

# Nuremberg International Human Rights Award

## Award Ceremony

September 14, 2003 in Nuremberg Opera House

Tribute to the Prize Winners by  
Dr. Mario Soáres, former President of the Republic of Portugal

Ladies and gentlemen,

it is a great honour for me to be here in the historical city of Nuremberg the only city in the world honoured with the UNESCO Award for Human Rights Education and to take part in this impressive ceremony, the fifth presentation of the International Nuremberg Human Rights Award to the renowned awardees Teesta Setalvad from India and Ibn Abdur Rehman from Pakistan.

I feel greatly honoured to have been invited to speak in praise of the awardees, all the more so since the jury comprises high ranking members, among them the former state presidents Professor Roman Herzog and the renowned writer and intellectual Vaclav Havel as well as the current Director general of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura. With such dignified and expert support and in the wonderful surroundings of the Nuremberg Opera House and in particular since these two awardees are characterised by extraordinary human, moral and spiritual strength.

Respect for human rights cannot be demanded and claimed often enough. Particularly in the uncertain and insecure times we live in, where concern about security threatens to override the respect for basic human rights in an unacceptable way, and to override even international law as worked out painstakingly in a long process after the Second World War. Each citizen who honours human life has the duty to stand up against terrorism with determination, but always respecting human rights and international law and in the awareness that unrestrained self defence is unlawful.

We must fight against world-wide terror I repeat with great determination and courage, but also with reason and with comprehensive knowledge of this new reality created by global terrorism. This, however, hasn't happened. The Bush administration plunged headlong into retaliatory measures, the effectiveness of which in view of the results so far is doubtful, and which have also led to the breaking up of the "great coalition" which had spontaneously formed after the horrible attacks of the 11th September, as a result of a world-wide feeling of solidarity.

The United Nations were marginalised although they ought to be the institution co-ordinating anti-terror measures with the support of the Arabic world. Since the United States were afraid that they might not achieve a majority in the Security Council they started their own war against Iraq, actively supported by Great Britain and Australia and with the rather moral support of Berlusconi's Italy, Aznar's Spain and unfortunately also Durão Barroso's Portugal. The overwhelming demonstrations of the populations in almost all European countries were largely ignored.



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It was easy to win the war with the military might of the American forces. It is much more difficult to secure peace as can be clearly seen in Iraq and Afghanistan at the moment.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine, pivotal for the political stabilisation of the entire region, is escalating every day. The mutual intolerance and the continuing military retaliations on an unimaginable scale will necessarily lead to terrible consequences.

I think we must look at the world differently and must turn to humanist values again: respect for our fellow human beings and for human rights education from primary school on, without using terrorism as a pretext for staging unilateral preventive wars and for implementing security policy measures which in fact curb civil rights of the individual and cannot be reconciled with international law. Because it is precisely those liberties, rights and guarantees which give moral justification to our fight against terrorism.

If those who fight terrorism, claiming that there is an imminent danger of attack, do not check their secret service information or do manipulate it in order to influence parliaments and the public, they lose any right and any moral claim to justify later warlike actions. Apart from that, it is not really evident that the fight against terrorism led as it has been until now has succeeded in disarming or weakening terrorists. Osama Bin Laden, Mullah Omar and Saddam Hussein are still alive, even if we don't know their whereabouts, and thus nourish the myth of anti-western Islamic fanaticism. Acts of terror are repeatedly committed all over the world, from Morocco and the Philippines to Indonesia.

Iraq is increasingly becoming a trap where the occupying troops are a sitting target for attacks. The world is in turmoil. We must react and return to multi-lateralism. Under the pressure of imminent elections, the United States asked the United Nations to concern itself with Iraq again. This is a first positive sign. As Europeans, it is our duty to assist the Americans and the British, our traditional friends and allies, but also in this case with reason and a clear mind. We cannot accept that we have to foot the bill for past events and that Turkish, Pakistani or Indian soldiers might lose their lives in order to restore order and to secure peace. Here, too, we must insist on responsible and intensive negotiations among equals within the framework of the United Nations.

The City of Nuremberg has done exemplary work for peace and human rights, an essential precondition for today's world being able to react in a positive way to the global challenges we are seeing right now: unlimited globalisation of the economy, world wide-finance speculation not conforming to legal or ethical standards, the protection of our planet which is the victim of ecological crimes, the fight against poverty and hunger in the world, international organised crime and of course the new scourge to be fought with great determination: world wide terror wrongly called Islamic terror.



Fight against terrorism today concerns the entire world and it cannot be led in contradiction to international law and without the United Nations, the only institution which can give legitimacy to this fight. We must not give the Muslim world the pretext to say that we are on our way to a "holy war", whereas all efforts of the Christian churches also of Islam are directed towards ecumenical dialogue as a means of securing peace. Just a few days ago, I took part in Aachen in a memorable ecumenical meeting which was organised by the community of Sant'Egidio where high ranking officials and dignitaries of all world religions represented emphasised this will with great strength.

The award presented today to the Indian journalist Teesta Setalvad and the Pakistani journalist Ibn Abdur Rehman honours their remarkable and outstanding achievements for the respect of human rights and their commitment to peace and solidarity. This award also has a symbolic meaning since both come from major countries who, as Colin Powell put it recently, have all the prerequisites for understanding and for dialogue and whose understanding the world needs: India and Pakistan.

Both Teesta Setalvad and Ibn Abdur Rehman, are experienced and courageous fighters for the good cause, people of dialogue and of openness who from different backgrounds and with very different personal developments and experiences nevertheless share a belief in the inalienable worth and dignity of human beings and of Human Rights and who also share the conviction that peace will find its way into the hearts of human beings via a genuine culture of peace.

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you and, as a mere humble politician coming from the far west of Europe, tell you that the award you are getting today will be a point of reference and a further incentive for all those who are campaigning for understanding and peace in your home countries and for that matter everywhere in this chaotic world we live in. Your example teaches us dignity and courage, it gives us all strength to nourish hope in these uncertain times, hope that a better world is possible, a world with more humanity, solidarity and justice. I would like to express my personal thanks to you for this lesson in hope.