

Yasmin - a human rights activist

By MEMS MOOSA

YASMIN Louise Sookha (53) is undoubtedly a respected figure when it comes to human rights legislation.

Sookha, daughter of the late N. Rathinsamy – ex-principal of Nirvana Secondary School – is married and has three children.

Having matriculated at the above school, she completed her B.Proc. LLB at the University of Witwatersrand. She was admitted as an attorney in 1984, qualified as a mediator/arbitrator in 1988, a conveyancer in 1992, and served as an Acting Judge in the Johannesburg High Court.

Until 1994, Sookha was a practising attorney and partner in the firm Mahomed, Sookha and Seedat.

With a mountain of legal experience, Sookha, since 2001, is the executive director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa. She is responsible for implementing the joint European Union and South African Government Human Rights Programme.

While Sookha has been actively involved nationally, she has also has wide international acclaim.

From 2007 to 2010, she has served as consultant and expert to African Union meetings in Addis Adiba (Ethiopia). Sookha is also an expert on recommendations in Croatia and on draft laws in the former Yugoslavia.

She has also consulted on Traditional Justice in Zimbabwe and serves as an expert on this topic in Kenya.

In 2006, she acted as an expert on Reparations and Victims' Claims to the International Criminal Court and has also consulted as part of the mission in Burundi.

Further afield, Sookha is part of the International Centre for Transitional Justice in Afghanistan

In 2007, she joined UNIFEM/Afghan Human Rights Commission Project.

She also dealt with transitional justice in Nuremberg and Nepal; the Truth Commission in Liberia and Ghana and was an expert on Sierra

Leone to the UNIFEM Conference.

Recently, Sookha was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General to advise on accountability for violations committed by both sides in the last days of the war in Sri Lanka.

This dynamic lady is also an executive member of South African Women in Dialogue's (SAWID) Mission to Tunisia, and has occupied positions on professional bodies including Black Sash; the Global Institute at Leuven University and the Centre for Conflict Resolution.

Sookha is the founder of the South Africa Chapter of the Interfaith Body.

The legal heavyweight also has a hand in the post apartheid rectification processes. This includes her involvement in the National Coordinating Committee for the Reparation of South African Exiles and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

Currently Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa, Sookha is also the author of a number of publications: a chapter in *South Africa in Africa*; the introductory chapter in *Peace and Justice* and a paper on Kampala Review on Peace and Justice.

Taking into consideration the challenges faced by a democratic South Africa, this remarkable woman now chairs the Steering Committee of the National Forum Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances.

