



“Dialogue Prize of Swiss Jews” awarded to the rabbi Noam Hertig und imam Muris Begovic

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(May 29, 2018) Today, the first «Dialogue Prize of Swiss Jews» was bestowed in a great ceremonial act in Berne.

The President of the Federal Council, Mr. Alain Berset, emphasised in his address the significance of the dialogue for a peaceable living together. The winners of the prize, awarded for the first time by the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG) and the Platform of Liberal Jews in Switzerland (PLJS), are the imam Muris Begovic and the rabbi Noam Hertig from the German speaking part of Switzerland, as well as the protestant deacon Maurice Gardiol and the Jewish prayer leader Eric Ackermann from the French speaking part.

«We live in paradox times», Alain Berset in his celebratory speech in front of approximately 350 guests said. On the one hand, people had the opportunity to inform themselves extensively and inter-exchange across borders. On the other hand, rumours and untruth were spread especially on Social Media, so that intolerance, xenophobia and anti-Semitism could continue to grow. «We must not stop to carry on with enlightenment», Berset stated, and requested that the dialogue be fostered as a medium of enlightenment: «The dialogue is the most lasting and effective answer to uncertainty, distrusts, prejudice and hate.»

Dialogue Prize for a Zurich rabbi and an imam from the Limmat Valley

Herbert Winter, President of the SIG, stressed the importance of the dialogue, too: «We want to invigorate the social cohesion and are convinced that the dialogue is one way to achieve this. The dialogue even is necessary and indispensable in order to make individuals with the most differing life plans get together.»

National Council member Beat Walti of the Liberal Party, co-president of the Parliamentary Group against Racism and Xenophobia, gave the laudation for the rabbi of the Zurich Israelite Religious Community, Noam Hertig, and the Imam, Muris Begovic, from the Zurich suburb of Schlieren. Both prize winners have promoted the dialogue and exchange between Jews and Moslems for many years.

Also, they co-led the first Jewish-Islamic dialogue event initiated by the SIG/PLJS and the Muslim federations KIOS and FIDS. For the Romandy, the protestant deacon Maurice Gardiol and the Jewish prayer leader Eric Ackermann received the Dialogue Prize in recognition of their work in the Geneva Inter-religious Platform. On behalf of the Swiss Jewry, Jean-Marc Brunshawig, Co-President of the PLJS, congratulated the prize winners.

The Dialogue Prize is endowed with twice 10,000 Swiss Francs, meant to be utilized for a common dialogue project. Beat Walti declared: «This Dialogue Prize is not just one among many prizes. To me, it is the right and important prize in a time when xenophobia smoulders and anti-Semitism flares up again.

Likrat – a showcase project in dialogue among youths

The green National Council member Lisa Mazzone later presented the Likrat project (from Hebrew «towards each other»). Moreover, a documentary film on the project had its premiere. Jewish youths are invited to a school class and present their Jewishness there. Thanks to this involvement with another religion a sensitization and tolerance towards Judaism and other minorities develops. The Swiss dialogue project, having been successful since many years, was already expanded to Germany, Austria and Moldavia.

The evening dedicated to the «Dialogue Prize of Swiss Jews» ended in the true sense of the term «dialogue» – with a common fast-breaking of Moslems, Jews and Christians.

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