

# International Bremen Peace Award **2021** of the *schwelle* Foundation

Crossing Thresholds - Breaking Vicious Circles

Shortlist for the  
Award of the Donors



- 1** OPAN  
Lawyer for the Indigenous Peoples  
Brazil
- 2** Lesvos Solidarity  
An Oasis for Refugees  
Greece
- 3** Nonviolent Education and Resarch Association  
Dealing Non-violently With Conflict  
Turkey
- 4** FIACAT: International Federation of the ACAT  
Abolition of Torture and Death Penalty  
France
- 5** Reach Out  
Women for Peace  
Cameroon



*schwelle* Foundation  
Contributions to Peace

# International Bremen Peace Award 2021 of the *schwelle* Foundation

Crossing Thresholds - Breaking Vicious Circles



We received 59 applications for the International Bremen Peace Award 2021 from many different countries. They are fascinating examples of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation which give courage to others.

The *schwelle* Foundation's board of trustees has compiled a shortlist from the applications we received for initiatives and organisations. You, as donors, are invited to choose this year's award winner from this list.

Anyone who donated at least 30 € (we are happy to accept more) from 15th June 2020 until 15th June 2021 to the *schwelle* Foundation, may participate in the choice of the award winner.

1. Choose one of the organisations presented to receive the peace award.
2. Send us an email or a postcard by 30th June 2021 with the number AND the name of your favorite organisation.

**Important:** Make sure you include your name and address so that we can assign your vote to your donation

email: [stiftung@dieschwelle.de](mailto:stiftung@dieschwelle.de)  
mail: *schwelle* Foundation, Wachmannstrasse 79,  
28209 Bremen, Germany

The organisation which receives the most votes will be the winner of the International Bremen Peace Award in the category „Encouraging Initiatives“. In the event of a draw, the winner will be decided by random selection. The winner will be announced by September 2021.

If you have not yet made a donation, you are more than welcome to do so by the 15th June 2021. You can also encourage friends to join in. Our donation account is:

DE45 2903 0400 0000 0942 93  
BIC (SWIFT)-Code: PLUM DE 29

The award winners for the categories Grassroots Peace Worker and Peace Ambassador in Public Life will be decided on by the *schwelle* Foundation's board of trustees.

# Proposal

# 1 OPAN Advocate for the Indigenous Peoples Brazil

OPAN was founded in 1969. It is the most long-standing Brazilian NGO working with the indigenous people in the Amazon River region and campaigns for their rights and well-being. The principle that guides all actions is shaped by an appreciation of their indigenous culture, ancient knowledge and way of life. The voice of the indigenous people is at the heart of every suggestion pertaining to laws and projects.

Hydropower provides 63,8 percent of Brazil's electrical energy. What may at first sound progressive proves to be disastrous on closer inspection: The damming of rivers necessary for the production of hydropower disturbs the balance within the ecosystem, fish migration is prevented, water quality reduced and unique biospheres destroyed. The alarming result is the forced displacement of approximately 40 to 80 million people.

OPAN stands for Operação Amazônia Nativa. The organisation supports indigenous peoples in defending their land rights by staking out areas of land. In this way, millions of hectares of land have already been claimed for indigenous ethnic groups and habitats regained.

OPAN supports the indigenous people of Brazil in their wish for self-determination. First assemblies and opportunities for dialogue and exchange were organised. An indigenous policy aligned with the interests, needs and specific socio-cultural characteristics of the different ethnic groups was drawn up and put into practice. The organisation also helps to restore the self-confi-

dence of the indigenous peoples of Brazil by means of a newly-developed method of working. Even during his campaign for presidency, President Bolsonaro demonstrated a derogatory attitude towards the indigenous ethnic groups. It is very difficult to enforce political co-determination under his current presidency.

The work carried out within the health programme focuses in particular on controlling epidemics. This endeavour has gained special importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. People are being medically trained and vaccination is moving forward. The appreciation of the traditional knowledge of healing together with tested healing practices play a significant role in this process.

Through its engagement in campaigning for the rights of indigenous peoples, OPAN has earned itself an excellent reputation in Brazil and throughout the whole of Latin America.

<https://amazonianativa.org.br>

*Proposed by Misereor*



## Proposal

# 2 Lesvos Solidarity An Oasis for Refugees Greece

*In 2012, Efi Latsoudi and a small group of local residents and volunteers begin distributing food and other essential goods to refugees and other people in need of protection. When the number of refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea continues to rise, they prepare large amounts of warm meals and distribute them at central localities.*



The deserted area of land around a former summer camp on the outskirts of the capital city Mytilene is renovated, and Camp Pikba is built in its place, with room to cater for up to 120 people in need of protection. Pregnant women, people suffering from chronic illnesses and those with mental health problems, minors and people with disabilities are all able to find refuge here. When, in 2015, an even greater number of refugees reach the island, the structures are already in place to take in another 400 people. In 2016, Lesvos solidarity is officially registered as a non-government organisation.

Refugees and local residents are encouraged to become actively involved by learning to help themselves. The principles that underlie the work are openness, transparency and environmental sustainability. Everyone has access to the activities on offer, which are distinguished by cultural diversity and shared artistic creation.

In the wake of the devastating fire in Camp Moria on Lesbos, armed police officers stormed the self-governing refugee camp Pikba on 30th October 2020. The Greek minister for immigration ordered the evacuation of „The Village of Altogether“ and prohibited

the longstanding work of the non-government organisation, Lesvos Solidarity. The people who witnessed the violent eviction, children in particular, were traumatised, in some cases severely.

The Mosaik Support Centre is still run by Lesvos Solidarity in cooperation with the NGO borderline-europe. It is situated directly in the city centre of Mytilene and offers language courses, cultural activities as well as legal advice for residents and people who have fled their country. In a local sewing shop, locals and refugees make bags from items found on the rubbish tips, such as lifejackets and clothes that end up there having been discarded on the island's beaches. They are then sold under the label „Safe Passage“.

The work carried out by all NGOs on Lesbos is currently considerably restricted due to the effects of the global crisis resulting from the pandemic. However, the team is absolutely determined to continue its work. Former camp residents receive support when searching for a flat. Hygiene concepts are being developed for Mosaik and Upcycling projects. Teaching and counselling services are in part in the process of being digitalised. The search is on for new grounds where day-care facilities can be offered and a safe space for women and children can be provided. On a political level, Lesvos Solidarity bears witness to racist attacks carried out by the police, the military, the civilian population and groups from the political right that have travelled into the country. In this way, the NGO campaigns for the safeguarding of the human rights and dignity of refugees.

[www.lesvossolidarity.org](http://www.lesvossolidarity.org)

*Proposed by different people*

## Proposal

# 3 Nonviolent Education and Research Dealing Non-Violently With Conflict Turkey

*„We believe that it is possible to create a world without discrimination and suppression, in which social justice is paramount and conflict can be solved in a non-violent way“, acknowledged the Nonviolent Education and Research Association in Istanbul.*

The centre has its origin within a society that accepted violence as a legitimate means of exercising state power and in which extrajudicial murder, the act of people simply “disappearing” and torture were the order of the day. Non-violence was dismissed as “spiritual”. Two activists, who had studied the subject of non-violence and discussed it with friends from Germany since 1996, ventured to take the first concrete steps in founding an organisation. In 2014, the Non-violent Education and Research Association was founded and was officially registered as a non-government organisation in 2015. Their premises are in Istanbul. Meanwhile, the team comprises a five-member board of directors, three employees and twelve active volunteers.

The organisation supports the translation of written and visual materials on non-violence, non-violent activities and civil resistance in order to make this information accessible to the Turkish population. New articles are published or shared, publication and training materials are created which enable the spread of the concept of non-violent thought and action.

Civil resistance, non-violent campaign strategies, non-violence, gender, conflict, prejudice and non-violent communication all constitute the subjects of workshops organised by the centre. In some cases, external speakers are also involved. The Centre for Non-violence faces new challenges due to the high demand for these workshops. In 2019, 26 such workshops or training sessions took place.

Research is a further priority set by the centre. A data bank was created to document non-violent activities in Turkey, the focus

of which is on the environment, women and peace. An interactive map on the organisation’s website shows the results of the studies.

The non-violent resistance and the activities carried out during the first years of the organisation were repressed by the Turkish government. Consequently, the employees in the centre, in cooperation with other NGOs, academics, researchers and activists, have focussed more on strengthening and expanding civil society groups. Despite the problems and the difficult conditions under which the Centre for Non-violence has to operate, it has thus far been able to carry out its work, grow and find an increasing number of supporters.

„Every day, in all circumstances, all together for a world free from violence!“ is the slogan of the Centre for Nonviolence.

<https://siddetsizlikmerkezi.org>

*Proposed by Bund für Soziale Verteidigung*



## Proposal

# 4 FIACAT: Intern. Federation of the ACAT Abolition of Torture and Death Penalty France

*In many African states, an increasing number of people are imprisoned without justification. It is not uncommon for them to be detained for months or even years without a verdict, and they are often not even registered by name. They are in danger of being forgotten by the judicial system.*



Even minor offences or political involvement can cause people to be struck by this despotism. Minors are often imprisoned, and their families are powerless to help them. If the father of a family is detained for a long period of time, then the family faces financial ruin. Mothers are separated from their children or have to take care of small children in prison.

The consequence of this practice are prisons that are hopelessly overfilled. The prisoners in the cells can only sleep when they take it in turns to lie on the floor. The hygiene conditions are catastrophic and the food supply is insufficient. More often than not, they depend very much on the means their families have to support them. Torture at the hands of the prison staff as well as violence occur on a daily basis.

FIACAT (International Federation of ACAT) takes measures against the unsustainable conditions in the prisons. It is an association comprising 30 national ACAT organisations from four continents. ACAT stands for „Actions by Christians for the Abolition of Torture“ and is an interdenominational human rights organisation. Two women from the Reformed Church of France began this work

in 1974 after hearing a report the previous year by an Italian priest about the atrocities of the Vietnam War. The declared aim of the NGO with its headquarters in Paris is the abolition of torture and the death penalty.

Members regularly visit the prisons to identify prisoners, and the regional ACAT groups in six African states have succeeded in securing the provisional or final release of almost 2500 detainees. 1293 cases were submitted to the responsible courts and 1798 files revised by lawyers. In addition, employees from the judiciary, prison administration and civil society are trained in international and regional standards as a means of preventing torture.

The work carried out by ACAT is greeted with great interest and approval by the African media. FIACAT draws attention to the shortcomings in remand centres and collects money to secure its work on site. In this way, they were able to secure the humane treatment of a large number of prisoners as well as fair trials and release from prison. Moreover, democracy has been revitalized through dialogue between the ACATs, further civil-society agents and the state authorities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated the situation for prisoners and put them in great danger. Courts have only been able to work slowly due to the pandemic. The ACATs have, however, emphatically drawn attention to the danger that the virus can easily spread in prisons on account of overcrowding. A large number of prisoners were released.

[www.fiacat.org](http://www.fiacat.org)

Proposed by ACAT Germany

## Proposal

# 5 Reach Out Women for Peace Cameroon

*The country cannot find peace: This is true of the conflict between the francophone majority of the population and the Anglophone minority in the west of the country. Women, children and adolescents in particular suffer as a result of the brutal disputes involving a separatist Anglophone movement, Islamic terrorist groups, francophone ethnic groups and the central government. Any attempt to live a civilian life is thus nipped in the bud. The organisation Reach Out (REO) empowers women, supports young people and addresses problems. In doing so, it makes an important contribution to the peace process.*

One example: A school in Kumba is brutally attacked. Nineteen students are badly injured, seven die at the scene of the crime. An agreement had been made between hostile groups after four years with no working education system. To no effect. REO organises demonstrations and ensures that the local authorities are made responsible for dealing with the terrible crime. Journalists are in part significantly restricted in carrying out their work in this country. REO serves as a whistle-blower by demanding accountability for war crimes and by publishing breaches of human rights on a public website.

It is the women who desire and strive for peace with all their might. They do not want to live without their men or lose their sons in action. REO helps women to recognise and accept how important their role is in the peace process. Coaching and training programmes teach them how to take an active part in promoting peace in the face of family disputes, questions within the community and regional conflicts with local authorities. Men are integrated into this process to support the women in the peace process.

A youth peace initiative is founded in 2009 in answer to the violence resulting from the increasing influence of the terrorist group Boko Haram. Every year, 100 young people come together to work on ideas such as living together peacefully, healthy living, governance and community development. In this way, REO in Cameroon carries out pioneer work. Young people in danger of being radicalised as well as unemployed youths are trained and motivated to campaign for peace.

The health service has become a victim of the ongoing armed conflict. Health centres have been closed, destroyed or abandoned. There is no health care available to the people and the mortality rate is increasing. REO distributes hygiene articles, birth kits, basic food stuffs and vitamin supplements. Communities caught up in conflict which are difficult to reach are provided for by a mobile clinic. The organisation supports orphanages and schools.

In cooperation with the founder of REO, Esther Omam, 80 employees are committed to upholding human rights, the peace process, the economic stability of individual households as well as the health of the people living in South and Northwest Cameroon. The organisation, which was founded in 1996 during the widespread HIV epidemic in Southwest Cameroon, supports neighbouring groups, gets involved, and emphatically and consistently demands a cease-fire and non-violent solutions to conflict.

[www.reachoutcameroon.org](http://www.reachoutcameroon.org)

*Proposed by Lisa Trebs*



# The *schwelle* Foundation and its partners strive for Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation.

We initiate and support projects that create and shape society and societal change through non-violent means. The work of our projects and project partners support and campaign for social justice, compliance and implementation of human rights as well as environmental sustainability.

Overall, the foundation's work aims to inspire other projects to show support for a social change towards greater justice.

## Every two years the *schwelle* Foundation confers the International Bremen Peace Award.

With this award we honor people and organizations that set a good example in their work for Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation. People and organizations involved in peace promotion worldwide nominate individuals and projects for the award. Out of these, the award winners are selected in the following three categories:

**Grassroots Peace Worker**

**Peace Ambassador in Public Life**

**Award of the Donors for Encouraging Initiatives**

The jury of the *schwelle* Foundation will select the first two award winners. The award for Encouraging Initiatives will be determined by the donors.

With this award we make visible encouraging examples of convincing peace work that have yet remained unknown to the broader public.



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**Stiftung *die schwelle* | Beiträge zum Frieden**  
***schwelle* Foundation | Contributions to Peace**  
**Wachmannstrasse 79 | 28209 Bremen | Germany**  
**+49 (0)421 - 30 32 575**  
**[stiftung@dieschwelle.de](mailto:stiftung@dieschwelle.de)**  
**[www.dieschwelle.de](http://www.dieschwelle.de)**

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