



Ginetta Sagan Fund

Supporting courageous women who risk their lives to defend the human rights of others.

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Amnesty International Honors Activist Jenni Williams for Inspiring Zimbabweans to Stand Up for Freedom and Basic Rights

Founder of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) Has Led Peaceful Protests Since 2003 Involving 75,000 Women and Men, Who Have Endured Harassment, Arrests and Violence

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(New York) – Activist Jenni Williams, a founder of the social justice movement Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), who has endured dozens of arrests and beatings for leading peaceful protests, will be awarded Amnesty International U.S.A.'s 2012 Ginetta Sagan Award for Women's and Children's Rights. The award honors activists who persevere, often at great personal risk and sacrifice.

In 2003, Williams co-founded WOZA with the late Sheba Dube to demand social and political reforms in Zimbabwe under the brutal rule of Robert Mugabe.

WOZA has inspired tens of thousands of women and men to stand up for their rights to free speech and assembly and the fulfillment of basic needs like food and education. WOZA is both the protest group's acronym and a word in the Ndebele language that means "come forward."

"Thank you for this wonderful and timely news," said Williams. "It reached me on another rough day fighting fabricated kidnap and theft charges. When I first heard the story of Ginetta, I was filled with such admiration for the work she did and it inspired me to keep going."

In nearly a decade of struggle and hundreds of protests, more than 3,000 WOZA supporters have spent time in police custody. Williams herself has been arrested 40 times including most recently in February during a demonstration to mark WOZA's 10th anniversary. She has been beaten, imprisoned without food or medical supplies and threatened with execution. Williams' September 2011 arrest – her 39th-- resulted in charges of kidnapping and theft against her and

Jenni Williams, 2012 Ginetta Sagan Awardee

WOZA program coordinator Magodonga Mahlangu. As of February 2012, they were still fighting the charges in a Zimbabwe court.

WOZA encourages women and men to speak out about issues they may be too fearful to raise alone, including domestic violence and rape. Williams has said the WOZA slogan, "Tough Love," reflects her conviction that "the power of love can conquer the love of power."

Williams, 49, was honored by President Obama at the White House in 2009 when WOZA and WOZA Programs Coordinator Magodonga Mahlangu were awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Award.

Ginetta Sagan, a resistance fighter during World War II who was arrested and tortured, was an early supporter of Amnesty International and a winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She died in 2000 at the age of 75.

The award established in her name honors activists who persevere often at great personal risk and sacrifice to end human rights abuses against women and children. Like Sagan, Williams has been arrested, beaten, harassed, intimidated, and jailed in filthy and dangerous prisons. Despite safety concerns – for herself, her family and for WOZA members -- she has fought to help change conditions in Zimbabwe through peaceful protest.

Suzanne Nossel, Amnesty International USA executive director, said: "I am so proud to honor this brave woman who fights every day for the dignity and rights of women and children in Zimbabwe. Few of us can imagine the risks she takes every time she leads a protest. Every time Jenni Williams is arrested and jailed Amnesty International activists all over the world stand with her to demand her freedom. As long as she carries on her courageous work, Amnesty International will be by her side."

Ana Sagan, Ginetta Sagan's granddaughter and a member of the AIUSA Ginetta Sagan Fund, said: "With each awardee, part of Ginetta's spirit shines through. Jenni has not only Ginetta's passion and courage, but also an innate ability to inspire those around her that they themselves have the power and courage to make a stand for their own rights."

"Jenni Williams demonstrates the strength and perseverance that has become a hallmark of Ginetta Sagan Award recipients," said Andrea Claburn, co-chair of the Fund, and a close friend of the late Ginetta Sagan. "Throughout the 16-year history of the Ginetta Sagan Award, we have been privileged to honor women leaders around the globe who inspire women everywhere to demand justice and accountability. Jenni, our 17th award recipient, continues this legacy with great integrity."

Jenni Williams, 2012 Ginetta Sagan Awardee

Williams will receive a grant of \$10,000 and will be speaking in the United States, as part of the award's intent to shine a light on human rights abuses or concerns in a particular region.

Her work in Zimbabwe is badly needed. The government of Zimbabwe continues to commit widespread and systemic human rights violations. Multiple human rights organizations report that politically motivated violence is likely to increase in 2012, when national elections are scheduled.

About the Ginetta Sagan Fund

Established as a living memorial to the late human rights activist and prominent Amnesty International U.S.A. member Ginetta Sagan, whose lifelong work began with the Italian resistance during World War II, the fund annually bestows an award of \$10,000 to recognize and assist a woman doing effective work to protect the dignity, liberties and lives of women and children in crisis regions where the abuse of human rights is widespread. The award recognizes outstanding achievement, often at great personal risk; enhances the recipient's ability to live and work freely; protects her capacity to continue her work, and brings increased international scrutiny to the crisis region or issue for which the recipient works.

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 2.8 million supporters, activists and volunteers in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

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