



# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

Monika Hauser (Germany)

(2008)



*"...for her tireless commitment to working with women who have experienced the most horrific sexual violence in some of the most dangerous countries in the world, and campaigning for them to receive social recognition and compensation."*

Monika Hauser  
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**Monika Hauser is the founder of *medica mondiale*, which works to prevent and punish sexual violence against women and girls in wartime and to assist the survivors. Hauser and her colleagues have helped over 70,000 traumatised women and girls in war and post-war crisis zones in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo, DR Congo, Liberia and Afghanistan, often despite great risks to their own security.**

## Career

Monika Hauser was born in 1959 in Switzerland, and holds an Italian passport due to her family roots in South Tyrol. She completed her doctorate in medicine in Innsbruck and Bologna in 1984, obtained her German medical licence in 1988 and completed her gynaecological specialisation in 1998. She came to work with victims of sexual violence after being exposed as a young doctor in South Tyrol and Germany to women who had experienced rape and other forms of sexual violence.

## Bosnia - Building up *Medica Zenica*

At the end of 1992, Hauser was shocked by the media reports about the tragedy of the Bosnian women, and the instrumentalisation of the survivors in the media, which often reduced the women to mere "rape victims". She assembled a highly motivated team of 20 Bosnian experts, collected the funding needed, brought the complete material for the clinics to Central Bosnia through the frontlines and built up *Medica Zenica*, a women's therapy centre, in the middle of war-torn Bosnia.

Setting up *Medica Zenica*, Hauser insisted on a multi-ethnic team. The creation of such a centre in a war situation was pioneering work, even more remarkable in a highly patriarchal and hostile war context.

### ***medica mondiale***

Out of these activities *medica mondiale* gradually evolved. For the next six years Monika Hauser continued to further the development of *medica mondiale*. She also returned to Zenica for several extended stays. In 1999, she initiated the project *medica mondiale Kosova*, involving numerous project visits to Albania and Kosovo. In 2000 Monika Hauser assumed the professional and political management of *medica mondiale*.

### ***medica mondiale's mission***

*medica mondiale* supports and assists women and girls in war zones and areas of crisis, whose physical, psychological, social and political integrity has been violated. This support and assistance is provided irrespective of the women's and girls' political affiliation, ethnic origin or religion. The aim is to strengthen the women's self-healing powers and to support and demand their right to an emancipatory way of life.

*medica mondiale* has a double strategy of individual professional support and human rights work by

- establishing sustainable local structures to provide support for survivors of wartime sexual violence,
- setting up interdisciplinary counselling and therapy centres,
- capacity building and training of local professional staff, and
- political advocacy for women's rights.

### **Advocacy for women's rights and legal prosecution**

Since its formation, *medica mondiale* has worked for the recognition of sexual violence in wartime as a war crime, for the prosecution of the perpetrators, and against social stigma and the marginalisation of the survivors.

*medica mondiale* supported the investigations of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, took care of witnesses, monitored court proceedings and protested publicly whenever it saw the interests of women witnesses threatened. *medica mondiale* also campaigned for the creation of the International Criminal Court, and contributed to the fact that grave sexual violence became explicitly recognised as a war crime and crime against humanity in the ICC's statutes.

### **Facts and figures**

*medica mondiale* has independent projects in Bosnia and Hercegovina (27 staff), Kosovo (25 staff) and Albania (12 staff), and own projects in Afghanistan (72 staff) and Liberia (17 staff). It supports partner organisations in Cambodia, DR Congo (6 co-operative partners), East Timor, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda and Israel, supported by an office in Cologne, Germany, with 29 staff, plus a similar number of volunteers and 100 women in action groups in several German cities.

*medica mondiale* estimates to have - directly and indirectly - reached around 100,000 women and girls through their projects. Half of *medica mondiale's* 2007 budget of 3 million Euros came from private donations. Organisational sources of funds in 2007 included the Sigrid Rausing Trust, KfW Development Bank, UNHCHR, which regards *medica mondiale* as 'an essential partner' in relation to women and conflict, the European Community, the Danish Embassy in Afghanistan, and the German Government.

In 2005 *medica mondiale* published *Violence Against Women in War*, a manual of lessons learned

from eleven years of experience in half a dozen countries emerging from war.

### **Further activities**

Monika Hauser lectures regularly at national and international congresses and public events, presenting the work of *medica mondiale* to the general public and to professional panels. She has also been active as a trainer for the *medica mondiale* Qualification Programme for Afghan women doctors, nurses and midwives in Kabul.

### **Honours**

Hauser has received a number of awards for her work, for example "Woman of the Year" 1993 of the German ARD TV, and the Peter Beier Award of the German Lutheran Church. She was named "European of the year 2011" by Reader's Digest magazine. She turned down the German Federal Cross of Merit in protest against the German Government policy of forced repatriation of Bosnian refugees.

### **Quotation**

*"Every minute, in conflict regions worldwide, women and girls become victims of sexualized violence. We do not tire of denouncing this publicly, and to demand support, security and justice for those concerned, be it in the respective countries or on international stage. We are with the surviving women and girls with all our knowledge and solidarity so that - despite all the destructive violence they had to experience - these women have a chance to live self-determined lives in dignity."*

Monika Hauser

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