



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Acción Mundial de Parlamentarios
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) Announces Recipients of the 17th Annual Defender of Democracy Awards

NEW YORK, NY, September 28, 2012 - Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) will present the 2012 Defender of Democracy Awards to Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director of NETWORK; and Ms. Khady Koita, President of La PALABRE. The awards ceremony will take place at the Italian Senate on the evening of December 10th, 2012 in Rome, Italy in conjunction with PGA's Seventh Session of the Consultative Assembly of Parliamentarians for the International Criminal Court and the Rule of Law.

PGA is honoring Sister Simone for her distinguished advocacy and commitment to economic justice and peacebuilding. She is a religious leader, attorney and poet with extensive experience in public policy and advocacy for systemic change. Sister Simone has served as Executive Director of NETWORK since 2004. In Washington, DC, she advocates for issues of economic justice, immigration reform and peace building and is a noted speaker and educator on these public policy issues.

In 2012, Sister Simone was instrumental in organizing the "Nuns on the Bus" tour which was credited with shifting the political conversation to include those who are left out of the US economic and political process. "Nuns on the Bus" received an avalanche of attention across the U.S. among religious communities, elected officials and the media. She has previously served as Executive Director of JERICHO and has also served as the general director of her religious community, the Sisters of Social Service, leading the order in the United States, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Ms. Khady Koita is being honored for her commitment to women's rights and advocacy to stop human rights violations. For over 20 years, she has been at the forefront of the fight against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. She is the founder and President of La PALABRE which seeks to defend the human rights of women and children by fighting against all harmful traditional practices affecting their health through education and training.

Ms. Koita helped establish the Group for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation, an organization working against FGM and striving for the rights of women in France. In 2000, Ms. Koita co-founded and served as President of EuroNet FGM, a network of European organizations combating FGM. In 2005, Ms. Koita published a memoir titled *Mutilée (Blood Stains)*, which describes her experience overcoming cultural and social barriers to take ownership of her life and become a renowned activist.

This year, PGA will also be presenting the 2004 Defender of Democracy Award to Ms. Teesta Setalvad, a Human Rights Activist and attorney-at-law in India. Ms. Setalvad was selected to receive the award in 2004 for her work on human rights and the promotion of the rule of law. In 2002, Ms. Setalvad co-founded Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), an NGO composed of non-political concerned citizens in response to the massacre of 2000 people in Gujarat which took place that same month. Ms. Setalvad, through CJP, fought for fair trials for victims of the massacres.

Since 1996, PGA has held the Defender of Democracy Awards Ceremony in parallel with its Annual Forum. The Award is presented to individuals who, through their own commitment and active engagement, have made significant progress in strengthening democracy and democratic practices. Past recipients include Ms. Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Administrator of the UNDP; Ms. Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Prof. Cherif

Bassiouni, Chairperson of the Drafting Committee at the Rome Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of the International Criminal Court.

PGA is a non-profit, non-partisan international network of approximately 1,000 legislators in 120 elected parliaments around the globe, which aims to promote peace, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development and population issues by informing, convening, and mobilizing parliamentarians to realize these goals.

Contact: Helen Tsakiris, Senior Development Officer, tel: (212) 687-7755 ext. 111, email: Helen.v@pgaction.org