



PRESS RELEASE

Strong signal against anti-Semitism in Europe: Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt received the prestigious Charlemagne Prize

Aachen - 9 May 2024 - The President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, received the International Charlemagne Prize 2024 in Aachen on Thursday. The Charlemagne Prize Committee explained that Jewish life is a natural part of Europe and that there must be no place for anti-Semitism in Europe.

The 60-year-old Chief Rabbi was honoured for his commitment to European values, understanding and interfaith dialogue. Together with Goldschmidt, the Jewish communities in Europe were honoured. The Charlemagne Prize consists of a certificate and a medal and is awarded for services to understanding in Europe.

International recognition

The Charlemagne Prize, named after Emperor Charlemagne, is awarded to individuals who have rendered outstanding services to Europe and European unification. Since 1950, many statesmen and personalities have been honoured, including Emmanuel Macron, Helmut Kohl, Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, and Pope Francis. In 2023, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky received the prize. The annual award ceremony takes place in the German city of Aachen.

Germany's Vice Chancellor Habeck honours award winners

In his speech, German Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck said that the Charlemagne Prize is sending out a clear signal against anti-Semitism, which has been more pronounced in recent years than for a long time. He paid tribute to the interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Jews, which Goldschmidt has also helped to promote as a co-founder of the European Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council. Another speaker was the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, who spoke in favour of tolerance and respect.

More protection needed.

In his speech, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt referred to the increase of anti-Semitic offences. He said that much was being done to combat anti-Semitism and providing security for Jewish people. But what is being done is not enough. "Jewish people did not dare to be recognisable as Jewish," he said in the light of the current situation after the terror attack of Hamas on Israel on October 7 last year. "Jews are feared and changed their names for parcel and delivery services for fear of violence".

The protective equipment of many communities needed an update of state support throughout Europe. Efforts to investigate and convict perpetrators of anti-Jewish offences should be intensified, he demanded. There are strong analyses and tools in Europe to combat anti-Semitism, he said. "I ask you to implement them, consistently, nationally and internationally," he said emphatically.

Iran is a real danger.

Goldschmidt also warned of the terror sponsor Iran, which is now also targeting Jewish and Israeli institutions in Europe and wants to attack them. This is a real danger, said Goldschmidt. He called on the European Union to put the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the terror list immediately.

The 60-year-old Jewish religious leader has been President of the Conference of European Rabbis, in which more than 800 rabbis are represented, since 2011. The Zurich-born rabbi served as Chief Rabbi of Moscow for more than 30 years. After refusing to support the Russian war against Ukraine, he was forced to leave the country with his family in 2022.

Goldschmidt said that he would like to see more solidarity with the Jewish state. He also has problems with the current Israeli government, with the "right-wing extremist ministers", he said. Regarding the Gaza war, he said that Hamas had started the war and could end it immediately by releasing the hostages and laying down its arms.

German government pays tribute to the laureates.

Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared on Platform X at the award ceremony that the Jewish communities have a firm place in Europe and in Germany. Their work should be taken for granted. "The fact that the Charlemagne Prize of Aachen goes to Jewish communities and Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt is an important sign for tolerance and against anti-Semitism," explained the Chancellor.

Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also expressed his congratulations. He emphasised the consistency with which Goldschmidt resigned from his position as Chief Rabbi of Moscow and turned his back on Russia after the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. "You have never hesitated to clearly point out differences and stand up for your position," Steinmeier explained. He said he is grateful that the Conference of European Rabbis had been based in Munich since last year.

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Photos of the Charlemagne Prize2024 laureate Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt can be downloaded here:
<https://www.aachen.de/images/pressefotos/kp2024.zip>

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About the CER

As the European Rabbinate, the CER represents around 1000 rabbis from Dublin to Vladivostok and thus the largest Jewish communities in Europe. Founded in the UK in 1956, the CER stands up for the religious rights of Jews in Europe. It is also committed to religious freedom and intercultural and interreligious dialogue with Muslims and Christians in order to counter growing radicalisation in society. The President of the CER since 2011 is the now exiled former Chief Rabbi of Moscow, **Pinchas Goldschmidt**.

About the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen

The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, first awarded in 1950, is the oldest and most prestigious award given to individuals or institutions for work done in the service of European unification. The Prize is named after Charlemagne, the Frankish king, who is considered the first unifier of Europe, who was revered by his contemporaries as the 'Father of Europe', and who chose Aachen as his favorite Palatinate at the end of the eighth century; thus, a bridge is built between European past and future.