

Press Release

Leipzig Media Prize 2008 to Susanne Fischer, Alan Johnston and Win Tin

Leipzig, September 2nd, 2008. This year's "Prize for the Freedom and Future of the Media", donated by the Media Foundation of the Sparkasse Leipzig and including a total prize money of 30,000 €, goes - ex aequo - to German journalist Susanne Fischer, British TV reporter Alan Johnston and writer and journalist Win Tin of Burma.

The prize will be awarded for the eighth time. As in 2007, the award ceremony will take place on October 8th, the eve of the anniversary of the peaceful revolution in the former GDR, which is connected to the decisive mass demonstration in Leipzig on October 9th, 1989. With this reminiscence to the changes of 1989, the Media Foundation wishes to highlight the moral connection between the prize and the peaceful revolution, because the wish to be granted the freedom of media and the press had been one of the main objectives of the 1989 demonstrators. Moreover, this connection is symbolized by a miniature replica of the commemorative column on Leipzig's Nikolaikirchhof, the Prize winners will be awarded with. The peaceful revolution of 1989 started with prayers for peace at St. Nicholas church in the city centre of Leipzig. The "Prize for the Freedom and Future of the Media" goes to journalists, publishers and media institutions who – by way of their daring, courage and commitment – strengthen the freedom of the media and the press.

Reporting from Iraq since 2003, Susanne Fischer has repeatedly proven this kind of courage, daring and commitment. Besides this and commissioned by the British "Institute of War and Peace Reporting" (IWPR), she has been actively involved in training journalists since 2005. The IWPR promotes the development of a free press and media in numerous post-authoritarian states in the world. Workshops and seminars help to strengthen a journalistic expertise directed towards the promotion of free expression and critical coverage.

Contact:

Media Foundation of Sparkasse Leipzig, Menckestr. 27, 04155 Leipzig
 Phone: +49 (0) 341 - 5 62 96 61 E-Mail: info@leipziger-medienstiftung.de
 More Informations of the Media Foundation:
www.leipziger-medienstiftung.de

2001 Laureates

Prof. David Protess, USA
 Renate Flottau, Germany
 Thomas Mayer, Germany

2002 Laureates

Grigorij Pasko, Russia
 Jolana Voldánová, Czech Republic
 Simone Wendler, Germany

2003 Laureates

Daoud Kuttab, Palestine
 Gideon Levy, Israel
 Vladimir Mostovoy, Ukraine
 Netzwerk Recherche e.V., Germany

2004 Laureates

James Nachtwey, USA
 „La Voz de Galicia“, Spain
 „Journalisten helfen Journalisten e.V.“, Germany

2005 Laureates

Seymour M. Hersh, USA
 Anna Politkovskaya, Russia
 Hans-Martin Tillack, Germany
 Britta Petersen, Afghanistan

2006 Laureates

Alina Anghel, Moldavia
 Fabrizio Gatti, Italy
 Dr. Volker Lilienthal, Germany

2007 Laureates

Vasil Ivanov, Bulgaria
 Akbar Ganji, Iran
 Dr. Wolfram Weimer, Germany

Susanne Fischer, a resident of both Hamburg and Beirut, was head of IWPR's office in Iraq – a task demanding courage that contributed towards developing independent media there. After three years, she is now heading IWPR's office in Syria commuting between Damascus and Beirut.

Being the West's only journalist permanently reporting from Palestine's Gaza Strip since 2003 – a task including heavy personal risks, BBC's Alan Johnston's coverage of events there have been hailed both by colleagues and monitors for their calm tone and strict impartiality. On March 12th, 2007, the "Army of Islam" kidnapped and held him hostage for 114 days. The kidnappers demanded the release of Muslim prisoners in Great Britain. They released a video clip with Johnston being forced to wear an explosive belt in order to enhance the pressure on the British government. After his release on July 4th, 2007, Alan Johnston was awarded the Media Prize of Amnesty International's British section. Alan Johnston now works for BBC in London.

Win Tin, 79 years old Burmese journalist and writer has now been imprisoned in Burma for more than 18 years. Arrested in 1989 for subversion and anti-governmental propaganda, he has been sentenced to 3, 7 and 10 years of prison in subsequent, secrete and non-public trials. Win Tin was chief editor of "Hanthawati" daily newspaper, banned in 1978. He wrote numerous critical essays, was a consultant to the Peace Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and a leader of the "National League for Democracy" (NLD). He is now seriously ill. Reasons of his prolonged imprisonment have been: his efforts to inform the UN about human rights violations in Burmese prisons and his unbending will not to renounce the NLD.

From a list of proposals handed in by national and international experts of all media, laureates have been selected by the Foundation Council of the Media Foundation of the Sparkasse Leipzig composed of chief editors, TV reporters and writers. Conducted by Prof M. Haller, Leipzig University students in journalism investigated the qualifications of the nominees.

Proposals for the 2009 "Prize for the Freedom and Future of the Media" should be forwarded until February 29th, 2009.

Contact:

Media Foundation of Sparkasse Leipzig, Menckestr. 27, 04155 Leipzig
Phone: +49 (0) 341 - 5 62 96 61 E-Mail: info@leipziger-medienstiftung.de
More Informations of the Media Foundation:
www.leipziger-medienstiftung.de