



ICCJ Mourns the Passing of Pastor Armin Ihle

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The International Council of Christians and Jews joins in mourning the death of Pastor Armin Ihle, for several periods co-chair of our Uruguayan member organization, the Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana.

The International Council of Christians and Jews and the Friends of Sponsors of the Martin-Buber-House mourn the sudden loss of a long-time friend, brother, and valiant fighter for the cause of interreligious understanding.

Although Pastor Armin Ihle has died, he is yet so much alive, in our hearts, our minds, and our thoughts.

His appearance, beard, basque beret, and scarfs, giving a colorful touch to his black attire, how can we ever forget? Pastor Ihle was special, once you met him you knew – this man is special. But what made him so special?

He was born in Lüdenscheid, Germany in 1944. As a young pastor, at the age of 22, he emigrated to South America, where he first worked as Assistant Pastor in Rio Negro and then was nominated Pastor of the Protestant Congregation in Buenos Aires and of Asunción /Paraguay. During Strößner's dictatorship in Paraguay, he stood up bravely for human rights and helped political prisoners and all those persecuted by the dictatorial powers. For Armin Ihle this was part of the duty of being a pastor, living according to the gospel. His courageous actions meant that he was temporarily imprisoned. In Buenos Aires he openly opposed the Peron regime and again came to the defense of human rights and justice. Armin Ihle was a man who fought for a better and more just world. His commitment to justice and human rights was recently honored, on August 2, 2015, when he was awarded the highest honor of the German State, the Bundesverdienstkreuz 1. Klasse, by Joachim Gauck, President of the German Republic.

In 1995 the Iglesia Evangélica del Río de la Plata transferred Pastor Ihle to Montevideo. Here he joined the Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana del Uruguay (CJCU), and was for many years its president, until he was made responsible for international affairs. In this function he became active in the ICCJ. Armin Ihle attended every Conference wherever it was held. For many years he was a loyal member of the board of the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin-Buber-House. His advice and many creative ideas inspired the work of the Friends and Sponsors. We all remember the ICCJ Annual Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 2001, that he helped organize in order to heighten the awareness for interreligious dialogue in South America. And many of us have very vivid memories of his generous hospitality. For his engagement in Christian-Jewish understanding the Zionist organization of Uruguay awarded him the "Premium Jerusalem" in 2014. On August 2 he retired from his position as Pastor. He still had many plans and projects in mind.

His sudden and unexpected death, at the age of 71, is a great loss for the ICCJ, the Friends and Sponsors, and for Interreligious Dialogue in South America.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to his three daughters, his son, and to Sonia, his wife.

He shall not be forgotten. May he rest in Peace. May his name be for a blessing.

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