

## MISA Press Freedom Award

### **Previous Winners**

#### **2005: Raymond Louw**

MISA awarded the 2005 MISA Press Freedom Award to South- Africa Based Editor and media freedom activist Raymond Louw, in recognition of his tireless campaigning for an enabling environment for media freedom and freedom on expression in our region

Raymond Louw was honored at MISA's annual general meeting in Windhoek in September 2005 where colleagues paid tribute to his lifelong career in media development and activism.

Louw is currently the Deputy chairperson of MISA South Africa and holds numerous positions in the media. He is the editor and Publisher of Southern Africa Report, a weekly current affairs briefing. He further acts as the Africa consultant for the World Press Freedom Committee, is a council member of the South African National Editor's Forum and the Freedom of Expression Institute.

Louw is a general consultant on media, politics, and governmental affairs. He is actively campaigning, on behalf of several organizations, for the recognition of a free media in the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). He has made several interventions on behalf of endangered journalists and was successful in securing the release of at least two journalists, Pius Njawe (Cameroon, 1998) and Ali Lamrabet (Morocco 2004) who were detained under insult laws.

Louw continues to make substantial contribution to media freedom in SADC and Africa

#### **2004: Methaetsile Leepile**

In March 2002 under Methaetsile Leepile's guidance the first ever vernacular Setswana broadsheet newspaper, Mokgosi, was born in Botswana. The weekly broadsheet had a circulation of 10 000 copies.

Leepile believes that there are compelling reasons to protect indigenous languages from extinction because when a language dies, a people's knowledge dies with it. Editorially Mokgosi newspaper also tackled social, political, and economic issues from a development agenda, ensuring that a previously large sector of the Botswana population was able to access credible information on issues that affect their livelihood. Due to financial constraints Mokgosi has since folded.

Mr Leepile is however no stranger to MISA. He was amongst the group of media practitioners who met in Chobe in 1989 to discuss the future of media in the region. These discussions finally led to the formation of MISA through the Windhoek Declaration. He became the first director of MISA in 1994 and left its head office in Windhoek in 1999 to

take up a management of the Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF). He left SAMDEF in 2003 to enter the private sector. He is currently the Managing director of the Botswana Guardian.

**2003: Dr Augusto Raul Paulino**

Through the award MISA recognizes the incalculable contribution made by Judge Paulino to the judicial process in Mozambique as well as access to information and freedom of expression in the region. Judge Paulino presided over the celebrated trial and conviction of six men accused of murdering Carlos Cardoso, one of Mozambique's top investigative journalists. The trial was hailed widely as both a triumph of the openness of the court proceedings and an indictment of the corruption among the country's rich and powerful. By allowing the electronic media to cover the case live Judge Paulino gave the public an opportunity to form its own opinion and that has been a major step and a positive example for a whole continent to emulate. Although many Mozambicans may not be satisfied by the outcome, they have witnessed that the judicial system can work.

**2002: No award was give. MISA celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Maputo Mozambique.**

**2001: Carlos Alberto Cardoso**

The late Carlos Alberto Cardoso, editor of Metical, was murdered on 22 November 2000. A fearless campaigner for freedom and a lifelong socialist who committed his life to the African revolution and the struggle against imperialism, Cardoso was gunned down in what happens to have been a planned and professional assassination. Carlos' exceptional talents as a writer ensured a rapid rise in the world of journalism. He worked first on the weekly magazine Tempo, then briefly on Radio Mozambique, before he was appointed chief news editor of the Mozambique News Agency (AIM) in 1980. In 1990, Cardoso was among a group of journalists campaigning for the inclusion of a specific commitment to press freedom in the new constitution. The clauses on the media in the 1990 constitution, and the follow-up press law of 1991, are among the most liberal in Africa.

In 1992, Cardoso and a dozen others founded a journalists' cooperative, Mediacop, launching Mediafax. A dispute in Mediacop in 1997 led to Cardoso leaving the cooperative to set up Metical. Cardoso campaigned tirelessly against what he regarded as the disastrous recipes for the economy imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, championing the fight of the cashew processing industry and later the sugar industry, against liberalization measures.

Among the scandals that Cardoso had been investigating in the last months of his life, one stands out above all others. This was the largest banking fraud in the country's history. In 1996, a well-organized criminal network stole the equivalent of \$14 million out of Mozambique's largest bank BCM. Although the names of the main suspects were known there was no prosecution and no trial.

**2000: Geoffrey Nyarota**

Geoffrey Nyarota as editor-in-chief of the Daily News in Zimbabwe has displayed skill and vision in keeping afloat the spirit and voice of the independent media in a country where independent media exists in a minefield of treacherous laws and intolerant authorities. Geoff has come a long way since his days as a reporter at the Zimbabwe Herald newspaper. In the process he has also ploughed a lonely furrow which is unavoidable for people like him who fail to seek shelter in the ever convenient shade of complacency, silence or political cover-ups.

As editor of the Chronicle, he exposed corruption in high places in what was to become known as the 'Willowgate scandal'. The resilience of Geoff came of age in a sense, with the launching of The Daily News in March 1999. It was a magnanimous dream that it had roots- service due to Geoff's skill in assembling a team of some of Zimbabwe's most skilled and professional newspaper practitioners in every field. The trial that the Daily News blazes has come at a price- the paper's journalists have been harassed and attacked; in some parts of the country people can only read the paper in secret for fear of reprisals. The application of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Acts in Zimbabwe has led to the closure of the Daily News and its sister paper, the Daily News on Sunday.

### **1999: Bright Chola Mwape**

The late Bright Chola Mwape was still a young man when he tragically died as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident in August 1999. In 1994 Bright was Managing Editor of The Post, Zambia's leading and only independent daily newspaper. An article in 1996, in which he criticized a Zambian politician for attacking a Supreme Court judge who had earlier struck an important victory for the Right of Protest and Freedom of Assembly, saw him being condemned to indefinite imprisonment. Along with his editor-in-chief Fred M'membe and fellow columnist Lucy Shichone, Bright went into hiding to avoid being hauled off to prison. Later on Bright and Fred handed themselves over to the police in an act of defiance and bravery that challenged the Zambian Parliament to take their unjust decree to its logical conclusion. They were freed after 24 days.

In 1997, Bright joined MISA's regional secretariat to head the Media Information Unit. His disdain for the hypocrisy of SADC governments was evident on the occasion of May 3 1999 in a dynamic speech he delivered in Windhoek in Namibia. In his speech, Bright angrily dismissed a proposed Media Award the SADC governments were considering, questioning their moral right to confer such an award amid their obvious reluctance to refrain from or condemn government infringements on the rights of the media.

### **1998: African Eye News service (AENS)**

African Eye News Service was the first media institution to be honored with the MISA Press Freedom Award. Based in South African province of Mpumalanga, AENS had established itself as one of the sub-region's truly investigative news services. In its three years of existence, AENS, under the editorship of Justin Arenstein, had either halted or uncovered a series of corrupt practices in the public sector- some of which had led to public commissions of inquiry, or resignations of the affected officials. Its bold and extremely courageous reporting earned it several enemies in both the public and private

sectors of the South African community. The agency attracted numerous multimillion rand defamation suits, and to date it had won every case. Its team of journalists, especially Mr Aristein, had also been the targets of physical and verbal harassment, including death threats and threats of assault, while also being personally maligned. Despite this harassment and hostility, the AENS team carried on its mission with excellence, exhibiting mature and professional journalism with depth and carefully verified detail.

### **1997: Gwen Lister**

Gwen Lister, as editor of The Namibian, almost single-handedly kept up the mantle of press freedom in Namibia, both before and after independence. Starting out as a journalist at the Windhoek Advertiser in 1975, she eventually went on to establish The Namibian, which hit the streets for the first time in August 1985. From the outset, The Namibian was the only newspaper in Namibia that was brave enough to expose ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses being committed by the South African occupational forces. Gwen's determination to uncover the truth never wavered, despite concerted attempts to harass and intimidate her and the rest of The Namibian staff. Gwen's commitment to a free press remained steadfast after Namibia's independence in 1990, and her paper continued to adopt a watchdog role, this time over the new government of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO).

### **1996: Allister Sparks**

Allister Haddson Sparks has played a phenomenal role in the media in South Africa. Starting out as a reporter on the Queentown Daily Representative in 1951, Allister rose to become a sub-editor under the renowned Donald Woods at the East London Daily Dispatch, the editor of the Sunday Express, and then the editor of the great Rand Daily Mail. It was during his tenure at the Rand Daily Mail in the late 1970s that Allister distinguished himself as a journalist of great valor and strength, willing to stick his neck out for a story even though it might have reached into the deep echelons of government. In 1992, a decade after being dismissed from the Rand Daily Mail, Allister was instrumental in setting up the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), based in Johannesburg South Africa. At the time of receiving the MISA Press Freedom award, Allister was serving on the Board of the South African.

### **1995: Fred Membe**

Fred M'membe probably one of the most persecuted journalists in his country and the rest of the region, is qualified accountant who, along with colleagues John Mukela, Masautso Phiri and Mike Hall, founded The Post newspaper in Zambia in 1991. Since its founding as a weekly paper and its swift progress to a daily paper, the Post under the helm of Fred, tirelessly kept a watch on the government, exposing numerous incidents of corruption, illegal activities, bad governance, human rights abuses and lack of respect for the rule of law. In the process, and despite enormous efforts on the part of the government to harass The Post and Fred in particular, Fred has distinguished himself as a consistent and fearless journalist, committed to the ideals of media freedom.

### **1994: Basildon Peta**

By the time the young Basildon Peta was awarded the MISA Press Freedom Award, he had already come up against the full might of the Zimbabwe police. A senior reporter at the Daily Gazette, Basildon was incarcerated in 1994 for a week, enduring long sessions of interrogation by the police, who failed to break his determination to stand by the truth. Basildon was also not cowered into silence and he went on to expose further incidents of corruption and abuse of power in government. Peta is currently practicing journalism in South Africa.

**1993: Onesimo Makani Kabweza**

The late Onesimo Makani Kabweza as editor of Moto in Zimbabwe, was one of the first Zimbabwean journalists to break the 'culture of silence' which followed the country's independence in 1980. Onesimo dared to take a critical stand against the new Zimbabwean government under Robert Mugabe at a time when others were too scared to criticize or speak out against any government wrong doing. He was enthusiastic about the need for southern African media workers to unify and thus shared the dreams and aspirations of MISA. At the time of his death in 1993, Onesimo was on his way back from a trip to Harare on MISA business.