



PRESS RELEASE

International Peace Bureau awards the Sean MacBride Peace Prize 2011 to Hanaa Edwar (Iraqi women's rights and democracy activist) and Peter Becker (German anti-nuclear lawyer)

14th Sept. 2011, Geneva

The International Peace Bureau is delighted to announce that this year's **Sean MacBride Peace Prize** is to be awarded to two individuals who have contributed in quite different ways to the advancement of democracy and human rights, and who have taken firm stands against violence and war.

The prize has been awarded each year since 1992 by the **International Peace Bureau (IPB)**, founded in 1892. Previous winners include: Binalakshmi Nepram (India, 2010), Betty Reardon (USA, 2009), Jayantha Dhanapala (Sri Lanka, 2007) and the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (2006). It is named after Sean MacBride, a distinguished Irish statesman who shared the 1974 Nobel Peace Prize, and is given to individuals or organisations for their outstanding work for peace, disarmament and human rights. (details at: <http://ipb.org/i/about-ipb/II-F-mac-bride-peace-prize.html>)

HANAA EDWAR

Born 1946 in Basra, Iraq, Hanaa Edwar became an activist already as a student. She joined the Iraqi Women's League while very young, and was arrested after the Ba'athist-led coup in 1963. Escaping from prison, she moved to Germany to represent the Iraqi Women's League at the Women's International Democratic Federation in the 1970s.



After this period she moved to Lebanon and then Syria, and became a strong activist in the struggle against the dictatorship. She also joined the resistance movement in Iraqi Kurdistan for three years, but not in a military position. Forced to migrate again, she formed the Iraqi Al-Amal Association. This was located first in Damascus, and then from

1996 the organization settled in Erbil, Kurdistan. After the fall of the regime in 2003 she moved the head office to Baghdad.

Hanaa's name has become synonymous with the defence of human rights, with a long track record of activities. She has been instrumental in the formation of the Iraqi Women's Network, made up of more than 80 organizations. One of her most recent campaigns was lodging a law suit at the High Court of Iraq against the Speaker of the Parliament for acting unconstitutionally to hinder the formation of a government after the last election. This campaign became known as the Civil Initiative for the Preservation of the Constitution.

Her action at the Human Rights Conference in Baghdad on 5 June 2011, to defend civil society organizations and to demand the release of four arrested young people, highlighted the increased attacks on civil liberties in general in Iraq. Her protest led to the release of the four youths.

IPB's Co-President Tomas Magnusson comments: *"Hanaa Edwar is an extraordinary woman activist, well-known in the whole of Iraq for her strong positions in the slow moving process among politicians. She is brave, and under constant threats to her life, but not slowing down in any way her mission. She is a most worthy laureate, determined and energetic, with an impressive record of activities to strengthen human rights and democracy, to develop civil society, and to defend women's rights. She has been an outspoken and tireless challenger of the ruling parties, the Ba'athists and male-dominated politics in general."*

PETER BECKER

When the German section of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA) was founded in June 1989, Dr. Peter Becker was elected chairman. He remained in this position for more than 20 years, and he still serves the board as Treasurer. The great successes of the German and international IALANA are inextricably linked to him, in a number of distinct areas.



He has made a particularly important contribution to international de-legitimization of nuclear weapons, the highlights being the International Court of Justice verdict in 1996 and the lawsuit against the stationing of U.S. nuclear weapons in Germany. When, after the first attempts, barely anybody believed in the success of this international campaign, he urged us to proceed. Overcoming the doctrine of deterrence is an issue close to his heart. Also characteristic of his work are the rejection of German participation in the

illegal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and his participation in the various protest actions. Furthermore, Peter Becker has developed various ideas for a scientific programme entitled "Legal Peace" and has led scientific debate in this area.

We should not forget the hard daily work of running a small international professional peace initiative. Notably, Peter has helped in solving many financial problems. In 2011 he was elected Co-President of the international IALANA, together with Judge Weeramantry and Peter Weiss.

Peter has been an extremely successful professional lawyer. He established Europe's leading energy law firm, which is associated with his name and significantly contributed to the many successful cases against the building of nuclear power plants. The German withdrawal is due to decades of tireless hard work by women and men like Peter. In his latest book "*The Rise and Crisis of German Power Companies*", he summed up this successful stage of his life very convincingly. The early shutdown or the building freeze of nuclear power plants are results of his legal expertise and argumentation skills. He has contributed crucially to the de-legitimization of nuclear power. After the disaster in Fukushima, without him probably neither the German IALANA nor the international IALANA would have argued for the complete worldwide phase-out of this irresponsible technology.

In fact Peter, who was born in 1944, for a long time didn't want to be a lawyer, but planned to be a musician. And he still is an exceptionally gifted pianist. Early on, he found his way into politics and became a member of the left-liberal FDP, remaining faithful to the party's original view of freedom and worldwide social justice until today. Consequently, he left the FDP after their turn to the neo-liberal right in 1982. Since then he is completely dedicated to the peace and environmental movements, and especially to IALANA. Repeatedly he argued that a nuclear weapons convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons is the lesson of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and is the permanent central challenge for the peace movement, which has to be expressed through the political system.

To promote the idea of peace in society but especially in the scientific community, Peter has founded, from his own resources, the Foundation for the Peace Movement, which has helped quite a few small projects to succeed. He has also donated the Peter Becker Peace Prize, the most prestigious social science-related peace prize in Germany, to the University of Marburg.

His warm, comradely relations with everyone have shaped the atmosphere of IALANA and his social gatherings and celebrations are famous. "We will continue to work alongside him for peace, to celebrate successes and to overcome problems in solidarity" says IPB Board member Reiner Braun, "Peter Becker has shown us the way so often. IPB's MacBride Prize is a worthy distinction."

The Prize, a silver medal contributed annually by the Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, will be awarded on the evening of **Saturday 29 October 2011** at the **City Hall in Potsdam**, as part of the annual gathering of the International Peace Bureau (details at: <http://www.ipb.org>): international symposium on the life and work of Alfred Fried (Nobel Peace Prize 1911) and IPB Council meeting.

About IPB

The International Peace Bureau is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. We are a Nobel Peace Laureate (1910), and over the years 13 of our officers have been recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Our 320 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network which brings together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. Our main programme centres on *Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development*.

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<http://www.demilitarize.org>

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