



# Citations for the Human Rights and Nursing Awards 2018

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The International Care Ethics Observatory is pleased to announce that, on 1 September 2018, the Human Rights and Nursing Awards will be given at a short ceremony at the Catherine McAuley School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork, Ireland. The awards will be presented during the conference organised by the Catherine McAuley School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork in conjunction with the International Care Ethics Observatory, University of Surrey and *Nursing Ethics*.

## Citation for Alice Leahy

Alice Leahy, a former nurse and midwife, is also a former Chairperson of the Sentence Review Group and a former Irish Human Rights Commissioner. She is also a writer, commentator, broadcaster and lecturer, promoting understanding of the needs of outsiders in society. She helps to combat social exclusion in practical ways every day.

In 1975 Alice co-founded TRUST, which is now the Alice Leahy Trust. The work and ethos remains the same, providing health and related services to people who are homeless.

Alice Leahy is well aware that the condition of being homeless implies much more than not having a home. Being homeless implies being on the borders of society and being vulnerable.

Her daily work centres around the Alice Leahy Trust. She has made it into an extraordinary nurse-led service that offers respite, shelter, recognition, advice, fresh clothes, warm showers, healthcare and friendship to the men and women who live and sleep outdoors in Ireland's capital city.

When the day's caring is done, Alice takes up the challenge of letting the outside world know about the lives of the people she encounters each day. She fights their corner. She challenges the status quo. She queries orthodoxies. She highlights hidden abuses. Where others see problems, Alice sees people. She is on their side every time.

The marginalised and excluded people and those who possess little self-worth have few champions. But they do have Alice. Every day, every week, she makes time for them. She visits prisoners, speaks to school children and attends funerals where mourners are few. She lectures to nurses and doctors, checks on old friends, meets politicians, writes to newspapers, thanking supporters, publishes books, promotes human rights and makes a difference.

Now in the fifth decade of her work, Alice Leahy's dedication to anyone less fortunate grows only stronger. Her human rights work is known and recognised locally, nationally and internationally. But those who know Alice best of all are those who have, or once had, no homes to go to. To them, she is simply Nurse Alice. And there is nobody else quite like her.

It is Alice who created this unique Trust, and it is the Trust that continues to empower its users by encouraging them to use the statutory services and to obtain their entitlements, while at the same time working to acknowledge the dignity of every person, promoting awareness on the issues of homelessness and vulnerability, ongoing training of specialist groups and involvement in relevant research on the issues relating to homelessness. For this same reason, the Alice Leahy Trust is also very involved with people who have been in prison and in psychiatric institutions and the people who work with them.

She works from early each morning and shines light on her chosen field of homelessness until the night light goes out.

‘Sometimes one word can recall a whole span of life’ said Edna O’Brien (Irish novelist), and the word that sums up the life span of Alice Leahy is without doubt ‘advocacy’, applying to the most vulnerable people in our society.

Alice has finished a memoir *The Stars are our only Warmth* written with well-known journalist Catherine Cleary, due for publication by O’Brien Press in October 2018.



## Citation for Miriam Kasztura

What clearly emerges from Miriam Kasztura's nomination is the fact that her thoughts and thus her actions are guided by the desire for justice. Indeed, as a child, Miriam Kasztura wanted to become a judge to stop injustice, or a journalist to give voice to people who suffer. Eventually, Miriam became a nurse whose actions are guided by the wish for justice, equity and making vulnerable people heard. She did volunteer work in India while still studying for her nursing degree, collaborating in a community health project where she was responsible for a vaccination campaign and nutritional status assessment for 240 children. She was also involved in building up surgical camps in rural remote clinics and in teaching local staff and nursing students. Her second volunteer posting was in Mongolia, where Miriam worked for a shelter for street children in Ulaanbaatar. Later, she went to Papua New Guinea.

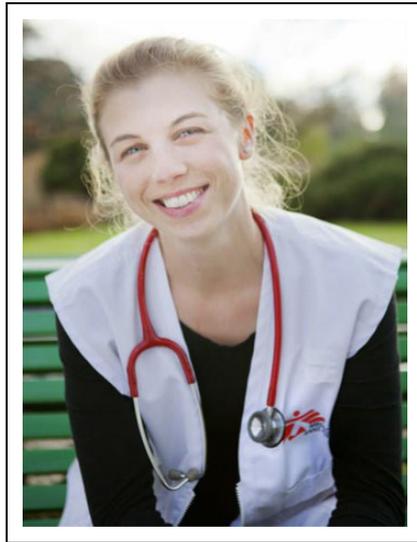
Already during her nursing studies, Miriam Kasztura's interests lay with less privileged people in the societies in which she lived, concerning herself with drug users, homeless people, prostitutes, migrants and prisoners. She was more interested in the social issues in nursing than with the medical ones. As a consequence, during her last year of nursing school, she completed a Certificate in Health and Humanitarian Assistance at the University of Aix-Marseille, France (2007). Her first experience as a registered nurse was in different wards in Switzerland, then moving to Australia, where she mainly worked in emergency departments, first in Adelaide, then in Townsville. She completed an emergency nursing practice education programme, followed by a Master's degree in Public Health and Tropical Medicine at James Cook University, Townsville, Australia.

After these years of experience in Australia, Miriam went to work with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Between 2011 and 2017, Miriam completed 15 assignments in complex humanitarian emergencies and active conflict settings in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Chad and Syria. She was active in responses to displaced populations in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Tanzania and Syria and worked in outbreaks of Ebola, measles, malaria, cholera and meningitis. She engaged in hospital and health structure management of every possible kind and also in a variety of mental health, health promotion and community involvement activities. She supervised vaccination programmes and mortality surveys and implemented epidemiological surveillance. Her responsibilities were multiple, from representing the organisation, to media relations, access and project negotiations with representatives from governments and armed forces, to coordination of multicultural teams of over 400 national and expatriate staff, providing technical support, coaching and training.

In addition, Miriam Kasztura worked in the staff health departments of the United Nations Office in Geneva and was involved in developing briefing documents and reference documents for disaster response teams.

In 2016, Miriam began the MSc Nursing Program at Berne University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland, which she has just completed. Today, she continues to support and improve practice from within MSF, having been elected to the organisation's Board of Directors. With this, she is also concerned with the enforcement of human rights in underserved populations in Switzerland whose healthcare needs are not met. In particular, Miriam is playing a leading role on: a health promotion intervention project for unaccompanied minors who are seeking asylum; the case management for frequent users of emergency departments; and a nurse-led primary care consultation service which includes physical examination, basic diagnostics, psychosocial risk behaviour assessments and health promotion interventions for university students and employees.

The world needs nurses like Alice Leahy and Miriam Kasztura and it is fitting that they are to be honoured with the 2018 Nursing and Human Rights Awards.



(Reto Albertalli/Phovea).