



**MARTIN ENNALS AWARD
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**NARRATIVE REPORT
2023**

Martin Ennals Foundation
Date of report: January 2024

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What were our objectives in 2023?

The Martin Ennals Award provides a burst of support and recognition to human rights defenders at risk. Anchored in the ‘world capital of human rights’, the Award is uniquely prestigious because of its location in Geneva, association to leading civil society organizations, and proximity to the UN human rights mechanisms. The Award experience includes both a world-class ceremony and tailor-made support to the Laureates in the form of protective publicity, prize money, networking, and capacity-building.

Since 2019, the Martin Ennals Foundation strives to be a dynamic player in Geneva, contributing to international diplomacy while engaging local schools and associations in debate on human rights.

2023 is the third year of implementation of the strategy agreed by the Martin Ennals Foundation Board in 2019 which prioritized three new axes for the Foundation’s action. In a nutshell: 1) *be more visible and dynamic in Geneva*, 2) *communicate more and better*; and 3) *develop a value-proposition for former winners of the Award*. Building on the gains we've made in the pursuit of this strategy, Martin Ennals Foundation focused our efforts in 2022-2023 a few goals:

-  Improving attendance of local and international audiences to the Award Ceremony;
-  Convening the Martin Ennals Defenders’ Network to a Regional seminar on Latin America and the Caribbean;
-  Simplifying the ‘education project’ in Geneva public high-schools which aims to raise awareness about human rights defenders;
-  Striving for financial sustainability through the establishment of new donor relationships and the augmentation of existing sources of funding.

1. Award Cycle 2023

The 2023 Award Cycle was completed in record time! This was particularly challenging because the previous Ceremony 2022 was held in June 2022, and the Foundation hosted a seminar with former Laureates from the Middle East and North Africa in November 2022 alongside the Award cycle.

THE MARTIN ENNALS AWARD - A 6 MONTHS-LONG PROCESS



Nominations process

The nominations process began in June 2022 right after the Award Ceremony and lasted until July 31, 2022. The Foundation received 35 candidacies of human rights defenders from around the world. During the month of August, Jury members conducted research on the nominees' profiles and selected the top ten candidates. On September 15 2022, the Jury gathered to select the three 2023 Laureates.

Meet the Martin Ennals Award Laureates 2023

The common denominator between the 2023 Laureates, Feliciano Reyna (Venezuela), Delphine Djiraïbé (Chad), and Khurram Parvez (Kashmir), is their long-standing courage, passion, and determination to bring the voice of the voiceless to the international arena, despite the ongoing, sometimes life-threatening, challenges they endure.



Feliciano Reyna founded Acción Solidaria to provide medication and treatment to Venezuelans living with HIV & AIDS. He advocates for access to health for the marginalized LGBTQI population. He also founded CODEVIDA, a coalition of Venezuelan organizations promoting the rights of Venezuelan citizens to health and life. Since 2006, he has worked closely with UN mechanisms to defend human rights in his country.

In 2019 his advocacy was instrumental in establishing the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission in Venezuela.

Khurram Parvez: founded the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) and Chairs the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances. Under his leadership, the JKCCS has been highly effective in translating the protections guaranteed by international human rights law into local realities. Despite continued attacks on his right to freedom of expression by the Indian government, being jailed in 2016 and losing a leg to landmines, Khurram relentlessly spoke the truth and was an inspiration to civil society and the local population. In November 2021, he was arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) on politically motivated charges. He remains detained without trial in India.





Delphine Djiraïbé was one of the first female lawyers in Chad and a pioneer of the human rights movement in her country. She was a key figure in bringing the former dictator Hissène Habré to justice. She heads the NGO Public Interest Law Center (PILC), which accompanies citizens seeking justice for violations of their rights. In recent years, she has fought against gender-based violence and is in the process of establishing the first women's counselling centre in Chad, which will include an emergency shelter for women affected by domestic violence.

2. Protective Publicity

Today's world is flooded with information and news – and yet, Laureates of the MEA consistently confirm that more visibility locally and internationally does raise the costs of harming them for governments or non-state actors. Visibility can thus be 'protective'. Our protective publicity objectives in 2023 included:

1

Raising public awareness around the Martin Ennals Award, the collaboration with the City of Geneva, and the long-term impact of the Foundation

2

Enhancing the profiles and influence of the Laureates by casting a positive light on their achievements and highlighting why they were selected as MEA Laureates

3

Informing locally and internationally around the human rights situations in the Laureates' countries: Chad, India, and Venezuela

Over time, the protective publicity approach has evolved to combine traditional media work, such as press releases and conferences, with digital actions on the main social media platforms. Marketing for the Ceremony similarly combines both physical posters and flyers with an online campaign and livestream.

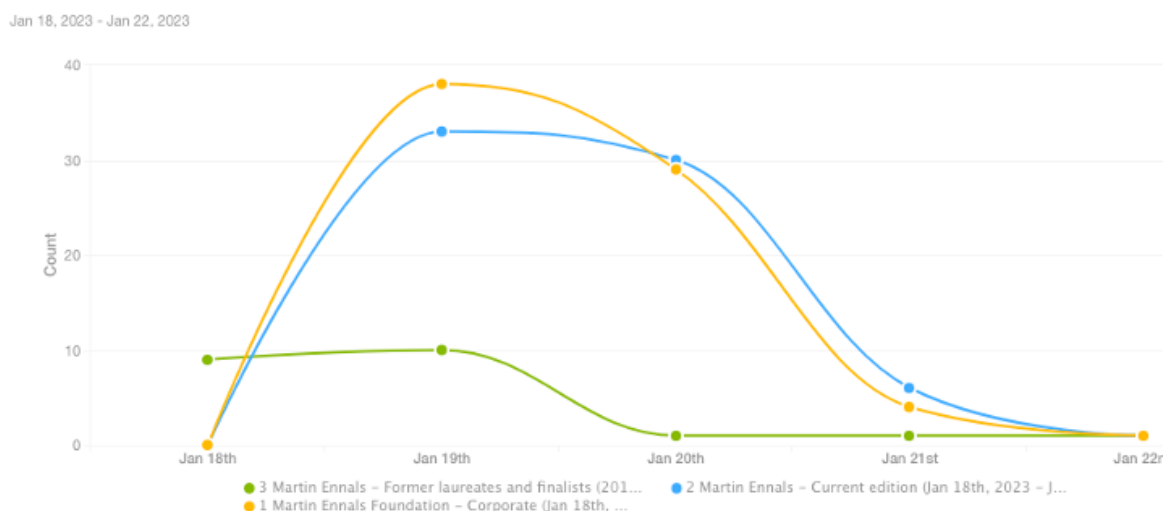
The names of the 2023 Laureates were revealed on January 19th, 2023, on the MEF website to the local and international media and through a press release/press kit to the MEF mailing list. The information was extensively posted on all social media platforms.



The announcement resulted in 228 media mentions, especially by the regional press of the Laureates' countries of origin. Visitors also reacted on all social media platforms, particularly on Twitter where a wide number of comments, exchanges, and resharing were observed. Social media campaigns, a local posters campaign, and a traditional press conference held in February kept the attention on the Laureates for a sustained period. By the month of August 2023, 1061 media mentions were registered on the Laureates 2023.

However in their anonymous survey, the Laureates rated the Award's media coverage only a 66 out of 100. The Foundation will follow-up to understand where expectations were not met; while also recognizing the challenge of capturing the press' and social media users' attention more generally.

MEDIA EXPOSURE FOLLOWING THE 19TH OF JANUARY 2023 PRESS RELEASE



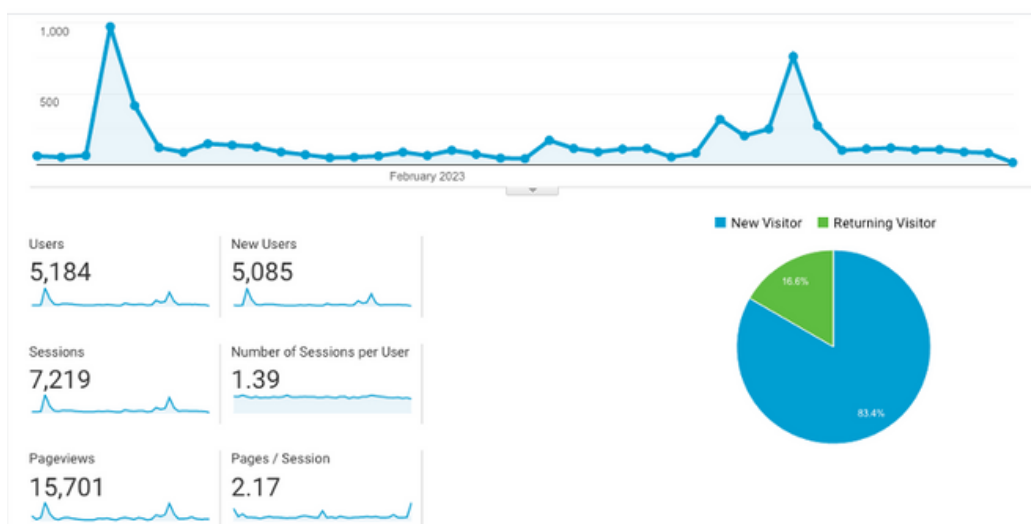
A decision was made to postpone the 2023 press conference from the day of the Announcement, as it had been done in previous years, to the arrival of the Laureates and their representatives, in order to allow the press to meet the Laureates at an in-person gathering. Local media coverage was, however, lukewarm, with only a handful of journalists attending the press conference and a smattering of articles published.

Website

Traffic to the website increased substantially in January and February 2023 (Laureates Announcement/Press Conference/Award Ceremony), attracting a significant number of new visitors (83.4%), and more specifically, those within the age group of 18-34. The highest number of visitors was registered on January 19th, 969 visitors, (Laureates Announcement) and February 16th, 760 visitors, (the Award Ceremony).

Not surprisingly, the countries from which the three MEA 2023 Laureates originate are among the top eight countries' website visitors. Considering news about Khurram Parvez was blocked in India, it is encouraging to observe that many website visitors came from India.

JANUARY 19TH, 2023: 969 WEBSITE VISITORS
FEBRUARY 16TH, 2023: 760 WEBSITE VISITORS



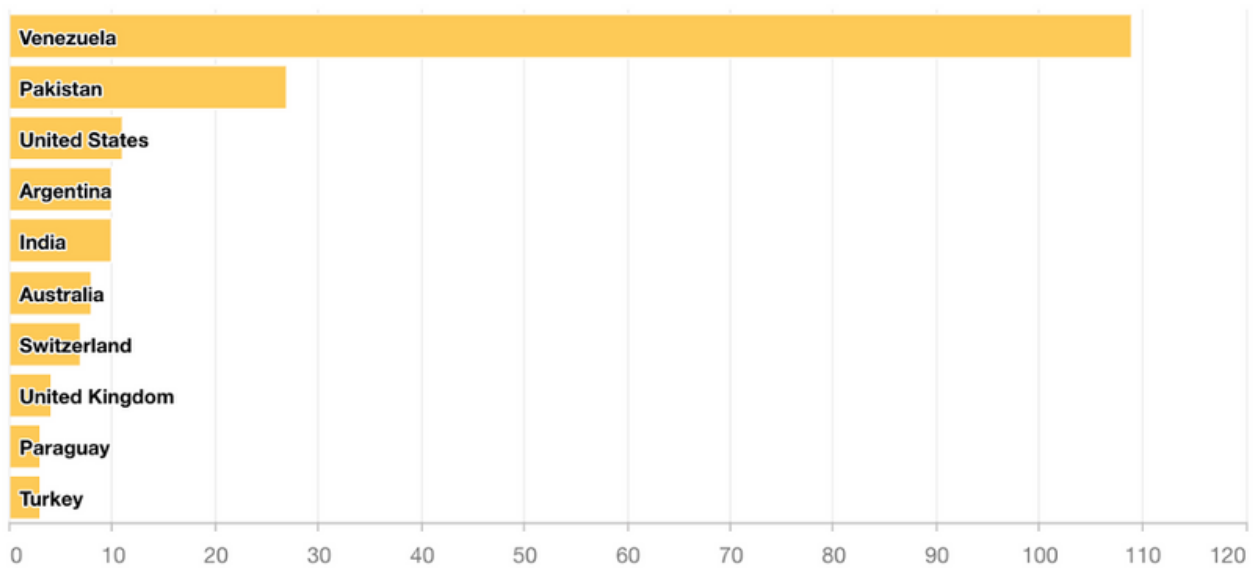
Press coverage

Interviews:

The Laureates were interviewed by several local/regional newspapers and international news agencies including le Courrier, Keystone, and Agence France Presse.



TOP LOCATIONS



EXAMPLES OF ARTICLES ON THE 2023 MEA LAUREATE ANNOUNCEMENT:

- **Africa News** - <https://fr.africanews.com/2023/02/16/tchad-la-population-vit-la-peur-dans-le-ventre-selon-une-activiste/>
- **Swissinfo** - https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/venezuela-d-humanos_feliciano-reyna--premiado-en-ginebra-por-30-a%C3%B1os-de-activismo-en-venezuela/48285360
- **Al Jazeera** - <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/19/jailed-kashmir-activist-khurram-parvez-among-winners-of-martin-ennals-award>
- **Léman Bleu** - “capsule “Focus” - <https://vimeo.com/lemanbleu/prixmartinennals-2023>
- **BBC World Service** – radio coverage of laureate announcement - 19/1/2023

Social media

Between December (Save the Date) and February (Award Ceremony) all social media platforms were regularly updated with text and visuals informing the public about the Award, the Laureates, and the event, to build awareness and enthusiasm, and encourage engagement from the public worldwide.

Social media was used to promote the Laureates’ activities as part of the Geneva Residency program. These included Feliciano Reyna’s participation at the University of Geneva (UNIGE) and Delphine Djiraïbé’s Geneva Graduate Institute (IHIED) event, our education project, and the UNHRC side-event organized by the Belgian Mission.

RESULTS FROM DECEMBER 15, 2022 TO APRIL 30, 2023:



Followers 2022	Followers 2023	ACCOUNTS REACHED 2022	Accounts reached 2023		Number of posts 2022	Number of posts 2023
2,346	2,582	46.1k	187,429		141	34
288	472	30,423	10,277		136	63
2,512	2,671	310,416	10,752		112	21
938	1,096	1,128	403		80	18

LESSONS LEARNED

Twitter is the platform that garners the highest engagement and visibility for our content. This might be because of the strong presence of the human rights movement on this platform. Martin Ennals Foundation has the most potential here to raise the Award's profile and the Laureates' visibility.

Instagram: the human rights movement is growing here, and despite having fewer followers, we are rapidly gaining traction (over 100+ new organic followers in the last two months). Feliciano Reyna's network in Venezuela was very active in sharing our content and we gained followers from this country.

Facebook: after a promising start in 2019, engagement with our content on Facebook has declined. The page settings do not allow us to boost content (which also affects our Instagram account). The human rights movement seems to be logging off from Facebook, however, it is still a useful platform from which to live stream the Ceremony.

LinkedIn: we have a considerably high number of followers (1k) compared to our Instagram account; however, LinkedIn is a less dynamic platform to share our advocacy content as its focus is squarely on professional opportunities.

Marketing campaign with the Ville de Geneve

Combining colorful billboards, videos on public transportation, spots in local magazines and television, the Ceremony marketing campaign, sponsored by the City of Geneva, is a signature of MEA's anchoring in the world 'capital of human rights'!

Content	Results
Flyer F4 format from 30.01.23 to 19.02.23	39
Flyer F12 format from 30.01.23 to 19.02.23	33
Poster F4 on the outside of TPG buses from February 1 to February 15, 2023	9
Printed flyers A5	800
3 min Léman Bleu capsule	broadcast 46 times between March 6-7; and again March 11-12
Posters in shopping centers from 06.02.23 to 19.02.23	58 between La Praille, Eaux Vives, Planète Charmilles, Les Cygnes, Balaxert
Coverage in "Vivre à Genève" magazine	100,000 distributed
Social media	Posts
Facebook	4
Twitter	4
Instagram	4

3. Award Ceremony

The Martin Ennals Award Ceremony was once again held in the Salle communale de Plainpalais in Geneva (in collaboration with our co-host, the City of Geneva) and was livestreamed in English and French by both partners. The Ceremony was very well attended by a full house of some 350+ enthusiastic guests.

Prestigious speakers included the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Turk; the Vice President of the City of Geneva, Mr. Alfonso Gomez; the President of the State Council, Mr. Mauro Poggia; the Chairman of the Geneva Bar Association, Mr. Miguel Oural; and the President of the International Federation for Human Rights, Ms. Alice Mogwe.

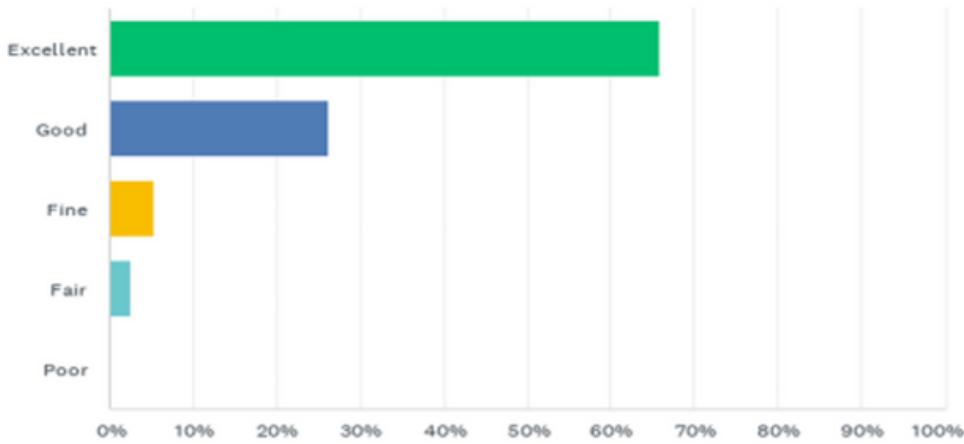
A follow-up survey of the audience showed a positive response to the event. A few respondents, however, did suggest the Ceremony was too long; that the speakers' remarks could be more succinct, that there were not enough women speakers, and that more time could have been given to the Laureates to express themselves.



MARTIN ENNALS AWARD CEREMONY SURVEY RESULTS

Q2: Overall, how would you rate the event?

Réponses obtenues : 38 Question(s) ignorée(s) : 0



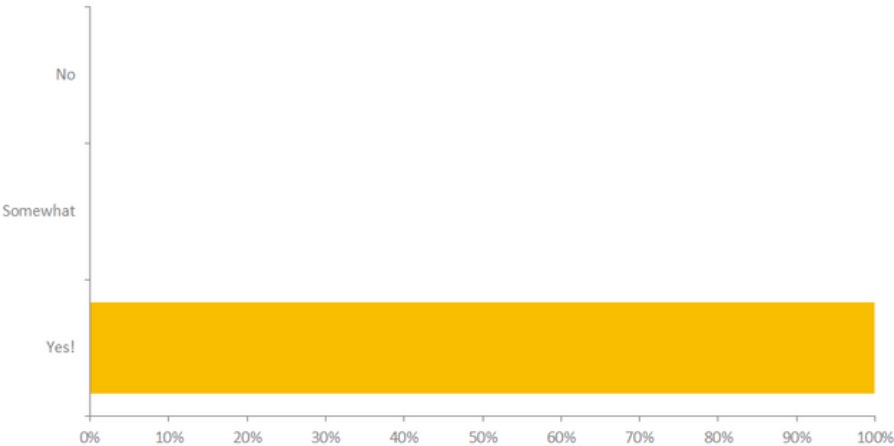
LESSONS LEARNED

Organising the Award Ceremony is a rewarding but challenging experience. One lesson learned for the Martin Ennals team is the importance of balancing the interests of all stakeholders. While it's essential to provide a platform for the Laureates to showcase their achievements, it's also crucial to consider the needs and expectations of the audience, donors, partners, and the press. As organizers, we should strive to keep speeches concise and allow even more time for the Laureates to express themselves. Finally, gathering feedback from the audience is helpful to improve future events and ensure overall satisfaction.

The Laureates 2023 rated the Ceremony 3.75 out of 4 stars and expressed their view that the event provides an important platform from which to transmit their messages.

Q2: Do you believe you were able to effectively communicate your message during the Ceremony?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



Livestream of the Ceremony

A key goal of the MEA's protective publicity strategy is to increase awareness about the Laureates' and the work they carry out in their respective countries. Livestreaming the Award Ceremony is one way to successfully extend the celebration of these human rights defenders to a global audience. The MEA2023 Award Ceremony was livestreamed on:

YouTube:

- Martin Ennals channel (ENG): 378 viewers, average 21 min view duration.
- Ville de Genève channel (FR): 599 viewers.

Facebook:

- Martin Ennals in ENG: 271 viewers.
- Ville de Genève in FR : 2648

FOUNDATION AWARD CEREMONY VIEWS BY COUNTRY ON YOUTUBE

Geography	Views		Watch time (hours) ↓		Average view duration
<input type="checkbox"/> Total	1,155		219.1		11:22
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Venezuela	223	19.3%	59.0	26.9%	15:52
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> United States	118	10.2%	23.2	10.6%	11:48
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> India	140	12.1%	18.7	8.5%	8:00
<input type="checkbox"/> Switzerland	86	7.4%	16.9	7.7%	11:45
<input type="checkbox"/> Canada	10	0.9%	6.5	3.0%	39:13
<input type="checkbox"/> Spain	35	3.0%	5.0	2.3%	8:29
<input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom	21	1.8%	4.9	2.2%	14:00
<input type="checkbox"/> Germany	12	1.0%	1.8	0.8%	8:57

We were pleased to note many viewers in Venezuela and India, likely supporters of Feliciano Reyna and Khurram Parvez, as well as numerous of viewers on the VdG french-speaking channel, most likely friends of Delphine.

Film portraits

One of the main highlights of the Award Ceremony is the screening of film portraits to share the Laureates' stories. The production company RAKE Films filmed original footage of Feliciano Reyna and Delphine Djiraïbé in Venezuela and Chad, respectively. They also adapted existing footage and audio of Khurram Parvez paired with images from his life and work. The three films tell their stories positively while highlighting their achievements and challenges.

Laureates employ their films as calling cards long after the Ceremony. Delphine was introduced by her film during events at the IHEID, in Geneva, and at the Werner Lotje Lecture 2023, in Berlin. Khurram's film is a regular fixture of the campaign for his release, most recently screened by the FIDH in Brussels during a meeting with European Parliamentarians.

Q4: How do you rate the film portrait about you commissioned by the Foundation?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



Powered by  SurveyMonkey

PREVIEW OF THE LAUREATES' FILM PORTRAITS FOR THE 2023 AWARD CEREMONY



4. Geneva Residency 2023

The Geneva Residency is a program of advocacy opportunities, capacity building, personal growth/well-being, and networking specifically crafted for each Laureate. In the process of getting to know the Laureates, MEF gathers their preferences, needs, and ambitions related to the four mentioned areas and submits to them a menu of options for training courses, public events, in-person meetings or medical/therapeutical support. It is important to highlight that whenever the Laureate is not able to benefit from the program personally (HRDs in detention, health conditions, or under travel ban, etc.) the Geneva Residency is offered to a family member or a fellow activist.

The Padlet illustrates some of the activities proposed to Delphine Djiraïbé in 2023 for her Geneva Residency program.

Several of these activities are also carried forward online after the return of the Laureates to their countries.



PADLET GENEVA RESIDENCY
DELPHINE DJIRAÏBÉ

GOALS OF THE GENEVA RESIDENCY FOR DELPHINE DJIRAÏBÉ

To raise awareness in Geneva and other European capitals about the nearly complete closing of civic space in Chad and to prompt the HRC to review the abuses of the regime in place, particularly the killings and forced disappearances during the 20 October 2022 demonstrations. Delphine's program included:

ACTIVITIES IN GENEVA

- Meeting with representatives of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs Peace and Security division and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Bern;
- Film screening during the conference: *“Justice interrupted: What the trial of Hissène Habré left unfinished in Chad”* moderated by Annyssa Bellal from the Geneva Peace Building Platform;



- Briefing with representatives of the Belgian, Irish, and the French missions, where Delphine stressed the importance of supporting a fact-finding mission to Chad to establish accountability for the incidents on 20 October 2022;
- Speaker at the HRC52 side event “Lawyer at your own risk”, organized by the Permanent Missions of Belgium, Costa Rica, and Togo;
- Meeting the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association, Clement Voulé;

ACTIVITIES IN BERLIN

- Film-screening and key-note address at the “Werner Lottje Lecture” hosted by the German National Human Rights Institute and Bread for the World.
- Guest speaker on the topic *“Contributing to gender justice with German feminist development policy and strengthening the rights of women and other marginalized groups from a gender perspective worldwide”* at the German Parliament. Organized by Fokus Sahel and International Advocacy Networks.
- Meeting with the special representative of Germany for the Sahel, and the country-officer for Chad at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FOLLOW-UP

- During her stay in Geneva, Delphine was trained by UPR Info on how to lead the development of a UPR report ahead of the 2023 exam of Chad. In collaboration with the OMCT and MEF, a report was drafted and submitted to the process. Delphine returned to Geneva in November to present the findings of the report during the civil society hearings for the Chad UPR exam.
- Delphine began an online consultancy with Isango (a Swiss network which specializes in capacity building for NGOs in the peace and development fields), to strengthen her organization, the Public Interest Law Center (PILC), and to find ways to ensure its sustainability through a transition in leadership. The experience led to concrete plans for succession and improvements in the descriptions of roles and objectives for PILC.
- A comprehensive security plan for Delphine was delivered in June 2023 through a consultancy with Open Briefing. MEF and Bread for the World will assist Delphine to find extra funding for implementation of the plan.

GOALS OF THE GENEVA RESIDENCY FOR KHURRAM PARVEZ - KASHMIR

Since the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in 2019, an ongoing crack down has led to the harassment and arrest of dozens of civil society leaders in Kashmir, as well as drastic limitations on access to information and freedom of association in the region.

For this reason, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances – AFAD- (chaired by Khurram), designated his campaign manager, Mohammed Ashafuzzaman, as his representative. A decision was made to limit his activities to the week around the Ceremony, in the hope that later in the year Khurram would be released and could benefit personally from these opportunities.

The Geneva Residency offered a platform to raise awareness of Kashmir's deteriorating civic space and the Indian government's repression of civil society, alongside applying pressure for Khurram's release from prison.



During meetings with the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs and at a briefing to the EU missions in February, the message conveyed by the Kashmiri representative underlined how the UAPA is leveraged as a tool to put defenders behind bars for long periods of time without charges.

Given India's Presidency of the G20 in 2023, it was hoped that human rights concerns could be raised by other members of the process or highlighted by the press, for example, during a G20 Tourism meeting in Jammu and Kashmir.

In May 2023, MEF together with the FIDH lobbied members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to emit an 'urgent appeal' regarding the case of Khurram. 10 CSOs signed on to the action and approximately 50 MEPs were contacted across the center and left parties. The vote was not successful in June; but a resolution on the violence occurring in Manipur passed in July -- a signal that the European Parliament may be ready to challenge India's human rights record.

Unfortunately, additional charges have been brought against Khurram in March 2023 through a new case filed by the Indian government against the JKCCS which accuses him of "funding terror activities in the valley and propagating secessionist agenda in the Valley under the garb of protection of human rights." His detention without trial was once again postponed at end of July.



GOALS OF THE GENEVA RESIDENCY FOR FELICIANO REYNA-VENEZUELA

As a seasoned human rights defender, Feliciano has an influential network of support at the international level. Therefore, he requested to limit the Geneva Residency to the week around the Ceremony and offered the opportunity for capacity building to a younger staff member of Action Solidaria in Venezuela, Natasha Saturno, whom he considers a potential future leader of the organization.

However, the critical humanitarian situation and the political momentum in Venezuela (given the visit of the High Commissioner Volker Turk in January 2023 and the recent attempt to pass a restrictive law which further closes civic space in Venezuela) required urgent actions. MEF developed the following opportunities for Feliciano and Natasha from February through September 2023:

- Closed briefing with the HRC core group on Venezuela (Paraguay, Brazil, Guatemala, and Chile, convened by the Canadian mission);
- Meeting with representatives of the Swiss Mission to the UN, the Deputy Regional Coordinator for South America of the Peace and Human Rights Division of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs Peace and Security division;
- Speaker at the informal briefing to the EU missions ahead of the HRC52;
- Meetings at UNAIDS, and with the staff of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Association

Succession planning: Feliciano is interested in the long-term sustainability of his organization, Accion Solidaria, which means new leaderships must be developed. Natasha Saturno's experience in Geneva was an opportunity for a younger and female representative to establish working relationships with Geneva human rights diplomacy. MEF engaged Leaders Today to coach Natasha during the remainder of 2023 as she prepares to assume succeed Feliciano.

BRIEFING STAFF OF THE SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF THE OHCHR

The briefing was convened by the office of the Special Rapporteur on HRDs and was joined by a staff of the regional desks of the Laureates' countries, the reprisals office, the women and gender division, the freedom of expression, freedom of association and right to health mandates. OHCHR staff targeted questions to the Laureates, allowing for a frank exchange on cooperation between the multilateral system and HRDs:

- What is the effectiveness of our work (OHCHR)? Are there obstacles for you to be in touch with us?
- Is the judiciary in fear and therefore unable to operate? Or is the system completely captured?
- What is the role of other states in maintaining the government in your countries despite human rights abuses? What message can OHCHR pass on to those states to create change?





Laureates are charismatic people, but not all of them are gifted speakers. Moreover, English is a second or third language for many of them, which complicates the task. Therefore, the three Laureates had the chance to work with a coach in public speaking so that they could make the most out of the important encounters during the Geneva Residency and beyond.

LESSONS LEARNED

Each year MEF organizes public events to raise awareness about the Laureates' causes during their stay in Geneva. However, after Covid restrictions were lifted, it has become increasingly difficult to gather large audiences for these events. We have also noticed that small events targeting the right audience can be very productive and strategically enlarge our Laureates' networks. Therefore, in the future, we will aim to organize events that attract around 20-30 attendees during the Geneva Residency.

The dimension of the well-being of the Geneva Residency has become increasingly relevant and we have learned to take a more comprehensive approach, including, for example, the arrangement of medical check-ups or support to handle stress and trauma while Laureates are in Switzerland.

5. What was our impact in 2022-2023?

Laureates were invited to share their views anonymously on what effect the Award may have had, what they enjoyed and would change about the experience. Here is a sampling of their remarks on 2023:

The Ceremony was overwhelming. The attendance was high, the sequences were well planned. Everything falls into place. the films was great and speakers were just terrific.

I loved the film! I was surprised by the very personal content of the film... and how it recognized the work of others in my organization and beyond...

My advocacy work gained even more recognition after receiving the MEA, it has been almost a "presentation card", which also has been used by others to introduce me, such as ambassadors, colleagues. I also really appreciated the possibility of sharing with a colleague the opportunity for the GVA Residency, which empowered and opened many more doors for her in her own advocacy work.

The Laureates also shared frustrations or concerns for the future, following the Award experience:

The attitude of the Government of India has been more hostile than before.

The OHCHR has not adopted any effective and visible plan of action as the High Commissioner for Human Rights promised.

I hoped to use all the opportunities I was exposed to in Geneva, to move lines for human right respect and good governance in Chad, but due to my busy schedule and the pressure of the daly life in Chad I was not able to, and this is my deepest regret

We heard how the Award may be having a positive impact already on different aspirations of the Laureates and their proxies:

Although dejectedly, Khurram seems to be struggling to reconcile with the fact that a chilling silence has accompanied his detention and that of repression against human rights work in Kashmir. The work that he has so meticulously, with great danger and at a personal cost, put together for over two decades now seems to be in a state of suspension and impairment. The MEA's attention and subsequent activities will be important to lift his spirit and send some positive energy and hope amidst the isolating nature of prison life. It will also be very important for his family and colleagues as they find global solidarity. In these times of repression, to see that your work is valued, acknowledged, and globally recognized means a great deal.

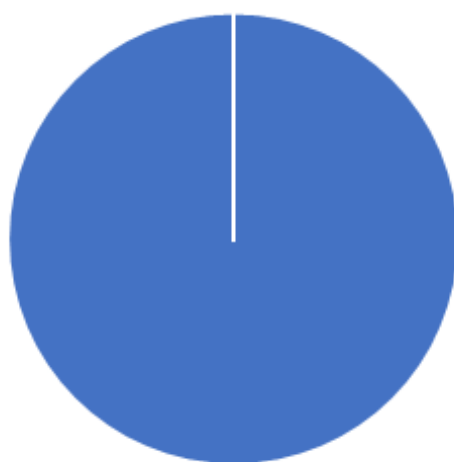
Through the Award, I gained more confidence in me and was able to mobilize colleagues for action, while situations becoming tense in Chad.

It was a relief to receive the prize money this week... I've been using personal funds to defend certain victims of the repression in Venezuela which are not internationally known, one of these is a young man who was left blind by shooting from anti-riot personnel. We secured his departure from the country together with his mother and sister, I am enhancing their resources while they request asylum and look for work. The prize money allows me to support these types of complicated but important situations.

How would you rate your personal motivation today to continue your engagement as a human rights defender?

I feel motivated given the scope of our work, as well as the sense of commitment that I get from staff, volunteers and colleagues. I believe I not only have the possibility to impact the lives of people in need, of victims, but also to contribute to effecting the needed changes that may lead to navigating through the political conflict in my country.

Laureates 2023 responses - Fully motivated (3)



Regularly I feel that my co-workers do not understand the importance of the work we do documenting human rights violations, and raising awareness of the current situation. Also, because the impact of our work is not something palpable (at least immediately), it is difficult to stay motivated, even knowing it is a process and takes time, dealing with frustration is part of my day at work.

The Martin Ennals Award gives me motivation to continue my work because it rises my profile and added a layer of protection I needed to do so.

Sometimes the MEF staff needs a little motivation too, so we were thrilled to receive the following feedback in 2023:

I would like to thank all the great work Martin Ennals Foundation is doing, trying to highlight the situation and context of daily lives of HRDs. Also I want to highlight the amazing professionals of the Martin Ennals team. Thank you very much for your empathy, humanity, quality of work, attention, support, accurate suggestions, ability for interpersonal relationships, networking, amongst other things that made this experience unforgettable.

6. Martin Ennals Defenders Network

While the Award provides a near-term burst of protection for HRDs, the Martin Ennals Defenders Network, which includes all former Laureates and the organizations they represent, aims to build up the human rights movement for the medium and long-term. By engaging in opportunities for self-care, skills building, and advocacy in exchange with their peers, HRDs hone their abilities and develop relationships which enrich their work and boost motivation.

BRIDGING THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL IN GENEVA

One of the Defenders' Network's most important objectives is to provide a permanent bridge for Laureates to reach international human rights diplomacy occurring in Geneva. In 2023, we assisted a handful of Laureates to connect with the relevant mechanisms of the capital of human rights. Overall, the concerned defenders expressed their sensation of being reconnected with Geneva and of having 'guides' to find their way to the relevant interlocutors.



LEVERAGING THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS PROCESS

One of the most effective tools to support the advocacy efforts of our Laureates is cooperation around the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Meeting advocates and HRDs during their stay in Geneva is a precious opportunity for diplomats to gather first-hand information on the situation locally and to strengthen the recommendations they will submit during the UPR reviews. In many cases, this collaboration ensures the protection of the HRDs upon return to their countries, while enhancing the Laureates' understanding of the priorities of allied countries.

Since 2021, MEF has assisted several former Laureates and Finalists of the Award to plug into ongoing preparations for Universal Periodic Reviews of their countries. In 2023 alone, we supported participation or drafted reports from civil society organizations on Burkina Faso, Chad, India, Turkmenistan, and China.

The process is extremely rich in terms of content and networking for the defenders participating. Its results, however, are varied. While in some cases, countries under exam participate in good faith, we have also observed reactions from Member States which fluctuate from diplomatic indifference to flagrant hypocrisy. Notwithstanding, the UPR remains one of the primary tools of human rights diplomacy at the international level.

ATTEMPTED VISIT OF MARYAM AL-KHAWAJA TO BAHRAIN



Maryam Al-Khawaja announced her intention to travel to Bahrain in October 2023, in order to visit her father, MEA Laureate Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja, in jail since 11 years.

A committee of supporters rapidly formed around Maryam, including interim Executive Director of Frontline Defenders, Olive Moore, and Secretary-General of Amnesty International, Agnes Caillamard, amongst others.

Behind the scenes, many organizations -- including MEF -- requested support from diplomatic missions so that Maryam could be received at the airport by friendly faces or that meetings with countries supportive of her father's release could be arranged on site.

The committee was ultimately not allowed to travel to Bahrain by the airline at port of departure. But the effort did yield very interesting results, particularly the tremendous media attention which exerted great pressure not only on Bahraini authorities, but also on the Danish and American governments. It became clear that most Western governments were not willing to anger their Bahraini counterparts by meeting or overtly supporting the committee traveling with Maryam.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HRDS DECLARATION - WASHINGTON DC

Martin Ennals Foundation joined forces with several leading NGOs including Amnesty International and ISHR to co-host an event on 17 October 2023 in Washington, DC celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Human Rights Defenders' Declaration. UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs Mary Lawlor was the guest of honor on this occasion, which also featured the sister of **MEA 2021 Loujain Al-Hathloul, Lina Al-Hathloul**, amongst the special guests.



Annus Horribilis

In the past year – which we have nicknamed the ‘annus horribilis’ – the reality that larger forces are at play on our defenders was very much brought home.

The system is under too much pressure

The Human Rights Council, Treaty Bodies, and special procedures are overwhelmed by demand. As a result of the need to maximize resources, **there is a tendency to prioritize emergencies**, which has the unintended consequence of deprioritizing other issues. **Our Laureates from Chad and Yemen**, whom we assisted in accessing the ongoing resolution process (Autumn HRC 2022) and Universal Periodic Review (December 2023) respectively did not feel that either process would deliver tangible progress in their countries, despite their efforts.



Polarization of the human rights discourse as “a Western” construct

More Member States question the universality of human rights and delegitimize the work of HRDs in the field by branding them as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘enemies’ of their country. **Our Laureate in Bangladesh, Adilur Rahman Khan**, who has for years documented abuses of human rights, was verbally attacked during a side event at the UN Palace in Geneva in November 2023. Participants in the audience accused him of being an agitator trying to tarnish Bangladesh’s image.



Realpolitik

Holding Member States accountable for non-compliance with human rights commitments is becoming more difficult, as economic interests take precedence over shared values. This lack of enforcement hampers civil society's efforts, as protests alone cannot compel action when Member States escape scrutiny for violations.

On April 13, 2023, **Yu Wensheng (MEA Laureate 2021)** and his wife Xu Yan were detained en route to the EU Representation in Beijing. Yu already spent 2019-2022 in prison for his human rights work. Now Yu and Xu face charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Their teenage son is under government surveillance, and concerns are growing for his well-being. While we mobilized EU parliamentarians and the EU External Action Service to protest, there are no results so far.



Reprisals against MEA Defenders in 2023

The right to leave a country

On November 18, 2023, Turkmen officials deliberately damaged the passports of **Soltan Achilova (MEA 2021)** and her daughter, stopping them from flying to Switzerland.

Soltan was invited to the University of Geneva's Human Rights Week and had scheduled meetings with UN agencies when this harassment occurred.

The incident took place only days after Turkmenistan's 4th UPR Exam, during which Turkmen officials affirmed their commitment to freedom of expression and their progress in the promotion of human rights.

We denounced this attack during a conference organized with Reporters Without Borders. An exhibition of Soltan's photos reminded all of her absence during the UNIGE Human Rights Week 2023.



The right to security and dignity of a person

On December 1, 2023, **Dr. Daouda Diallo (MEA Laureate 2022)** was abducted by security forces as he exited the passport office in Ouagadougou.

He was taken to an undisclosed location and forcibly enlisted in the military. His whereabouts are unknown and his family has no official information about his status.

His disappearance flagrantly violates Burkina Faso's 2017 law safeguarding HRDs, which explicitly forbids forced disappearances under Article 25.

The Foundation, the international community, and Geneva's Administrative Council called Burkina Faso's government to immediately release Daouda. Local civil society condemned the incident and urged accountability.



However... at the Martin Ennals Foundation, we believe that it is precisely in times of setbacks affecting the human rights movement that it is essential to preserve the collective intelligence and resources for its most committed defenders. Our determination has not wavered and together with our partners, we will continue to pursue accountability of Member States in the medium and long-term!

PEER-COACHING PROGRAM

Well-being is a key dimension of the work of human rights defenders but is typically a low-priority for MEA Laureates. Constant exposure to threats and harassment takes a toll on their physical and mental health. The Martin Ennals Foundation firmly believes that offering professional support and strengthening the relationships amongst Laureates will increase their resiliency and motivation to continue their work.

This is the third year that the Martin Ennals Foundation delivers its Peer-Coaching Program for 10 participants. 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 program, are often overshadowed by day-to-day routines and unforeseen but urgent tasks. We therefore take an approach of encouraging them against all odds and showing as much flexibility as possible towards their busy schedules.

The initial choice of the company Leaders Today to manage the Program remains relevant and adds value to the objective of strengthening the capacities and the well-being of the Martin Ennals Laureates. Their ability to offer professional coaching in different languages and the flexibility demonstrated to accommodate the participants' schedules is key to ensuring that both the individual mentoring as well as the exchange in groups respond to their expectations and needs.



We piloted some adjustments in 2022 and 2023 to improve the Program:

- The “mandatory” small peer coaching groups are no longer required, given the challenges in matching, timezones, attendance, etc. Instead, facilitated joint peer group meetings are proposed.
- The recruitment process were revisited, so that aspiring participants know in greater detail what is involved.
- The initial workshop sessions were shortened. The remaining content will be spread over the group-facilitated meetings.
- The online 2022 closing/2023 launch included a guest speaker, to increase the interest in joining the event. Atziri Avila, head of capacity building for the Americas at Front Line Defenders, shared highlights of the manual: “Self-care: Why HRDs wellbeing is political”.

SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE TO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR THE 2023 COHORT:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER	PARTICIPATION	COMMENTS
Launch meeting 2023 program	1	100%	All participants were present for the launch.
Workshops	2		Some of the workshops were conducted in two parts, with catch-up sessions for absentees at the first sitting.
Mentor coaching	4 Individual sessions	75% (average between language groups)	Meetings with LT coaches. Most meeting were conducted, but there were some delays in scheduling and a few last-minute cancellations and no-shows.
Peer coaching	8	60% estimated	Peer coaching is autonomously organized, private meetings between participants so we don't have all the details.
Facilitated peer-coaching	6	100%	The French and English groups required a few facilitated peer coaching meetings, because of some challenges to conducting these autonomously.
Mid-term meeting 2023 cohort	1	70%	Not everyone was able to attend the mid-term meeting.
Closing meeting 2022/Launch 2023	1	40% of the 2022 group and 90% of the 2023 cohort	Participation was consistent with the trend observed during the program in 2022, where around half of the group was highly involved. On the contrary, in the 2023 cohort (six new participants) all of them were present, except for one person.

Participants expressed positive feedback on the coaching sessions directly to their coaches or to MEF, and in the joint peer group meeting. The key benefits can be summarized as follows: a relation of trust with the coach, increased self-confidence, and putting into practice the learning from the workshops (self-coaching and coaching skills, and support to handle stressful situations.)

LESSONS LEARNED

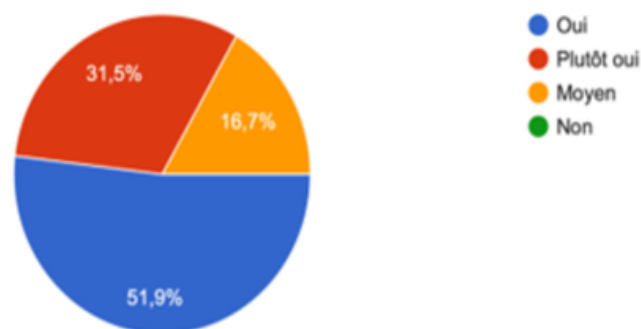
- The difficulty that many human rights defenders face in caring for themselves is rooted in stereotypes which are deeply entrenched in the human rights movement.
- Self-sacrifice, collective interest over individual priorities, and the difficulty to perceive human rights engagement as “work”, have implications when it comes to establishing boundaries and achieving balance between one’s personal life and professional commitment.
- The inconsistency of some HRDs with peer-coaching activities should not be interpreted as a lack of interest, but rather as the result of a lifestyle that has not prioritized well-being over urgent human rights work.
- Investment in the mental health of HRDs is a strategic way to counter a hostile environment for defenders in many parts of the world.

7. Human Rights Education project

Conducted in partnership with Amnesty International-Switzerland and True Heroes Films, the project has a double-fold aim: on the one hand to sensitize youth to the causes upheld by the MEA Laureates, and to expose them to the communications techniques essential for the human rights movement. With 12 classes participating in 2 schools, the project reached approximately 240 students ages 16-19 from January-March 2023.

Avez-vous aimé le projet dans son ensemble?

54 réponses



"I wanted to thank you and the entire project team for your invitation to join the annual Award Ceremony. The students I accompanied were very impressed and touched by the testimonies they experienced, as well as by the elegant audience present there."

- Teacher from CECG Andre Chavanne

Students were exposed to the trajectories of the Laureates 2023 and trained to produce a short video about the HRD of their choice. The students met with Delphine Djiraibé during her extended visit to Geneva.

The students' videos were projected on a screen and received technical feedback and reactions from Delphine Djiraibe, from True Heroes Films colleagues and the MEF's team. Many of the student groups centred their videos around the theme of gender-based violence. It also became evident that the topic with the least interest was the rights of people living with HIV, perhaps since this generation has not been exposed to the challenges that the virus unleashed in the 80s and 90s when Feliciano Reyna began his work as an HRD.

8. Governance and Organisational updates

Thanks to the Irish Mission to the UN in Geneva who graciously hosted us, a joint meeting took place between the Martin Ennals Award Jury members, the Board, and core donors of the Award on the eve of the February 2023 Ceremony. A frank conversation amongst these key stakeholders centered on the prospect of the Award thriving in Geneva given its financial difficulties and the scale of its donor base. Jury members reiterated the importance of maintaining the Award as a recognition to HRDs in the world human rights capital and as a vibrant example of civil society collaboration.

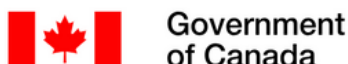
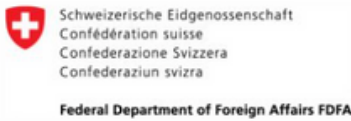
The MEF staff advanced a new Safeguarding policy with support and input from sister foundations and from the Norwegian Human Rights Fund. Developed as a policy tool to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of all individuals affected directly or indirectly by the activities of our Foundation organization and its employees, the draft was reviewed by the Board in October 2022 and should be finalized shortly. Research conducted by the staff was complemented by consultations with former winners of the Award to ensure a tailor-made approach which is suited to the small size of MEF, on the one hand and the global and diverse nature of the network of MEA winners.

After facing a deficit in 2022, the Board agreed that fundraising would necessarily be the focus of the staff and Board's efforts in 2023 and an agreement was reached to hire a fundraising consultant specialized in the human rights field. It was also agreed that new members with stronger profiles in fundraising should be recruited to the Board. No less than 12 new donors were approached in 2023 to complement existing funding. A welcome piece of news was the approval of grants by the Ford Foundation and the Commune de Carouge for activities in 2024.

At the time of writing, the financial perspectives of the Foundation are on track for a healthy conclusion in 2023. Notwithstanding, in 2024 and 2025 the Foundation may take steps to cost-share certain administrative functions with larger Jury member organizations based in Geneva. This would allow for economies of scale of certain functions and a greater focus of the MEA's resources on added-value activities. At time of writing, conversations are well advanced to experiment with a 'project hosting' arrangement at the ISHR in 2024. Financial and administrative matters, communication functions and fundraising for the MEA would be 'shared' with the ISHR on a fee-for-service basis.

Five existing members offered up their seats in 2023 – Ivana Mrdja, Dick Oosting, Nicola Duckworth, Patrick Chappatte and Bacre Ndiaye – and will be stepping down as soon as replacements are identified.

Thank you to all of our partners and donors in 2023!





MARTIN ENNALS AWARD
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