

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

VERA CHIRWA HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

REGULATIONS

1. Introduction

Vera Mlangazua Chirwa is a Malawian-born lawyer and human and civil rights activist. She fought for multiparty democratic rule in Malawi and was charged with treason, tried and sentenced to death by the authoritarian regime of Hastings Kamuzu Banda. She spent 12 years on death row with her husband Orton Chirwa, a lawyer and once Malawian Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The Chirwas' execution date was set for 9 June 1983, but international pressure saved their lives. While in detention, they were tortured, often kept in leg irons, received inadequate food and were denied proper medical attention which led to the death of Vera Chirwa's husband Orton. Vera Chirwa was eventually released in 1993 and a new constitution was adopted, which allowed for multiparty democracy. Vera Chirwa established herself as a leading voice for human rights in Malawi and started an NGO. She became a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1999 and served as the Commission's Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention in Africa. She retired from the Commission in 2005 but remains a human rights champion in her home country, across the continent and the globe.

On the occasion of the Centre for Human Rights being awarded the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education (current UNESCO Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights), the **Vera Chirwa Human Rights Award** was instituted in 2006 in recognition of her personal sacrifice and contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights in Africa.

2. The Award

The award consists of a plaque and a small in-kind contribution to an organisation the laureate is affiliated to.

The award will be presented on 10 December each year, International Human Rights Day, as part of the graduation ceremony of the LLM programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (LLM HRDA). The laureate will be expected to deliver a short address on that occasion.

The Centre will cover all expenses related to the laureate's travel to and stay in Pretoria (South Africa) to receive the award, including a return ticket to South Africa, airport transfers where applicable, accommodation, local transport and meals.

The laureate will also be expected to attend a contact session with the graduating LLM students.

3. Eligibility

The laureate will be a graduate of the LLM HRDA programme.

He or she will be required to have undertaken one or more particularly noteworthy initiatives for the protection or the promotion of human rights, and/or the strengthening of democracy in Africa or in the diaspora.

They must have distinguished themselves through innovation and initiative, courage and sacrifice.

4. Criteria

In selecting the recipient, the following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- the significance of the event and the nature of the sacrifice involved;
- the duration of the activity, the importance of its outcome and impact;
- the relevance and significance of the event or activity to the goals and principles of the LLM HRDA programme and Vera Chirwa's own achievements;
- the contribution of the work accomplished or sacrifice involved to the understanding of human rights and democratisation problems in Africa and their resolution.

5. Jury

The following will be involved in the selection process:

- a Selection Committee comprising:
 - the Director of the Centre or his representative;
 - the Programme Manager of the LLM HRDA; and
 - the Coordinator of the LLM HRDA Alumni Association;
- the Council of Directors of the LLM HRDA (Programme Directors at partner universities).

6. Nominations, selection and announcement

Submission of nominations and selection will be conducted as follows:

- **1 - 31 July:**
Nominations will be made to the Coordinator of the LLM HRDA Alumni Association and will comprise:
 - a curriculum vitae and
 - a brief letter of motivation outlining:
 - a description of the activity carried out;
 - an account of the result obtained; and
 - any other information relevant to the evaluation of the nomination according to the criteria set out above.
- **1 - 15 August:**
Applications will be forwarded to external referees who will be required only to indicate reasons why the candidate may not be given the award.
- **16 - 30 August:**
The Selection Committee proceeds to choose the laureate taking into account feedback from referees; the decision is reached by consensus.
- **1 - 7 September:**
The Director of the Centre submits the result of the selection to the Council of Directors for endorsement.
- **1 October:**
The Director of the Centre announces the results to the candidates. The winner will be required to observe an embargo on the results until the date of the announcement. The Coordinator of the Alumni Association consults with the winner for travel and other arrangements.

The award is attributed to one nominee in any particular year, although the Centre may decide on a joint award.

The laureate is announced on **10 December** each year.

7. Withdrawal

The Centre may withdraw the award if the recipient falls below the standard of conduct expected of laureates.

Grounds on which the award may be withdrawn include but are not limited to:

- Information provided on the nomination or in support of it, which is untrue, biased or misleading;
- Bringing the Centre, the LLM HRDA Alumni Association or the laureate into disrepute through statements or actions unbecoming.

The award is withdrawn by written notice, sent to the laureate, who may no longer use the term 'laureate of the Vera Chirwa Human Rights Award'.

PREVIOUS WINNERS OF THE AWARD:

- 2011** Mr Thulani Rudolf MASEKO (Swaziland, 2005)
2010 Mr Yoseph MULUGETA (Ethiopia, 2002)
2009 Mr Gabriel SHUMBA (Zimbabwe, 2002)
2008 Mr Julius OSEGA (Uganda, 2001) (posthumously)
2007 Ms Nana Oye LITHUR (Ghana, 2001)
2006 Mr Melron NICOL-WILSON (Sierra Leone, LLM in Human Rights and Constitutional Practice, 1998)

CALENDAR

| DATES | PROCEDURES |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 – 31 July | Nominations sent to Coordinator of Alumni Association |
| 1 – 15 August | Consultation with external referees |
| 16 – 30 August | Decision of the Selection Committee |
| 1 – 7 September | Endorsement by the Council of Directors |
| 1 October | Issuance of results to candidates |
| 1 – 10 October | Travel and other arrangements |
| 10 December | Announcement of winner |

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Centre for Human Rights: www.chr.up.ac.za
Alumni Association: <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/academic/llm-alumni.html>
Vera Chirwa Award: <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/awards.html>