

## PRESS RELEASE

### Honoring those who stand up 4 Human Rights!

Today, during a busy & buzzing Award Ceremony in Nairobi, the Human Rights Defender of the Year awards were handed out for the second time. Out of many good nominations, three winners were chosen by an independent Selection Panel for their outstanding human rights work:

Upcoming HRD of the Year: Dr Kizzie Shako

Human Rights Defender of the Year: Elias Kimaiyo

Munir Mazrui Lifetime achievement: Njeri Kabeberi

The independent selection panel, consisting of eminent representatives of the human rights community (chaired by former CJ Willy Mutunga), looked at several criteria amongst which: demonstrable impact of the HRD's human rights work on the community, civil courage, leadership, innovation and creativity.

Upcoming HRD of the Year: **Dr Kizzie Shako** is Kenya's first female Police Surgeon. She attends to over 50 cases of sexual violence weekly. She started Vunjakimya (Break the Silence), a social media platform that addresses sexual violence and the negative stigma associated with it. Vunjakimya is a voice for the voiceless. Dr Kizzie also founded the Dr. Kizzie Shako Network which functions as a real time rapid response hotline.

Human Rights Defender of the Year: **Elias Kimaiyo Kibiwot** is a human rights defender from the Sengwer community. Inspired by forced evictions and human rights violation of the community, Elias joined leaders of the Sengwer indigenous community, advocating for communal land rights. He has documented violations in Embobut forest and raised the profile of the situation of the Sengwer community. During his work, he was injured and is still nursing his injuries to date.

Munir Mazrui Lifetime achievement: **Njeri Kabeberi** activism career spans over three decades; as a young girl in 1982, she quietly began supporting mothers and wives of political prisoners. Later, she joined Wangari Maathai's campaign to release Kenyan political prisoners. Njeri served on the board of KHRC for 12 years and worked for Amnesty International. In 2004 she formed the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy (CMD). Njeri's current vision is to power

an Environment Movement in Africa.

Ambassador Makken of the Kingdom of the Netherlands: “I congratulate today's winners and nominees for their exemplary work. I am extremely proud to have hosted this important award for the second time. In Kenya, so many brave women and men stand up for other people's rights, in spite of challenging circumstances, repercussions, and sometimes even threats to their lives. Today we celebrate all of them.”

Kamau Ngugi of the National Coalition on Human Rights Defenders: “The awards have demonstrated that every good deed by citizens, to speak out, stand up for human rights, at the smallest village or town, by anyone including people working with the government, is noticed and appreciated. I am proud to be associated with the enviable work of protecting rights.”

The HRD Awards are an initiative of the HRD Working Group, a group that brings together civil society organizations, activists and development partners to pursue the universal goal of protecting human rights and the defenders of these rights. Together with the National Coalition on Human Rights Defenders (NCHRD-K), the group has been chaired by the Netherlands for the last 4 years, and today the chairmanship was handed over to Belgium.

Ambassador Frans Makken, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands  
Kamau Ngugi, Executive Director, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders

Members of the press can contact Ms. Stijn Janssen ([stijn.janssen@minbuza.nl](mailto:stijn.janssen@minbuza.nl) or 0700 872 173), Political Counsellor & Press Officer at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for further details and interview requests.