



Press release

The Freiburg Kant Foundation awards the Kant-World-Citizen-Prize to Brazilian bishop and Israeli human rights activist

The Kant-World-Citizen-Prize 2009 will be awarded to the Brazilian bishop Dom Luiz Cappio and the Israeli human rights activist Jeff Halper. The prize comprises a gratification of 15,000 €.

The main purpose of the foundation is the promotion of courageous and independent, critically enlightening publicity work and education to protect peace, democracy and the environment and the promotion of keeping to democratic-constitutional principles in national and international politics.

The Freiburg Kant Foundation honours the prize winners of 2009 for their “courageous commitment to human rights and the human dignity of politically and socially marginalized population groups.” The Foundation argues that “a civilization which pays lip service to human rights yet at the same time withdraws their basis needs the determined reminder of that humane credibility these prize winners have themselves committed to”.

The Brazilian bishop Dom Luiz Cappio (62) became known around the world when he and three other activists went on a one- year-long pilgrimage along the 2700 km-long Rio São Francisco in north eastern Brazil thereby alerting the public to the grave problems of the river and its population. Dom Cappio – coming from an affluent family himself – became the champion for the rights of the poor when he tried to stop the transposition of the São Francisco River by a 23-day hunger strike. The transposition jeopardizes the environment and the livelihood of the people living along the banks of the river. A scholar of the Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, Dom Cappio has become a national hero.

Jeff Halper (59) is a political activist and co-founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition (ICAHD). The committee belongs to the first Israeli peace groups working together with Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories. The ICAHD uses non-violent and legal means to oppose and resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes.

The Kant Foundation promoting Kant’s World Citizen Ethics honours Halper’s work “to liberate both the Palestinian and the Israeli people from the yoke of structural violence.” Halper has just taken part in the crossing of the two solidarity boats, the “Free Gaza” and the “Liberty” from Cyprus to the Harbour of Gaza trying to break the Israeli blockage.

Halper, born in Minnesota, USA, is Israeli and American citizen. He is professor of anthropology. His actions have focused world-wide attention on the consequences of Israeli occupation policy for the Palestinians and he was nominated for the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

The prize awarding ceremony will take place on 9 May 2009 in Freiburg.

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