

The Body Shop Human Rights Award Ceremony 29th October 2002



Launched in 2000, The Body Shop Human Rights Award highlights and celebrates the outstanding achievements of grass roots activists across the world, working in the areas of social, cultural and economic rights.

The Body Shop Human Rights Award aims to demonstrate that human rights are as much to do with economic, social and cultural rights, and that all human rights are universal, indivisible and inter-dependent.

This unique award has been endorsed by Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and his holiness the Dalai Lama.

We believe that fundamental needs such as education, housing and health are the right of every person on our planet. A human rights-based approach to these issues can redress injustice and result in lasting change in the lives of millions.

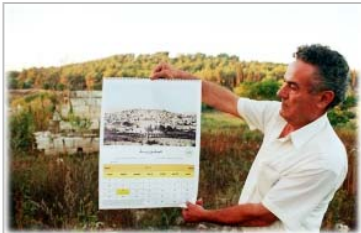
The **Right to Housing** is the theme of this year's award, and four winners, chosen by our independent, international jury will share the \$300 000 prize.

The winners:

- **The National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced.**
Location: Israel
- **Romani Baht Foundation Sofia**
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria
- **COPINH: Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organisations**
Location: La Esperanza, Intibuca, Honduras
- **Ilishe Trust**
Location: Mombasa, Kenya

1) *The National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced*

Location: Israel



This group works as a self-help and advocacy advisory service, and a network for all community-based organisations working on the right of return for internally displaced Palestinian people.

The work of this group is extensive and includes success in highlighting the fact that a quarter of all Palestinians in Israel are internally-displaced and have yet to exercise their basic right to return to their villages.

Their work includes maintenance of destroyed communal property and religious sites (grave yards, churches, mosques) done through local committees.

They also undertake documentation of history, demography, and properties of internally displaced Palestinians and community organising and coordination with Palestinian refugee-rights advocacy organizations and NGOs outside Israel.

Their work has resulted in a re-awakening of interest, among the young Palestinian generation, for their villages of origin, and in numerous local and individual initiatives throughout the year such as repairing village graveyards and celebrating family events (picnics, marriages, baptisms) on their lost land.

2) Romani Baht Foundation Sofia

Location: Sofia, Bulgaria



Romani Baht is a community-based Roma rights organisation, working with the largest Romani ghetto in Sofia, the Fakulteta. Like the majority of Roma slums in Bulgaria, and indeed most of Eastern Europe, almost all buildings in Fakulteta are unregulated, and so deemed illegal.

Romani Baht has consistently battled to legalise these illegal homes and promote equal access for the Roma people to a whole range of public services and infrastructure improvements.

The group has developed projects to defend the Roma children's right to education and has single-handedly undertaken the renovation of a local school in Fakulteta with the aim of breaking down the existing barriers of segregation.

Their work is carried out against a constant barrage of racism and prejudice.

3) COPINH: Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organisations

Location: La Esperanza, Intibuca, Honduras



The original “banana republic”, Honduras has been left ravaged by more than 20 years of massacre, assassination, disappearance, illegal detentions and torture: A consequence of the US-backed “war against communism.” The terrible poverty endured by Honduras was worsened by natural disaster in 1998 when Hurricane Mitch struck with brutal force, leaving nearly 10,000 Hondurans dead.

Violations of the rights of indigenous communities and activists continue, with impunity, as do systematic violations of land and cultural rights of indigenous communities.

COPINH works to strengthen community unity and fights legally and politically on land issues; against illegal foresters and loggers; against the forced evictions of campesinos (political activists), including the destruction of homes and animals; and to hold the military and police responsible for violations of the political and civil rights of campesinos and indigenous people.

4) Ilishe Trust

Location: Mombasa, Kenya



The Ilishe Trust is a community-based organisation consisting of marginalised communities, both rural and urban, who are located in the coastal region of Kenya. It has mobilised thousands of people from the rural farmers in Majaoni to slum dwellers living in Mombasa to resist the threats of forced evictions.

Recently, the Majaoni community successfully battled against immense political opposition and pressure to illegally grab their land for beach development, and persuaded the government to allocate them the land they have occupied for generations. By mobilising communities, the media, and human rights groups and developing saving schemes, they have also stopped threatened evictions in Mzizima and the Tudor Municipal Council Housing Estates, home to over 20,000 people.

The Ilishe communities are ethnically and religiously diverse and work to ensure that women are fairly represented. As well as organising groups to protect land, it has organised special groups for women, youth and self-help groups, thus ensuring that its membership is broad and taken from all key sectors of society.