



**FRONT LINE
DEFENDERS AWARD
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS AT RISK**

2024 GLOBAL LAUREATES

f FRONT LINE
DEFENDERS

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About **Front Line Defenders**

Front Line Defenders is an international human rights organisation founded in Dublin in 2001, with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk (HRDs).

Front Line Defenders works to improve the security and protection of human rights defenders and organisations around the world at risk for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work. As identified by human rights defenders themselves, the organisation responds to protection and security needs by providing support through grants, capacity building, visibility, networking, and advocacy, at the international, regional and local levels. Front Line Defenders has been awarded the 2018 United Nations Human Rights Prize.

Front Line Defenders maintains its headquarters in Dublin, an EU Office in Brussels, and regionally-based field staff in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe & Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa.

About **The Front Line Defenders Award**

The annual Front Line Defenders Award was established in 2005 to honour the work of human rights defenders who are courageously making outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of the human rights of others, often at great personal risk to themselves.

The Award focuses international attention on the work and struggles of HRDs. This provides them with a greater national and international platform to speak about and advocate

for the human rights issues they are defending, while also contributing to their personal security.

Up until 2018, Front Line Defenders named one Global Laureate each year. Since 2018, Front Line Defenders began honouring five Regional Award Winners, with the Irish jury selecting one among them as the Global Laureate. In 2021, Front Line Defenders began recognising all regional winners as Laureates.



MOZAMBIQUE

Gamito Dos Santos Carlos

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AJOPAZ, THE YOUTH ASSOCIATION FOR PEACE, AND MEMBER OF KÓXUKHURO

Gamito dos Santos Carlos, a 33-year-old human rights defender from Nampula, northern Mozambique, is the executive director of AJOPAZ, the Youth Association for Peace. His human rights work centres around social, civil and political rights and accountability. Gamito has been advocating for the protection of human rights activists and engaging with young people to advocate for significant social changes in his community, to foster justice and sustainable decision-making by authorities. He is also a member of the Friends of Amurane Association for a Better Mozambique - KÓXUKHURO, as well as an analyst and Provincial Coordinator of the Mozambican Network of Human Rights Defenders (RMDDH).

Growing up, Gamito had a difficult childhood. His parents separated when he was young, and he has lived independently since the age of 12. His father was an agricultural extension worker and his mother a domestic worker, both of whom have passed away. Despite these difficulties, he managed to complete his education and after finishing school, he became involved in activism, working first on sexual and reproductive health for young people. To support himself and his siblings, he had a number of jobs.

Gamito later became involved in public service. Upon the recommendation of his mentor, the late Dr Mahamudo Amurane, he joined the Nampula Municipal Council, where he held various positions. He also worked for two years as a communications and press officer for then President of the Nacala Porto Municipality. However, he resigned that post to fully pursue his passion - defending human rights and opposing the exploitation of the country's resources. He has worked on a number of notable different initiatives calling for accountability, working in a context where the management and administration of public services and infrastructure has not been as effective as it should be. Gamito cites a lack of understanding on the part of politicians, citizens' lack of information, and a culture of conformity and fear, as reasons why little change has been achieved.

In 2017, Gamito intervened in accusations in schools regarding the illegal payment of guards. He also worked on ensuring the Namiteka neighbourhood had rightful access to water by ensuring the replacement of their water supply system. He has helped families to recover illegally taken land, and many other matters similar to this. His community sees him as someone who can assist on a number of social matters and

he is trusted as someone who can support and advise them on local civil and political rights.

Gamito was particularly active in 2023 when elections took place in Mozambique. He implemented local governance election projects which aimed to train young people on how to take part in decision-making processes in Municipal Assemblies, as well as organising election observation teams. He helped to get 105 young people released after they were arrested for peacefully protesting the 2023 election results on the grounds that they were fraudulent.

In May 2023, Gamito spoke out against the unlawful demolition and eviction of vendors from the Nampula Market, which had left 1,000 of them without a livelihood or compensation. He noted that the market's destruction could result in an increase in illegal activities, since many young people who depended on it for their livelihoods would be left without job opportunities. However, his intervention resulted in death threats, intimidation of his family through anonymous phone calls and an attempted robbery at his home. When trying to file a lawsuit demanding compensation for the victims, Gamito was ambushed in his car, his window was smashed and documents related to the case were taken.

In Mozambique, those who defend human rights face an increasingly repressive environment that restricts their ability to organise peaceful demonstrations and protests. Gamito's human rights work has exposed him to grave dangers, including kidnapping, torture, threats, intimidation and more. At a march on 18 March 2023, in honour of the late activist and musician, Edson da Luz, also known as 'Azagaia', Gamito was kidnapped and tortured, accused of creating instability in the country, and questioned about his human rights work before being released the following day. His home was raided three times, and in November 2023, unidentified people held





him and his family hostage in their home, even putting a gun to his seven-year-old daughter's head. They also confiscated his work equipment, including mobile phones and his work computer, which contained sensitive data.

The repeated raids on his home have forced Gamito to leave the neighbourhood he has lived in since childhood, and his family has suffered ongoing social and economic impacts of the intimidation against him. Due to his activism, he has lost his job with the Municipality of Nampula and the negative stigma associated with him makes it difficult for him to find new work. Gamito has also experienced social isolation and reduced social networks, as close friends and family often face secondary targeting as a result of their ties to him.

In Mozambique, it is also difficult to secure sustainable and sufficient financial resources needed to carry out his human rights work and to follow through on outcomes. However, despite all these challenges, Gamito has consistently defended democracy, human rights and anti-corruption initiatives in Mozambique, having a significant impact in improving conditions for the Nampula community.

Gamito dreams of a fairer, equal country; where health, education, housing and employment are rights which are properly realised, where equity and gender equality are accepted without prejudice, where young people and women are involved in decision-making processes, where politicians treat people with respect and dignity and adhere to the rule of law, where freedom of speech is a respected right, and where democracy is genuine and people exercise their rights without fear.



HONDURAS

Colectiva de Mujeres Trans Muñecas de Arcoiris

TRANS WOMEN COLLECTIVE

Muñecas is a collective of trans women from the city of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela in Honduras, founded in 2008. Muñecas works under the LGBTBI+ Arcoiris Association of Honduras with the aim of creating a safe space for trans sex worker women. The members of Muñecas started as volunteers of the Arcoiris Association, where they became more aware of the situation that trans people were facing in Honduras. With the support of the Arcoiris Association, Muñecas members received training related to their rights as LGBTBI+ people. They then started to document human rights violations specifically against trans women in 2006 and two years later, on 31 October 2008, the collective was formally created as a trans women organisation. Most of its members are sex workers, informal workers, stylists, housekeepers, among others.

Muñecas' mission is to reduce the stigma and discrimination of Honduran society against trans people. They do this by providing correct information and strengthening support for the trans population in relation to human rights, sexual and reproductive health and prevention of HIV, AIDS, and other STIs. They also campaign for legal rights, education reform, advocacy, training and visibility. In the last five years, they have trained and empowered more than 100 trans women.

Their work has not come without risk, as their members have faced physical, psychological, and verbal attacks, and have been killed as well. The LGBTIQ+ community in Honduras, including human rights defenders, face a lot of violence, stigma and discrimination in society. They often face rejection from family members and severe discrimination when accessing basic services like healthcare, housing, police and legal assistance, and more. They operate and live in an extremely hostile and high-risk context, where they could be targeted through complaints filed against them, threats, murder, physical violence, restriction of access to public services, robbery with violence, degrading treatment, domestic violence, forced displacement, violation of property, kidnapping and sexual violence. As human rights defenders, members of Muñecas have a double layer of vulnerability. They are adversely targeted, firstly due to their identity, and secondly due to their work defending trans rights. Over the years the work of Muñecas has led to high-risk situations for a number of its members, who have faced threats, physical, psychological and verbal attacks, and killings. At least every year, a member of Muñecas is killed.

In view of this context, Muñecas provides support to trans sex worker women in a number of ways. Muñecas thus

accompanies victims of attacks and violence in filing complaints and seeking legal support, offering advice related to accessing medical services like hormonal therapy as well as its effects, documenting and reporting attacks and killings of trans people at a national level, and more. Muñecas also works on campaigns pushing for the state to provide the legal option for trans people to change their name in their identity documents, and reforming of the narrative of trans people in the education curriculum. Muñecas believes that it is important for children and young people to be taught the correct narrative about trans people in order to adequately transform society at a deeper, long-term level.





In the last five years, they have trained and empowered more than a hundred trans women. They have also worked at an advocacy level, having participated in national and international forums where they reported the situation of trans people in the country. They are currently working in the promotion of the National Agenda of Trans People, as well as the Human Rights Agenda of LGBTB people. They are also supervising the compliance of the Honduran government of the decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Vicky Hernández v. Honduras.

The members of Muñecas dedicate their lives to the defence of human rights, fighting for a more equal world, in which respect, tolerance, empathy is present. For the members of Muñecas, being able to have a safe space where they meet and learn more about their human rights is an invaluable experience. This has helped them to give more visibility to their work as a community, feeling more comfortable participating in parades and public spaces, and also when supporting other trans people in difficult situations, as they feel they are not alone anymore.





Balochistan,
PAKISTAN

Sammi Deen Baloch

GENERAL SECRETARY, VOICE FOR BALOCH MISSING PERSONS

Sammi Deen Baloch is a Baloch woman human rights defender from Mashkai, Awaran District of Balochistan province, Pakistan. She is the General Secretary of the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), a non-governmental organisation that represents and supports victims and relatives of enforced disappearances in Balochistan. In June 2009, at the age of 10, Sammi's father, Dr Deen Mohammed Baloch, was forcibly disappeared in Khuzdar, Balochistan. She began persistently campaigning for the release of her father, which further led to her deeper, collective involvement in advocating against enforced disappearances in Balochistan by state forces.

Following the enforced disappearance of her father, Sammi together with her family attended court hearings, and campaigned relentlessly for his release. In October 2013, Sammi, along with family members of victims of enforced disappearances, organised a 3000km long walk from Quetta to Karachi, and onwards to Islamabad. She was moved by the struggles of families, mainly mothers, wives and sisters, who did not know whom to approach for support in fighting for their loved ones to return. Sammi has led campaigns and actions including marches, protests and sit ins; documented violations and cases of enforced disappearance; and assisted families with registering cases with relevant authorities. She has been a vocal advocate on women's and girls rights, the

right to education and ongoing violations including killings, mass graves and the collective punishment of families.

Her human rights work is especially significant given the extremely dangerous context in Balochistan, the largest mineral and resource rich province of Pakistan. The province has seen repeated rounds of insurgency and violence since it was annexed to the state of Pakistan in 1947. The province experiences crippling poverty and systemic, deliberate exclusion and denial of basic services, including education and health. The recent two-decade-long insurgency has claimed thousands of lives, and sadly many youth. Pakistan, through its military and proxy agents, have silenced dissent by committing widespread violations, of which enforced disappearances are a key strategy, against many Baloch people.

In November 2023, Sammi was an important figure in the Baloch Long March, a campaign in response to the extra judicial killing of a Baloch youth. The campaign began as a sit in protest in Turbat, followed by a march to Islamabad, garnering national and international attention to the plight of enforced disappearances. Protestors including Sammi were blocked from entering the capital, beaten and arrested by Pakistani security forces.

Sammi has also been vocal against the targeting of human rights defenders and families of the disappeared as reprisal for their peaceful campaigns for truth, redress and justice. Being a victim of this herself, she understands the experience of human rights defenders and dissidents who speak out against violations and discrimination and face violent reprisals including killings, disappearance, arrest, detention and torture. Surveillance is routine and many have experienced false legal cases and other forms of reprisals.

Sammi has faced persecution and reprisals including violence towards herself and family members. Since 2009, the military have raided her home several times, burned and seized valuables and even tried to abduct her brother. The family were forced to relocate to Karachi where her work continued, and threats against her escalated. In 2016, at 17 years old, she was forcibly disappeared by the Pakistani intelligence agency and held in detention in Quetta (the capital of Balochistan) for seven days, where she was subjected to abuse and threats. She was warned to stop her work and advocacy on human rights and against enforced disappearances. In 2018 her home in the village was unlawfully seized by the military and is still under their control. Family members including uncles and cousins were arrested, tortured and even killed in custody as reprisal for her work. Her brother was compelled to leave Pakistan due to escalating threats. She suffers ongoing attacks on social media and defamation campaigns which attempt to tarnish her work, character and safety in Pakistan. She faces physical and digital surveillance of her movements and communications - in 2021 her phone was hacked, data and photographs leaked and shared widely in an attempt to discredit her work. She has been labelled as a terrorist on social media by powerful figures including parliamentarians and government ministers.





Despite being targeted and risking so much, Sammi remains undeterred, driven by her unwavering commitment to justice and the protection of human rights in Balochistan. Her work has enabled thousands of women and girls to stand up for their rights and has brought attention to the struggles of the Baloch people. It also demonstrates the persistence of her community's struggle for rights and justice and builds hope for those who walk alongside her.





CYPRUS

Doros Polykarpou

FOUNDING MEMBER OF KISA - MOVEMENT FOR EQUALITY, SUPPORT, ANTIRACISM

Doros Polykarpou is a leading human rights defender and founding member of KISA (the Movement for Equality, Support, and Anti-Racism). He is an expert on migration, asylum, discrimination, racism, and trafficking in Cyprus. For over 27 years, he has dedicated himself to defending and advocating for the rights of people on the move and tackling discrimination and xenophobia in Cyprus, navigating the unique socio-political environment of the small island nation with strong conservative elements.

Doros first served as the President of the Steering Committee of KISA and then as Executive Director for 15 years. For the past four years, he continued his work as a volunteer activist with KISA. Under his leadership, KISA has managed to provide support to a number of migrants and asylum seekers through direct support, campaigning and mobilisation, strategic litigation, advocacy, documentation, and more. Over the course of 27 years of activism, Doros has been the target of a multitude of attacks, including defamation campaigns, criminal prosecutions and death threats - the latest being the bomb attack on KISA's offices on 5 January 2024, with the planting of an explosive device right opposite Doros's workstation at KISA's offices.

Doros was born in Silikou, a mixed village where Turkish and Greek Cypriots lived together peacefully, even during intense inter-communal conflicts. In the early 1970s, despite his young age, Doros and his family suffered at the hands of the far-right paramilitary organisation EOKA B, which with the support of the Greek junta, violently overthrew the government in 1974. Doros credits his upbringing for helping him to perceive the realities around him and to understand the differences and fluidity of each person and their identity, which influenced his life choices.

In the 1980s, Doros moved to Germany to study where he stayed for 10 years working and studying. He was actively involved in the German student movement and the European Peace Movement, and served for several years as the elected representative of international students at German universities. Returning to Cyprus in the early 1990s, he engaged in the movement for reconciliation and reunification of the divided island and worked to protect children and women from domestic violence. Cyprus first developed its immigration policy in 1996, and strong right-wing conservatism led to a model focused on temporary residence and filling of undesired jobs by migrants. The policy ultimately led to a rapid increase of migrants, along with strong sentiments of racism and discrimination.

In response to this, Doros founded KISA together with other activists with the objective of combating discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers, and addressing human trafficking. KISA's criticism of migrant rights violations was seen as a conflict with social institutions. Later, in the early 2010s, migration became even more central in right-wing political debates, increasing racism and negative rhetoric towards migration, making the context for KISA to work in even more difficult, but even more important. Hate speech, hate crimes, and racist violence reached unprecedented levels, especially with the racist pogroms in Chloraka and Limassol. KISA's human rights work became not only difficult, but dangerous. Unfortunately, KISA's and Doros's efforts have made him the target of numerous attacks, including defamation and criminal prosecutions. KISA's activities have been criminalised, to the point where they were falsely accused of corruption. These attacks worsened after the government portrayed refugees and migrants as threats to national security, and began to brand human rights defenders as traitors. The most recent attack occurred on 5 January 2024, when a bomb exploded in KISA's office, causing significant damage and posing a direct threat to Doros' life. He also faces public harassment and bullying as his contact numbers have been shared on the walls of public toilets, but police have failed to take any action.

In addition to these threats, the government's campaign against NGOs led to KISA's deregistration and the freezing of its bank accounts. Repeated attacks, defamation and threats not only exhaust their resources, but also reduce the impact of their work. Although they were later able to regain their status by registering as a non-profit company, ongoing harassment and limited resources continue to challenge their capacity to protect human rights.



Despite the threats and challenges, Doros finds great satisfaction in his work, engaging directly with individuals and migrant groups through a human rights-based approach and making positive changes in people's lives. One of the greatest successes he celebrates is watching people become stronger and more independent after being supported by KISA, gaining a sense of optimism and better prospects for their future. Doros Polykarpou's journey from a mixed ethnicity village in Cyprus to becoming a prominent human rights defender demonstrated his resilience and dedication.



“
I believe, the reason I do what I do is the conviction and confidence I feel to stand up against injustice and oppression.”

Doros Polykarpou



WE ARE NOT
Numbers

Gaza,
PALESTINE

We Are Not Numbers

YOUTH-LED PALESTINIAN STORYTELLING NON-PROFIT PROJECT

We Are Not Numbers (WANN) is a youth-led Palestinian nonprofit project established in the Gaza Strip in 2014, with the aim of telling the everyday, human stories of thousands of Palestinians. Their vision is to spread Palestinian voices and narratives, based on respect for human rights through the work of peaceful, non-violent, youth led Palestinians. When co-founder Ahmed Alnaouq lost his 23-year-old brother, Ayman, during an Israeli military attack on Palestinians in the summer of 2014, he was devastated, and sunk into a depression from which he thought he would never escape. During this time, he met American journalist Pam Bailey, who encouraged him to celebrate his brother's legacy by writing a story about him. Like many young people in Gaza, Ahmed was majoring in English literature to improve his language skills. Pam published the story on a Western news website, which was well-received beyond expectation. Ahmed and Pam realised that writing the story had brought some healing to him and that this could be done on a much bigger platform.

The idea came fully to fruition in early 2015 in collaboration with Dr. Ramy Abdu, chair of the board of directors for the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (Euro-Med Monitor). In a context where the media was dominated with news and stories of Palestinians as mere political numbers; living under occupation, amid war, WANN wanted to share the humanity of

Palestine beyond politics and numbers. It became a platform both to document human rights violations, but also to share the personal struggles and triumphs, tears and laughter, and the universal human experiences of Palestinians. The mission of WANN is to break stereotypes about Palestinians, by creating and empowering a new generation of Palestinian writers and thinkers who can share unfiltered stories of the Palestinian cause. Ahmed feels that Palestine is often misrepresented, and that WANN has an ethical and moral responsibility to correct that, giving victims of human rights violations a platform to speak themselves. WANN took the initiative to tell the stories of Palestinians, by Palestinians, instead of waiting for others to do so.

WANN pairs professional English writers from around the world with developing storytellers in Gaza, mentoring them on their writing journey. Almost a decade after its establishment, around 150 mentors have contributed to the development of over 1,300 stories by young Palestinian writers. Further, WANN has expanded its scope beyond written stories, including other expressive forms such as poems, photo exhibitions, visual reports, videos and short documentaries.

WANN has been instrumental in sharing unbiased stories from the ground since its inception. They have done outstanding

work in the last few months since the 7th October attacks on Gaza, documenting human rights violations by Israel and providing a safe space for Palestinians to write about and share their personal experiences through the war. WANN's platforms reach an audience of more than 100,000 people from around the world, hosting a website and social media pages on all major platforms, where they have garnered significant followings. Their stories have been translated into a number of languages.

Unfortunately, WANN's office in Gaza was completely destroyed during the war. One of WANN's co-founders and four writers on the ground were also killed during the war. Operating in Gaza under the current circumstances has become difficult, however, they continued their mission by setting up an office in the UK, and are currently engaged in a number of advocacy missions and speaking tours in Europe to advocate for the Palestinian cause. Western media outlets have also interviewed WANN writers to talk about what's happening on the ground, seeing them as trusted and unbiased voices. Sadly, Ahmed lost a further 21 family members during this war, and yet continues to tell his stories and advance the mission of WANN. WANN also faces challenges with funding and travel restrictions for mentors to enter Gaza.

Many writers express that WANN has been a sanctuary for them, as it has been a space to express themselves without restriction, to break the mental siege they often feel as Palestinians, to nurture the talents within them and have their voices heard. It is an honour for writers to be chosen as part of WANN's cohort, and something that is widely celebrated. It provides a springboard for many to go on to do important work both on the ground and around the world.





Urgent
Israeli military tanks besiege Al-Ahli Baptist hospital in Gaza
 PRCS teams are unable to move and reach those who are injured

BREAKING NEWS



nal political security all
 al: "The entrance to Shifa is fi
 ce we will not reach. We did n
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 get in Shifa is also the Hamas





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