



**MARTIN ENNALS AWARD  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2024**

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The Martin Ennals Foundation  
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# The Martin Ennals Foundation: 30 years of a unique tool for the protection of human rights defenders

In 2024, the Martin Ennals Foundation (MEF) celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, its sixty and counting human rights champions and the unique collaboration through the Jury of ten leading organisations of the global human rights movement.

Against the global setback against human rights, our belief is that providing support and visibility to local human rights champions strengthens their ability to document human rights violations, promote change and build collective initiatives at the local, regional and international level, which can – ultimately – enable progress in the global human rights movement.

By operating from Geneva, Switzerland, and in close cooperation with the ten member organisations of the Jury of the Martin Ennals Award, we also provide a bridge from individual defenders in the field to the highest instances of international diplomacy and policy-making.

The Award was delivered for the first time in 1994 to recognize, promote and protect outstanding human rights defenders at risk or from under-reported contexts. It combines protective publicity strategies – which culminate every year in a public ceremony in Geneva co-hosted with the City of Geneva, with tailored advocacy and protection tools for the defender to be able to lead activities on the long term. Over the years, the Award has consistently recognized key figures of the human rights movement from about forty countries, offering them a platform to expose a broad range of issues that are of global concern and the connections to steer positively the movement for human rights and larger freedoms.

Further support is galvanized each year thanks to the attendance and participation of high-level UN officials in the Award ceremony, such as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Swiss authorities, representatives of Diplomatic Missions and other key actors of the international Geneva.

The role of the Martin Ennals Foundation is to manage the cycle of the Martin Ennals Award, liaise activities with the Jury and support the Award Laureates and Finalists. The network of human rights defenders associated with the Martin Ennals Award has also developed into an exceptionally promising ground to identify early signs of repressive trends and build collective initiatives for the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide.

The Award and the Foundation were established to honor the memory and legacy of British human rights activist and pioneer of the human rights defence movement, Martin Ennals. He served as Secretary-General of Amnesty International between 1968 and 1980, and was instrumental in establishing many human rights organisations, including ARTICLE 19, International Alert and HURIDOCs.

THE MARTIN ENNALS AWARD



# 30 years defending human rights Together

# The Jury of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders

The Jury is composed of: Amnesty International, Brot für die Welt, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, HURIDOCs, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the International Service for Human Rights and the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT).



**Brot**  
für die Welt

**Human  
Rights  
First**



**OMCT**  
SOS-Torture Network

 **International Service  
for Human Rights**

**f FRONT LINE  
DEFENDERS**

 **huridocs**

**fidh**

The Award draws its legitimacy and prestige from its Jury, which represents a unique collaboration among ten of the world's leading human rights organisations. The profiles of future Laureates go through a thorough review process with guiding criteria such as the need for support, the risks faced by the defender, as well as the need for increased media coverage of the context. Thereby, the Award seeks to highlight not only the defenders who are most deserving of support, but also those who need it most.



The 30th anniversary of the Martin Ennals Award in 2024 was also the opportunity to gather the ten organisations of the Jury for a **public discussion on the challenges faced by human rights defenders today**. This new format enabled representatives on the Jury to provide a vivid picture of the struggles of human rights defenders, ranging from personal safety concerns, both online and offline, to chronic underfunding, effectiveness of advocacy strategies, and emerging issues such as climate change. The conversation was skilfully moderated by young activist Cynthia Houniuihi, Laureate of the 2024 Young Activists Summit.

Hans Thoolen, co-Founder of the Martin Ennals Award, describes it best:

*“The Award’s Jury structure was a revolutionary concept for the time. The MEA was the first international Award whose Jury is composed solely of international human rights organizations unaffiliated with either a state or a private institution. The model encompassed by MEA represents a unique form of cooperation between leading human rights organizations that allows the Jury organizations to pool their support for those whose work is instrumental in making the world a fairer and more humane place. The notion behind the Jury is that Human Rights Defenders gain credibility and visibility through the recognition of a prestigious group of leading human rights organizations.” Hans Thoolen, co-founder of the Martin Ennals Award.*”

# Board and operational team

The 2024 activities were successfully implemented with a new operational team and new Board members.

The composition of the Board changed in 2024, maintaining Mr. Philippe Currat (President), Mr. Rolf Künzler (Treasurer) and previous Martin Ennals Award (MEA) Laureates Ms. Alejandra Ancheita and Mr. Arnold Tsunga. Newly arrived members were Ms. Dorothee Baumann-Pauly (Director of the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights at the University of Geneva, and Director of Research, NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights); Mr. Blaise Matthey (Vice-President of the International Organisation of Employers, former Director of the FER Genève), Ms. Romaine Jean (well established Swiss journalist, former President of the Fondation Hironnelle, and Mr. Abdul Aziz Muhamat (2019 MEA Laureate). Mr. Taimoor Aliassi (Executive Director and President of the Impact Iran Coalition) also joined the Board in November 2024 as Secretary.

The change of Board members provided for key access to new competences and guidance for the activities and strategy of the Foundation. With a greater number of its members being based in Switzerland, the Board is expected to improve its synergies, and ensure greater outreach capacity in terms of fundraising and communication.

The two-person operational team also changed with the arrivals of the new Director Ms. Manon Karatas in April 2024, and the new Programme Officer, Maximilian Gassmann, in June 2024. Ms. Karatas is specialized in supporting human rights defenders and developing advocacy strategies, which are key competences to furthering the work of the Foundation. Mr. Gassmann has experience in facilitating and supporting both State delegations and civil society organisations in their activities relating to International Geneva.

# Priority 1: Improving the legitimacy of Human Rights Defenders

Human Rights Defenders continue to be exposed to extreme personal risks, various forms of harassment and attacks for exercising their legitimate activities for the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. The shifting geopolitical landscape in 2024—particularly the rise of restrictive policies in countries that had historically supported human rights movements—has directly weakened the level of protection for those on the front lines. The outcome of the U.S. election and following cuts to international solidarity funding, in particular, have begun to severely impact the human rights sector, which is already among the most underfunded. As a result, Human Rights Defenders recognized by the Martin Ennals Award are now facing greater obstacles in their work — whether in documentation, advocacy, accountability, litigation, or simply in exercising their freedom of expression and movement.

In response, the primary objective of the Foundation is to improve the visibility and legitimacy of human rights defenders who deserve recognition for their outstanding work and contributions worldwide. Thanks to its ability to gather numerous actors of the international human rights movement, the organisation of the Martin Ennals Award plays a critical role in legitimizing, protecting, and supporting those who defend human rights despite extreme personal risk. For longer-term effect, our action model is to complete these efforts by a holistic protection approach that takes into account the defender's socio-economic situation, mental health, and specific needs in order to sustainably support their human rights work.

The strategic location of the Foundation and the Award in the world's capital of human rights – Geneva – also facilitate the establishment of connections for defenders before UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, and with Diplomatic Missions.

# Meet the Martin Ennals Award Laureates 2024

In 2024, the Martin Ennals Award recognized two human rights defender who have made the protection of human rights in Afghanistan (Zholia Parsi) and Tajikistan (Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov) their life mission. Their nomination was the result of a selection process by the Jury of the Martin Ennals Award supported by the Foundation, which took place between January and May 2024. A large number of human rights organizations and networks from around the world were first mobilized to submit nominations, which were received and recorded by the Foundation. Each Jury organization then conducted its own internal process to assess the quality of the candidates and the information provided about them in order to establish an initial list of ten nominees. Finally, joint deliberations were held to select the two 2024 Laureates.

**ZHOLIA PARSI** was a teacher in Kabul, Afghanistan. After losing her career and seeing her daughters deprived of education following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, she founded the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women (SMAW) to protest the return of policies and practices that violate women's rights and fundamental freedoms. She demonstrated remarkable leadership and resilience by organizing numerous public protests despite the risks involved. The grassroots movement SMAW quickly gained momentum in Kabul and other provinces. It now has 180 members and has mobilized communities to resist the Taliban's policies and practices. She was arrested on the street by armed Taliban in September 2023 and detained along with her son. She was released after three months of torture and ill-treatment, which only strengthened her determination to resist the Taliban's oppression and repression.



**MANUCHEHR KHOLIQNAZAOV** is a Pamiri human rights lawyer from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), in Tajikistan. He is serving a 16-year prison sentence after what is widely considered an unfair trial in retaliation for his human rights work. As Director of the Lawyers' Association of Pamir (LAP), he led strategic advocacy efforts in the GBAO—a region marked by the presence of an ethnic minority and historical tensions with the central government—including by pressing for the incorporation of international human rights standards into national law and practice, and by providing legal support to residents of the GBAO



Through the human rights initiatives Commission 44 and Group 6, he played a key role in investigating the death of youth leader Gulbiddin Ziyobekov in November 2021 and the violent crackdown on the ensuing mass protest in the regional capital, Khorog. The investigation gathered critical evidence of the young man's unlawful killing, possibly an extrajudicial execution, and of the illegal use of force by security forces against demonstrators, which left two dead, seventeen injured, and hundreds arrested. He was arrested on May 28, 2022, along with two other members of Commission 44, as part of a broader crackdown on informal local leaders and GBAO residents.

To mark the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Jury and the Foundation also sought to recognise the most outstanding candidates shortlisted by the Jury who did not receive the Award. The Foundation conducted video interviews with six of the ten shortlisted candidates and raised their profiles around an event held on 13 November 2024 as part of the University of Geneva Human Rights Week. The shortlisted candidates for the 2024 Martin Ennals Award are:

- **Anastasia Loika (Belarus):** A Belarusian human rights lawyer and activist, she has been instrumental in defending political prisoners and advocating for civil liberties in Belarus.
- **Armél Niyongere (Burundi):** A Burundian lawyer and human rights defender, he has been at the forefront of efforts to bring justice and accountability for human rights violations in Burundi.

- **Dilrabo Samadova (Tajikistan):** A young Tajik human rights advocate, she focuses on promoting democratic values and youth engagement in Tajikistan's civic life.
- **Panayote Dimitras (Greece):** A Greek human rights activist, he has dedicated his work to combating racism and defending the rights of migrants and minorities in Greece.
- **Jamal Abdallah Khamis Ishaq (Sudan):** A Sudanese human rights defender, he has faced significant risks while documenting abuses and advocating for human rights in Sudan.
- **Kenia Inés Hernández Montalván (Mexico):** A Mexican indigenous rights activist, she has been actively opposing megaprojects that threaten indigenous lands and communities.
- **Khaled Quzmar (Palestine):** A Palestinian lawyer specializing in children's rights, he has worked extensively to protect Palestinian children affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **Sami Huraini (Palestine):** A Palestinian activist, he has been involved in non-violent resistance against land confiscation and settlement expansion in the West Bank.
- **Wesa Matiullah (Afghanistan):** An Afghan education activist, he has been committed to providing education to children, especially girls, in regions affected by conflict.
- **Zara Mohammadi (Iran):** An Iranian Kurdish language teacher and cultural rights activist, she has been advocating for the rights of Kurdish communities in Iran.

## The Award ceremony and protective publicity

This 30th edition, held on 21 November 2024, was co-organized with the City of Geneva at the Salle communale de Plainpalais and broadcast in French and English on the Foundation's YouTube channel. High-level speakers enhanced the prestige of the event, including Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; Ms. Christina Kitsos, Administrative Councillor and Mayor of Geneva; and Mr. Alfonso Gomez, Administrative Councillor. Mr. Hans Thoolen, President of the Martin Ennals Award Jury and co-founder of the Foundation, delivered the closing remarks.

The Foundation commissioned film portraits of each Laureates and their struggles which were streamed during the ceremony to provide a more vivid the experience of the life defenders and to enhance online content on the Laureates. The film portrait of Zholia Parsi highlighted the reasons behind her attachment to women's rights, the protests and movement she led against the Taliban takeover and the remaining impact of torture after she was detained. The film portrait of Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov showcased staged written testimonials and videos of people who could depict, without fear of reprisals, his commitment for human rights, his achievements and the type of work he did and call for his release out of arbitrary detention.

Unable to attend in person, Zholia Parsi was enabled to address the audience via video instead during the ceremony. The evening was also kept dynamic by engaging in a short discussion with Zamila Yunus, Director of the organization Omed in Afghanistan, who delivered a powerful testimony on the institutionalization of discrimination against women in the country. Due to the high risk of reprisals against members of the Pamiri minority, Gerald Staberock, Secretary General of the World Organisation Against Torture and member of the Jury, was invited to expose the conditions of the arbitrary detention of Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov and the closing of civic space in Tajikistan.

The ceremony also opened on a short film anniversary retracing the stories and struggles of Laureates across the 30 years of existence of the Martin Ennals Award, and the still-relevant issues raised by their testimonies.

The cocktail reception, offered by the City of Geneva following the ceremony, provided a valuable moment for the Geneva public, speakers, and Jury members to express their support for the 2024 Laureates.

The results of the attractivity of the Award ceremony and the effectiveness of the advertising strategy – which combined personal invitations, invitations via newsletter, a poster campaign in collaboration with the City of Geneva, and an advertising campaign on social media and in Geneva public transport – demonstrated themselves with a room filled at its full 500 seats capacity and about 300 people following the livestream online on November 21, 2024.

Media-wise, the press conference and press kit resulted in over 70 publications from international, regional and local media outlets who covered the 2024 Martin Ennals Award and its Laureates. It included: BBC News, Deutsche Welle, Radio France Internationale, La Tribune de Genève, Swissinfo and Yahoo! News.

Following the announcement, the Afghan Laureate was contacted by numerous local media outlets for interviews. Soltan Achilova, a finalist for the 2021 Prize, who was also invited to the ceremony but was prevented from travelling, also received media coverage, notably in an article by Reuters. The advertorial commissioned from Léman Bleu to cover the ceremony further helped to inform the Geneva public about the 30th anniversary of the Martin Ennals Award on television.

## Engaging the diplomatic sphere

A reception with the Diplomatic Club was organised just before the Award ceremony on November 21, 2024. It brought together around twenty representatives on the first floor of the Salle communale de Plainpalais in Geneva. The event was an opportunity to raise the situation of the Laureates in front of high-level representatives. Mr Nasir Andisha, Afghanistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, was also invited to deliver a speech which raised the increasing discriminations against women, the difficulty for human rights defenders to operate in the country and the lack of accountability avenues for human rights violations. This event also secured the attendance of Diplomatic Missions at the Award ceremony, as participants were subsequently directed to the front rows, which participated in demonstrating solidarity with Martin Ennals Award Laureates.

## Engaging the youth - human rights education in Geneva high schools

Another tool used by the Foundation to raise public awareness is a partnership with Amnesty International Switzerland and True Heroes Films to run a human rights education programme in Geneva schools. In 2024, this programme benefited seven classes from the André-Chavanne and Madame de Staël secondary schools between September and November 2024, involving around 140 students aged 16 to 19. It consisted of four stages for each class: 1) a workshop entitled 'Discovering human rights' (Amnesty International); 2) a workshop on 'Communication for Human Rights' (True Heroes Films); 3) participation in the Martin Ennals Award ceremony; and 4) a meeting with human rights defenders.

The students were introduced to the stories of Zholia Parsi and Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov and trained to produce a short video on human rights defenders and a topic of their choice. The 12 films made by the students were screened and received technical feedback and reactions from colleagues at True Heroes Films, as well as from Abdul Aziz Muhamat (winner of the 2019 Martin Ennals Award) and the director of the Foundation, who led the meetings in stage 4 with the students in the absence of the 2024 Laureates. Many groups of students focused their videos on the theme of gender-based violence and discrimination, with Zholia Parsi's profile resonating more than that of Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov.

Between 80 and 100 students participated in the ceremony on 21 November 2024, with more than 90% of the students participating in the programme saying they enjoyed it.

## Engaging the universities and their students

An [event](#) was held as part of the UNIGE Human Rights Week on 13 November 2024, on the cross-cutting issue of Human Rights Defenders in migration contexts, and with the aim of highlighting the candidates shortlisted by the Martin Ennals Award Jury in 2024. Six video testimonies were shared.

Maya Hertig, Professor of Public Law and Human Rights Protection at UNIGE, and Abdul Aziz Muhamat, who received the 2019 Martin Ennals Award due to his work on these issues, commented on the testimonies, provided insightful analysis of the detention of migrants and made recommendations in light of these illustrations of migration for people on the move, displaced or in exile around the world, and the specificities that apply to human rights defenders.

The event engaged around 50 university students and academics on the cross-cutting issue of human rights defenders in migration situations. The format was particularly appreciated by the University of Geneva, which expressed a desire to continue collaborating with the MEF in such manner.

# Priority 2: Improving individual capacities and collective support for Human Rights Defenders

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Martin Ennals Award was the occasion to take stock on the rich network of around 60 defenders associated with the Martin Ennals Award. The Foundation assess that the diversity of the profiles of MEA Laureates requires different approaches to participate in the protection of the most vulnerable while developing individual and collective initiatives to support the objectives and reinforce the capacities of those who can operate in their environment.

The Foundation seeks to bridge this unique network of human rights defenders among itself and with international human rights organisations and actors, in order to improve the identification of repressive patterns, of counter-strategies to better protect defenders and human rights, and of solidarity initiatives among stakeholders.

## Advocating for the most vulnerable defenders

### ***Heavy constraints and surveillance of Soltan Achilova***

The prior concerns raised by the Foundation concerning the acts of reprisals against Soltan Achilova in 2023 was taken up in the Secretary General's report on Cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights ([A/HRC/57/60](#)), published in September 2024 at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council. The report further built on the communication made by mandates of the UN Special Procedures (AL TKM 1/2023).

The Foundation continued to report on the repeated acts of harassment against Soltan Achilova with a [statement issued on August 19, 2024](#), calling on local authorities to respect their international human rights obligations and create an environment conducive to independent press and media.

In response to this repeated harassment of 2021 Martin Ennals Award Finalist Soltan Achilova, the Foundation has been working since 2023 to offer her a rest and health assistance program, during which her 2021 Martin Ennals Award would also be formally presented. In 2024, based on known risks and in agreement with her, the Foundation decided to invite her to the 2024 Martin Ennals Award Ceremony and facilitate meetings with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and various Special Procedures mandates.

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On November 19, 2024 – the day she was due to depart Turkmenistan – Soltan Achilova was prevented again from traveling when she was forcibly seized by the authorities at her home on the day of departure and forcibly hospitalized. The previous assurances given to diplomatic representatives that she would be allowed to leave the country were not kept.

The Foundation worked closely with the Jury organizations to publicly denounce the arrest of Soltan Achilova and her relatives in a [joint statement on November 20, 2024](#), and to quickly convey the information to Diplomatic Missions and actors at the European level. This broad and rapid mobilization led to the release of Soltan Achilova and her relatives the following week.

The Foundation continues to work with Soltan Achilova and the Jury to support her in the dire situation she continues to face.

### ***Release of Daouda Diallo***

Following the abduction in December 2023 of Daouda Diallo (2022 MEA Laureate) and his forced enrolment in the military as a means to silence him and expose him to frontline risk, the Foundation mobilized key State and UN actors to advocate for his urgent release. Consequently, high-level representative of Burkina Faso requested a meeting with the Foundation to discuss the situation, during which it was announced then that he would be released on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The date coincided with a court decision which clarified that his enrolment was unlawful.

Daouda Diallo was released on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 as a result of this mobilisation. His release, in line with a court order was unprecedented, and participated in reinforcing the legal precedent for similar cases.

The Foundation rejoiced at his release but remains concerned over continued threats, which question the safety of Daouda Diallo.

### ***Call for release and visibility of detained human rights defenders***

#### ***Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov***

The Foundation communicated bilaterally with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures mandates and various diplomatic representations to raise awareness on the arbitrary detention of Manuchehr Kholiqnazarov and call for his release. Two actors took up the issue and indicated that they had raised Mr. Kholiqnazarov's detention with local authorities. His continued detention requires further efforts.

#### ***Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja***

The Foundation participated in increasing awareness on the detention of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and defenders arbitrarily detained in Bahrain by participating in bilateral initiatives and as panelist in a [side event](#) of the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council on September 12, 2024.

#### ***Yu Wensheng***

The Foundation also [participated](#) in giving visibility to a joint campaign for 2021 Martin Ennals Award Laureate Yu Wensheng, around 13 April 2024 which marked the first anniversary of his detention and that of his wife.

#### ***Cao Shunli***

The Foundation paid tribute on 14 March 2024 to Chinese human rights defender Cao Shunli on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of her death, following arbitrary detention and denial of adequate medical treatment in prison.

The Foundation also supported the inclusion of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Pham Doan Trang, and Khurram Parvez in ISHR's 2024 [#endreprisals](#) campaign.

# Building defenders' individual capacities

## ***Rights of defenders in situation of migration with Abdul Aziz Muhamat***

As a result of the identified need of Abdul Aziz Muhamat, 2019 Martin Ennals Award Laureate, for building documentation and advocacy capacities in the area of protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, including for defenders on the move, displaced or in exile, the Foundation provided financial support for a joint programme with the Global Detention Project (GDP), with a view to support further in the future the network of defenders related to the Martin Ennals Award.<sup>1</sup>

Through this programme limited in time between August and December 2024, Abdul Aziz Muhamat worked for the first time with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and was trained by the Global Detention Project to support the documentation and advocacy of various defenders as part of its detention monitoring program.

In particular, Abdul Aziz Muhamat worked with Ethiopian defenders to document and verify information for the submission of a report on children in migration in Ethiopia for the 99th meeting of the CRC's Pre-Sessional Working Group. He also organized their participation in CRC meetings between September 16 and 20 and was supported in developing an advocacy strategy in coordination with several organizations specializing in the field, including Child Rights Connect.

He was able to strengthen his capacities by also being supervised for the documentation and analysis of the needs of Saudi defenders and representing them during Saudi Arabia's review before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on October 9, and before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on October 25, 2024.

Abdul Aziz Muhamat also demonstrated the positive results of this experience by providing an insightful analysis of the detention of migrant defenders around the world when he participated as a panelist at an event on November 13, 2024, organized by the Foundation as part of UNIGE's Human Rights Week.

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. Abdul Aziz Muhamat was not part of any of the discussions at the operational or Board level that led to the documentation and advocacy programme, which were held between the Global Detention Project and the MEF. The programme was pre-approved by Philippe Currat, President of the Council of foundation of the MEF until 21 March 2025, and approved by the Council of foundation as a whole in its 11 October 2024 meeting. Subsequently, Abdul Aziz Muhamat became President ad interim on 21 March 2025, until the recruitment of a new President is completed.

This experience must feed the sharing of good practices for defenders related to the Martin Ennals Awards who encounter obstacles to their freedom of movement, as is the case for the 2024 Laureate Zholia Parsi.

### ***Digital security training with Zholia Parsi***

The Foundation organised a digital security training to enable Zholia Parsi to safely participate in the press conference and Award ceremony online, and more generally, to strengthen the security of her digital activities.

## **Identifying common synergies and building collective initiatives**

Originally initiated to create and strengthen dynamics within the existing network of the Martin Ennals Award, the regional meetings of defenders associated with the Award have also proven to be an efficient way to build the capacities and resilience of Martin Ennals Laureates and Finalists. Connecting together the defenders of the same region or around a thematic has the added value of helping defenders learn from each other by sharing good practice and by identifying common synergies and possible collaboration. The connections created also participate in combatting the isolation many feel in their respective fields.

### ***Regional seminar of Latin America defenders***

In April 2024, the Foundation gathered 10 Martin Ennals Award Laureates and Finalists from Latin America for a one-week seminar in Colombia. As a consistent practice for those that could not attend, some of them were represented by colleagues active in the organisations they have founded who, in most cases, share with the Laureates the leadership of the organisations.

The 10 outstanding human rights defenders were able to meet and exchange with over 30 local civil society actors during a dedicated session, and to meet with 9 State representations. The seminar culminated in a joint declaration which exposed impunity, the criminalization of human rights defenders and the lack of financial resources as threats to their safety and sustainability.

The seminar was highly valued by participants as it participated in strengthening the connections and relationships between human rights defenders of the same region, including by developing new contacts; the sharing of good practice and acquisition of new knowledge and models on human rights practice in the field; as well as the identification of common thematic for future collaboration, notably challenges regarding migration through Central America and their impact on rural

and indigenous communities, and human rights violations related to national and transnational corporations' pressure on local communities to sell their ancestral land.

The regional seminar further encouraged the Foundation in identifying common thematics for cross-regional exchanges to better support the defenders associated with the Award

## Acknowledgements

The Martin Ennals Foundation extends its heartfelt gratitude to its donors, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in advancing our mission throughout 2024. Thanks to the generous contributions of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the City and Canton of Geneva, the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Brot für die Welt, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Ford Foundation and a private Swiss foundation, we have continued to honour and support Human Rights Defenders worldwide. Their commitment ensures that Human Rights Defenders receive the recognition, protection, and resources they need to continue their vital work.

We also express our deepest appreciation to the distinguished members of our Jury, representing ten of the world's leading human rights organisations: Amnesty International, Brot für die Welt, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, HURIDOCS, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the International Service for Human Rights and the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT). Their unwavering commitment and expertise are pivotal in selecting and recognising courageous Human Rights Defenders, ensuring that their vital work receives the global attention and support it deserves.

Finally, the Martin Ennals Foundation extends its sincere gratitude to our technical partners— Chalk and Blue Gum Sàrl, Global Audiovisuel SA, Octoprod, So2 Design, True Heroes Films, and The Montbrillant—for their invaluable support throughout 2024. True Heroes Films' moving film portraits, Octoprod's expertise in production, Chalk and Blue Gum Sàrl's excellent translation services, So2 Design's creative design solutions, Hôtel Montbrillant's exceptional hospitality, and Global Audiovisuel SA's advanced audiovisual services have been instrumental in enhancing our events and initiatives.



**MARTIN ENNALS AWARD**  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

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