

# JURY REPORT

## JRS Journalist Prize 2008



Fr. Jan Stuyt

*Regional Director JRS-E*

## **Jury Report – JRS Journalism Prize 2008**

### **Jury Process**

On 6 March 2008, jurors for the JRS Journalism Prize 2008 met in Brussels in order to select three winning articles. The Director of JRS Europe, Fr Jan Stuyt, had pre-selected the jury according to their journalistic experience and empathy with the topic, 'Access to Asylum'. The jury included Ms Safak Pavey, Ms Caroline de Gruyter, Mr Forward Maisokwadzo and Mr Jean-Paul Marthoz. Overseeing the meeting were Fr Jan Stuyt, Ms Eliazbeth Underhill and Mr Michael Donohoe.

Prior to the meeting, jurors were sent ten short-listed articles that had been selected from the original 37 entries. From these ten articles the jury was requested to follow a prescribed judging criteria, to select their three preferred articles and to present these articles at the meeting in Brussels. The jury was requested to give reasons for their selection, to present these reasons in Brussels and to discuss their corresponding or conflicting selections.

At the meeting, jurors were split between seven articles from the short-list of ten. This variance of opinion meant jurors had to discuss extensively the individual merits of each article, and equally, where they had found faults with each article.

Generally, jury members found the articles addressed the issue of 'Access to Asylum' well, showed good knowledge of the subject and displayed originality. However, that is not to say the articles were free of fault. The jurors found that many of the articles were grammatically sloppy, not contextualised enough, lacked balance with regards to sources and displayed a journalistic style that was over-emotive.

Notwithstanding these critiques, due to a firm grasp of the topic, sobriety in delivery and awareness of the greater issues, the jurors were able to identify three articles that stood out from the rest.

The jury awarded third place to Thomas Estrup from Denmark for his article entitled, 'A young African's odyssey to Europe'. The article recounts a Nigerian boy's abortive attempts to access asylum in Spain. The jurors believed that this article stood on its own two feet, displayed good journalistic ability with relevant use of sources and humanised the struggle for asylum without debasing the issue via over elaborate prose. The only negative point was that the theme of the article did not address the wider issues regarding access to asylum and instead chose to focus on economic migrants.

Second place went to Stav Shaffir from the United Kingdom for her article entitled, 'Shall We Dance'. The article discusses access to asylum for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the UK. The jury identified this piece as an original article that dealt with a topic that is still viewed as taboo in many newsrooms and something that is not given enough exposure in Western media. Jurors also complimented the writer's style and appreciated that he was able to take a step back from the subject in order to give a relatively objective account of the issue. Criticisms levelled at the article were that the writer, at times, got distracted from the main theme and presented his ideas in an untidy fashion.

The jury had no disagreements as to what article should be put forward as the winner of the JRS Journalism Prize 2008. 'The Politics of Fighting Windmills' by Anastasia Stolovitskaya from Denmark was declared outright winner via a unanimous decision from the four person jury. The article is an account of one Iraqi family's struggle with the asylum system in Copenhagen. The jury was swayed by choice of subject, the writer's style and an analytical display that opens up any number of potential avenues of discussion and debate.

The jurors agreed that Ms Stolovitskaya's subject displays a well informed knowledge of mixed migration flows and the plight of Catholic Christians who can no longer find safe haven within the borders of Iraq. Her delivery is in a tone that does not overplay the subject and at times the style borders on the onomatopoeic, driving home the day-to-day monotony of life in a detention centre. The lasting impression the jurors took from the article was that it showed a profound understanding of mixed migratory flows and offers a useful incite into the greater discourse of immigration and access to asylum.

### **Conclusion**

The JRS-Europe office wishes to thank all those who entered the JRS Journalism Prize 2008. Apart from seeking out young journalists willing to invest time in key issues regarding asylum and refugees, the competition is also an awareness raising project in schools and institutes throughout Europe. We are pleased that the 2008 edition did just this and we hope for the further advancement of this project in the coming years. We wish to thank those institutions that offer us their continued support and we wish to ask the young journalists who contribute, do not lose sight of the greater fundamental issues that arise from an ever evolving Europe.

### **Judges**

Ms Caroline de Gruyter: Geneva correspondent for NRC Handelsblad and published author. Formerly a correspondent for NRC Handelsblad in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem.

Ms Safak Pavey: Journalist and Nansen Refugee Awards Coordinator, Division of External Relations UNHCR

Mr Forward Maisokwadzo: Coordinator of the Exiled Journalists' Network and Project Communications Officer of the Media-Wise Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Media (RAM) Project. Formerly a journalist for the Zimbabwe Independent. Has freelanced for a number of UK based newspapers.

Mr Jean-Paul Marthoz: Editorial Director of Enjeux Internationaux, columnist for 'Le Soir' and associate editor of Europe's World. Published author and former European Press Director of Human Rights Watch.

*Report compiled by Michael Donohoe – Media Officer JRS-Europe*