

## Profile for Ms Mary de Haas

Ms Mary de Haas is an advocate and an activist for political and human rights, human dignity and social justice in South Africa.

She is a qualified, registered, social worker with an MSocSci (*cum laude*) in Anthropology from the University of Natal, which was awarded for her research on African marriage and divorce.

As a social worker, Ms de Haas has been involved with marriage and family therapy (FAMSA in Durban) and has held the position of Principal of a children's home, also in Durban.

Besides her extensive research into marriage and divorce, Ms de Haas has broadened her research to include informal sector activities relating to the sale of liquor, traditional leaders, the role of customs and culture in contemporary society and the meaning of ethnic identity, and policing. She also served on the Research Committee on Farm Violence appointed by the national Minister of Safety and Security in the early 2000s, and wrote a large section of the report. From 2005-2008, she was a member of the Council of PSIRA, the body which regulates the private security industry.

Since the mid-80s, she has been involved in research into, and documentation of, political violence in KwaZulu-Natal and has produced regular summaries of this violence, known as the *Natal (now KZN) Monitor* ([www.violencemonitor.com](http://www.violencemonitor.com)).

More recently, her violence monitoring activities have included interventionist human rights work, directed at improving the criminal justice system, particularly with regards to the policing aspect. Between 1995 and 2005, funding from Norwegian People's Aid allowed her to work closely with lawyers on human rights matters, including constitutional issues. She has been affiliated with FrontLine Defenders, an international network of human rights defenders, since its inception in 2001.

Ms de Haas lectured in Anthropology at the University of Natal (now University of KZN) for twenty years. During this time, she taught a variety of courses, including on Africa, medical anthropology, and research methodology, to undergraduate and postgraduate students. She contributed to a number of interdisciplinary courses at the University, including Women's Studies. She also provided undergraduate and postgraduate courses to medical students on medical social science at the then University of Natal Medical School. She served for fourteen years on the Biomedical Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Ms de Haas was also a member and chairperson of the Bioethics Reference Group at the University between 1994 and 2004.

Although she officially retired as Senior Lecturer and Programme Director: Social Anthropology at the end of 2002, her work did by no means cease. She has continued with and expanded her research and interventionist work on violence and human rights abuses, with an increased focus on land-related issues and medical rights in KZN. She is a founding member of the Medical Rights Advocacy Network (MeRAN), an independent group of experienced bioethicists, which also does interventionist work on behalf of patients and medical professionals.

Ms de Haas is currently an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Law, UKZN, and a member of the Navi Pillay Research Group, which has a focus on justice and human rights.

She is regularly consulted by media (press, radio and television), both South African and international. She has presented numerous conference papers at national and international conferences, and has published articles (academic and popular media), not only on violence and human rights, but also on subjects such as marriage, family and bridewealth, informal sector activities, religion, medical ethics, culture, ethnicity and politics.

For all that she has done to advance the cause of human rights, human dignity, social justice, peace and nation-building, Rhodes University will confer Ms de Haas the degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) (*honoris causa*) at its 2021 Graduation ceremonies in April 2021.