Munich/Berlin, November 22, 2011: Delivering a keynote speech on the Arab Spring, Germany's Federal President Christian Wulff opened the 1st Berlin Human Dignity Forum today at the Deutsche Bank Forum in Berlin. Discussion of recent upheavals in the Arab world then continued in a panel session that included the Egyptian Ambassador to Germany, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, political scientist Volker Perthes, German-Egyptian publicist Hamed Abdel-Samad, and the head of the international NGO Reporters Without Borders, Jean-François Julliard.

Discussions were followed by this year's presentation of the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award. This is the fourth time the award, endowed with EUR 1 million, has been conferred. In the light of recent events, the Awards Committee decided to honor those who have paved the way for the Arab Spring: The Tunisian lawyer Radhia Nasraoui is the founder of the Association for the Fight Against Torture in Tunisia (Association de Lutte contre la Torture en Tunisie, ALTT). As such, she was honored for her courageous efforts over many years to combat torture and promote an independent legal system in Tunisia. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), represented by its founder and director Gamal Eid, also received the Award for waging a long and successful struggle for freedom of expression and press freedom in Egypt. This struggle helped lay the groundwork for the realization of democracy and human dignity there. And Syrian journalist Mazen Darwish, founder of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), was chosen for his brave and tireless advocacy of the same causes and values in his country.

As a result of their work, all three award winners have been – and still are – subject to repression in the form of restrictions on their movements as well as physical and mental abuse. This is particularly true for Mazen Darwish. The Syrian authorities have confiscated his passport, so that he is unable to travel to Berlin for the awards ceremony. The tribute to the award winners was delivered by former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer.

The 1st Berlin Human Dignity Forum attracted around 300 guests from politics, business, the arts and media. This forum, now planned as an annual event, is an initiative of the Roland Berger Foundation; its patron is the German Federal President Christian Wulff.
President. The idea is to bring together decision-makers, experts and others engaged in the issues to discuss developments in human dignity and human rights. Reflecting the importance of recent developments, the kickoff forum focused on "Human dignity and the Arab Spring".

To expand on the aim of the Human Dignity Forum, the Roland Berger Foundation also launched a blog as a platform for international discussion on human dignity topics. The blog will focus on people who serve as role models in their commitment to human rights and dignity. In addition, the blog will provide information on the annual Roland Berger Human Dignity Award, the Berlin Human Dignity Forum and current human rights topics. The blog will go online during the ceremony and can be found at www.human-dignity-forum.org.

The 1st Berlin Human Dignity Forum was followed by the presentation of the 2011 Roland Berger Human Dignity Award. This is now the fourth year in which the Roland Berger Foundation has paid tribute to individuals or organizations worldwide that play an exemplary and successful role in promoting human dignity and human rights. The award money totals EUR 1 million. This year, the money has been divided up between the three winners, who will use it to realize specific projects in their respective countries with the help of the Roland Berger Foundation.

Dr. Romano Prodi, a former President of the European Commission, former Italian Prime Minister and member of the Awards Committee, explained how the laureates were chosen: "Our three award winners represent the three countries that started the wave of action which swept throughout the entire Arab world. Radhia Nasraoui is from Tunisia, where the wave of protests began. Gamal Eid's Arabic Network for Human Rights (ANHRI) represents Egypt, where the Cairo-based network campaigned so steadfastly for freedom of opinion and press freedom throughout the Arab world. And journalist Marzen Darwish is from Syria, whose citizens are refusing to be intimidated by an unscrupulous dictator. For me, all three are heroes in their own way."

Another member of this jury is Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Shirin Ebadi, herself a recipient of the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award in 2009. Explaining this year's choice, she said, "By paying tribute to Marzen Darwish as a Syrian fighting for human dignity and refusing to be silenced, we want to stand up for a Syria that will be free and democratic. In Syria, we again see that a despot's violence inflicted on his own people must ultimately fail. State violence will be overcome by the courage and free will of citizens determined to achieve their right to a life in dignity."

TV actress and physician Maria Furtwängler, who is also on the Awards Committee, highlighted the important role played by women in the political transformation process: "By selecting Radhia Nasraoui, we are honoring a courageous woman who embodies the role of women in a new Arab world – independent, self-confident and actively shaping a new era."

The welcome address at the awards ceremony was delivered by Professor Dr. h.c. Roland Berger. The founder of the Roland Berger Foundation and Chair of the Board of Trustees pointed out that all three award winners have one thing in common: "Their commitment has made a real difference by speaking out for human dignity through the turmoil of the Arab Spring." He said that, "Their resolute advocacy
of human rights over many years of dictatorship and despotism has been critical in ushering in the epochal events now transforming the Arab world, a trend we hope will continue."

In his tribute to the award winners, former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer noted that, "The Arab world is on the cusp of a new beginning. The way forward has been paved by courageous individuals fighting tirelessly for human dignity in the face of adversity, setbacks and even torture. They are sustained by the vision of a free and fair society. This evening, we have the honor of paying tribute to three of them. The award is intended as an expression of our profound respect and deepest appreciation of their exemplary commitment. But, at the same time, it offers material support for their work and encourages them to continue their struggle against the many and varied violations of human rights."

Award winner Radhia Nasraoui describes the repression she suffered under President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali: "Ben Ali's regime would not let me do my work properly, so what I was doing often caused me problems. Just two years after Ben Ali became President, in 1989, I was arrested for taking on the defense in a political trial," she said. She said the Award was "an encouraging sign that I should continue fighting for people's freedom in Tunisia and committing myself to the cause."

Gamal Eid, who accepted the Award on behalf of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, said in his acceptance speech: "Having been a human rights lawyer and activist for 20 years now, I'm extremely proud to be honored together with two of the greatest human rights campaigners in the Arab world. I've devoted myself to this task because I firmly believe human rights activists need to focus on supporting the people who live under repression and desire nothing more than to live in democracy. This prize comes at a time when we are changing towards democracy, and it will help us expand our work in Egypt and the region."

Mazen Darwish is banned from traveling abroad, and so was unable to attend the awards ceremony; but he spoke via videoconferencing live from Damascus during the event anyway. "History teaches us the price of freedom may be high; but the price of tyranny is even higher", he said. "To date, more than 4,000 Syrians (women, men and children) have paid for the road to freedom with their lives after overcoming the barrier of fear." He continued: "During my many years of fighting for freedom and human rights in Syria, many friends from Syria and the whole world have stood by my side. They never lost faith in me, even in the toughest times. The award I receive today is not just for me alone, but for them all."

For more information on the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award or high resolution images from a visit by the laureates in November, please visit www.rolandbergerstiftung.org.

The Phoenix television network will air the event, and after the broadcast will also make the recording available in its online "mediathek". Should any other TV broadcasters be interested in video or sound material, please contact Phoenix production in Berlin directly: Diana Soycka, telephone: 030/22882712, e-mail: diana.soycka@ardhsb.de.

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 is overseen by an Executive Board and a Board of Trustees.

The objective of the Roland Berger Foundation is human dignity, which it pursues in two ways:

1. **Education:** With the Roland Berger Scholarship program, it supports gifted and motivated children and young people from socially disadvantaged families. It makes it possible for them to receive an education that cultivates their talents and to achieve a self-determined life in dignity. Currently, the program supports 400 students aged six to eighteen throughout Germany.

2. **Human rights and dignity:** Every year, the Roland Berger Foundation confers the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award, which is endowed is EUR 1 million. The Foundation also supports award winners in their efforts on behalf of human dignity. Previous award winners are Somaly Mam from Cambodia, Dr. Shirin Ebadi from Iran, the international organization Reporters Without Borders and former German Chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl.

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