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The three Laureates of the 2022 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders inspire through their courage and hope

Pham Doan Trang, Daouda Dialo, Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja are three inspiring and courageous human rights defenders from Vietnam, Burkina Faso and Bahrain who have been named the 2022 Martin Ennals Award Laureates.

By HURIDOCS Team on 21 January 2022



Martin Ennals Award 2022

We are delighted to share that the Laureates of this year's Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders are Pham Doan Trang, Daouda Dialo, Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja. In 2022, the Jury selected these three activists who through their courage, unflinching hope and strategic approaches, inspire others to stand up for human rights.

Courage as the connecting dot

On 19 January 2022, the three Laureates were announced in an online ceremony that was hosted by the Martin Ennals Foundation. According to Hans Thoolen, Chair of the Martin Ennals Award Jury, the Jury nominated three galvanisers of the human rights movement and “courage” is the connecting dot between them.

Pham Doan Trang is a leading journalist, editor and democracy advocate in Vietnam who is extremely vocal on issues pertaining to democracy and fundamental rights. She was arrested in 2020 and sentenced to 9 years in prison for her courage to raise awareness about human rights and to promote freedom of speech and access to information.

Dr. Daouda Diallo is a pharmacist-turned-human rights activist in Burkina Faso who fearlessly documents human rights violations committed against civilians who are caught

between violent attacks by government forces, local paramilitary groups and Islamist factions. His work that is related to investigations and reporting of human rights abuses have caused him to be the subject of numerous serious threats, including death threats.

Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja from Bahrain is a leading figure in the human rights movement in the Gulf region and worked tirelessly for many years to promote democratic reform in the MENA region. His political and human rights activism led him to become a shining light during the Arab Spring where he led peaceful protests and engaged on democratic reform. He was tortured and sentenced to life in prison in 2011 and will this year be spending his birthday in detention for the 11th time.

In the face of adversity that includes prison sentences and death threats, the three Laureates continue to courageously speak up against tyranny and inspire others to keep up the good fight of defending human rights at all costs.

Meet the Laureates of the 2022 Martin Ennals Award

Pham Doan Trang (Vietnam)

In Vietnam, little room remains for human rights activism in a context where the authoritarian government repeatedly stifles citizens' freedom of speech and the right to information. Pham Doan Trang, a talented journalist and editor of several leading independent media outlets, began advocating for political and civil liberties in the late 2000s. She is a primary advocate for democracy in Vietnam.

In an environment that challenges the very existence of investigative journalism, her unique entrepreneurial initiatives to establish multiple media outlets (such as the Luat Khoa and Liberal Publishing House) were inspirational to many. It galvanised several other journalists in Vietnam to speak up about human rights violations.

Her persistent efforts to raise awareness amongst the population about their rights made Trang one of the most hunted human rights defenders in Vietnam, until she was eventually arrested in 2020 and remained in



“I hope that some of my writings will touch

incommunicado detention until 19 October 2021. On 14 December 2021, she was sentenced to nine years in prison for “conducting propaganda against the state”. There are growing concerns about her health.

someone, help them realise the truth and maybe change how they think about society”.

– *Pham Doan Trang*

“Pham Doan Trang’s work is not only needed, but also legitimate, it is essential. She should be freed immediately and unconditionally.”

–*Friedhelm Weinberg, Executive Director of HURIDOCS and Member of the Jury*

Daouda Dialo (Burkina Faso)

In Burkina Faso, Dr. Daouda Diallo is a pharmacist by training and a committed human rights defender. Since 2019, Dr. Diallo strives to document human rights violations by government forces and Islamist factions, as well as by local militias formed to defend villages caught in the crossfire.



“We have documented more than 1000 killings of Burkinabe civilians in the context of the armed conflict”

– *Daouda Dialo*

His work occurs against the backdrop of extreme poverty and weak governance, which make Burkina Faso one of the most fragile states worldwide. He oversees the medical laboratory of The Centre Hospitalier Régional Dédougou. Since 2019, he is also the founder and Secretary General of the Collectif Contre l’impunité et la Stigmatisation des Communautés (CISC – Collective Against Impunity and Stigmatisation of Communities), an organisation conducting numerous investigations and reporting on the conflict.

Dr. Diallo has been a reliable news source for international organisations and media channels; he is also highly trusted and revered by victims of the violence, given his empathetic and kind manners; by international actors, for his analysis and information on abuses; and by NGO workers, who see him as a leader willing to give

voice to their calls for justice. One of CISC's objective is also to restore social cohesion among the varying ethnic groups of Burkina Faso who, in the chaos sown by the violence, have at times turned on each other. He has been the subject of numerous threats, ranging from stalking, robbery, to serious death threats. Most notably in connection with his public statements and advocacy regarding the massacre in Yirgou in January 2019, following violent clashes between Islamist groups, the local paramilitary and Burkinabe government militias. Despite working in such vulnerable conditions, Dr. Diallo remains committed to the protection of human rights in Burkina Faso and inspires many others to join the movement.

"Dr. Diallo is one of the most committed, active and collegial human rights defenders I have encountered in my 20 years at Human Rights Watch. He is fearless and his courage has been contagious."

-Corinne Dufka, West Africa Director at Human Rights Watch and Member of the Jury

Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja (Bahrain)

Bahraini-Danish activist Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja is one of the earliest architects of the human rights movement in Bahrain and a leader of the movement for greater freedom and democracy in the Gulf region. His dedication to the protection of human rights emerged early on. Fiercely outspoken, he embodies Bahrain's spirit of protest and inspires a new generation of activists.

After receiving asylum in Denmark with his family, he continued his activism by documenting human rights violations in Bahrain and advocating on behalf of victims and survivors up to the United Nations. Following his return to Bahrain in 2001, he advocated for economic equity and an end to corruption and criticized the regime for a series of human rights abuses and for inciting discrimination between the Shia majority and Sunni minority. Al-Khawaja co-founded with other Bahraini and regional human rights defenders several prominent human rights



organisations such as the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights. These organisations were the first of their kind in the region, igniting a powerful culture of resistance against authoritarian regimes. He

expanded his work internationally as well. During the Bahrain chapter of what is known as the “Arab Spring” uprisings, Al-Khawaja led several peaceful demonstrations and pledged allegiance to the emerging drive for securing democratic reforms across the MENA region. Bahrain’s monarchy retaliated: in April 2011, AlKhawaja was severely beaten, forcibly disappeared and tortured. Two months later, he was condemned to life in prison in a military trial. April 2021 marked Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja’s tenth year in prison and his sixtieth birthday. In prison, he organised multiple hunger strikes to secure the rights of detainees. There are urgent concerns about his physical security in prison.

“The Bahraini people should continue on the path of peaceful resistance.” ”

– Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja

“Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja is a man of commitment, integrity, and determination. One of the kindest persons I have ever met. He was a colleague and a friend I could rely on. His arrest and torture triggered an outpouring of love and solidarity from across the Middle East and North Africa.”

–Andrew Anderson, Executive Director of Front Line Defenders and Member of the Jury

About the Martin Ennals Award

What is the Martin Ennals Award?

Since 1994, the Martin Ennals Award (MEA) honours human rights defenders from around the world who show exceptional commitment to promoting fundamental rights, often at the risk of their own lives. The Award is given to human rights defenders in urgent need of protection – for example, who are in jail or threatened with imprisonment, who are harassed while doing their job or have gone missing. The Award seeks to protect these defenders by mobilising international support for them and highlighting their contributions in the media. The presentation of the Award is accompanied by support for advocacy and outreach activities, as well as capacity-building and prize money.

Who was Martin Ennals?

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Martin Ennals was a British human rights activist and social entrepreneur. He was Secretary General of Amnesty International from 1968 to 1980. During his tenure, the organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Erasmus Prize and the United Nations Human Rights Prize. Martin Ennals also contributed to the creation of several other non-governmental organisations: [ARTICLE19](#), [International Alert](#) and [HURIDOCS](#). The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders was created in 1992. The Award was officially launched in June 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

Who is the Jury?

The independent Jury of the Martin Ennals Award is made up of representatives of ten of the world's leading human rights organisations. HURIDOCS is a proud member of the jury, alongside:

- Amnesty International
- Bread for the World
- International Commission of Jurists
- FIDH
- Front Line Defenders
- Human Rights First
- Human Rights Watch
- World Organisation against Torture
- International Service for Human Rights

In addition to Jury members, a Regional Panel composed of a diverse group of human rights organisations, assist in providing expertise on the various geographic contexts in which MEA nominees work:

- 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

For more information, please visit the [Martin Ennals Award website](#).

2022 Martin Ennals Award Ceremony

In 2022, the organisers chose to postpone the Award Ceremony to 2 June 2022. With this postponement, it is hoped that the COVID-19 situation will allow the ceremony to be held in person, in Geneva, Switzerland.

We are inspired by your courageous activism, Pham Doan Trang, Daouda Dialo and Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja! We stand in solidarity with you, your families, your friends and your allies while we celebrate your outstanding and galvanising contributions to human rights!

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