



Copenhagen and Paris 30 years on: Progress made and challenges ahead

[Thematic Webinar](#): 6 November 2020, 14:30 - 16:00 CET

The role of human rights defenders in promoting and protecting human rights

Speakers' Biographies

1. Professor Mary Lawlor (the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders)

Ms. Mary Lawlor took up the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defender on 1 May 2020, following the Human Rights Council decision 43/115.

Ms. Lawlor is currently an Adjunct Professor of Business and Human Rights in the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), School of Business, Trinity College Dublin. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the School of Business.

She has worked extensively with and on the situation of human rights defenders. In 2001 she founded Front Line Defenders - the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders to concentrate on human rights defenders at risk. As Executive Director from 2001-2016, Ms. Lawlor represented Front Line Defenders and had a key role in its development. Ms. Lawlor was previously the Director of the Irish Section of Amnesty International from 1988 to 2000, became a Board member in 1975 and was elected Chair from 1983 to 1987. Now she is on the Advisory Board of the Centre for Ethics in Public Life, School of Philosophy, University College Dublin.

She has a BA in Philosophy and postgraduate degrees in Montessori Teaching and Personnel Management.



2. Ms. Erinda Ballanca (People's Advocate of Albania, People's Advocate Institution)

Ms. Erinda Ballanca graduated from the Law Faculty of the University of Tirana in 1996 with a Golden Medal. Following graduation, she became an associate lecturer at the Law Faculty, of the University of Tirana lecturing in Constitutional Law and Legislative Technique. From 1997-2008 she was affiliated with the Studio Legale Tonucci, the first international law firm in Albania, in which she became a partner in 2004.



She founded her own law firm “Ballanca Law Office” in 2008 which has grown to be one of the most well-known Albanian law firms. Ms. Ballanca was involved as a Member of the Coordinating Group for drafting Albania’s Constitution in 1998. She has been a local legal expert in several projects approximating Albanian legislation with the *acqui communautaire* under the UE/PHARE Program for Albania. As a local expert for GIZ, she contributed to the drafting of the Albanian

law on international arbitration based on UNICITRAL standards.

From 1997, Ms. Ballanca has been a Member of the Chamber of Advocates in Tirana and holder of several positions in the Board of Directors for both the Tirana Chamber and the National Assembly of the Advocates Chamber. She has been a member of the International Bar Association from the year 2000. As an attorney at law, Ms. Ballanca has been listed by Chambers and Partners, Legal 500, and IFLR 1000 as one of the best lawyers in the country in several areas of civil law such as contracts, banking, real estate, judicial torts, commercial companies’ law, privatizations etc. With outstanding expertise in financial and corporate law, she has been an expert in the privatization of large-scale state-owned companies such as the former Savings Bank of Albania, Albanian Mobile Communications and Albtelecom.

The Albanian Parliament elected Ms. Erinda Ballanca as the People’s Advocate of Albania for a five year mandate on 22 May 2017. Former President of the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsman (AOM) and currently AOM 2nd Vice President, Ms. Ballanca is since 2019 Board member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and European member of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Bureau.

3. Mr. Yuri Dzhibladze (President of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights and Member of the Coordinating Committee of the Civic Solidarity Platform)

Yuri has over 30 years of experience at national and international level in research, advocacy and coalition-building, focusing on protection of fundamental freedoms, civil society development, strengthening of international human rights mechanisms, developing instruments of opposing authoritarian regimes, and building strategies of the human rights movement.

He has worked on the situations in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and other countries as well as the OSCE region. Yuri has played an active role in human rights and pro-democracy advocacy with governments and inter-governmental organizations, ensuring their accountability and amplifying the voice of civil society.



He is an author and editor of analytical and documentation reports, article and books, a regular speaker at national and international events, and has served as an expert with OSCE/ODIHR,

the Council of Europe, and various international NGOs and foundations. Yuri holds an MD in cardiology from Sechenov Moscow Medical University, a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University in New York, and a certificate from Stanford University.

4. Mr. Gerald Staberock, (Secretary General of the World Organization Against Torture, OMCT)



Gerald Staberock is the Secretary General of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), the principal civil society and human rights defender coalition against torture, arbitrary detention, extra-judicial killings and disappearances since September 1, 2011. The OMCT also operated the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (as a joint initiative with the FIDH). Since 2015, he is also member of the Board of the European Union Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Protect.defenders.eu.

Previously, he served with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) as Director of its Global Security and Rule of Law Initiative as well as its Center for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL). In this context, he coordinated the most comprehensive global inquiry on the impact of counter terrorism on human rights through the ICJ Eminent Jurists Panel. From 1998-2002 he worked at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw coordinating rule of law and anti-torture projects, including prison reform projects in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Gerald Staberock is a qualified lawyer from Germany concluding his judicial clerkship with the Higher Regional Court of Berlin. He studied in Bonn, Geneva and Washington DC (LL.M). He has published on the rule of law in Europe and the former Soviet Union, the domestic implementation of international standards, terrorism and human rights, intelligence accountability, and on the role of civil society in international law.