

# Protecting Human Rights Defenders

*From shared experiences to cohesive action*

*Seminar report*



*The Hague, 7 – 10 December 2010*

# Protecting Human Rights Defenders

*From shared experiences to cohesive action*

## *Seminar report*

### **Justitia et Pax Netherlands**

P.O. Box 16334, 2500 BH, The Hague, the Netherlands

T +31 70 3136800

F +31 70 3136801

E [info@justitiaetpax.nl](mailto:info@justitiaetpax.nl)

I [www.justitiaetpax.nl](http://www.justitiaetpax.nl)

*Justitia et Pax Netherlands greatly appreciates the financial support provided by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.*



Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>I Identification of skills and expertise of human rights defenders</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>II Tools and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Getting the local community involved in a specific human rights issue</i> by Justine Masika Bihamba.....	8
<i>Using national legislation to ensure the rights of minorities</i> by Smaranda Enache.....	9
Plenary discussion.....	9
<b>III Tools and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders (HRDs)</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Enforced disappearances</i> by Ewoud Plate.....	11
<i>HRD mechanisms and EU guidelines</i> by Bjorn Petterson.....	11
<i>Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme en France</i> by Michel Forst.....	12
<i>Shelter cities</i> by Vincent Forest.....	12
<b>IV Presentation of outcomes seminar</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>V Concluding observations of the seminar</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<i>Inventory of needs and actions to better protect human rights defenders</i> .....	16
<b>Annex I Declaration of Human Rights Defenders</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Annex II Keynote speech by Samuel Kofi Woods II</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Annex III List of participants</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Annex IV Guests</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Annex V Speakers</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Annex VI Chairpersons and panel members</b> .....	<b>29</b>

## Foreword

During my 27 years with Justitia et Pax, working in the human rights field, I have met internationally celebrated heroes, laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize, veteran human rights defenders, but I have also met many less celebrated and even unknown individuals working at grassroots level, people of great valour and heart, committed to a noble cause, with long records of personal sacrifice. In their stories I found hope and inspiration.

They spoke to me of the causes to which they have devoted their lives, and for which they are even willing to sacrifice them. These human rights defenders are mostly unknown beyond their national boundaries, sometimes not even beyond the boundaries of the village or the region where they live.

Justitia et Pax has organized a seminar for these grassroots human rights defenders, who remain anonymous and undertake their work often at great personal risk to themselves and their families, to promote women's and children's rights, religious freedom and minority rights. From 7 - 10 December 2010 they gathered in The Hague, the Netherlands to discuss their work and their needs. The central question was how we could strengthen their work and the mechanisms needed for their protection?

The human rights defenders presented and discussed cases from their own experience and external experts explained and discussed the practical implementation of international protection mechanisms for human rights defenders. The results were presented to a wide audience at the closing ceremony, which marked the start of the political advocacy campaign.

This rapport provides a summary of the programme, the conclusions reached and the results that were achieved. We hope that in reading it you will feel a sparkle of the inspiration we have all felt.

In conclusion I would like to thank the participants for their active participation and their positive contributions. Their continuing work and commitment is an inspiration for us all.



Victor Scheffers  
Director Justitia et Pax Netherlands



## Introduction

All international partners of Justitia et Pax Netherlands are human rights activists. They report and denounce human rights violations in their countries, and assist victims of human rights violations. By doing so, they put themselves and their families at risk. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for example, a structural increase of threats, disappearances and killings of activists was observed, in the year prior to the 2010 presidential elections.

This seminar brought together partners of Justitia et Pax Netherlands from Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. They shared their experiences and expressed their needs in respect to their work as human rights defender, both in terms of urgent response as well as in terms of structural support. What role is expected from Justitia et Pax, and what is expected from the international community as a whole?

The objective of the seminar was first to identify *specific expertise and skills* that human rights defenders need in order to strengthen their work at all levels. Secondly, through presentations and discussions, an *overview of tools and mechanisms* would be identified that could strengthen the work of human rights defenders. Justitia et Pax took this opportunity to integrate some of the identified needs in their activity for 2011. See page 13 for a summary of Justitia et Pax's commitments for 2011.

The report highlights of outcome of the discussions on the *specific needs* of human rights defenders. Throughout the report several *action points* are outlined to be followed-up in 2011. These action points will be summarised in the *conclusion* (page 16).

The *Declaration* that was drafted to present at the official meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December is enclosed in the Annexes (pp 15 & 16), as is the keynote speech of Samuel Kofi Woods (pp 17 - 20). You will find the programme, lists of participants, speakers and chairs to this seminar on pages 21 to 25.

*Don't ever ask why but ask why not!  
By asking why not you unveil  
the enormous strength of the human spirit*  
Kofi Woods, 7<sup>th</sup> of December speech

## **I Identification of skills and expertise of human rights defenders**

*Opening, December 7*

Victor Scheffers, director of Justitia et Pax Netherlands opened the seminar by welcoming all participants, recommending them to use these days for their own benefit. Most important for the seminar is to find out what human rights defenders need: from each other, from governments and from partners like Justitia et Pax. Human rights defenders' experiences and advice is needed to improve support for their work.

During the course of the seminar different participants and experts were requested to share some of their experiences as a human rights defender or to share some of their activities. Samuel Kofi Woods, human rights defender and the Minister of Public Works of Liberia, opened the discussion on the needs of human rights defenders by describing part of his personal history and his personal perspective on needs.

Mr. Woods started to be fascinated by humanity and the value of life at an early age. He acquired a great love for people who, whilst living under dire circumstances, managed to survive and raise families. As a youngster he organised community projects in his own environment: a large city slum.

As a student leader he regularly protested against government decisions. Studying law, he learned more and more how life in Liberia should be and could be improved. Because of his criticism of the regime, he was forced into hiding and seeking refuge. During seven years he never remained at the same address for more than two days. Mr. Woods later joined the Justitia et Pax commission in Liberia. To save his life, he had to flee the country and remain in the Netherlands for a while. This stay enabled him to recover and educate himself. Later he returned to help rebuild his war-torn motherland as a Minister of Labour and now Public Works.

Being a human rights defender wasn't a matter of choice in his personal case. One day he just found himself defending the rights of others. Mr. Woods is convinced everybody in his or her particular situation could do the same. By not asking "why?" but "why not?" a world of possibilities will open up.

According to Mr. Woods, human rights defenders are in need of: 1) building national and international networks and partnerships and sustainable alliances, 2) sharing information within these networks 3) engaging in advocacy 4) building relationships with media 5) creating awareness.

### **Group discussions**

The different personal needs and challenges faced by human rights defenders (HRDs) were discussed in groups.

First of all, human rights defenders (HRDs) need commitment and passion. Additionally, it is necessary to know the local laws, national laws and international human rights standards and mechanisms. Being media-aware and undertaking political lobby is essential, as well as developing personal relationships with important stakeholders in society. Skills such as strategy planning and awareness of intercultural differences are also important. Furthermore, a human rights defender needs to be a role model and to set the example for the rest of society.

How can the international community support the needs of human rights defenders? The following suggestions were made: the creation of a UN fund for Human rights defenders; the realisation of rapid and well-functioning protection mechanisms; support from partner organisations in publishing reports (of human rights violations); assistance from partner organisations in advocating at diplomatic missions, with public officials and with international institutions.

Finally, the following challenges were raised during the plenary session: *Illiteracy and lack of internet access of the most marginalized* and other sources of information; *armed groups* that make working in certain areas practically impossible; *donor doctrines*: tendency to think according to 'programmes' and thus obstructing long-term commitments and much needed local creative ideas; the difficulty of *keeping sufficient well-trained and reliable staff*. Please see page 17 for the complete list of identified needs.

### **Migrant detention in the Netherlands**

Jakob de Jonge of Justitia and Pax Netherlands was requested to give a presentation on a pressing human rights issue in the Netherlands, that of migrants' detention in the Netherlands.

The political climate in Europe is becoming less open, less protective and more self-centred. Refugees and migrants are more often seen as profiteers, rather than fellow human beings looking for a safe and better future. The detention system in the Netherlands is designed to scare people from travelling to the Netherlands and to apply for asylum and to punish those who try to stay in the Netherlands without a legal permit. Although the Netherlands could not really be called a human rights abuser, like many other countries, it also isn't the lightening example of how things should work.

### **Practical tools**

The strategy of *naming and shaming* publicly was mentioned in Jakob de Jonge's speech when advocating for change in policies. In politically sensitive cases, it might be essential to gain the public opinion on your side: this could be part of the advocacy strategy.



*Solidarity, solidarity from inside and outside  
is a fundamental need for human rights defenders*

## **II Tools and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders**

*Day two, 8<sup>th</sup> of December*

Three participants were asked to describe how they use different mechanisms to defend human rights in their respective communities.

### ***Effective advocacy at the international level by Manjula Pradeep***

Manjula Pradeep shared her personal journey and transformation from a child in an oppressed Dalit community into a national and international acclaimed human rights defender promoting Dalit and Dalit women's rights. She finds her inspiration in the communities affected by discrimination and especially women that are seeking justice and achieve against all odds.

She emphasized that it was essential to let the world know about Dalit discrimination. First a national platform was organized to campaign for Dalit rights in India. Then this was linked to other organizations and platforms in South Asia and eventually also to Japan, where similar kind of caste based discrimination takes place.

Networks on different levels were of importance to open the doors to the rest of the world. Organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty allowed for more international pressure upon India. Also groups facing similar discrimination in other countries, such as African Americans, Roma and Aborigines are important. The creation of the International Dalit Solidarity Network and other Dalit solidarity platforms around the world kept the Dalit issue on the agenda. Finally, media are an important stakeholder in the process, according to Manjula Pradeep.

Working at national level also includes training and educating leaders from the Dalits community. They may serve as an example to their own community and make the world know about the condition of Dalits.

### ***Getting the local community involved in a specific human rights issue by Justine Masika Bihamba***

Justine Masika Bihamba spoke on the issue of sexual violence against women in East Congo. Often women are faced with impunity and excluded from their communities after they have been sexually assaulted, even while the support of their community is essential for them to survive and deal with their traumatic experience.

With her organization, Synergie des Femmes, she tries to raise awareness of the impact of sexual violence on women and society at large. Violence against women is a social problem that is not easily discussed. Local community initiatives involve local leaders to change the mindset of the people. Because of the widespread illiteracy, visual aids such as films and manuals are used to get their messages across.

Women that have become victims of sexual violence also need to be reintegrated into society. Some even have become human rights defenders themselves. Reintegration should include long-term psychological support.

*Synergie des Femmes* is involved in drafting legislation in Congo with the aid of international organisations, to build alliances and to have the laws adopted by the national government. The regional human rights



mechanism of the African Union is adapted and translated to community level and can be used as a tool to promote human rights protection.

### ***Using national legislation to ensure the rights of minorities by Smaranda Enache***

She explains her personal journey from a life under dictatorship into becoming a human rights defender in Romania focusing on minority rights and especially Roma.

In the early 90s virulent nationalism took hold of Romania which resulted in 30 cases of collective violence (pogroms) against Roma settlements by extreme nationalistic militias. During these atrocities, the police never intervened.

This led to the rise of networks to stop the atrocities committed against Roma. They documented the cases and send them to the national and international media and other human rights organizations in Europe. This allowed the issue to take middle stage in the world and brought the issue to the forefront.

There was an intervention of the European Court of Justice which reprimanded Romania and ensured the prosecution of perpetrators of the crimes against the Roma. Note that Romania was not reprimanded for the atrocities, but for lack of access to justice for the Roma.

The expulsion of Roma from France based on their ethnicity, was a confirmation for the Romanian government to treat the Roma as second-rate citizens. Furthermore, it used these developments to Europeanize the issue, although the solution of Roma discrimination in Europe is first and foremost a national question and the responsibility of the separate nation-states.

### ***Plenary discussion***

Following the three presentations, tools and needs were identified to strengthen the work of human rights defenders.

#### *Capacity-building:*

- Support must be based on local needs and demands;
- Training in use of and access to internet and creation of websites;
- Training on regional, national and international human rights mechanisms;
- Advocacy skills and how to develop a lobby strategy;
- Training of women leaders;
- Human rights education needs to be part of the solution.

#### *Networking:*

- Link different levels (grass-root and international) of human rights defenders from different countries;
- Mutual capacity-building through networks – sharing of specialties and capacities (linking and learning);
- Effective networks – to avoid duplication and reinventing the same strategies;
- Inform and support international networks to keep the issue on the international agenda.

*International community:*

- Enhance the capabilities to apply for mobility for human rights defenders, as they are often refused visa to attend conferences or to conduct advocacy activities;
- Simplify the application procedure for EU and other international funds for easier access for grass-roots level organisations;
- More regular consultation with diplomatic corps;
- Support the work of human rights defenders publicly as a way of protection;
- Sustained long-term financial support of human rights defenders organisations.

*Protection:*

- Human rights defenders may need to be quickly moved away when they are under threat. Local networks may research whether the threat persists at the national level. If so, human rights defenders need to be moved abroad if they cannot stay in their country, even at a distance from their home town;
- Protection of Human Rights Defenders by a UN fund on human rights defenders;
- Protection of victims and witnesses of violence;
- Support individual families of human rights defenders as they are threatened as well;



*A short term break is considered  
an urgent need for human rights defenders  
working under high pressure*

### **III Tools and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders (HRDs)**

*Day three, 9 December*

Four experts with extensive knowledge on EU and UN mechanisms to protect human rights defenders on the political level were requested to share their experiences. They each give their personal perspective with regard to a specific human rights instrument.

#### ***Enforced disappearances by Ewoud Plate, Aim for Human Rights***

Deprivation of liberty and denial of disappearances are some of the characteristics of enforced disappearances conducted by states. People are arrested under mysterious circumstances (cars without number plates, during manifestations, roadblocks, no witnesses) so that no trace is left. A natural reaction of the family members and friends is disbelief that this person has disappeared or to blame oneself for the disappearance.

Solidarity is one of the first needs for the people directly affected. Lessons learnt can be useful to others. A strong network, good training, tactics and strategic thinking are essential ingredients to better protect oneself and the family.

#### ***HRD mechanisms and EU guidelines by Bjorn Petterson, International Service Human Rights***

The UN Human Rights Defenders Declaration was adopted in 1998 by consensus. However, states continue to use domestic laws to frustrate the process. Communications ought to be confidential, and ought not expose the HRD nor their organization. Approximately 700 cases of abuse are reported by the UN every year. Urgent appeals are sent to governments, but response is slow. The UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders usually visits two or three countries per year to assess the current human rights situation, but only on invitation.

#### ***Challenges of the mandate of the Special Representative***

The *Code of Conduct*<sup>1</sup> that restricts their area of work; the fact that there are few responses to representatives' communications; a limited effect of the reporting; the fact that governments have a right to comment on the report prior to publishing; limited resources (including limited availability of assistants who do all the preparatory work).

The EU guidelines on human rights defenders were developed in 2004 as a practical tool for permanent representations in cases where human rights defenders are threatened. They were adopted by consensus. They are explicitly intended to reinforce the mandates of other mechanisms like the Special Procedures, and the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The guidelines provide EU Member States with the following tools to address human rights abuses.

1. Monitoring; representatives should not isolate themselves in embassies but monitor threats and attacks in the field, and analyse institutional frameworks;
2. Demarches: confidential as well as public Statements;
3. Political dialogue with counterparts;

---

<sup>1</sup> The Code of Conduct for Special Procedures was adopted in the Human Rights Council in 2007. There are several examples where Member States referred to this Code to attack the mandate holder for not handling according to the Code.

4. Visible recognition, visits to offices of human rights defenders, attendance of press conferences, engagement in their activities and take actions to counterbalance stigmatization;
5. Trials: attend trials and send a message to officials - this is sometimes outsourced to lawyers;
6. Financial support (EIDHR);
7. Physical protection and emergency visas.

One of the main challenges of the guidelines is their implementation on the ground. Strategies to implement the guidelines are often vague and inconsistent, if not non-existent.

#### *What else can be done?*

There is a great need to disseminate the EU guidelines and to provide trainings to learn more about their application by human rights defenders when needed. There is a lack of consistency in their implementation, which depends largely on the willingness of the rotating presidency of the European Union. Under the presidency of Austria for example, 24 demarches of human rights defenders were reported, while under Finland's only four. The lack of consistency undermines sustainability. Involving human rights defenders in implementing and developing a strategy is another challenge.

#### ***Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme en France by Michel Forst***

The French government presents a human rights award each year. It was an initiative to sensitize the Parliament, government institutions and others that normally do not open their doors to urgent needs and questions of human rights defenders. The award is used as a tool to protect human rights defenders and to gain the defender international attention.

Every year two themes are given extra attention. Last year the impact of the economic crisis to the situation of human rights was a central theme. The request for nominations of human rights defenders is sent to all French embassies in foreign countries, and they disseminate this request to a wider network, including the press.

#### ***Shelter cities by Vincent Forest, Frontline Brussels***

It is easy to sell the idea of Shelter Cities: the objectives are clear, and it sounds attractive, but there is a whole road from theory to practice. The primary actors should be the municipalities themselves offering temporary accommodation. Even if there is no urgent procedure available, a letter from the city council may help, stating "*we have accommodation ready and we would like to host this person*". Other practical needs may be health insurances and travel costs coverage.

#### *Lessons learnt*

The visa issue is sensitive. *Schengen* only provides visa for a maximum of three months. If more time is needed, it will even be more complicated.

Willingness of cities is a prerequisite; they have to believe in the initiative.

Cities also need to share common practices, there needs to be an informal network of initiatives. If the European level is too high up, cities could start to link initiatives themselves. In the Netherlands it could be a network of NGOs that takes the first steps.

A short-term break for human rights defenders in trouble is considered an urgent need. In the discussion following Frontline's presentation, the participants shared experiences of how they could never stop their work, even at night, and they suffered physical and psychological consequences.

Support of the families of the human rights defenders is necessary. Protection of information is also seen as important.

## **IV Presentation of outcomes seminar**

*Closure seminar, 10 December*

On the last day of the seminar, the results were presented and discussed. Various governmental representatives and international non-governmental organisations were invited to witness the outcomes of the seminar. Furthermore the role of the Netherlands in the international arena of human rights was discussed with the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador.

Professor Tak opens the session by giving a summary of the previous days and by explaining the objectives of the seminar. He regards it as a moral obligation to support people who defend human rights anywhere on earth. He thinks everyone could be a human rights defender if he or she decides to be one.

### **Presentation of the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders by Ms. Stella Murungi**

See Annex I.

### **Keynote speech by Samuel Kofi Woods**

See Annex II for the complete speech

### **Panel discussion**

*Participants: Manjula Pradeep, Barbara Oomen, Lionel Veer, Samuel Kofi Woods, Peter Tak (chair).*

The challenges and needs of human rights defenders were discussed and centred around the topic of Shelter City initiative: a cooperation between NGO's and cities to host human rights defenders who urgently need temporary refuge. A summary of participants' contributions is given below.

*Lionel Veer:* Human rights problems of today are as urgent as they were when Mr. Veer started his career. Even contacting the Dutch embassy could be dangerous for inhabitants of some countries. Mr. Veer is in favour of the Shelter City initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to contribute to the realisation of this idea. The Shelter initiative could take away pressure on human rights defenders so they can reorganize and recharge their energy. The biggest problem of the realisation of the initiative will be the fact that much of the admissions policy is not decided by national policy but by Schengen. Initiatives like this one are often obstructed by bureaucracy. A successful shelter city programme can only be realized when the technical, financial and bureaucratic obstructions are removed. The Netherlands have become very restricted on migration; the challenge for the coming years will be to get less restrictive without 'opening the gates'.

*Prof. Barbara Oomen:* The fact that a minister from Africa can come and remind Europe of its own core values and commitments to human rights shows that human rights are of concern to us all. It would be encouraging if The Hague would become the first Shelter City of the Netherlands. The initiative could be supported by organising a competition with other ambitious cities, like Utrecht that presents itself as "European City of Human Rights". All authorities, especially on a local level should be involved.

*Manjula Pradeep:* Ideas like the Shelter City Initiative always require people who believe in it and who want to work hard to make it real. Those people could be everywhere: in parliament, within ministries, in the media, etc. In the case of Dalits, the biggest problem would be to get a passport. The Shelter City initiative is necessary because local solutions mostly fail. The Indian government will never support the initiative within

its own borders. Because governments in the region often work closely together, a neighbouring country cannot be of much help to a human rights defender. No true human rights defender will prefer to leave his community and go to another country. They truly desire to continue their work as soon as possible. The risk that human rights defenders would stay in Europe indefinitely is not an issue according to her experiences. The public needs to be educated and informed about human rights and human rights violations. People are often scared of standing up against abuses, while other people are on their own and in desperate need of support. Being a human rights defender is not just a casual decision. People become it through the circumstances. It is not a job, it is a calling.

The public event was closed with words appreciation from Professor Tak. The expert panel as well as the participants of the event agreed that more concrete measures should and could be taken by organisations and countries such as the Netherlands in order to improve protection of endangered human rights defenders. And to take action to respond to the needs of human rights defenders, for example by initiating the City Shelter programme in the Netherlands. The declaration presented earlier, was adopted unanimously by both experts and other attendants of the meeting.

The award ceremony of the Human Rights Tulip followed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All human rights defenders that partook in the seminar were present to the awarding of the Human Rights Tulip 2011 to Mrs. Bertha Oliva de Nativi of Honduras for her longstanding work for victims of disappearances and their families in Honduras.



## V Concluding observations of the seminar

During the three-day seminar a group of 25 participants participated and worked in small groups and in plenary sessions to share their experiences and needs in respect to their work as human rights defenders. Different kinds of needs and skills were identified, regardless of the context of human rights activists. Key-words that were emphasized repeatedly were: **Broad & reliable networks, access to reliable and secure communication- and information channels** and **trainings for human rights professionals**. Some of the main challenges that were mentioned were: *high levels of illiteracy* and *difficult access to internet* and the risk of donors' tendencies to think according to *short-term projects instead of long-term commitments* that are needed, leaving little space for local creative solutions.

Secondly, different international instruments aimed at strengthening the protection of human rights defenders were identified. Informal solidarity networks in cases of enforced disappearances were discussed in the context of Latin America. Human Rights Council instruments that could have political influence were illustrated with examples.

The EU-guidelines<sup>2</sup> on human rights defenders were discussed as a potentially effective instrument but so far, dissemination, translation and implementation of the guidelines are limited. Human rights defenders in their respective countries and the international community could support its implementation by advocating for broad translation and dissemination and by keeping EU-representatives informed of human rights violations and threats against human rights defenders.

The advantages and limitations of international award nominations were illustrated. While it might be an effective instrument to protect an individual by generating broad media attention, it may also obstruct the work of this exceptional human rights defender. Justine Masika Bihamba explained that after the award ceremony of the Human Rights Tulip in 2008, she was approached differently. She felt more safe and secure to denounce the violations against women in Goma and around. At the same time, people had high expectations of her as a spokesperson which meant that her daily work was jeopardised.

Finally Shelter Cities were put forward as an example from Ireland. If more cities in Europe create solidarity networks for temporary shelter, it meets an essential need of human rights defenders under high pressure. Lessons learnt from initiatives in other countries include the challenges of issuing a temporary visa, as well as the need to share common practises amongst Shelter Cities.

### **Role of Justitia et Pax Netherlands**

What do partners expect from Justitia et Pax Netherlands? One of the roles partners ascribe to Justitia et Pax Netherlands is to bring together different human rights defenders from all over the world to share their experiences and to learn from each other. This event was perceived as an example of showing solidarity. Activists from India learnt from the complex realities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and activists that protected rights of marginalised Roma expressed their solidarity with Dalit women for example. Though coming from different contexts and different realities, participants recognized the same fears, struggles and actions. Justitia et Pax Netherlands was requested to continue linking different backgrounds and experiences by providing the opportunity to bringing together human rights activists.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesDefenders.pdf>

Justitia et Pax Netherlands commits itself to:

- continue strengthening its partner network; a follow-up of this seminar is planned in December 2011;
- strengthen efforts advocating Shelter City The Hague in coalition with like-minded organisations in the Netherlands;
- advocate the strengthening of human rights instruments and their implementation as a high priority on the agenda;
- facilitate advocacy workshops and facilitate access to international decision-making institutions like the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and Members of Parliament in Brussels and in The Hague.

Victor Scheffers closed the seminar by expressing these commitments on behalf of Justitia et Pax Netherlands, and by thanking all participants for their contributions that took place in an atmosphere of openness and trust.

The main priority needs and points of action that came up during the seminar are summarised below.

### *Inventory of needs and actions to better protect human rights defenders*

#### **Points of action**

- Make sure human rights defenders can be moved quickly away from their town or city;
- Include protection of witnesses of human rights violations, before, during and after a trial against a human rights abuser;
- Advocate for implementation of EU-guidelines;
- Putting in place Early Alert systems and disseminate information to human rights networks;
- Advocate for a United Nations Human Rights Defenders Fund: if human rights defenders are in need of temporary relocation, this Fund could quickly and easily be accessed;
- Simplify EU-funds for local organisations and allow for smaller budgets;
- Human rights education needs to be integral part of human rights programmes.

#### **Urgent needs**

- Mobility; as participation in international conferences is often obstructed by visa refusal;
- Solidarity (international and regional);
- Effective networks and partnerships;
- Access to accurate information, outreach of information to the public;
- Information exchange and secure communication channels (security-in-a-box<sup>3</sup>).

#### **Training needs**

- Trainings on regional national and international human rights mechanisms;
- Advocacy skills: e.g. how to develop a lobby agenda that caters local circumstances of all parties concerned;
- Train women to be leaders within their communities;
- How to develop a security plan.

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a toolkit and a project created by Frontline and Tactical Technology Collective: [www.tacticaltech.org](http://www.tacticaltech.org); to provide tools and techniques for the digital security of human rights defenders and people worldwide



**Long-term needs**

- Support must be based on grass-root needs and demands;
- Installation of a monitoring mechanism in collaboration with local (human rights) networks:
- Support individuals and their families members
- Detailed mapping of regional and local level needs
- Coherent and coordinated intervention strategies of donors and international organisations.



## Annex I Declaration of Human Rights Defenders

*as a response to the conclusions of a seminar of better protecting human rights defenders*

We, human rights defenders convened in The Hague at the invitation of Justitia et Pax Netherlands;

1. **Recall** the fundamental and universal values of the United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights that was adopted 62 years ago by all member states;
2. **Reemphasize** that human rights are universal, inherent, indivisible, inalienable and non-negotiable;
3. **Reiterate** that these fundamental rights always need to be defended in all our societies.

We, human rights defenders convened commit ourselves to:

- a) *reaffirm* to continue to put human rights always at the forefront of our work and activities as human rights defenders (HRDs);
- b) *promote and strengthen* alliances and use all available peaceful instruments;
- c) *continue to support* the work and the needs of those who defend human rights at the grassroots and local level, for example by *creating regional safety networks*.

Moreover we commit ourselves to:

- d) *disseminate* our acquired knowledge on the EU guidelines and the UN protection mechanisms;
- e) *promote and strengthen our networks*, through building and further strengthening alliances ;
- f) *initiate*, in cooperation with supporting NGOs, *early alert systems* so as to minimize the risks faced by human rights defenders;
- g) *the use of all peaceful instruments* available in the defence of human rights.

We stress the following *specific needs* of human rights defenders at the grassroots level, on top of existing mechanisms:

- to *receive the necessary support* at all levels to be able to carry out their work;
- the strengthening of networks of human rights defenders to mutually support and exchange information using safe networks of communication;
- having *access to psycho-social support* for human rights defenders including opportunities to rest and recover in a safe environment;
- *a safe environment* for all human rights defenders and their families and colleagues.

We recommend to the City of The Hague:

- to live up to its status as the International City of Justice and Peace and to engage in providing temporary shelter to human rights defenders in danger (such as the Shelter City project).

We recommend to the Dutch Government:

- to support these initiatives by creating emergency visa procedures for human rights defenders who are at risk in their home country;
- to continue to put human rights at the heart of domestic and foreign policies.

We recommend to the EU and the EU Member States:

- to provide active support to human rights defenders in all countries where they are represented;
- to ensure sustainable support to human rights organizations at grassroots level, strengthening institutions, giving long term modest support for basic conditions instead of the current practice of focusing on project support;
- to consult with human rights defenders when guidelines, country strategy and indicative programmes with regard to human rights defenders are reviewed and renewed;
- to make small funds available in case human rights defenders need to be relocated quickly;

We recommend to the diplomatic missions of the EU (EEAS<sup>4</sup>) and the EU Member States:

- to make maximum use of their diplomatic networks to protect human rights defenders;
- to translate the EU guidelines on human rights defenders in local languages, so they become available to all, and to cooperate with religious institutions and local organizations to disseminate them to the grassroots levels;
- to send observers to courts where human rights defenders stand on trial;
- to monitor impunity for attacks on human rights defenders and act upon it as required by the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders;
- to appoint an EU Human Rights Ambassador.

We recommend to the Member States of the United Nations:

- to create a standing invitation for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders;
- to create a United Nations Human Rights Defenders Fund for human rights defenders in need of quick relocation.

In closing we reiterate our commitment to work with representatives from the UN; EU; states; NGOs and individuals to improve the work, support and defence of human rights defenders.

---

<sup>4</sup> EEAS: European External Action Service: body of the European Union that came into force when the Lisbon Treaty was signed to coordinate the EU's foreign policy.

## **Annex II Keynote speech by Samuel Kofi Woods II**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER  
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS  
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA  
ON  
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2010  
THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS,**

*My Dear Friend Victor Scheffers and Colleagues of Justitia et Pax, Netherlands  
Officials of the Dutch Government and Municipality  
My Fellow Human Rights Defenders from around the World  
My Dear Colleagues and Friends,  
People of the Netherlands  
Members of the Media  
People of our one World,*

I have decided to wear a black shirt today in mourning of a Dear Friend and Colleague, Floribert Chebeya of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and his driver. Floribert lost his life few months ago under quizzical circumstances. On this day, as we focus on the protection of Human Rights Defenders, we are reminded too well of the extreme risk to which we are all subjected. I have been informed that five policemen should go on trial this month but the circumstances of the driver remains unknown. Floribert's death is a testimony to the heartless character of repressive governments and their agents. It echoes the urgent need to provide the protective environment for all defenders around the world who must confront the evils of their society. They are the Nathans of our day and need refuge. This ghastly act demands collective action and justice.

On this day, and in this way, I call urgent attention to the plight of all human defenders and citizens of the world who continue to suffer under excruciating circumstances as they struggle for the respect of human rights. I urge the international community, the Dutch Government and all of our friends to continue to pressurize the Government of Congo and similar governments to ensure that justice are done. The murderers of Defenders must not go free!

The blood, sweat and tears of many activists have made freedom and democracy possible. Many defenders continue to make the ultimate sacrifice so that the majority of our people can live in dignity.

I pay tribute to all of you and dedicate this day to all human rights defenders around the world. I call on the world community to recommit itself and transcend the narrow commitment enshrined in the declarations of human rights Defenders of 1998: the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Everyone by this declaration can be a human rights defender. In 2004, the African Commission decided in its session to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders. In Europe, the European Union has developed specific guidelines to assist defenders. These efforts are laudable but we must transcend the narrow bounds of declarations and rhetoric and become more practical.

The issue of human rights cannot be postponed, compromised or negotiated. Many Human Rights Defenders are increasingly at risk and needs shelter. Nations of the world must help create the working and living environment and ease immigration procedures through the shelter city initiative. I urge this with utmost speed and urgency.

Dear Friends, Today like every year, the world is summoned to reflect on the universal commitment to human rights as articulated on December 10, 1948. In solemn reflection we recommit ourselves to the respect for human dignity.

Today, simultaneous reflections and reawakening are taking place all over the world. I have been opportune by an invitation by the Justitia et Pax, Netherlands to travel here from Liberia, West Africa and join you in your days of reflection. I am honoured but humbled by your invitation.

As a human rights lawyer who had the experience of living here in Exile for two years, I hold dear the memories and nostalgia of the Netherlands. Its tulips, the winter, its people so charming and helpful provided temporary shelter for reflection, work, study and support to enable me live in hope and prepare for my return to Liberia. It is this preparation that has helped me contribute to the rebuilding of my country.

I am sure many Dutch Citizens must be proud of this singular contribution to Liberia after its years of war and devastation. My story here in Holland, the support of the Dutch Government and its people and prominent individuals most of whom I cannot name here give your country a human face. I always believed this is the real character of the Dutch People.

The proposed **shelter city initiative** for human rights defenders could produce many leaders for the future. There is a list of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and other renowned scholars like Einstein who sought refuge elsewhere but later contributed positively to humanity. I am told that Gems are found in otherwise dirty surroundings.

The renowned city of Den Hague, my former home, the International Legal Capital of the World, the City of Justice and Peace is challenged to lead the way as one of the first shelter cities of the World. You have been a global leader for justice. You cannot fail us now.

On this day, I am humbled by your invitation but provoked by a world receding into fear, xenophobia, right-wing extremism, neo-conservative philosophy, the lust for materialism and individualism. In short, a world where violations of international laws are masked in insecurity and fear.

This is why I will share with you on this Human Rights Day my thoughts on the Topic: Human Rights: NEW CHALLENGES, NEW VISION

For more than 30 years I have endured an optimistic journey to defend human rights internationally. I do so believing the tenets of human rights are universal, inherent, inalienable, and indivisible.

Since 1948, the world has experienced the evolution of the human rights agenda. The generation of 1948 sought to end human miseries and indignities by offering the Universal Declaration as a source of redemption.

In the 60s, the Universal Declaration was refined into legally scripted conventions obligating States. The generation of the 70s saw additional developments with the formation of new mechanisms and commissions while the period of the 80s-2000s witnessed the emergence of legally enforceable and judicable mechanisms.

Through these institutions, justice and due process and the end to impunity for crimes against humanity and violations of human rights were pursued. These progressive developments of the human rights regime were erected on the backs of human rights defenders around the world. These developments, however, will not

impact the world, if like domestic laws, they are seen as bias and discriminatory: where the rich and powerful are excluded, where justice is for the weak and enforced only by the strong but not the law. The law must enrich human expectations and ensure that all low or high must become subjects of international justice. No nation or leader must be allowed to escape the claws of international justice based on a false sense of supremacy. This is what we seek. This is double standards.

Fellow Defenders and Friends, we have reasons to celebrate progress with international trials of dictators and mass murderers. Alleged perpetrators are being brought to justice before international tribunals. We celebrate these victories. Few years ago this was an illusion that has become possible. We must consolidate these gains and continue to hold the feet of governments and others to the fire.

As we celebrate these victories there are few issues and concerns that threatens us and could force us into retreat.

Let me mention few of these concerns:

**The War on Terrorism:** The spectre of 911 continues to haunt us. It was an attack on human decency. But with the formulations of new legal regime to protect democracy, new tools and weapons were place in the hands of dictators to violate individual and collective liberties. In many countries around the world new legislations were enacted and in some cases genuine defenders of human rights fell victims to all kinds of characterizations (conspirators, terrorists, etc.). We must seek to reverse this trend and create the avenue for laws to be enforced not out of anger, fear, and public anxiety but out of fairness and the pursuit of justice. The United States must therefore assume leadership in this regards.

As we gather here, we hold no illusion of the complex and often distressful national environment in which we all work. Our overriding concern therefore is to postulate a world free of humiliation and abuse of human rights.

The universal application of respect for the rule of law is lacking and democratic entitlements are constantly jeopardized. In Europe, the desire and pursuit of materialism compels the state to pander to right-wing and neo-conservative thinking as the way of finding solutions to their problem. This alternative is reversing the historic gains that Europe has made as a forerunner for modern state development. The so-called Fortress Europe is fastly becoming Dante's Hell.

The People of Europe know too well that the Island of Paradise that you seek to create can disappear in a sea of anarchy as your prosperity will never benefit you if it is achieved at the expense of human dignity. This is what I refer to as the **Western and Eurocentric Tragedy:** Human rights in the West and particularly in Europe are under threat and in retreat. The rise of rightist and so-called populist movement continues to feed on insecurity and indifference.

All over Europe and in the Netherlands, new laws and procedures are being developed to subject both its citizens and strangers alike to inhumane conditions. This is unacceptable.

I have resided in the Netherlands but it has become a strange place for me. I cannot recognize this country anymore. Development aid has been cut. Detention centres are being reinforced for asylum seekers and immigrants.

Your core values and those values that brought honour and respect to your nation are being negated. This is a historic tragedy for a continent whose history is built on refuge and terrible experience of violence. Where

is the Spanish Nunca Mas!!!! NEVER AGAIN!!!! This society needs the real human rights defenders to stand up.

I have watched on television the horrifying images of the Roma being ejected and removed from France. Europe must act collectively and condemn this act of inhumanity.

My Dear Friends, I am in Europe and must therefore speak truth to Europe on this International human rights day. If the treatment to the Dalit in India is wrong, the TWA in Central Africa and other minorities around the world are inhumane then we must in this day and age condemn the treatment of the Roma's in Europe and their expulsion from France. We must not remain silent in the face of ethnic separation and genocidal acts reminiscent of Jewish alienation during the Second World War and the experience of Sudan's Darfur.

All decent men and women, the churches and religious communities, the media and governments must frown on this tragedy in Europe. The European conscience is being challenged and my message to you today is to seek redemption. Years ago, it took a European Minister to lecture our governments in Africa about human rights. On this day, an African Minister will tell you that your act against asylum seekers, the Roma's and others are wrong. You are on the wrong side of history.

Your treatment of strangers tells a lot about your civility. Those who fail to demonstrate leadership and conviction when their values are challenged fail the test of conviction and conscience.

My Dear Friends forgive me for the harm I do your invitation but as an international advocate of such acclaim, I must speak to issues here in the Netherlands otherwise my conscience will chastise me. **"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"...**

In Africa, greedy incumbents and demagogic oppositions see elections as an end rather than a means to the full realization of democratic entitlements of citizens. The democratic process is intended to ensure the exercise of basic human rights (freedom of assembly, speech, opinion, association, the press, etc) can be exercised not just by elections. In Kenya, Zimbabwe and now in Ivory Coast resistance to the will of the majority presents a defy the tenets of democracy. In the face of these violent resistances, human rights are violated. Sanctions must be imposed and more innovative actions taken against those who suppress the will of the majority and violate their rights. Here new international laws must be enacted to bring such violators to justice.

The issue of distributive justice, the integrity question, lack of institutions to deliver justice and due process presents a democratic façade. Until we respect the genuine exercise of fundamental freedoms, Africa will remain shrouded in a prolonged transition subjecting its citizens to pitiful existence.

In Asia and other parts of the world, there is a pre-occupation on the economic aggression. China, India and other nations makes us more sensitive to the importance of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We must ensure that community rights regarding natural resources and corporate social responsibility be enhanced. I call on the Chinese Government on this Day to acknowledge the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and release him from Prison. We celebrate the freedom of the Burma leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Dear Colleagues, I have raised these issues not to highlight the impossibilities of our task but to seek renewed commitment for **the global new vision of a new world built on justice and respect for human dignity.**

With about 2.5 million people from about 127 countries being trafficked, with bonded labour, forced labour, sex trafficking and according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) more than 246 million children are being exploited, millions of women suffer various kinds of abuses, we need to act and act collective. Humanity is under attack.

This new vision must demand that our nations act individually and collectively to ensure that international laws are upheld; that human rights defenders will be protected and work in an environment free of harassment, threats and intimidation; that by building strong international networks and institutional capacity, we will succeed. The human rights struggle cannot be left to the human rights defenders alone. It is a wider responsibility of all peoples. We need movement not isolated islands.

As I take my seat, I have the firm belief that there is a universal contest between good and evil, good will eventually triumph over evil but good will not triumph by retreating from evil. Good must confront evil, by confronting evil; we offer society a moral alternative. **Don't ever ask why but ask why not????** By asking the question why not, you unveil the enormous strength of the human spirit. Conviction must be tested to convert.

We must not loose hope, we must remain optimistic. The world is changing because we exist.

I THANK YOU!!!!





## **Annex III List of participants**

### **Maria Balkandzhieva - Bulgaria**

Maria Balkandzhieva works at Amalipe. Working for the Roma community, Amalipe develops projects with a focus on lobby efforts, educational efforts and implementing specific cultural projects.

### **Justine Masika Bihamba – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Justine Masika Bihamba is the Director of Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes des Violences Sexuelles (SFVVS). SFVVS documents cases of war violence and sexual violence against women in war-torn Eastern Congo. In 2008 The Dutch Government awarded her the Dutch Human Rights Award.

### **Sylvestre Bwira – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Sylvestre Bwira Kyahi is a human rights activist and chairman of the Civil Society of Masisi. In August 2010 he was kidnapped after sending an open letter to the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. After a week of abduction and torture, he managed to escape the country in cooperation with MONUSCO, the Dutch Embassy and some friends on the international level. Early December, he arrived in the Netherlands for medical assistance and to demand more structural support from the international community for the deteriorated situation of human rights activists in the DRC.

### **Alexandra Delemenchuk – Georgia**

Alexandra Delemenchuk is Advisor International Affairs of the Women Information Center in Georgia. This organization works in the field of emancipation and women's rights. By organizing specific courses and providing information, the organization wants to further enhance women's capacities.

### **Smaranda Enache – Romania**

Smaranda Enache is the Vice-President of Liga Pro Europa. This organization strives towards the reduction of cultural tensions and racial stereotypes. The situation of the Roma, which are as well discriminated against in Romania is a central point of attention of the Liga Pro Europa.

### **Chris Franssen – The Netherlands**

Chris Franssen is a human rights activist. A former chaplain at the Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, he became chaplain of the Expulsion Centre Schiphol-Oost in 2008. He is a defender of human rights for asylum seekers and irregular immigrants in detention in the Netherlands.

### **Germaine Girighiri – Democratic Republic Congo**

Germaine Girighiri is a human rights defender from Eastern Congo. She works in close cooperation with the various human rights organizations towards respect of basic human rights in war-torn Eastern Congo.

### **Moise Kambere – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Moise Kambere is the General Secretary of the Groupe d'Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Paix (GADHOP). A network of 20 human rights organizations working in East-Congo, GADHOP strives towards peace and the protection of human rights defenders.

### **Agit Mirzoev – Georgia**

Agit Mirzoev is the Director of the Public Movement Multinational Georgia (PMMG). PMMG is an umbrella organization which provides resource support and cooperates with the representatives of the more than 18 diaspora organizations and 56 grassroots NGOs working in the field for the protection of rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups residing in Georgia.

**Patrick Kikandi Mulemeri – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Patrick Kikandi Mulemeri is the Director of Action Sociale pour la Paix et le Développement (ASPD). ASPD works to protect human rights in war-torn Eastern Congo. They monitor the human rights situation, publish statements about abuses and conduct lobby activities at the local and national authorities towards ending impunity.

**Stella Murungi – Uganda**

Stella Murungi works at the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network. By publishing independent reports about the situation of human rights defenders, by making cases of violence against human right defenders public and by implementing lobby activities towards the authorities GADHOP tries to support and protect human right defenders in East Africa.

**Manjula Pradeep – India**

Manjula Pradeep is the Director of Navsarjan (New Development). Navsarjan is a grassroots Dalit organization dedicated to ensuring human rights for all. Their main mission is to eliminate discrimination based on untouchability practices; to ensure equality of status and opportunities for all, regardless of caste, class or gender; and to ensure the rule of law. Navsarjan is the largest Dalit organization in Gujarat, active in more than 3,000 villages, as well as in the cities.

**Miralem Tursinovic – Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Miralem Tursinovic is the coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Anna Lindh foundation, which wants to bring people together from across the Mediterranean to improve mutual respect among cultures. Since its launch in 2005 the organization developed a region-wide network of over 3000 civil society organisations.

**Samuel Kofi Woods – Liberia**

Samuel Kofi Woods is a Liberian human rights activist, journalist, politician and academic. In November 1991 he became head of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church in Liberia. In 1994, Samuel Kofi Woods founded and still runs the Forefront Organisation, which documented many human rights abuses during the Second Liberian Civil War. He won the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1994 and received the Pope's human rights medal. Woods is the current Minister of Public Works in the Government of Liberia under President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

## Annex IV Guests

### **Tori Eggherman – The United States of America**

Tori Eggherman lived and worked in Iran for four years (2003 – 2007) and was co-author of the blog View from Iran ([viewfromiran.blogspot.com](http://viewfromiran.blogspot.com)). She is currently part of the international team for United4Iran and works with Arseh Sevom, a NGO dedicated to building civil society in Iran and related communities.

### **Astrid Frey – the Netherlands**

Astrid Frey is Programme Officer of Cordaid's women and violence programme. Cordaid combines more than 90 years' experience and expertise in emergency aid and structural poverty eradication. One of the biggest international development organisation, it has a network of almost a thousand partner organisations in 36 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

### **Bogale Kassaye – Ethiopia & the Netherlands**

Bogale Kassaye is the President of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRC). The EHRC has multiple offices in Ethiopia which lobby for human rights and document human rights abuses.

### **Daniel Legutke – Germany**

Daniel Legutke is staff member for human rights with the German Commission for Justice and Peace. The German Commission for Justice and Peace assembles the Catholic institutions and organisations which work at the international level in Germany. Justice and Peace is their joint voice in society and politics and wants to draw the German public's attention to the world-wide issues of justice and peace.

### **Ewoud Plate – the Netherlands**

Ewoud Plate is Senior Legal Training and Advocacy Officer at Aim for Human Rights. Aim for Human Rights supports organisations which fight for human rights all over the world. Local organisations are often the first to notice that human rights are violated and are well-placed to act immediately. Aim for Human Rights enhances their capacities through trainings.

### **Jeanet van der Woude – the Netherlands**

Jeanet van der Woude is Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Dutch section of Amnesty International. Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.8 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights. The vision of Amnesty International is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

### **Team of Justitia et Pax Netherlands**

Victor Scheffers; Sebastiaan van der Zwaan; Annemiek van Voorst; Jagoda Paukovic; Nienke Vermeulen; Marijn Peperkamp; Nathalie van Schagen; Jakob de Jonge; Radboud Reijn; Floor Schuiling; Sara Pavan; Tony Fernandes; Martine Benschop; Anne van Dalen; Wim Ruijgrok; Nicole Janssen; Wendy Sasse; Bastiaan de Jong.

## Annex V Speakers

### **Vincent Forest – Belgium**

Vincent Forest is the Head of the EU office of Front Line. Front Line is the international foundation for the protection of human rights defenders. Front Line was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk: people who work non-violently for any or all of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Front Line aims to address the protection needs identified by defenders themselves.

### **Michel Forst – France**

Michel Forst is the Secretary General of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. The commission is the official advisory body for the government on the subjects of human rights and humanitarian action. They support the Prime Minister and the government with advice regarding the questions within these fields. The commission grants the French Human Rights Award "*Prix des Droits de l'homme de la République française - Liberté - Égalité - Fraternité*", which is awarded each year by the French Prime Minister.

### **Jakob de Jonge- the Netherlands**

Jakob de Jonge is researcher and author of the report on humanity in aliens' detention centres in the Netherlands. For Justitia et Pax Netherlands, he is spokesperson for alternatives for detention regarding (political) refugees and asylum seekers that are not awarded a (temporarily) visa.

### **Bjorn Pettersson – Switzerland**

Bjorn Pettersson is the Director of the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR). Based in Geneva, ISHR supports the engagement of human rights defenders with the UN and regional human rights systems. In turn, ISHR also aims to make these systems more effective, more accessible to human rights defenders, and more responsive to their concerns. They work at national, regional and international level.

## **Annex VI Chairpersons and panel members**

### **Jan van der Kolk – the Netherlands**

Jan van der Kolk is Chair of the Working Group on Refugees of the Council of Churches. As well as a former deputy director of a large department at the Ministry of Transportation and the Environment, he has been a board member of the organisation for development cooperation ICCO. From 1999 until 2005 he was president of the Foundation Church and World.

### **Maria Martens – the Netherlands**

Maria Martens is the current President of SIMAVI, a development cooperation organisation. Ms. Martens was a member of the European Parliament from 1999-2009 on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party. In the European Parliament Ms Martens was spokesperson on i.a. Development Cooperation.

### **Barbara Oomen – the Netherlands**

Barbara M. Oomen is Associate Professor of Law at Roosevelt Academy, with a specific interest in human rights, socio-scientific approaches to law, and the relationship between law and cultural diversity. Prof. Oomen also holds an endowed Chair in Legal Pluralism at the University of Amsterdam.

### **Victor Scheffers, the Netherlands**

Victor Scheffers is Director of Justitia et Pax Netherlands, the Catholic organisation for justice and peace in The Netherlands. Inspired by the social teachings from the Catholic church, Justitia et Pax stands up for human rights and social justice, worldwide and in the Netherlands.

### **Peter Tak – the Netherlands**

Peter Tak is the Chairman of the Justitia et Pax Commission Netherlands and Emeritus Professor of Law at Radboud University Nijmegen. Prof. Tak is a leading comparatist in criminal law. Justitia et Pax Netherlands is the Catholic organisation for Justitia et Pax in The Netherlands. Inspired by the social teachings from the Catholic church, Justitia et Pax stands up for human rights and social justice, worldwide and in the Netherlands.

### **Lionel Veer – the Netherlands**

Lionel Veer is the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador and as such supports the central and recognizable profile for human rights in international affairs. Moreover, the Human Rights Ambassador ensures cohesion in Dutch human rights policy. Prior to his current post, Lionel Veer was Ambassador for the Netherlands in Croatia.



*A report by **Justitia et Pax Netherlands**  
P.O. Box 16334, 2500 BH The Hague  
[www.justitiaetpax.nl](http://www.justitiaetpax.nl)*