

## **2023 Nuremberg International Human Rights Award**

On Saturday, 28 January 2023, the jury of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, chaired by Marcus König, Lord Mayor of the City of Nuremberg, held a digital meeting and came to the following decision concerning the fifteenth Nuremberg International Human Rights Award:

### **The Award Winner is Mr Malcolm Bidali from Kenya**

The jury gave the following reasoning for its decision:

Between 2018 and 2021, Malcolm Bidali worked as a security guard in Qatar. Like numerous workers from abroad, he was subjected to very bad working and living conditions. Since his complaints with the authorities were unsuccessful, he published blogs about the human rights violations he experienced and observed, using different channels, such as Twitter and Instagram, and writing under the pseudonym “Noah”.

His posts provided an intimate insight into the working and living conditions of low-income migrant workers. He described overcrowded dormitories, confiscated passports, excessively long working hours, lack of privacy, and his unsuccessful attempts to achieve better treatment. A week before his arrest, he gave a talk to a group of civil society organisations and trade unions, informing them about his Qatar experiences.

He was investigated, presumably via a phishing attack on his mobile phone, and arrested on 4 May 2021. It was only eight days later that his arrest was confirmed by the Qatar authorities. His whereabouts were not disclosed. During his entire imprisonment, he was denied access to legal assistance. The accusation levelled at him was that he “broadcast and published false news with the intention of endangering the public system of the state”.

It was only with the assistance of human rights organisations and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that Bidali was released after 30 days of solitary confinement, on condition that he was not permitted to leave the Emirate. The penalty order was issued on 14 July, without him ever being indicted, heard in court or even informed about the criminal charges brought against him. He paid the fine imposed, the equivalent of about 6.000 Euros, left the emirate and returned to Kenya.

Together with a female colleague who had been a domestic worker in Bahrain, he founded the civil society organisation Migrant Defenders.org which makes the case for the rights of migrant workers. This includes the demand that Kenya as the sending state must fulfil its human rights responsibilities.

By presenting Malcolm Bidali with the 2023 Nuremberg International Human Rights Award, the jury honours him as a human rights activist. He is one of very few fearless voices which come out against abuse and exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar, mainly in the service sector. Although by now, in some Gulf States four out of five





inhabitants are migrant workers, authorities, employers and indigenous population often treat them as second class people. Their dependence on their respective contractors and employers often results in working conditions frequently reminiscent of forced labour and modern slavery.

The problem, however, is not limited to the rich Gulf States. In Europe, too, we must not lose sight of the idea of fair mobility of labour. It was particularly during the Covid pandemic that it became clear that migrant workers living in precarious conditions are the weakest link in the employment chain.

This is why the jury, by honouring Malcom Bidali, also wants to focus on worldwide exploitation of migrant workers.

**The award will be presented in Nuremberg Opera House on Sunday, 24 September 2023.**

*Nuremberg, 28 January 2023*

