

Michael Sattler Peace Prize 2020

Award goes to LUCHA in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Bammental, December 3, 2019. The Michael Sattler Peace Prize 2020 of the German Mennonite Peace Committee (DMFK) was announced by DMFK Director Dr. James Jakob Fehr at the annual Mennonite peace conference held in Berlin. The honour goes to a group of nonviolent activists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under the name LUCHA, they champion human rights and democratic participation, social justice and principled politics, ecology and nonviolence.

LUCHA is an acronym for "Lutte pour le changement" (struggle for change). LUCHA started in June 2011 as a youth movement in the eastern city of Goma and quickly spread to other areas of the country. In nonviolent campaigns the activists denounce injustice in politics and society. LUCHA strives to inspire transformative initiatives for nonviolent conflict resolution, greater engagement of civil society, ecological management and politics free of corruption.

One of LUCHA's first actions to gain national attention was the monitoring of the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections. It initiated a voting drive especially for first-time voters. Other actions addressed the need for clean drinking water and the often unbearable waste disposal situation. Not only in Goma, but also in many other major cities of the DR Congo, LUCHA is active in encouraging the general public to find their voice, participate and take responsibility for their basic needs and rights.

Many members of LUCHA have been repeatedly subject to state repression, including arbitrary arrests and imprisonment. One of the leading activists, Luc Nkulula, died in the night from the 9th to 10th of June 2018, at the age of 33, when his house burnt down. The immediate witnesses doubt the official version of an accidental death.

The Michael Sattler Peace Prize will be awarded on Thursday morning, May 21, 2020 (Ascension Day) in Rottenburg am Neckar, Germany. Two delegates from the DR Congo are expected to attend. Afterwards they will participate in the programme of the Mennonite Gemeindetag in Bolanden-Weierhof, May 21 to 24.

The Michael Sattler Peace Prize was first awarded in 2006 on the 50th anniversary of the German Mennonite Peace Committee (DMFK). In 2020 the prize will be awarded for the sixth time. It is named after the early Anabaptist Michael Sattler. He sought to fight against the arch-enemies of the "Christian" West, the Ottoman Turks, not with military force, but with prayer and love of the enemy. On May 21, 1527 he was tortured and burnt at the stake in Rottenburg am Neckar.

www.michael-sattler-friedenspreis.de

The Historic Peace Churches: Since their formation, these churches have been guided by the peace witness of the Gospels and the early Church. They encourage their members to live a life of discipleship, conscientious objection, peace service and active nonviolence. The "historic peace churches" include the Mennonites, who emerged in the 16th century as the "radical reformation"; the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), founded in the 17th century among English dissenters; and the Church of the Brethren, inspired by the radical German pietism of the 18th century.

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