

Press release

Roland Berger Human Dignity Award goes to Reporters Without Borders and Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi

Munich/Berlin, March 25, 2009: This year, the "Roland Berger Human Dignity Award – to promote peaceful cooperation in the world" goes to the international organization Reporters Without Borders and Iranian human rights activist Dr. Shirin Ebadi.

In selecting Reporters Without Borders as an award winner for 2009, the Roland Berger Foundation is highlighting the importance of freedom of expression and of the press. As the Foundation noted in its presentation on the global status of press freedom, more than 80% of the world's population currently has limited or no access to independent reporting. The right to free expression of opinion is frequently ignored: In the past ten years, several hundred journalists have been killed and thousands arrested, kidnapped or exiled. For nearly 25 years, Paris-based Reporters Without Borders has advocated freedom of the press around the world and also helps journalists in need.

Also receiving the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award this year is Iranian human rights activist Dr. Shirin Ebadi. Since early 2009, she has come under increased pressure to give up her activities as a human rights lawyer. In granting the award to Dr. Ebadi – who is also a member of the Foundation's Awards Committee – the Foundation wishes to express and strengthen its support for her, as well as highlighting the protection of human rights.

Federal President Horst Köhler will present the awards on April 21, 2009 at a ceremony in Berlin. The honorees will share the accompanying EUR 1 million.

"Freedom of expression and free access to information are human rights and serve as the foundation of a functioning democracy," says Prof. Dr. h.c. Roland Berger, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Roland Berger Foundation, which confers the Human Dignity Award. "As long as people are being punished for expressing their opinions or exposing violations of human rights, we must act to protect freedom of the press." The importance of this topic is revealed in the Foundation's presentation entitled "Freedom of expression and the press – Situation and challenges in the 21st century". These freedoms have been protected since 1948 as per the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, over 80% of the world's population currently has limited or no access to independent reporting. In many places, journalists who criticize those in power are subject to massive reprisals – ranging from threats and arbitrary arrests to kidnapping and even murder. Sources report that anywhere from 450 to 770 journalists were killed between 1998 and 2008 – with an upward trend. Every year, hundreds more are arrested, kidnapped or threatened, and many flee into exile.

The international organization Reporters Without Borders was founded in 1985 and fights for press freedom across the globe, as defined in Article 19

of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization has made it its mission to document violations of press freedom, to publicize particularly egregious offenses and to support journalists and media in trouble. For these important activities in service of human dignity, Reporters Without Borders will receive the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award 2009, endowed with EUR 900,000. Dr. h.c. Joschka Fischer, Germany's former Foreign Minister and member of the Awards Committee, explained the jury's decision: "Journalists take a high personal risk when they report from war zones or speak out against authoritarian regimes, for example. They are threatened, harassed, arbitrarily arrested and physically attacked, and often their families are also in danger. For this reason, journalists must be protected and supported in their cross-border work. This protection and support is also crucial for the family of those who are murdered by the enemies of freedom because of their courageous research and reporting." By granting the award to Reporters Without Borders, the Roland Berger Foundation hopes to promote the worthy ideal of press freedom and the free sharing of opinion the world over.

Roland Berger Human Dignity Award 2009 for Dr. Shirin Ebadi

The Awards Committee has decided to also honor Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Shirin Ebadi. For 30 years, Dr. Ebadi has been fighting for human rights as a lawyer, author and university professor, particularly for the rights of women and children. Because of her legal work, she and her family are consistently threatened and publicly defamed. This pressure has increased over the past few months: for example, the Defenders of Human Rights Center, an NGO she founded, was closed in December 2008. Despite all the reprisals, Dr. Ebadi is still active as a lawyer for human rights, and is also a member of the Awards Committee of the Roland Berger Foundation. By awarding her the EUR 100,000 prize, the Roland Berger Foundation honors and supports her commitment to defending human rights worldwide.

Federal President Horst Köhler will present the award to Jean-Francois Julliard, General Secretary of Reporters Without Borders International, and Dr. Shirin Ebadi on April 21, 2009. The ceremony will take place in Berlin's Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt.

Endowed with EUR 1 million, the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award honors and supports persons and institutions that serve as successful role models in respecting, promoting and protecting human dignity and human rights. It is the Founder's hope that others will follow this example and take action to promote human dignity.

The Roland Berger Foundation, headquartered in Munich, is an independent public foundation under German civil law. It was founded by Prof. Dr. h.c. Roland Berger on March 27, 2008. The Roland Berger Foundation is endowed with a foundation capital of EUR 50 million and has an Executive Board and a Board of Trustees. The Foundation has two objectives: first, the Foundation is committed to recognizing, promoting and protecting human dignity and human rights around the world. To this end, the "Roland Berger

Human Dignity Award – to promote peaceful cooperation in the world", endowed with EUR 1 million, is awarded every year. Second, the Roland Berger Foundation supports talented young people from less privileged backgrounds. The Roland Berger "Fit for responsibility" scholarship program makes it possible for them to obtain a high-quality education and thus lead a self-determined life.

Further information as well as downloadable materials in German, English and Persian are available at:

www.rolandbergerstiftung.org

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