

## Nuremberg International Human Rights Award 1997

Address by the Bavarian Minister-President **Dr. Edmund Stoiber**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a particular pleasure for me to be present at today's presentation of the 1997 International Nuremberg Human Rights Prize. I congratulate the jury on its choice. By choosing Khémaïs Chamhari and Abe Nathan, it is paying tribute to two outstanding personalities, who deserve great credit for their efforts in the cause of enforcing human rights and peace in the Near East, at risk to their own personal freedom. Our heartfelt congratulations go out to them.

The choice of these prizewinners comes at the right time in a difficult period. During the past few weeks and months, murderous terrorist attacks have brought the peace process in the Near East to a deadlock, many are lamenting the end of the efforts at reaching understanding. When Khémaïs Chamhari and Abe Nathan receive the International Nuremberg Human Rights Prize today, may the Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis see this as an urgent appeal to resume the policy of mutual understanding. Because we can never and should never reconcile ourselves to the alternative: "The next war is already lurking behind the door and it will be a hard war, a superfluous war", to quote the alarming warning of an Israeli politician.

Human rights and peace are two sides of one and the same coin. Because in those places where human rights are respected, there is peace, security, stability and flourishing prosperity. Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, like Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa, who have become famous largely through their work for human rights, bear witness to this association. Modern transport and communications technologies are making our world smaller and smaller, people are being brought closer and closer together. In the future, it will therefore become increasingly important for peace to be secured and human rights to be respected on all parts of the globe for everyone, regardless of which region of the world they live in.

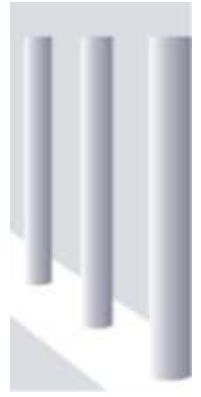
One thing is certain, namely that the states of the world all have different traditions, systems of values and stages of development. Their history and culture are individual to them. But it is precisely for this reason that the global community needs a joint reference framework. It lies in the recognition that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" as it says in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Peaceful coexistence of nations requires respect for other cultures. No cultural group should ever want to force their own values on others. But there is a universal, international nucleus of human rights that prevail irrespective of differing cultural traditions.

There is no alternative to seeking a common line here. We owe this to peace and humane coexistence on this Earth. We must remember the basic principles of international law, which are binding upon all of us. These are the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Human Rights Pacts that form an integral part of general international law. We have secure foundations. What we need is the solid determination of the community of states to actually precipitate human rights all over the world.

In essence, it can be said of everyone and everywhere that the dignity of man is inviolable.

There can and must be no doubt about the validity of this basic principle throughout the world, and therefore about its universality. For us in Germany, recognition of this universality should be taken as a matter of course. During the totalitarian regime of crimes committed under National Socialism, our nation itself experienced what can happen when human dignity is only granted to its own members or to certain groups of people.

Particularly the widespread claim that the roots of human rights can only be found in Western cultures is wrong. Those who are really familiar with the cultures of the Near East and Asia know very well that the classic sources of Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Islam have established similar standards of humanity to the ancient Greeks and Romans, Judaism and Christianity, on which our culture is based. All these cultures and their characteristic philosophical systems have - in one word - formed an ethic of humanity. In all these cultures the Golden Rule can, for example, be said to



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apply: "Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourselves". If applied to real life, this sentence alone would cover the fundamental human rights, because there can surely be hardly a person in this world who would agree to being murdered, tortured, sold as a slave or arbitrarily thrown into prison. At least the fundamental rights of man are therefore a direct outcome of the Golden Rule and, as can quite easily be proved, this is true of all the cultures in the world.

This year's prizewinners, Khémaïs Chammari and Abe Nathan, are living examples of how the individual can help to promote human rights and peace through dialogue and a readiness to achieve mutual understanding beyond cultural boundaries. Their example is an incentive and encouragement for us.

On this note, I also congratulate both of this year's prizewinners on behalf of the Bavarian State Government and I very warmly thank the City of Nuremberg, under whose auspices the International Human Rights Prize is awarded.