

Internationale

Sektion der

Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme,
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für Menschenrechte
im Geiste von Carl von Ossietzky

– Der Vorstand –
Berlin, den 13. 10. 2008

International League for Human Rights In the spirit of Carl von Ossietzky

The Executive Board
Berlin, October 13 2008

Press Release Awarding of the 2008 Carl von Ossietzky Medal

The awards ceremony for this year's Carl von Ossietzky Medal will be held
on December 7, 2008 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
in the "Haus der Kulturen der Welt" (the House of World Cultures), Berlin.
(The press conference will take place on December 6, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in the House of World Cultures.)

The Board of Trustees of the International League for Human Rights honors two groups for their courageous dedication to human rights:

- Anarchists Against the Wall from Israel
http://www.awalls.org/about_aatw , <http://www.awalls.org>
- Bil'in Popular Committee, Bil'in, Palestine
<http://www.bilin-village.org/english/discover-bilin/> , <http://www.bilin-village.org/index.htm>.

Israeli journalist and peace activist Uri Avnery will speak as guest of honor at the awards ceremony. He will also speak at the press conference.

Sixty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations' General Assembly (on December 10, 1948), the Carl von Ossietzky Medal for outstanding service in the realization of basic and human rights has special significance.

May 4, 2008 was the 70th anniversary of the death of Nobel Peace Prizewinner and pacifist Carl von Ossietzky, who, because of his staunch resistance to militarism, war and racism, was taken by force to the Sonnenburg concentration camp (located near the present-day Polish city of Slonsk), where he was cruelly tortured. With this in mind, the International League for Human Rights' Board of Trustees salutes two organizations that - with the courage of their convictions, in keeping with Carl von Ossietzky's spirit - struggle jointly for a common cause.

Anarchists Against the Wall and the Bil'in Popular Committee exemplify the nonviolent resistance to the Israeli-built "Separation Wall" on Palestinian land, as well as steadfastness in the diverse grass-root campaigns against the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These groups incarnate a forward-looking culture free of exclusion and destruction, demonstrating thereby the possibility of living together in peace and freedom.

They also consistently represent their cause on the international stage: The Bil'in village, for example, sued two Canadian real estate companies in Quebec's Superior Court for their part in constructing the Israeli settlement of Modi'in - mostly on Bil'in's land.

The two groups were founded by young activists around the same time:

- Anarchists Against the Wall was formed in 2003 to protest Israel's construction of the Wall.
- The Bil'in Popular Committee was founded in December 2004 in reaction to Israel's planned - and in the meantime fully realized - "barrier fence" that separates the village of Bil'in from 60% of its fields and olive groves.

The two groups owe their effectiveness to their politically independent, self-determined, transparent and nonviolent practices. Friday demonstrations at the barrier fence in Bil'in have been organized by the village's popular committee every single week since 2005, leading to the formation of a broad international network of support and protection. The Israeli Border Police shoot tear gas, rubber- and steel-coated bullets, and - most recently - stink bombs at the demonstrators at close range, untroubled by causing the nonviolent protesters serious bodily injuries.

By honoring Anarchists Against the Wall and the Bil'in Popular Committee, the Board of Trustees of the International League for Human Rights highlights the organizations' common conviction that helps them surmount great obstacles and dangers in their mutual ideal of a worthy - and shared - future. Their exemplary activities are – in the age of globalization - of great significance for the realization of the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - well beyond Israel/Palestine.

With his comrade Rachel Avnery, Uri Avnery will take part in the awards ceremony where he will speak as the guest of honor. He will also speak at the press conference. In 2001 Uri Avnery received - along with Rachel and the Israeli peace group, Gush Shalom - the Stockholm Alternative Peace Prize. He was further honored by the City of Osnabrück with its Carl von Ossietzky Prize in 2002. Already in 1995, Uri Avnery had received Osnabrück's Erich-Maria Remarque Prize, and in 1997, the Aachen Peace Prize.



The Carl von Ossietzky Medal of the International League for Human Rights 1962 – 2007

Carl von Ossietzky, the engaged political commentator of the Weimar Republic and publisher of “Weltbühne (World Stage)” Magazine, was a member of the German League for Human Rights from 1920 and served as its President until 1933.

As the editor responsible for one of the articles exposing the secret rearmament of the German Armed Forces, he was sentenced in 1931 to 18 months in prison for “Betrayal of Military Secrets“. On the day of his imprisonment he explained, “I’m not going to prison because I’m true to my cause but rather because I’m a bigger annoyance behind bars.“ Despite being amnestied in 1932, von Ossietzky was taken into custody by the Gestapo the following year on suspicion of having set fire to the Reichstag. In 1936 a worldwide campagne was launched to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Carl von Ossietzky, then incarcerated in a concentration camp. He died in 1938 from mistreatment in the camp.

The International League for Human Rights is inspired by his incorruptible spirit and devotion to peace and human rights. The League has awarded the Carl von Ossietzky Medal since 1962 to individuals and groups dedicated to the defense of human rights and peace.

Notable awardees include:

- 1967** Günter Grass,
- 1972** Carola Stern - Founder and speaker of **amnesty international German Section**,
- 1974** Heinrich Böll,
- 1976** Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan, Ciaran McKeown, **Peace People, Ireland**,
- 1980** Ingeborg Drewitz,
- 1983** Heinz Brandt; Martin Niemöller,
- 1984** Günter Wallraff, **1986** Erich Fried,
- 1994** Volker Ludwig and **GRIPS-Theater Berlin**,
- 1995** Jacob Finci, **La Benevolencija, Bosnia**,
- 1996** **The Saturday Women of Istanbul**,
- 1997** Hannes Heer - **Team of the exhibit ”War of Destruction-Crimes of the German Army 1941 - 1944”**,
- 1998** Madjiguène Cissé and. **Les Collectifs des SANS-PAPIERS, Paris** ,
- 1999** Simin Behbahani, Monireh Baradaran, **Iran**,
- 2007** The **”Legal Team” – Lawyers’ SOS in support of protestors against the G8 Summit**