

Dr. Francisco Legaz Cervantes
Chairman, International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO)
Speech presenting the awardees of the 'Juvenile Justice Without Borders'
International Award in its 8th edition, 2024

Dear friends, professionals and colleagues of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory.

As Chairman of the IJJO, I would like to express what a great honour it is both for myself and our organisation to celebrate the 8th edition of the 'Juvenile Justice Without Borders' International Award.

This award was created 14 years ago with the intention of recognising the excellent professional work and the firm commitment of individuals and entities around the world who, from different fields, promote the rights of children and young people who come into contact with juvenile justice systems, as well as contribute to the advancement of these systems. This work is fully in line with the values and objectives that underpin the mission of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory.

Our mission and raison d'être is to address the problems of children and young people in conflict with the law from an interdisciplinary, plural and sensitive approach to the different realities and cultures, with the ultimate aim of contributing to protect their rights and improve their lives. Thus, the Observatory focuses on promoting the rights of children, adolescents and young people in conflict with the law through the observation of juvenile justice systems from an international, interdisciplinary and rights-based approach, as well as the promotion and support of initiatives that will advance towards a fairer, more inclusive and accessible juvenile justice system.

The individuals and entities awarded in this edition embody the fundamental values that the International Juvenile Justice Observatory seeks to promote through this recognition. Their work reflects an unwavering commitment to defending the rights of children and young people, creating opportunities for their holistic development and for the improvement of juvenile justice systems. Through their efforts in research, advocacy, education and awareness-raising, they have been able to bring about significant changes in legislation, practices and social attitudes. Together, they represent the essence of juvenile justice without borders: the relentless pursuit of a more just, equitable and hopeful future for children and youth.

We at the Observatory hope that the recognition of these awardees will not only be a reward for their achievements, but a source of inspiration for professionals, young people and the international community as a whole.

My most sincere congratulations to all the awardees of the 2024 edition, whom I will now introduce:

Prof. Dr. Adeela ahmed Shafi MBE (United Kingdom), Professor of Education in Youth Justice, University of Gloucestershire. Prof. Shafi has been awarded for her work in the research and development of interdisciplinary projects to improve education and training for young people in conflict with the law in custodial settings, promoting their educational and personal development, their interest in formal and informal learning, as well as their future employability. The IJJO highlights her efforts in investigating the most effective learning methodologies and adapting them to the needs of these young people.

Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (United States). This organisation has been awarded for its defense of individuals deprived of liberty with extreme sentences for crimes that they committed as children, as well as its support to those released for their successful reintegration into society. The IJJO highlights CFSY's advocacy, research, and awareness-raising efforts, which contribute to producing legislative, procedural, and societal change against extreme sentencing and in favour of rehabilitation, reintegration, and children's rights.

Prof. Julia Sloth-Nielsen (South Africa) Emeritus Professor, University of the Western Cape. Prof. Sloth-Nielsen has been awarded for her distinguished professional trajectory as a researcher and academic, which has contributed significantly to the understanding and improvement of the legal and policy frameworks that affect children at both a national and an international level, including in the field of juvenile justice. The IJJO highlights her work on the development of international standards in children's rights, as well as on the drafting of children's laws in a wide range of countries, including Kenya, Mozambique, Zanzibar, South Sudan, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, and South Africa.

Mr. Luis Pedernera (Uruguay), Vice Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Mr. Pedernera has been awarded for his outstanding work in defending the rights of children in Latin America and globally, monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in different countries, and developing guidelines and recommendations for the continued development of these rights. The IJJO also highlights his work in raising awareness and reporting to governments and society, alerting them to the rights violations suffered by children in different regions of the world.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Manfred Nowak (Austria), Secretary General of the Global Campus of Human Rights and Scientific Director of the Vienna Master of Arts in Applied Human Rights at the University of Applied Arts of Vienna. Prof. Nowak has been awarded for his work as a strong advocate for the implementation of children's rights worldwide, in particular as director of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which assessed the number and conditions of children in various detention situations around the world and proposed measures for their protection and rehabilitation. The IJJO also highlights his participation in different high-level forums and events, actively engaging with decision-makers to raise awareness of these issues and promote change.

Save the Children Spain. This organisation has been awarded for its many and diverse actions to protect the rights and well-being of children in vulnerable situations, and specifically those who come into contact with the justice system. The IJJO highlights its contribution through the publication and dissemination of research that raises awareness of the situation of these children and provides essential data and analysis that contributes to the development of policies and practices on child rights and juvenile justice in Spain.

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office. This Regional Office of UNICEF has been awarded for its contribution to the promotion of children's rights and the development of youth justice systems in East Asia and the Pacific through different actions of capacity-building, research, advocacy, and the implementation of innovative programmes in partnership with governments, NGOs, and communities. The IJJO highlights UNICEF EAPRO's efforts to provide valuable data and insights that inform policy changes and improve professional practices in the region.

I would once again like to express the great satisfaction it gives us to recognise and disseminate through this award the essential work that they do. As in previous editions, we hope that this award can serve as a model and motivation to more professionals and organisations in their mission to improve the lives of children in different parts of the world. On behalf of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory and myself, it is a privilege to present you with this award. Thank you and congratulations.

Dr. Francisco Legaz Cervantes

Chairman, International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO)