

Chadian woman lawyer receives highest award of human rights movement for international criminal justice work

Today, Jacqueline Moudeina, the lawyer for the victims of the former dictator of Chad, Hissene Habre, receives the 2002 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders. She took enormous risks by filing complaints in Chad against a number of Habre's accomplices, many of whom are still in positions of power. She also is one of the lawyers in the case against Habre himself in Senegal, where he lives in exile. As one of the few women lawyers in Chad, Jacqueline Moudeina gives much of her time to the local NGO, ATPDH. On 11 June 2001, when she took part in a peaceful sit-in to protest against the fraudulent elections, a security squad, led by one of the men she is suing, threw a grenade at her. Jacqueline Moudeina had to go to Paris for treatment.

The award will be handed to her today, 11 April 2002 at 17.30, by the Senegalese singer Cheikh Lo, himself a human rights activist. The ceremony takes place in studio 4 of the Télévision Suisse Romande in Geneva in the framework of the Festival Media North-South.

This 11th of April also marks the much-awaited entry into force of the International Criminal Court. The Jury of the Martin Ennals Award is proud to honour today an activist who symbolises the fight against impunity. The members of the Jury are: Amnesty International, Defence for Children, German Diakona, Human Rights Watch, HURIDOCs, International Alert, International Commission of Jurists, International Federation for Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights and World Organisation Against Torture.

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) is a unique collaboration among ten of the world's leading non-governmental human rights organizations. The MEA, created in 1993, carries a money component of 20.000 CHF. It is granted annually to an individual or an organization who has displayed exceptional courage in combating human rights violations. The previous 8 recipients of the MEA are: Peace Brigades International (2001), Immaculée Birhaheka, DRC; Natasa Kandic, Yugoslavia; Eyad El Sarraj, Palestine; Samuel Ruiz Garcia, Mexico; Clement Nwankwo, Nigeria; Asma Jahangir, Pakistan; Harry Wu, China (1994).

Background

Martin Ennals (1927-1991) was instrumental to the modern human rights movement seeking cooperation and solidarity among NGOs. A fiercely devoted activist, he was the first Secretary-General of Amnesty International and the driving force behind many other organisations. For further information please call the Secretariat of the Martin Ennals Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland, + 41.76 3662043 (Nadja Houben), or +30 9 44758678. e-mail info@huridocs.org Website: <http://www.martinennalsaward.org>.

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