



EMBARGOED UNTIL 1 PM, DUBLIN, 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Front Line Defenders Award Presented to At-Risk Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders from six countries have been named as laureates of the 2021 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk. The organisation is honouring human rights defenders (HRDs) working on issues including racial justice, housing rights, minority rights, the protection and defense of the environment and land, self-determination and disability rights. In each case, the HRDs have faced various forms of harassment, intimidation, and threats, with some facing violence and some have been detained and charged; and they respond with dignity, grace and determination to persevere, demonstrating incredible courage and hope.

The human rights defenders will be introduced at an online press conference on Wednesday, 24 November starting at 1 PM (GMT), with each Award winner presented at 25 minute intervals – see schedule below.

To register for the press conference, please visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-front-line-defenders-award-press-conference-tickets-212389541837>

1:00 – 1:25 PM GMT	<u>Mother Nature Cambodia</u> (Cambodia)
1:25 – 1:50 PM GMT	<u>Sami & Sameeha Huraini</u> (Palestine)
1:50 – 2:15 PM GMT	<u>Aminata Fabba</u> (Sierra Leone)
2:15 – 2:40 PM GMT	<u>Siarhei Drazdouski & Aleh Hrableuski</u> (Belarus)
2:40 – 3:05 PM GMT	<u>Mamadou Ba</u> (Portugal)
3:05 - 3:30 PM GMT	<u>Camila Moradia</u> (Brazil)

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be exploited by repressive governments to attack human rights defenders and close down the space in which they can carry out their work. As Front Line Defenders celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2021, the need to continue supporting HRDs with their security, protection and well-being is as important as ever.

Front Line Defenders traditionally holds its Award ceremony at Dublin's City Hall. As in 2020, however, due to COVID-19 restrictions, **an online award ceremony will be held online on 9 December**, International Human Rights Defenders Day, with a video presentation of the work of each of the regional laureates.

“On the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Front Line Defenders, we are thrilled to present these 6 Award winners who are on the front lines of struggles for racial and environmental justice,

equal rights and freedom,” said Front Line Defenders Executive Director, Andrew Anderson. “Their courage and resilience is inspirational and demonstrates to all that another world is possible.”

Front Line Defenders established its annual award in 2005. In 2018, the organisation began recognizing five winners from around the world, with one regional winner also named the Global Laureate.¹ In 2021, Front Line Defenders took the decision to recognize each regional award winner equally.

The Jury for the 2021 Front Line Defenders Award was composed of Senator Roisin Garvey (Green); Ivana Bacik (Labour); Seán Crowe TD (Sinn Féin); Cormac Devlin TD (Fianna Fail); Gary Gannon TD (Social Democrats); and Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD (Fine Gael).

The 2021 Regional Award Winners:

Africa

Aminata Fabba

Chair, Malen Affected Land Owners Association (MALOA), Sierra Leone

Aminata Fabba is the Chairlady of the Malen Affected Land Owners Association (MALOA), a farmer and a grassroots land rights defender in the southern provincial district of Pujehun. MALOA is a community movement resisting SOCFIN and other biofuel companies in Sierra Leone.

With the inception of the large scale land investment in Malen Chiefdom in 2011, Aminata stood against the Chiefdom Authorities to protect her family land; for that she was arrested by police and taken to Sahn, the chiefdom headquarters, and locked in a cell for one week. She was only released with the help of national and international pressure with payment of bail fee. Upon her release she became resolute to continue the fight and eventually became a land rights activist mobilizing support against any occupation of land by the Socfin Agricultural Company (SAC).

Americas

Camila Moradia

Women in Action in Alemão (MEAA), Brazil

Camila Moradia was born in a place known as Grota, in the group of favelas that make up the Complexo do Alemão. "Cria do morro" as she is born, raised and lives in Alemão. Her family is in its fourth generation in the favela.

In 2010, with the removal of the "Favelinha da Skol", Camila became one of the leaders of the fight for housing in the Alemão complex and started to give voice to 1,300 families. In 2015, based on the actions she was already carrying out and the demands of women who arrived, Camila established the collective, Women in Action in Alemão (MEAA).

MEAA's mission is to end violence against women and contribute to the empowerment of women and their families, thus strengthening their autonomy and guaranteeing their basic rights. More

¹ The five regions are: Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe & Central Asia, Middle East & North Africa.

than 400 women are assisted in the Complexo do Alemão, a slum in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

Asia-Pacific

Mother Nature Cambodia Cambodia

Mother Nature Cambodia is an environmental rights movement that advocates and campaigns locally and internationally for the preservation, promotion and protection of Cambodia's natural environment. As part of their work, the movement monitors and challenges gross environmental violations and also raises awareness, educates and empowers people by providing them with training and financial support.

What started as small campaign to empower Indigenous communities to mobilize against a hydroelectric dam has developed into a large movement of human rights defenders – the vast majority young university students – campaigning to protect the environment and expose corruption in Cambodia.

Europe & Central Asia

Aleh Hrableuski & Siarhei Drazdouski Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Belarus

Siarhei Drazdouski is the Founder and Director of the Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where Aleh Hrableuski works as a lawyer.

The Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a prominent and leading Belarusian human rights organisation that works for persons with disabilities. The organisation provides legal assistance and facilitates consultations on the rights of people with disabilities, advocates for changes in legislation, conducts research and educational activities to enable citizens to learn more about people with disabilities in Belarus.

In February 2021, the two HRDs were detained and interrogated by the Investigative Committee. After the interrogation Aleh Hrableuski was detained and Siarhei Drazdouski was placed under house arrest.

Europe & Central Asia

Mamadou Ba SOS Racismo, Portugal

Born in Senegal, and an immigrant to Portugal, Mamadou Ba has dedicated his life to anti-racist activism. He has been member of the SOS Racismo Movement since 1999 and is a founding member of several national and European organisations defending the rights of migrants and racialized people.

Mamadou is one of the most prominent voices of the anti-racist movement in Portugal who has denounced the proliferation of hate speech. As such, he is also one of the preferred targets of attacks by far right and neo-Nazi movements in Portugal.

In the beginning of 2020, Mamadou Ba received a letter with a death threat and one bullet case at his home. In February 2021, an online petition was launched to strip him from his Portuguese citizenship and to deport him from Portugal. And since June, the headquarters of SOS Racismo were vandalised twice with swastikas and racist slurs.

Middle East & North Africa

Sami & Sameeha Huraini Youth of Sumud, Palestine

The South Hebron Hills region is one of the most dangerous areas for Palestinians in the West Bank, with some of the most extremist Israeli settlements located in the area. Sami and Sameeha Huraini and their other activists in the Youth of Sumud movement escort shepherds and school children under threat of attacks by Israeli settlers and soldiers. Sameeha also organises activities for women in her village.

As a leader in the community, Sami is frequently harassed by both Israeli settlers and the Israeli military for his peaceful work. He was arrested after his participation in a peaceful demonstration on 8 January 2021. The demonstration was organised to protest against Israeli army violence, particularly after the shooting of the Palestinian activist Harun Abu Aram, on 1 January 2021, who was shot in the neck at point blank range. Sami's trial is still ongoing. Sameeha has also been detained and has faced judicial harassment for her work defending the rights of her community and the land.

Follow-up interviews post-press conference with the award winners can be facilitated in various languages.

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