

Nuremberg International Human Rights Award 2001

Welcoming address of the Lord Mayor of Nuremberg **Ludwig Scholz**

My dear ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the mayoress, Frau Helen Jungkunz, members of the City Council and all the citizens of Nuremberg I would like to welcome you to this, the fourth presentation of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award. Your presence here today in our opera house is both a great joy and honour for us.

As we gather here today to present the International Nuremberg Human Rights Award to Bishop emeritus Samuel Ruiz Garcia, this event, too, is overshadowed by this week's terror attacks on the United States of America. Hence this award ceremony takes place against a background of mourning for the victims of those terror attacks and for those who lost their lives in the attempt to save them. The victim's families have our deepest sympathy and we would like to express our complete solidarity with the people of the United States of America. This was an attack on all those who are committed to working for freedom, democracy, tolerance and the peaceful and fruitful co-existence of cultures. We all could have been victims of those attacks. This is why the solidarity with the United States which we would like to express in the rally after this award ceremony, together with the people of Nuremberg, must be linked to the declaration that we will not cease in our endeavours to work for tolerance and human rights and fight against terrorism, extremism, xenophobia and racism of any kind.

I would like to ask you now to rise from your seats and honour the victims of the terror attacks of September 11 in New York and Washington with a few moments of silence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

the cruel and perfidious terror attacks and thousands of victims have confronted us with a new terrible dimension of international terrorism unknown so far, but they must also remind us that the past few years have shown that racism, persecution of ethnic minorities and blind xenophobia are as virulent today as in the past and that their destructive force has continued to spread throughout many parts of the world. This type of violence has many ugly faces, our own country, as with the rest of Europe, being no exception. Racist attitudes, growing intolerance towards asylum seekers and minorities, racially motivated attacks and murders, attacks on synagogues and a growing acceptance of the extreme right mindset present a grim reality.

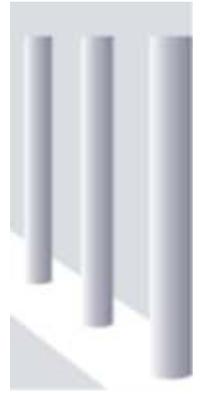
Racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia have plunged twentieth century Europe into the depths of barbarism. The holocaust is a vivid reminder of just what these evil and destructive forces can lead to. And whomsoever believed that such horrors were consigned to the past for all time on our continent would have been taught otherwise in the most dreadful way through the horrors of ethnic cleansing and the crimes committed on the territories of the former Yugoslavia.

These experiences and the conviction that our collective European communities are built on a foundation of tolerance and a mutual recognition of the principles of freedom, of democracy, of respect for human rights establishes for us Europeans a common commitment to be at the forefront of the world-wide struggle against hate, violence and intolerance. It is above all a matter of particular concern, that we Germans resolutely and vigilantly strive to combat all forms of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia wherever they are manifest. The first article of our basic law binds us to do so, by declaring the protection of human dignity as the top priority of our constitution.

With the weight of the catastrophes of the twentieth century upon them, the United Nations formulated both in their charter of 1945 and in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" of 1948 the vision of a future in which all human beings could live in freedom with dignity and with full and equal rights. Some days ago, in South Africa, the third World Conference of the United Nations against Racism came to an end. It had been beset with major problems and its repercussions cannot yet be estimated. Yet even if it has served only to place the struggle against the destructive force of racism high on the agenda of international Human Rights politics for the future, then we will be one step nearer to the world we envision for the twenty first century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The jury of the International Nuremberg Human Rights Award with their most recent list of candidates, has given a clear indication of their support for the world-wide efforts to overcome hate, violence and oppression.



NÜRNBERG
STADT DES FRIEDENS
UND DER
MENSCHENRECHTE

NUREMBERG
CITY OF PEACE
AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Our award winner this year, Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia from Mexico with great courage and determination has been fighting for the rights of the indigenous Indian population in his home country and in all of Latin America for many decades. He has become a symbolic figure among those indigenous peoples, who suffer from racially motivated violations of their human rights. Fatimata M'Baye from Mauritania, the 1999 award winner continues the fight against the continued discrimination against black Africans and the continued existence of slavery in her country.

The struggle against the scourge of racism can however only be successful if it becomes a matter of the greatest concern to all people of good will. The presentation of the International Nuremberg Human Rights Award to Fatimata M'Baye in 1999 and today to Bishop emeritus Samuel Ruiz Garcia can therefore also be perceived as a clarion call to each individual to fight resolutely against all forms of racism and xenophobia.

The city of Nuremberg has also contributed to this struggle through several other activities. We know that because of our history during the Nazi regime, we have a particular responsibility to confront and oppose hatred and violence.

Our city has for instance in co-operation with numerous partners organised an International Human Rights Conference, the results of which will contribute to an effective struggle against xenophobia and racism in our society.

As of the 4th November this year, the "Documentation Centre Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds" is opening as a centre documenting the inhumane system of the National Socialist State - going beyond the merely local aspects and in this sense fulfilling a task for the entire nation. In addition to the permanent exhibition "Fascination and Terror", the Documentation Centre will also offer an extensive accompanying educational programme which will make this centre a place of education for peace and human rights.

The city of Nuremberg strives to be recognised as a "City of Peace and Human Rights." This perspective is to be seen as a challenge to the entire city and all its citizens, to stand up for the respect of human rights as a prerequisite for peace in our world.

The city administration has been making major efforts to contribute to the fulfilment of this task. To name just two examples: it has established the foundation "Nuremberg - City of Peace and of Human Rights". One of the foundation's main tasks is to support projects run by awardees of the Nuremberg Human Rights Award in their own countries.

Nuremberg also joined the programme "Writers in Exile" initiated by the German P.E.N. centre, which helps those writers persecuted in their own countries find refuge in German cities.

Not only the city administration but also the churches, human rights groups, numerous other institutions and organisations and many of the citizens of Nuremberg are actively involved in the campaign for respect for human dignity and human rights. The city's many efforts have meanwhile gained international recognition. Nuremberg was the first municipality world-wide to be awarded the UNESCO award for human rights education. This award not only gives us great encouragement but further strengthens our resolve to continue along our chosen path.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this background I would like to thank you very much indeed for coming to Nuremberg today.

I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to this year's award winner H. E. Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia to whom we express our respect, our admiration and our thanks.

An equally warm welcome goes to our award winner of 1999 Fatimata M'Baye and the winner of the 1997 award, Khemais Chammari and I wish to thank them both for this act of solidarity with our city.

And a very special vote of thanks and word of welcome to the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Adolfo Perez Esquivel from Argentina who will give the laudatory address.

I would like to welcome the Federal Minister of the Interior, Mr. Otto Schily, and the deputy Minister President and State Minister of the Interior of the Free State of Bavaria, Dr. Günther Beckstein. Your presence here today, gentlemen, is a great joy and honour for our city.

I would also like to welcome the members of our jury who are present here with us today: Professor Dr. Theo van Boven, Prof. Dr. Maurice Glèlè-Ahanhaz, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, Maître Daniel Jacoby, Mr. Dani Karavan, the creator of the "Way of Human Rights" who will be presenting this award together with me, Professor Dr. José Miguez Bononio and Mr. Rudolf Joó, who today is representing Dr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the jury of the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award for their convincing decisions.

I feel particularly honoured to be able to welcome Professor Dr. Abdelfattah Amor, vice-president of the UN Human Rights Committee. Professor Amor will be reading words of



greeting from the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

I am also please to welcome here today the Bavarian State Minister of Justice, Dr. Manfred Weiß, State Secretary Karl Freller as well as members of the European Parliament, of the Federal Parliament, of the State Parliament, of the district and city council, as well as the Regional President Karl Inhofer.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency, Ms Espinosa Castellano, ambassador of the Republic of Mexico, as well as representatives of the Diplomatic Corps.

I would like to welcome the citizens honoured with the freedom of the City, Dr. Oscar Schneider, Karl Sebiger and Willy Pröhl, the citizens awarded with the Citizen's Medal as well as former Lord Mayor Dr. Peter Schönlein.

A particularly warm welcome goes to the vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ms Charlotte Knobloch, as well as to representatives of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and of the Regional Association of Sinti and Roma. I would also like to welcome representatives of the churches.

Mr. Vu Thu Hien is a guest in our city in the context of the "Writers in exile" programme, and I am happy that he is here with us today.

Ms Magda Watts from Israel and Mr. George Beeston from Belgium were displaced to Nuremberg during the National Socialist reign of terror and had to suffer the horrors of forced labour here. I would like to welcome them and thank them for coming here today.

I would particularly like to take this opportunity for thanking the publisher Bruno Schnell who again has donated the award money.

The International Nuremberg Human Rights Award is also to be seen as a call for individual commitment and support. My hope is that today's award ceremony will encourage many people to increase their support for human rights and respect for human dignity and rights for all and thus for peace, freedom and justice in our world. I would like to ask you all to join the population of Nuremberg after this award ceremony in remembering the victims of the terror attacks by taking part in the rally and the walk through the Way of Human Rights.