

African activists defending human rights win the XVI Navarra International Solidarity Award

These activists are Theresa Kachindamoto, Hulo Guillabert, Victoria Nyanjura and Oumou Sall-Seck, who will receive the first prize, worth 25,000 €

The candidacy of “Mujeres Africanas y Derechos Humanos en África”, which comprises the work of Theresa Kachindamoto, Hulo Guillabert, Victoria Nyanjura and Oumou Sall-Seck, is the winner of the XVI Navarra International Solidarity Award, organized by the Government of Navarra and Laboral Kutxa, and worth 25,000 €, which has been awarded this morning in the Palace of Navarra. The jury has chosen it from a total of 13 candidates presented in this year's edition. This award aims to recognize people, NGOs or institutions that stand out for their work or trajectory in achieving the sustainable development goals, which mark the agenda of the United Nations from here to 2030.

The jury who decided the winner of the award has been chaired by Miguel Indurain Larraya and has had the participation of Miguel Parra Navarro, vice president of Social Rights of the Government of Navarra; Javier Cortajarena Goñi, territorial director of Caja Laboral; Paloma Bescansa Miguel, professor at the Public University of Navarra; Maria Victoria Vidaurre Garcés, president of AMEDNA (Association of businesswomen from Navarra); María Jesús Castillejo, journalist; Javier Pagoa Lorente, journalist. In addition, Andrés Carbonero Martínez has acted as secretary, in representation of the government of Navarra. Besides the awarded women, the finalists have been Tun Khin (President of Burmese Rohingya Organization UK) and The Halo Trust, a neutral, impartial and independent organization specialized in the elimination of anti-personnel mines (APM), unexploded ordnance (UXO) and improvised explosive devices (IED) in conflict or post-conflict countries.

The candidacy of “Mujeres Africanas y Derechos Humanos en África”, proposed by the Consortium Casa África, which includes four relevant women, Theresa Kachindamoto, Hulo Guillabert, Victoria Nyanjura and Oumou Sall-Seck, has been the winner of the XVI Navarra International Solidarity Award. They all work in countries such as Malawi, Senegal, Uganda and Mali in the fields of women's and children's rights and peace in conflicts.

As indicated by the Director General of Casa África in the presentation letter of the candidacy: "Women are the engine of the world and this is especially evident in Africa. Women there lead the social changes that favor a better, fairer world; in which human rights will not be violated. What could be better than presenting a joint candidacy with four women who represent the best of the African continent... Four women who struggle to dignify their society through the defense of human rights from four distant regions in the continent. Their work consists in the protection of women and children, whose most basic rights are violated either by war and armed conflicts, by customs and traditions that are not sustained or by spurious interests. "

Theresa Kachindamoto

A woman of a both overwhelming and modest fortress. She is the governor of Dezda, one of the most populous districts of Malawi and her struggle is focused on eradicating child marriage. In just 3 years she has managed to stop more than 2,000 marriages.

Since being elected governor of Dezda, one of the 27 districts of Malawi, located in southern Africa, tribal chief Theresa Kachindamoto has traveled to the most remote settlements in the region to address two problems: child marriage and the rituals of sexual initiation in girls and adolescents.

Chief Kachindamoto herself tells that, "I have worked as secretary general of the office for 27 years before I assumed the position of chief after my father's death 14 years ago. I consider child marriage to be an outdated and damaging tradition for boys and girls and for my country, Malawi, against human rights, mainly the right to education. Our tradition shows that when a girl gets married, she leaves school and automatically moves to her husband's house, where her task is to take care of the house and her children. "

Hulo Guillabert

She is a defender of the children's rights, especially child beggars (talibés) victims of human trafficking and the economic exploitation of adults in Senegal. Born in Senegal, passionate about African writing and literature, art and culture since her childhood, she has lived in different parts of the world (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Réunion, Quebec...) but at the same time she remains firm in her African roots. After doing consultancy for French companies, she embarked on the creation of a publishing house dedicated to show the strength of the African continent. She returned to Senegal in 2012 and founded the cultural space and art gallery Nubi Arts in Dakar. Deeply pan-African, she is an activist of the Renaissance Africaine and her online magazine Bonnes Nouvelles D'Afrique and the African Conscience Meetings with her monthly lectures at the African Renaissance Monument.

Victoria Nyanjura

Originally from Uganda. According to activist Victoria Nyanjura, governments, instead of protecting their population, have allowed their childhood to be snatched from them. Like her, a 36-year-old woman, abducted in 1996 by a paramilitary group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), when she was only 14 years old and was at St Mary's College. Thanks to the negotiations of a nun and a teacher, 109 out of the 139 kidnapped girls, were able to return to their families. But Victoria was not one of them and remained a prisoner for eight years before she could escape.

Raped and forced to marry a militia commander, she was transferred to South Sudan in 1997, where children became soldiers and girls in sex slaves, who had to give children to the members of the group. She was subjected to all kinds of torture and inhumane treatments. Beaten, she starved, lived outdoors, gave birth without medical assistance to her two children, and suffered all kinds of vexations that the military imagined.

Oumou Sall-Seck

Elected for the first time mayor of Goundam in the Timbuktu region (Mali) in July 2004, Oumou Sall-Seck is committed to the reconstruction of Mali, with a focus on the role of women in society and in the field of politics. For the past 20 years, she has attended seminars and conferences, among others, on governance in Mali, decentralization, cooperation, and international meetings on topics such as "Local-to-Global participatory democracy", "Fighting Violent extremism", "Women's rights". For her experienced she was re-elected mayor in May 2009.

Oumou Sall-Seck was prevented from exercising her role as mayor from April 2012 until August 2013, due to the jihadist occupation of part of Mali. In the years 2012 and 2013 she was devoted to the fight against violence in West Africa and the Sahel; reconciliation and dialogue at cross-border and interregional levels. Oumou Sall-Seck has participated in several regional meetings in Europe and has contributed to the restoration of Mali's territorial integrity.

Regarding peace and reconstruction, she has participated in consultations organized by the United Nations, the International Organization of La Francophonie and the International Peace Institute on the peace challenges in Mali and the Sahel.

Awarded in other editions

In previous editions awards were given to organizations and personalities from different continents and a wide array of profiles. Thus, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhamad Yunus was awarded; The Missionary Sisters of Charity of Calcutta; The Jesuit Refugee Service; the Uganda Network of Aids Service Organisations; The International Federation of Faith and Joy; The San Juan de Dios Order; Wassu Gambia Kafo and Mama Samathe; The Apostolic Vicariate of Aguarico-Capuchin mission in Ecuador; Isabel Martín-Creative Handicraft; Professor Manuel E. Patarroyo Murillo; Kenyan Demina Khasiala (known as 'Mama Tunza'); Sister Martha Pelloni, who works in favour of human rights in Argentina; The Juan Ciudad Foundation and one of its workers, Sister Paciencia Melgar for her work with people with forgotten illnesses such as the Ebola, the Marist Blue Brother Georges Sabé, in recognition of the activity of the Blue Marists with the population affected by the war in Syria; and in the last edition of the awards to “La Vía Campesina”, a global social movement that defends the interests of the peasantry, promotes ecological agriculture and food sovereignty.