



Newsflash  
2013-01

06.06.2013

## J4J on change of governance:

Dear friends of Judges for Judges,

Yesterday (05.06.2013) Judges for Judges took leave from **Gerritjan van Oven**, chairman of the board of the foundation. He was celebrated by the board of directors during the meeting and the subsequent dinner. Gerritjan explains why he decided to vacate the chair and he summarizes what targets were reached by Judges for Judges during the last four years (see below).



The new chairman will be **Tamara Trotman**.

The board proudly announces three new members and welcomes them into their midst. Yesterday the following persons joined the board of the foundation. **Esther de Rooij**, **Ybo Buruma** and **Evert van der Molen** describe why they want to make an effort for Judges for Judges.

Yours sincerely,

## Judges for Judges takes leave from her chairman Gerritjan van Oven

On December 9th, 2009 a new board of directors of the foundation Judges for Judges took off, of which I was the chairman. It was the first chairman – **Bert van Delden** – who initiated the restart of the foundation that applies itself to support ‘judges in distress’. We – **Tamara Trotman**, **Jolien Schukking**, **Gerrard Boot** and **Esther van der Laan**, succeeded by **Vera Willemsen**, inspired new life into the foundation. I thank the Court of Appeal in The Hague for their enduring cooperation.

It was quite a job: the organisation had to be strongly harnessed, the administrative side had to be organised, as well as the financial side. We had to explore the field (both nationally and internationally) and of course some specific actions had to be undertaken.

I am proud of the result: we count around 120 more or less active supporters. The concept of Judges for Judges is widely known. Finances are sound. The foundation is in close cooperation with the [UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#), the [International Commission of Jurists](#) in Geneva and [MEDEL](#) (Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et la Liberté). We developed some tools: the Newsletter (today translated in English, French and in Spanish), the website (formerly mastered by Ilan de Vré, and now by Douwe Sikkema) and we even publish Newsflashes like the present one.

As regards content: some twenty countries have been detected that are considered problematic. A number of judges was contacted, that are being threatened. Many times we approached international and national organisations to call attention to judges that are threatened with either a dismissal or that are being taken in custody or on suspension. There is an active cooperation with the Dutch [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). I really swelled with pride when the Minister



of Foreign Affairs and members of the Dutch Parliament quoted 'Judges for Judges' during a hefty debate! In a few cases we were able to organise an observation of proceedings.

Of course there still is a lot to improve: it must be easier to inform us about a problematic situation. In the Netherlands more judges and colleagues ought to participate, preferably organized by each court. Translations ought to be facilitated better.

But not during my chairmanship. **I took leave from my judgeship and in my opinion the chair should befall on an active magistrate.** After a period of 3½ years, I'll yield the baton to my successor **Tamara** in whom I have every confidence, as I have in the other members of the board Vera and Douwe because of their limitless talent, enthusiasm and energy. I trust that the foundation has become so self-evident – both in national and international terms – that a change of chair is less relevant.

It goes without saying that I will closely observe the developments within the Foundation. With admiration where possible, critical if necessary. I'll gladly offer my services if I can be of any use. I recommend the foundation with all my heart.

**Gerritjan van Oven**

## J4J welcomes new members of the board

**Ybo Buruma**

In my opinion, judges have the task to further justice in their country. Even in a country like ours it is not always easy to practice this idea, but this task is much more difficult and sometimes even dangerous to fulfill in a country where the political situation is worse. I consider it **an important social mission to support colleagues** that nevertheless try to live up to this task. My affinity with activities on behalf of people in miserable countries comes as no surprise – long ago I supplied a little hamlet in **Mexico** with wells and toilets and I tried to edit the text of the **Albanian** Criminal Code by order of the Council of Europe. Considering my present position, **I may be able to unlock a few doors to successfully promote the mission of Judges for Judges.**



**Evert van der Molen**



I decided to join the board of 'Judges for Judges' because I want to make an effort and support colleagues that get into trouble because of their work. Justice and independence are closely linked and can't be separated. We have to guard this concept like we do the crown jewels. 'Judges for judges' stands up for those colleagues abroad whose independence is being threatened or violated. Reading the stories about judges that are being dismissed or detained by their regimes because of their being independent, makes me sad; it makes me realize how important it is to demand attention for their cause. Long ago, as a student, I myself was a member of an 'adoption group' within Amnesty International. That meant writing letters to the authorities but also to the political prisoners themselves. In my case I corresponded with a detainee in former **Rhodesia** (Zimbabwe). I received answers from him and this

man stressed the importance of knowing that he was on the minds of people elsewhere on the globe. This again motivated me very much. I am glad to know he was set free in the end. Later, as a lawyer, I was concerned with the legal status of catering personnel on offshore platforms in the **Dutch part of the Continental Plateau**. This not only

meant I had to conduct procedures, but it also involved the organization of actions, in cooperation with local political parties. These activities bordered both on national and international dealings. They were inspiring and instructive. **In my opinion, being active within 'Judges for Judges' implies a creative search for the tools to call attention to those colleagues of ours, that work in precarious circumstances.** I'll be happy to contribute.

### Esther de Rooij

Since 2013 I am a member of the board of the Amsterdam District Court. I worked in the Haarlem District Court before, where I headed the family and juvenile departments, the municipal and the administrative courts. In behalf of the 'Raad voor de Rechtspraak' (the Council for the Judiciary) I participate in an international project, called 'Judicial Reform in Europe'; its main goal is to strengthen the systems of justice within **Europe** by issuing recommendations together. It became clear to me that we fail to realize that in our country the basic requirements needed for an impartial and independent jurisdiction are met, but these core values are not self evident everywhere. **In many countries judges can't work independently, the way we do. Sometimes they are oppressed either by their governments or by the society that they live in.** Getting a bit of support from colleagues in other countries helps. In my opinion it belongs to my responsibility as a Judge to contribute to this cause, where ever possible. Remember: the Netherlands may be a small country, our jurisdiction however is in high international esteem.



## Matters of Principle

# MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE

CODES ON THE INDEPENDENCE  
AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE JUDICIARY

### Regulations on the position of judges

On the initiative of the foundation Judges for Judges the book **Matter of Principle, Codes on the independence and impartiality of the judiciary** has been launched in June 2012. The book covers the most important international, European and Dutch codes for the judiciary. This book will be distributed amongst all judges, counsellors, stand-in judges and future judges in the Netherlands. The digital version of the book can be found on the website of Judges for Judges [<http://www.rechtersvoorrechters.nl/matters-of-principle/>].

## Newsletter

Judges for Judges regularly publishes a newsletter. Please find the latest issues below. To subscribe to our English newsletter, please send an email with your name, email address and the text "**Subscribe to English newsletter**" to [[info@rechtersvoorrechters.nl](mailto:info@rechtersvoorrechters.nl)].