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## PRESS RELEASE

Geneva, Tuesday 7 October 2014

# **Alejandra Ancheita Selected as the 2014 Laureate Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders**

Ms Alejandra Ancheita was selected by the International Human Rights Community (*See Jury Below*). The Award is given to Human Rights Defenders who have shown deep commitment and face great personal risk. The aim of the award is to provide protection through international recognition. Strongly supported by the City of Geneva, the Award will be presented on Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>.

***Alejandra Ancheita*** (Mexico), Founder and Executive Director of ProDESC. For over 15 years she has worked with migrants, workers, and indigenous communities to protect their land and labour rights vis a vis transnational mining and energy companies. These disputes have included violent attacks on those she is trying to protect. She is also one of the pioneers in seeking accountability for transnational companies in Mexican courts when local communities' rights are not taken into account. In Mexico, there is a clear pattern of attacks, threats, criminalization, and murders of human rights defenders. Ms Ancheita and ProDESC have been subjected to surveillance, a defamation campaign in the national media, and a break in at their offices.

Martin Ennals Foundation Chair Micheline Calmy-Rey stated "*Alejandra Ancheita's selection by the jury highlights the array of forces facing human rights defenders. Local governments and courts in working with powerful economic interests have led to public defamation and physical attacks.*"

Sandrine Salerno, City Councilor, responsible for international cooperation added, "*Through the Martin Ennals Award, and through these three Nominees, the City of Geneva wants to recognize Human Rights Defenders everywhere. Today we think of all those who put their lives and freedom at risk.*"

The two other finalists received Martin Ennals Prizes.

***Cao Shunli*** (China): She died in Chinese custody on 14 March 2014 after being denied medical attention for known health conditions until too late. Since 2008, she advocated for access to information, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. This is a tragic example of reprisals suffered by human rights defenders who work with international human rights mechanisms.

*The Jury noted there should be a special mention for the late Chinese Human Rights Defender Cao Shunli for the importance and continuing impact of her vital work. A special foundation is planned in her honor.*

***Adilur Rahman Khan*** (Bangladesh), Since the 1990's, he and his organization Odhikar have worked on human rights issues such as illegal detention, enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killings. They face closure since Donor funds destined for Odhikar are being blocked by the Prime Minister's Office. Personally he is facing prosecution for documenting the extrajudicial deaths of 61 people during demonstrations.

**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,
- FIDH - Int'l Federation for Human Rights,
- OMCT - World Organisation Against Torture,
- Front Line Defenders
- International Commission of Jurists,
- International Service for Human Rights
- HURIDOCS.
- Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung

Electronic version with Video: <http://bit.ly/QoZniC>

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