



**THE BREMEN
SOLIDARITY AWARD
1988 – 2025**

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As an open-minded Hanseatic and trading city and given our historical responsibility, we want to show solidarity with people and initiatives who fight against injustice and for human rights.



Bremen practices solidarity with people suffering from injustice and oppression not only through its citizens, its associations and foundations, in churches and in politics but also demonstrated solidarity by its active support of the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa and Namibia, to which Bremen committed itself already in the late 1970s – before any other state in Germany.

Against this backdrop, the Bremen Senate established the Bremen Solidarity Award in 1987.

As many as nineteen recipients have been distinguished with the Bremen Solidarity Award since 1988, and I am proud to be able to introduce them to you here. I have the utmost respect for their tremendous courage and their commitment in their fight for justice and the observance of human rights.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bovenschulte'.

Dr. Andreas Bovenschulte

Mayor

President of the Senate of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen

THE BREMEN SOLIDARITY AWARD

The Senate of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen founded the international Bremen Solidarity Award based on a resolution of 10th November 1987. The prize is intended as an encouragement to persons and groups that devote special efforts to overcoming injustice in the North-South relationship and the consequences of colonialism and racism, and espouse democracy and human rights.

The Bremen Solidarity Award is awarded biennially. It is endowed with 10,000 euros, of which half is contributed by the Senate and half by the private R+R Reinke Foundation.

Along with the prize money, the recipient is presented with a sculpture by Bremen artist Prof Bernd Altenstein depicting the Town Musicians of Bremen as a symbol of the power of solidary action. Beneath the prominent animal masks, the story of the Bremen Town Musicians begins with a kick. Individuals falling and picking themselves up form a dynamic group.

The first Bremen Solidarity Award was awarded in 1988 to Nelson and Winnie Mandela.

The Senate chooses the recipients of the award with the assistance of an independent advisory committee made up of recognized experts on development policy.

1988

Nelson* and **Winnie Mandela** for their lifelong fight for freedom and justice, against Apartheid and racism; later President and First Lady (South Africa)

1990

Bishop Medardo E. Gómez and the refugee organization **CRIPDES** for their commitment to social justice as well as the protection of rural populations and displaced persons (El Salvador)

1992

Davi Kopenawa Yanomami advocate for the Yanomami Indigenous people, dedicated to their protection and the fight for land rights and reparations (Brazil)

1993

Aung San Suu Kyi* human rights activist and opposition politician, leader of Myanmar's pro-democracy movement in the late 1980s (Myanmar/Burma)

AWARD CEREMONY IN THE UPPER TOWN HALL

Presided over by the mayor of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, the award ceremony takes place in the Upper Hall of Bremen's historic Town Hall. Well-known figures from the areas of politics, academia, civil society or the media are invited to deliver the honorary addresses.

A framework programme organized with the recipient accompanies the festive presentation of the Solidarity Award.



Mayor Dr Andreas Bovenschulte presents the sculpture by Bremen artist Bernd Altenstein to the winner of the 17th Solidarity Award, Rukmini Vaderapura Puttaswamy



Award Winner Rukmini Vaderapura with Members of the Advisory Committee, Mayor Dr. Bovenschulte and Consul General Ruolngul

NETWORKING

Public visibility and strong networks are essential to highlight and support the commitment of the recipients of the Bremen Solidarity Award. To this end, the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen organizes a tailored program for each awardee, consisting of expert dialogues and public events with key political and civil society actors in Bremen, Berlin or Brussels. Young activists in particular often lack access to political contacts at the national and European levels.

The Free Hanseatic City of Bremen therefore supports the awardees by using its contacts at national and European levels to help them present their work to the public and in political settings, and to build connections with key figures from the Federal Government, the Bundestag, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and civil society organizations.

1996

Han Dong-Fang trade unionist, co-founder of the Autonomous Workers' Federation of Beijing, advocate for democracy, labour rights, and human rights (Hongkong)

1998

Nadjet Bouda, *Rassemblement Actions Jeunesse – le RAJ* human rights movement (Algeria)

Hetti Samanmalie, *Da Bindu Collective* (Sri Lanka) and Brigitte Erler, *Aktion Courage e.V. – SOS Rassismus* (Germany)

2001

Marguerite Barankitse (Burundi) and **Melanie Ntahongendera** (Rwanda) for the *La Maison Shalom* orphanage for their commitment to peace and reconciliation between Tutsi and Hutu communities

2003

Dr Sumaya Farhat-Naser (Palestine) and **Gila Svirsky** (Israel), co-founders of women's peace organizations, committed to dialogue and human rights in the Middle East conflict

19TH BREMEN SOLIDARITY AWARD 2025

MESERET HADUSH WELDEMARIAM

TIGRAY / ETHIOPIA

Honorary speech: Dr Monika Hauser, *medica mondiale*

The Bremen Senate honours Meseret Hadush Weldemariam from Tigray, Ethiopia, with the 19th Bremen Solidarity Award, presented on 29 September 2025, in recognition of her outstanding commitment to women and girls in Tigray who were subjected to sexualized violence during the brutal conflict in northern Ethiopia. As the founder of the aid organization Hiwyet (Healing), Ms Meseret advocates for survivors, provides support, documents their suffering, and gives voice to those affected.

The armed conflict in northern Ethiopia escalated into a civil war in November 2020, following years of mounting tensions. It is considered one of the most brutal and deadly confrontations in recent history. Mass rape, sexual enslavement, and mutilation were systematically deployed as weapons of war against women in Tigray, with the intent to shatter communities and annihilate the Tigrayan ethnic group.

A distinctive feature of Meseret Hadush's work is the survivor-centred approach, which places the dignity and safety of those affected at its core and aims to foster long-term empowerment and reintegration into society. Hiwyet supports survivors by providing safe accommodation, organizing psychological care, and offering training programmes to help women build economic prospects. To counter social stigmatization, Ms Meseret actively involves community leaders



Awardee of the 19th Bremen Solidarity Award, Meseret Hadush Weldemariam

and religious figures in her work and promotes a culture of listening, recognition, and healing.

At great personal risk, Meseret Hadush has played a vital role in documenting the atrocities committed during the war in Tigray. She collaborated with journalists to secure witness testimonies and gather evidence—an important contribution to legal protection and prosecution in current and future conflicts.

The presentation of the Bremen Solidarity Award to Meseret Hadush sends a powerful message against the use of sexualized violence as a weapon of war against women and girls worldwide, and gives a voice to survivors of this largely forgotten conflict and beyond.

2005

Elsa de Oesterheld (Argentina) and **Kuno Hauck** (Germany) for their commitment to the *Coalition against Impunity: Truth and Justice for Germans Who Have Disappeared in Argentina*

2006

Ana del Carmen Martínez, spokeswoman of the Afro-Colombian Peace Community and **Carolina Pardo Jaramillo** human rights activist, committed to supporting victims of forced displacement (Colombia)

2009

Immaculée Birhaheka, founder of the Congolese organization for the *promotion and support of women's initiatives, PAIF*, committed to combating sexualized violence against women in conflict zones in the Congo (DR Congo)

2011

Maung Thura* stage name *Zarganar*, satirist and actor, outspoken critic of the government, committed to free elections and human rights; repeatedly imprisoned for his activism (Myanmar/Burma)

MESSAGE FROM HAMIRA KOBUSINGYE AWARDEE OF THE 18TH BREMEN SOLIDARITY AWARD 2023

It is an honor to contribute a message for the next Bremen Solidarity Award winner. This award holds a very special place in my heart, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my congratulations and encouragement with the new laureate.

Receiving the Bremen Solidarity Award gave me a standing in the international community and affirmed the credibility of my work as a young African voice for climate and justice. It opened doors to meaningful networking with political and civil society stakeholders, creating opportunities for collaboration, visibility, and even support for my activities. Most importantly, it connected me to a wider circle of solidarity – reminding me that our struggles and hopes are shared across borders.



Hamira Kobusingye

Dear Meseret,

From one bearer of this honor to another, I offer you my warmest congratulations and deepest embrace in solidarity. This prize is more than an award – it is a chorus of voices across the world saying: we see you, we believe you, we stand with you. Your work, born from pain yet rooted in hope, carries the light of healing into the deepest shadows. You have turned music into refuge, advocacy into protection, and courage into a lifeline for thousands. May this recognition be both a shield against the storms and a lantern to guide your path. May it remind you, on the hardest days, that your light reaches far beyond the hills of Tigray, touching hearts across continents. Walk forward knowing you are never alone – your courage has woven you into a global fabric of justice and love.

*With deep respect, solidarity and hope,
Hamira Kobusingye*

18th Bremen Solidarity Award Winner

2013

Aminatou Haidar

human rights activist and president of CODESA (human rights organization) advocate for Sahrawi rights and international diplomatic efforts (Western Sahara)

2015

Esther Mujawayo-Keiner

Co-founder of the Rwandan organization AVEGA-AGA-HOZO (*Association of the Widows of 1994 Genocide*), trauma therapist for refugees (Rwanda/Germany)

2017

Stella Agara

worldwide activist for fair taxation and against tax avoidance diverse engagement across various organizations, including *African Youth Trust and Action Aid* (Kenya)

2019

Victor Antonio and **Martin Fernández Guzman**

human rights lawyers and co-founders of the *Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice*, fighting for the rule of law and against corruption (Honduras)

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Senate of Bremen chooses the respective Solidarity Award theme and the recipients with the assistance of an independent advisory committee made up of public figures who are involved in development policy issues or bear a relation to development cooperation through their professional activities.

The current members are:

- Dr Asia Abdulkadir, country coordinator for Kindernothilfe in Somalia
- Dr Bernd Bornhorst, German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation MISEREOR e. V.
- Bärbel Dieckmann, former Lord Mayor
- Prof Dr h. c. Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, former President of Bread for the World and Diakonie Emergency Aid
- Gertraud Gauer-Süß, Bremen Information Center for Human Rights and Development
- Dr Monika Hauser, founder of medica mondiale e. V.
- Dr Ernesto Harder, managing director of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), Bremen-Elbe-Weser Region
- Monika Hoegen, specialist journalist in development policy and moderator
- Horst Janus, Protestant Church of Bremen
- Petra Pinzler, journalist, DIE ZEIT
- Prof Dr Shalini Randeria, president and rector of the Central European University
- Bernd Schleich, former managing director of InWEnt GmbH
- Michael Windfuhr, German Institute for Human Rights e.V.

As of September 2025

We want to establish a symbol of encouragement for those who do not accept injustice and oppression, but rise up and fight for their rights.

2021

Rukmini Vaderapura Puttaswamy
activist against gender-based violence, advocate for women's rights, president and co-founder of the women-led *Garment Labour Union* (GLU) and the women's initiative *Munnade* (India)

2023

Hamira Kobusingye
activist for global climate and gender justice, founder of *ClimateJusticeAfrica*, connecting African climate activists (Uganda)

2025

Meseret Hadush
advocate against sexualized violence targeting women in the Tigray conflict; founder of *Hiwyet* (Healing), an organization supporting survivors (Tigray/Ethiopia)

**The award was presented in the absence of the recipients, as they were imprisoned or under house arrest at the time of the ceremony due to their commitment to human rights and democracy.*

INFORMATION AND CONTACT

Further Information is available at:

Office of the advisory committee for the
Bremen Solidarity Award
c/o Free Hanseatic City of Bremen
Senate Chancellery
Department 52 - International Relations and Development
Cooperation

Silke Goethe
Am Markt 21
28195 Bremen
Tel. +49 421 /361-2987
Email silke.goethe@sk.bremen.de



www.rathaus.bremen.de



directly to the Bremen Solidarity Award



Photo credits: Meseret Hadush: Hiwyet Charity Association / Hamira Kobusingye: Climate Justice Africa
Other pictures: Freie Hansestadt Bremen, Senatspressestelle / Design: Nicole Küpke