

1997 International Human Rights Award



Appreciation by the Jury

The beginning of a peace process in the Near East constituted a major step towards a more peaceful world where Human Rights are generally honoured. In the meantime, these efforts towards an understanding are seriously at risk.

To honour two personalities from this region with the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award – an Arab and Muslim from Tunisia and a Jew from Israel – bears great symbolic value, both for the people living in this troubled region and for the entire world: This award supports their wish for a continuation of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

Khémaïs Chamhari was one of the first Arab intellectuals and the first Tunisian to declare himself in favour of the idea of an Arab-Israeli dialogue, as early as the 1960s. Risking danger to life and limb, he kept doing everything in his power to get the protagonists, particularly Israelis and Palestinians, to sit down together at a negotiating table in order to improve their relationship. As an active member of the international movement towards democracy and Human Rights he has always consistently and steadfastly fought for his ideals without heeding high personal risks.

Abe J. Nathan demonstrates the possibilities and the scope of individual exemplary action. Guided only by his conscience, he has been involved wherever he felt that human beings were in danger or in dire need of help: whether in Africa, South America or Asia or other parts of the world. On various levels, Abe J. Nathan advocated a dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbours early on.

The presentation of the 1997 Nuremberg Human Rights Award to Khémaïs Chamhari and Abe J. Nathan, honours two personalities, who have dedicated their lives to the same cause and have also both accepted the risk of prison sentences: The fight against fanaticism, intolerance and fundamentalism and for peace and Human Rights – not just in their region, but all over the world.

In the present situation, when peace and Human Rights in the Near East are again endangered, the presentation of the 1997 Nuremberg International Human Rights Award to Khémaïs Chamhari and Abe J. Nathan is also intended as an appeal to all those positions of responsibility and to all people of good will: to strive actively for a continuation of a policy of understanding in a way the two prizewinners would wish.