

**Mars through Ghent: Stories and social significance of human rights monuments & symbols**  
**HRRN Conference: UDHR at 75: rethinking and constructing its future together**  
**6 december 2023**

Amnesty International Gent - Amsab Institute of Social History

**Introduction** (Gert - Josse)

Welcome everyone to this march and event celebrating 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To make this anniversary also clear during our march, we would like to ask each of you **to carry one of the 30 articles clearly visible with you**. And with your permission, we would also like to take photos of this as a souvenir.

Ghent has a long tradition of prominently featuring major historical events and people of great social importance. This may concern statues, other types of works of art, but also street names. Many of these symbols refer to values and events that seek to protect human rights. On this walk we pause at three specials: (1)The Kouter (here) with his Mystic Leaves and a Poem, (2)a human rights monument & (3) a square named after a human rights activist, all symbols where three speakers reflect on the social importance.

We start with a contribution by the director of Amnesty International on the universality of the UDHR.

**75 years of universal human rights?** (Wies De Graeve – director Amnesty international Flanders – **Translation on paper**)

**Symbols at the Kouter** (Gert – Josse)

We start at the Kouter Square. The Kouter contains two works of art that are also worth mentioning: the mystic leaves and their matching poem. To accompany artist Jessica Diamond's Mystic Leaves, poet Lut De Block has written a poem with reference to the persecution of the Jews. The poem 'Like a leaf that falls' refers to the Second World War when the Kouter was used as a deportation site.

**Poem** (Lut de Block – **cards in English**)

**On our way** (Gert – Josse)

On the way to the first monument we pass **Stumbling Stones**, a symbolic art project by the German artist Gunter Demnig. Since the first stone was laid in Germany in nineteen hundred and ninety-five, there are now more than ninety thousand stones spread across more than twenty-five countries in Europe. There are already thirty in Ghent. The name stumbling stone is the translation of the German word 'Stolperstein'. A stumbling stone is a memorial in memory of a victim of National Socialism during World War Two.

**HR-monument at Geldmunt** (Gert – Josse)

The reason for this human rights monument was the disappearance of the Honduran human rights activist José Eduardo Lopez on Christmas Eve, nineteen hundred and eighty-four. His wife Nora and the three children had to flee the country and were given political asylum in Canada. A Ghent Amnesty group campaigned for years and built up good contact with Nora.

In nineteen hundred and ninety-three, the group invited her to testify. A procession was then held in Ghent to a symbolic cardboard grave monument where Nora laid flowers. She knew then that Eduardo had been murdered shortly after his disappearance, just like dozens of human rights activists in Honduras. The Amnesty group in Ghent came up with the idea of placing a definitive human rights monument for the disappeared activists.

Artist association Honest Art Movement (HAM) helped make it happen. HAM artist MaRf provided the design, together with poet Roel Richelieu van Londersele. They chose a silhouette of a woman. A silhouette as a shadow of the disappeared activists, a woman because women are the most persecuted. Nora was a model. In November nineteen hundred and ninety-six, the human rights monument was inaugurated in the presence of Nora and her children, Minister of Foreign Affairs Erik Derycke, Ghent mayor Frank Beke and the designers of the monument.

More information in video: <https://vimeo.com/276865247> or 

We invited former mayor Beke to this walk because his words from that time are still relevant and important in two thousand and twenty-three, the year in which we celebrate 75 years of the UDHR.

**(Inauguration of the) Human Rights Monument in Ghent** (Frank Beke, former Mayor of Ghent – [Translation on paper](#))

**Miriam Makeba Square** (Gert - Josse)

Ghent street names often refer to the city's glorious past and the stories behind the names of streets and squares bring the history of Ghent to life. <https://gentdekuip.com/straten-2/> For several decades, the city of Ghent has regularly chosen references to people with a special bond with human rights when naming new streets and squares. These are often women because their social contribution has too often remained under the radar in the past. Women's rights and human rights in general receive extra attention in the current naming. The Miriam Makeba Square is a tribute to the South African anti-apartheid activist Miriam Makeba. [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam\\_Makeba](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam_Makeba)

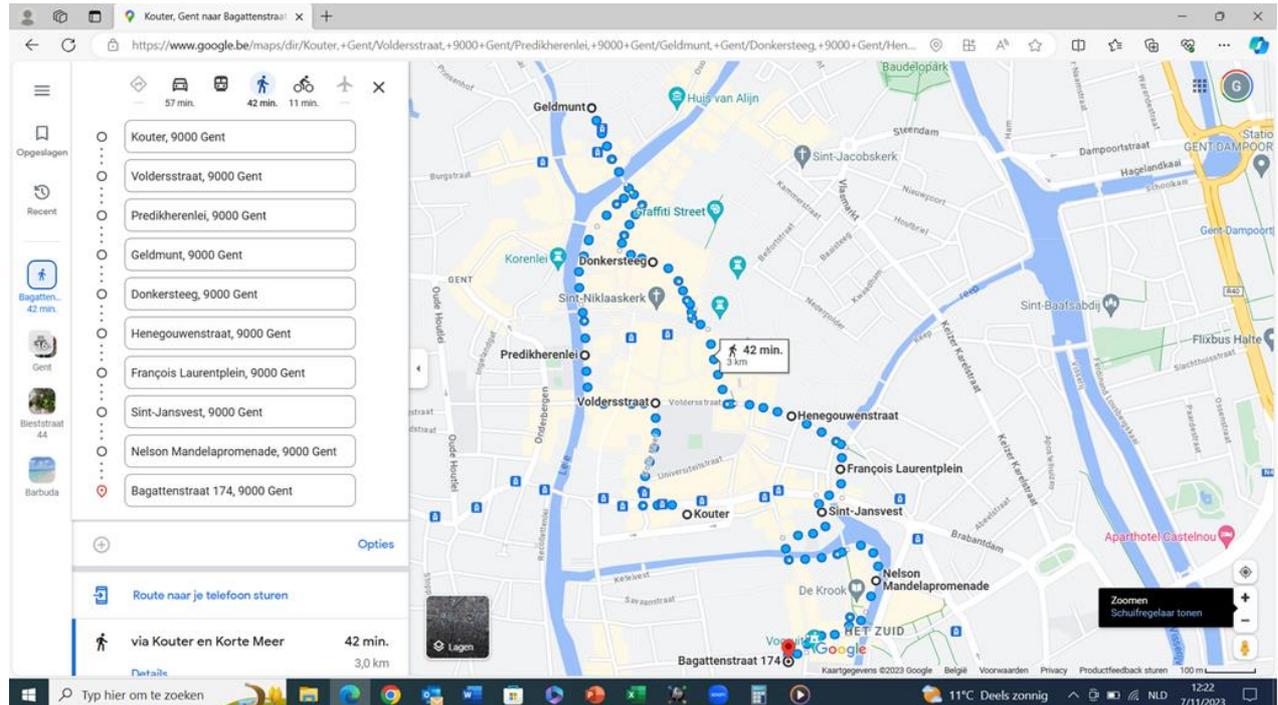
A road, two bridges and a square here at the 'Krook' library were named Nelson Mandela Promenade, Albertina Sisulu Bridge, Steve Biko Bridge and Miriam Makeba Square. <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/gent-eert-anti-apartheidsleider-met-straatnamen-bij-de-krook~b0fb6b65/>

On this Miriam Makeba Square we invite Henri Heimans to testify about his activism for human rights. Henri Heimans is an honorary judge and has worked for 45 years in various capacities at the Ministry of Justice, specializing in criminal law and paying particular attention to the protection of human rights. He will focus on the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and the need to remain alert to potential threats to human rights, now and in the future.

**Threats to human rights** (Henri Heimans - honorary judge – [Translation on paper](#))

**Last stop: Amsab-ISG** where participants receive a drink and will be informed about their work on social history and heritage preservation. (maybe also have the opportunity to visit the arpilleras expo)

## Parcours



Kouter

Korte Meer

Volderstraat

Hoornstraat

Predikherenlei

Graslei

Groentenmarkt

Kleine Vismarkt

Geldmunt

Kleine Vismarkt

Groentenmarkt

Kortemunt

Donkersteeg

Goudenleuwplein

Poeljemarkt

Botermarkt

Sint-Baafsplein

Limburgstraat

Laurentplein

Brabantdam

Sint-Jansvest

Kortedagsteeg

Grote Huidevettershoek

Nelson Mandelapromenade

Miriam Makebaplein

Albertina Sisulubrug

Lammerstraat

Bagattenstraat