



PRESS RELEASE

Madrid, 20 May 2009

The Martin Ennals Award goes again to a Human Rights Defender from Iran

**Today, the Jury of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA)
announces as the 2009 Laureate:**

Mr. Emad Baghi, a leading Iranian human rights defender based in Tehran. He founded the Society for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights, and has been a vigorous and outspoken opponent of the death penalty in Iran. His campaigning includes a scholarly examination of Islamic law (shari`a) on the subject, in which he demonstrates the absence of any doctrinal requirement for maintaining capital punishment. In addition, Mr. Baghi's inventory of death row prisoners in Iran, including juvenile offenders, has been an important resource for UN human rights bodies as well as human rights groups outside the country. Mr. Baghi has spent four years in prison over the past decade for his campaigning against the death penalty and other rights activities. Currently out of jail, he still faces charges relating to his work for the defence of prisoners rights. Mr. Baghi suffers from serious heart and kidney ailments; in August 2008 physicians of the prison in which he was detained declared his condition critical.

The Chairman of the Jury of the MEA, Hans Thoolen, describes the laureate as "*an exceptionally brave man defending human rights despite imprisonment and poor health*".

The Ceremony of the Martin Ennals Award will take place in Geneva in November 2009.

MEA: the main award of the human rights movement. The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders (MEA) is a unique collaboration among ten of the world's leading human rights organizations to give **protection** to human rights defenders worldwide.

The **Jury** is composed of the following NGOs: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, International Federation for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, Front Line, International Commission of Jurists, German Diakonie, International Service for Human Rights and HURIDOCS.

Previous laureates : Mutabar Tadjibaeva, Uzbekistan (2008); Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, Burundi and Rajan Hoole-Kopalasingham Sritharan, Sri Lanka; Akbar Ganji, Iran and Arnold Tsunga, Zimbabwe; Aktham Naisse, Syria; Lida Yusupova, Russia; Alirio Uribe Muñoz, Colombia; Jacqueline Moudeina, Chad; Peace Brigades International; Immaculée Birhaheka, DR Congo; Natasha Kandic, Yugoslavia; Eyad El Sarraj, Palestine; Samuel Ruiz, Mexico; Clement Nwankwo, Nigeria; Asma Jahangir, Pakistan; Harry Wu, China.

Patrons of the Martin Ennals Award: Asma Jahangir, Barbara Hendricks, José Ramos-Horta, Adama Dieng, Leandro Despouy, Louise Arbour, Robert Fulghum, Theo van Boven and Werner Lottje†.

*For further information, please contact: Luis Marreiros, Coordinator, +41228094925
marreiros@martinennalsaward.org or visit www.martinennalsaward.org*