



Roundtable on: Women Human Rights Defenders – Activism in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

Monday, February 24, 2020 from 15:15 – 17:15 at swisspeace, Sonnenbergstrasse 17, Bern

With the participation of two **finalists for the Martin Ennals Award 2020**

- **Huda Al-Sarari** Lawyer and human rights activist, Yemen
- **Sizani Ngubane** Founder of Rural Women's Movement, South Africa

Each year, the Martin Ennals Award rewards human rights defenders from around the world who distinguish themselves by their strong commitment to promoting human rights - often at the risk of their own lives. In 2020, for the first time the Jury nominated three women who defend the fundamental rights of their communities in sensitive contexts.

Within the framework of this KOFF roundtable, two Martin Ennals finalists will share insights into their work and the challenges they encounter as women who defend human rights. **While their causes are different, violent conflicts in both settings have shaped their activism. Their status as women, likewise, has proven both an advantage and a liability in advocating for human rights in patriarchal societies.**

Ms. Huda Al-Sarari has investigated, exposed, and challenged a network of secret prisons run by foreign governments in Yemen since 2015, where thousands of men and boys suffered arbitrary detention and torture. By collecting evidence and bringing forced disappearances to public attention, Huda contributed to the documentation of human rights violations during the conflict.

Ms. Sizani Ngubane began her activism during South Africa's struggle to end apartheid. She founded the Rural Women's Movement, a unique organization striving against gender-based violence and for women's access to land, education, land rights, property, and inheritance rights in courts operating under customary law.

Following two individual conversations with each of the defenders, the KOFF Roundtable will provide space for an open discussion and reflection on the experiences of woman human rights defenders. What are challenges of conflict and post-conflict settings for human rights? How can human rights activism in conflict and post-conflict settings inform peacebuilding? What are common challenges that women human rights defenders face, and how to address them? To what extent does a gender dimension inform human rights work? What role can Switzerland play in supporting women human rights defenders in conflict and post-conflict settings?

If you would like to participate, kindly send a confirmation e-mail to [Hannah Elias](mailto:hannah.elias@swisspeace.ch) by 17 February 2020. We look forward to a rich exchange and gainful discussions!

Program

15:15 Welcome and introduction

15:25 Introduction of the Martin Ennals Award Finalists

15:30 Human Library Round One

- a. Storytelling and conversation with Huda Al-Sarari
- b. Storytelling and conversation with Sizani Ngubane

16:00 Human Library Round Two

- a. Storytelling and conversation with Huda Al-Sarari
- b. Storytelling and conversation with Sizani Ngubane

16:30 Reflection and Discussion

17:10 Closing

Moderator

Anna Leissing, Head of the Swiss Peacebuilding Platform KOFF