proposé par la Fondation Martin Ennals ?



In the fall 2020, MEF submitted the program again to the DIP; for the 2020-2021 edition, the Foundation enrolled 13 high-school classes in 4 schools, for an approximate coverage of 260 students. Together with Amnesty International Switzerland and True Heroes Films, the curriculum for the project was

updated and sharpened with the addition of one more workshop. Funding for the project was secured with two Geneva-based donors, including the Loterie Romande.



.8. Launching the Martin Ennals Award Defenders Network

Following the new Foundation's strategy document approved in April 2019, the team was mandated to reflect on how the Foundation could continue providing support and being relevant to the work of former Laureates and Finalists. In January 2020, the first draft proposal for a "*Martin Ennals Award Defenders Network*" was shared with the Board and some core donors, who showed enthusiasm for the Foundation to pursue this ambition. In July 2020, the first specific grant for the Network was approved by one of our long-standing donors. The following section describes first steps taken to invigorate our network of almost 50 active defenders worldwide.

8.1 Overview of the Defenders' network

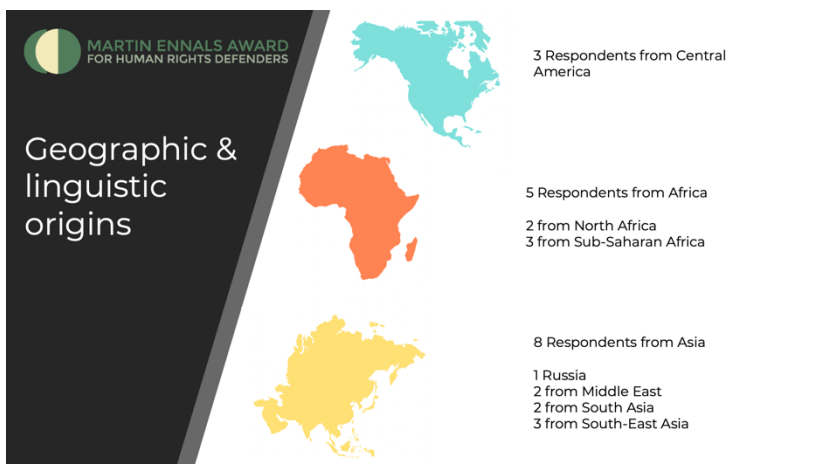
During its Board meeting in October 2020, the MEF Board approved the objectives of the Network:

- ✓ To offer a safe space to Laureates and Finalists for exchange, mutual support and growth.
- ✓ To add value to the Martin Ennals Foundation's work through the creation of a mentorship and a peer-coaching platform for human rights defenders.
- ✓ Facilitate the exploration of needs, motivations, skills and strategies to support the network's members in continuing striving for lasting change.
- ✓ Legitimize defenders work through continuous advocacy in Geneva and through our partners

A project plan, timeline and budget were developed over Q3 and Q4. Consultations on the concept of the Defender's network were sought out with supportive colleagues at Ford Foundation, the World Organization Against Torture and the Southern African Defender's Network.

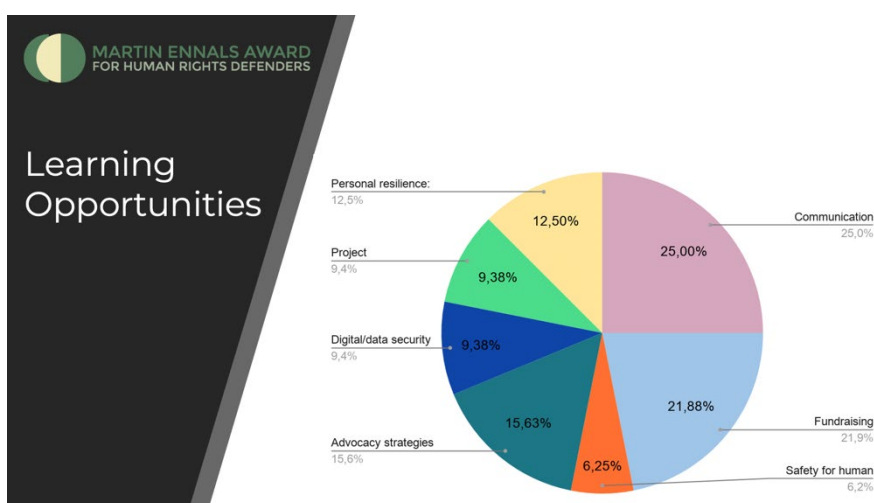
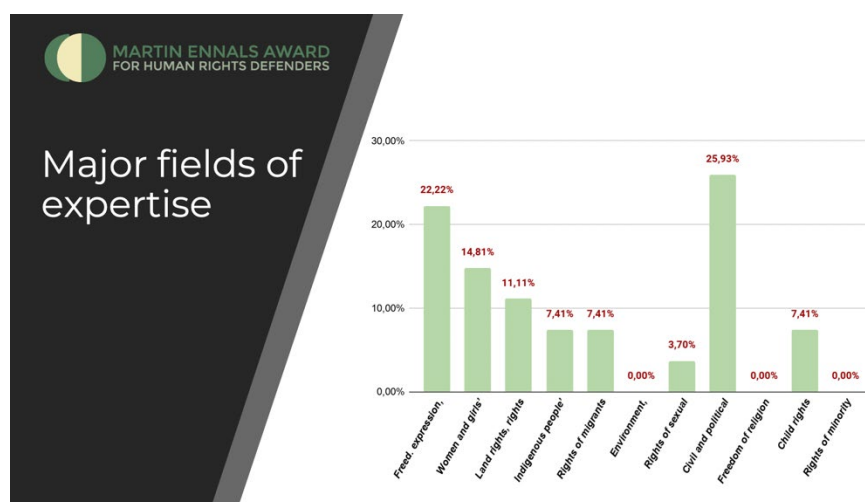
8.2 Defenders' survey

After many years of infrequent contact with MEA winners, the Foundation set out to conduct a survey of the group with the aim of refreshing our knowledge of their status, activities, and interests. The survey was sent out in five languages to all Martin Ennals Award winners and Finalists whose contacts we have (45).



21 replies were received from several regions of the world.

In addition to geographic diversity, Martin Ennals defenders confirmed they work on a host of important human rights topics:



The survey inquired about respondents to rate topics of interest for potential future learning opportunities. For many communication and fundraising skills were of particular interest. In addition to the topics highlighted in the below

graph, 90% of the respondents answered “yes” to the question of whether they would



like to be part of a mentoring and peer-coaching group with other Martin Ennals Award winners.

The survey assists the Foundation to sharpen its plans for hosting a Defender's network: priority was given to the peer-coaching project; in parallel, the Foundation decided to make communications and fundraising workshops accessible to the Network in 2021.

8.3 Peer-coaching program

In the second half of 2020, we partnered with Leaders Today, Coaching and Consulting – a Geneva-based company – to further develop our plans for peer-coaching amongst defenders. A Guidelines document to frame the peer-coaching offer and establish objectives and a *modus operandi*, was in place by the time of writing of this report. In 2021, MEF will proceed to pair up 10 defenders for the pilot experience. The outline of the pilot foresees 10 peer-coaching sessions with support from the coaches in three languages (Spanish, Arabic or French, and English); as well as 3 individual coaching sessions for the 10 defenders and 2 workshops to launch the experience.

Lessons learned

While it did not stop us from pursuing our plans, by the close of 2020 it is more apparent to MEF how COVID 'slowed-down' our project plans and communication with defenders in our network. The poor international outlook proved distracting to donors; therefore, our fundraising efforts on behalf of the project were less successful than expected. Many defenders found themselves under lockdown and facing states of emergency, which created new, often urgent situations for them to attend to at home. The launch of a brand-new initiative in these exceptional circumstances was therefore more challenging.

Likewise, we learned that constant communication is essential in the creation of a Defenders Network. Those former Laureates and Finalists with whom we maintain regular contact are more willing to engage in joint activities and provide precious information to shape our advocacy work.

Finally, ensuring meaningful responses from HRDs to surveys is an arduous task. We managed to obtain 21 answers out of a group of 45 active defenders.



8.4 Free the MEA prisoners' campaign

To test out the collective action capacities of the Defenders Network, a first campaign was launched in the spring and summer 2020 – at the height of the COVID outbreak worldwide. Given the vulnerability of detained persons to catching covid-19, MEF organized a letter-writing effort amongst former Award winners on behalf of five of our defenders in detention. In April 2020, we coordinated 14 signatures from former MEA Laureates for letters on behalf of:

- ✓ Ilham Tohti (China), Martin Ennals Laureate, 2016
- ✓ Ahmed Mansoor (United Arab Emirates), Martin Ennals Laureate, 2015
- ✓ Nabeel Rajab and Abdullah Al-Khawaja (Bahrain), Martin Ennals Finalists 2012
- ✓ Nasrin Sotoudeh (Iran), Martin Ennals Finalist 2012



Nabeel Rajab with his family after being released to home detention in June 2020, Bahrain

We published an article on our website in relation to this campaign, which gathered 170 views and was the 5th most viewed article on our website in 2020. The letter was also shared on social media – with one tweet gathering +13,000 impressions and 200 engagements.



Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders
 Published by Hootsuite · 22 April 2020

Read the letter the Martin Ennals Award defenders wrote to China, Bahrain, the UAE and Iran calling for the release of all imprisoned human rights defenders including their fellow award-winners. Waiting for the release of Ahmed, Ilham, Nasrin, Abdullah and Najeab.

[Amnesty International Human Rights Watch FIDH](#)
[- International Federation for Human Rights](#)
[HURIDOCS Brot für die Welt Human Rights First](#)
[OMCT International Commission of Jurists](#)
[International Service for Human R...](#) [See more](#)

MARTINENNALEAWARD.ORG
Martin Ennals Award - News
 The Martin Ennals Award winners are calling f...

17 2 comments 13 shares

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Performance for your post
NEGATIVE FEEDBACK
BRANDED CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

Although no official replies were received or reactions registered to the letter, on June 9th, 2020, Nabeel Rajab was released from prison in Bahrain. He will serve the remainder of his term under house arrest, in far better conditions and with the support of his family. MEF is confident that the letters on his behalf from so many high-profile defenders contributed to the Bahrain government's decision to release Nabeel.

For a short time in the fall 2020, Nasrin Soutoudeh was also released from prison in Iran. Her release followed a tremendous global campaign on her behalf, with participation from the highest-level diplomats and dozens of civil society groups. She was able to spend two weeks with her family and participate from afar in her nomination for the Right Livelihood Award. It was with shock and outrage that we learned of Nasrin's reincarceration by Iranian authorities on the evening of the Right Livelihood Award ceremony. MEF has offered its support to the family and lawyers of Nasrin, and have consistently communicated about her case from our own platforms.

8.5 Finalist Mona Seif briefly imprisoned

We were quick to respond on our social media channels when Mona Seif was arrested in April 2020 along with her mother and sister for protesting the continued detention of her brother, who is held in an Egyptian jail since several years, during the COVID pandemic. Fortunately, Mona was released shortly afterwards. As a follow-up, MEF facilitated the production of a short video for social media on Mona's experience and that of her brother. The video highlighted the plight of many prisoners of conscience exposed to COVID. Two months after we posted on Facebook, the post had logged 25,000 impressions; 46,000 impressions on Twitter and 200 engagements.



These numbers reflect the first fruits of our deliberate effort to mobilize MEA defenders and encourage them to share information and seek support from former finalists and laureates.

8.6 Assistance to Venerable Sovath, MEA Laureate 2012

In June and July 2020, MEF partnered with the Swiss government to relocate MEA Laureate Venerable Sovath to safety in Switzerland after he was threatened with ‘defrocking’ (expulsion from his Buddhist monk order) following a government-led smear campaign against him in May 2020. MEF has acted as Venerable Sovath’s guarantor during his stay in Switzerland, securing on his behalf a temporary relocation grant from Protect Defenders.eu that should provide for 6 months of expenses. In addition, the Foundation dedicated its own resources to ensure his plane tickets and training opportunities.

From July to end of December 2020, MEF facilitated numerous advocacy opportunities for Venerable Sovath – including a private briefing for missions in Geneva, hosted by Switzerland; and a key-note lecture to the Genève-Asie Club.



A highlight to note was Venerable Sovath’s intervention at the Interactive Dialogue on Cambodia, held within the framework of the UNHRC’s 45th session on 1st October. As his turn came to speak, Venerable Sovath was interrupted numerous times by the Cambodian and other missions, who questioned the validity of his accreditation in an attempt to drown out his statement. Ultimately, the Vice-President of the session allowed Venerable Sovath to speak and the acting President of the UNHRC, Ambassador Elisabeth Tischy-Fisselberger of Austria, sent a letter to the Cambodian mission in protest at the flagrant harassment and intimidation of a civil society member during proceedings at the UNHRC.



Venerable Sovath used his time in Geneva to contact the UN Special Rapporteur on Cambodia, as well as with the OHCHR reprisals office.

MEF assisted Venerable Sovath to apply for the IDREAM 2021 program for exiled defenders offered by the Center for Prevention of Torture, a USA-based organization. The program can be

followed online and offers defenders who have been forced to go into exile the opportunity to retrain themselves to continue their advocacy from abroad.

8.7 Martin Ennals Defenders Fund for Advocacy and Learning

In 2020, the City of Geneva approved MEF's request to reorient leftover grant monies of approximately CHF 56K into a "Martin Ennals Defenders Fund for Advocacy and Learning". The Fund will be placed into financial products which earn a commensurate return, at an appropriate level of risk for our Foundation (4-6% per annum). The interest earned will be available to finance travel to Geneva or other human rights capital in order participate in important advocacy opportunities (for example, during procedures at the UN Human Rights Council) or participate in capacity-building relevant to defenders.



9. Nominations process 2021

The nominations communication campaign is a fundamental part of our impact model: by bringing to light the existence of exceptional HRDs around the world, who may have gone unnoticed but are at great risk, the nominations process is an important information gathering exercise for the international human rights movement. From May through mid-June, MEF activated its networks and digital platforms to spread the word about the opening of nominations to the 2021 edition of the Award. The results were encouraging:

- ✓ Visibility online: The first nominations social media post almost reached 90K persons (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn). Mid-way through the campaign, our post reached 50K additional persons. By close of the campaign, we reached almost 190K persons online.
- ✓ 56 nominations total were received, of which 35 were highest quality.

By mid-summer 2020, the Jury arrived at a list of 10 top nominees; and by September 2020, 3 Finalists were selected. The announcement of their names would take place in early 2021.

Regional Panel: In the spring 2020, MEF staff undertook interviews with each of the 7 remaining Regional Panel members in order to refresh these historical relationships which ensure their assistance to the due diligence process of the Award. The conversations revealed a great deal of good will between the organizations and MEA, as well as variances in their understandings about the role they were meant to play and information gaps. MEF undertook to improve communication and expectations management of the Regional Panel throughout MEA2021.



10. Administrative and Governance Updates

Employee Handbook, Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct

Throughout 2020, Foundation Director and Board members advanced research and drafts for a first-ever employee handbook and Ethical Guidelines. These new rules provide a clear framework within which to operate for our small team and for service providers. They also communicate clearly on our values and beliefs as an organization. They came into effect at the start of January 2021. The Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct are available in Annex 4 of this report.

Foundation Board

The MEF Board welcomed several new members in 2020, most recently Rolf Kunzler who took on the role of Treasurer. By close of 2020, the Board received the resignation of long-standing member Andrew Andrea. Two new members were recruited in addition: Patrick Chappatte, a Swiss-Lebanese cartoonist; and Alejandra Ancheita, Martin Ennals Award Laureate 2014.

Staff 2020

In September, the Foundation welcomed a new part-time Programme Officer at 40% Full-time equivalent (FTE). Ms. Cristina Rendon joins the team with the responsibility to oversee the Foundation's network of former winners and the Geneva Residency programs offered to the Finalists 2021. The human resources of the Foundation were complemented by 3 dynamic part-time interns from local universities.

Impact Evaluation

Pursuant to conversations begun before the installation of a new executive team at MEF, researchers from the University of Leeds and from the University of the Highlands and the Isles (UK) will partner with MEF from June 2020 through March 2021 to conduct an impact evaluation of the Award and Foundation initiatives. The core of the research will be interviews conducted with former winners of the Award, donors, Jury members, and Board representatives. The final product will be shared with our key stakeholders and donors by March 2021.

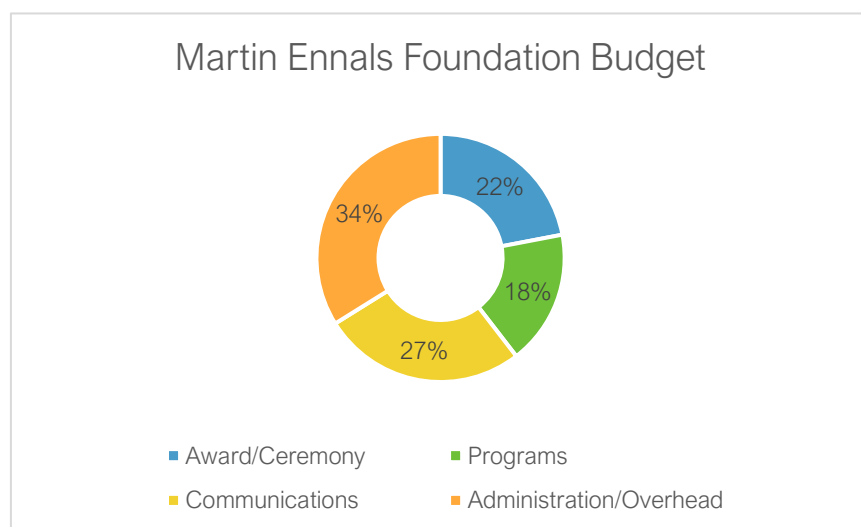


11. Financial Updates

MEF began the year with an ambitious fundraising plan that foresaw the recruitment of between 3-4 new donors for the Award. However, with the COVID pandemic shutting down all circulation for several months' time, and concerns over an ensuing economic crisis, the MEF together with the Board revised expenditures by -20% for 2020.

Secondly, the Board agreed to pursue several Swiss-based private donors to supplant other international donors who announced delays in human rights funding (Liechtenstein, Denmark, Germany).

With the Covid-reduction, spending was foreseen at CHF 487,025; at close of year, expenses totaled slightly more than budgeted at CHF 496, 910.



With several grants secured at the start of the year from core donors, fundraising efforts focused on attracting new private foundations based in Switzerland and Europe, as well as two or more new government donors. The following table details donations in 2020:

INCOME	2020 ACTUAL
Swiss confederation Year 1	73,000
Swiss confederation remainder Y1	19,500
Bread for the World	47,090.40
Irish Aid	53,790
Norwegian Human Rights Fund	49,424
City of Geneva	50,000



City of Geneva -- reorientation of leftover travel grants	55,643
City of Geneva - Flags on Mt Blanc	2,625
Canton of Geneva	40,000
Private swiss donor	30,000
Loterie Romande	20,000
ProtectDefenders.eu	13,057
Total	454,129.4

The fundraising strategy successfully recruited two new donors who showed enthusiasm about MEF's new projects – the Loterie Romande and Protectdefenders.eu. Several of the grants received in 2020 were part of multiannual agreements, an important conversion that affords MEF more efficiency in our financial management. However, a dozen other proposals were not approved by private donors; while some governments postponed indefinitely their consideration of our grant requests. Therefore, despite the cuts to our spending and a dynamic fundraising strategy, MEF finished the 2020 exercise with an important deficit of CHF -51,505.14.

The Foundation Board discussed these results at close of year with concern. Though the Board had foreseen in mid-2019 that an investment of a portion of the Foundation's reserves was necessary to launch a growth strategy, this second deficit leaves the Foundation far less margin with which to face any future disruptions. However, the Board agreed that the MEF should stay the course of its growth strategy with value-add programs to complement the Award. Though these activities require more human resources and therefore overhead costs, the potential return on investment in terms of impact and visibility for defenders, and reputation for the Foundation, should make it worthwhile. In 2021, the emphasis will therefore continue to be on fundraising, while keeping spending as reasonable as possible.



Gratitude

Our support to defenders would not be possible without the generosity in time and resources of many individuals and organizations. On behalf of the Foundation staff and Board, we would like to warmly recognize and congratulate all of you who partnered with us in 2020.

Donors 2020

Confederation of Switzerland
Canton of Geneva
City of Geneva
Irish Aid
Norwegian Human Rights Fund
Loterie Romande
Protectdefenders.eu
Private Swiss foundation

Ceremony 2020

City of Geneva
True Heroes Films
Visualive
Nana'n'air
Mme Catherine Sommer

Jury member organizations

Mr. Hans Thoolen, Chair of the Jury
Amnesty International
Human Rights Watch
Human Rights First
International Federation of Human Rights
Front Line Defenders
International Commission of Jurists
HURIDOCs
Brot Für die Welt
World Organization Against Torture
International Service for Human Rights

Special thanks to

Schellenberg Wittmer
Swisspeace
Cabinet Pluriels
The Geneva Academy
Geneva Peacebuilding Platform
DOCIP
Mena Rights Group
UN Women
OHCHR
Amnesty International Norway
Amnesty International
Switzerland

Regional Panel

Cairo Institute for Human Rights
Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
Forum-Asia
Asian Human Rights Commission
Civil Rights Defenders

