

## **Philippe Sands receives Erich Maria Remarque Peace Prize 2025**

### **Special prize for the “Triologue” project**

Every two years since 1991, the city of Osnabrück has awarded a Peace Prize named after the Osnabrück-born author Erich Maria Remarque. This year is the 17th time the prize is to be awarded. It goes to the British-French lawyer and writer Philippe Sands, KC. The Special Prize goes to Jouanna Hassoun and Shai Hoffmann for their project »Triologue«.

The Erich Maria Remarque Peace Prize is awarded in the spirit of its namesake for literary, journalistic or scientific works that deal with issues of inner and outer peace, as well as for exemplary commitment to peace, humanity and freedom.

The topic addressed by Philippe Sands is international law, which is not a given, but an achievement of the Enlightenment. It is therefore the duty of all states in civilised coexistence to defend international law against those who challenge it. That this is not a matter of course is demonstrated by the ongoing attacks on the international legal institutions and the idea of global jurisdiction. The rule of law and the prosecution of crimes such as »crimes against humanity« are under threat – the most recent examples being the sanctions imposed by the United States on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Hungary’s withdrawal from the ICC a few weeks ago.

Such resentment destabilises the well-established cooperation of the international community. At a time when ICC arrest warrants are losing their relevance for political action, it is all the more important to reflect on these values and norms to underline the need to uphold human rights and international law.

DIE OBERBÜRGERMEISTERIN

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For this reason, the Erich Maria Remarque Peace Prize, endowed with 25,000 euros, is awarded to the British-French lawyer and writer Philippe Sands. In addition to being Professor of Law at University College London and Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard, he is a barrister at the International Court of Justice and other international courts, and an international arbitrator.

In his book *East West Street*, he tells the story of his grandfather, who managed to flee after the annexation of Austria in 1938 and interweaves it with the history of the terms »genocide« and »crimes against humanity«. During the Second World War, two Lviv lawyers, Hersch Lauterpacht and Raphael Lemkin, independently began to introduce these two concepts into international law. Lauterpacht argued for the protection of individuals, while Lemkin advocated the protection of groups and coined the term »genocide«. Lauterpacht succeeded in getting »crimes against humanity« officially included in the judgments of the Nuremberg trials. Today, »genocide« is also enshrined in international criminal law.

»Sands describes the legal concept behind these terms. On this basis, it was possible to name and punish the horrors of National Socialism. He makes it clear to the reader that it is necessary to stand up for these fundamental rights and to work to ensure that they remain part of international jurisprudence,« said the jury chair, Professor Susanne Menzel-Riedl, President of Osnabrück University.

Lord Mayor Katharina Pötter, deputy jury chair, stated: »Our world is threatened by disorder. This makes it all the more important to preserve and protect that which serves as the yardstick of right and wrong in a globalised world – namely law, international law. To challenge and disregard this law is to undermine the progress that humanity has achieved

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through much suffering and courage. In this sense, the work of Philippe Sands is both exemplary and encouraging. He shows what is at stake.«

»Despite Sands' creative qualities, our choice is not only about the individual and his work, but also about an important issue for which Sands is an outstanding laureate. He is a person of enormous expertise and originality who stands for international law and thus for the destiny of post-war European history,« the jury said in explaining its decision.

### Special Prize

The »Trialogue« project, initiated by Jouanna Hassoun and Shai Hoffmann, wins the special prize of 5,000 euros. The prize is intended to highlight the need to engage young people in dialogue on issues that destroy conversation. Its central theme is the Middle East conflict, which has escalated since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in the Gaza Strip to such an extent that peaceful co-existence seems impossible in the foreseeable future. Their Jewish/Israeli and Muslim/Palestinian backgrounds make them directly affected by this conflict. They talk to high school students about the emotional challenges of this conflict. Intercultural/interreligious communication »on equal terms« can be practised and appreciated through the multi-perspective discussion format, creating a basis for mutual understanding in the spirit of human rights and international law.

»That is precisely why we see this award as an encouragement and a sign that the struggle for dialogue, humanity and understanding is heard, seen and appreciated even in dark times. We [...] would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the entire jury,« said Sophie Rüter, project leader of the »Trialogue« project, in a first reaction.

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The Erich Maria Remarque Peace Prize is supported by the Georgsmarienhütte Steelworks Foundation. Ansgar Pohlmann, Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Directors, says: »With Philippe Sands and the ›Trialoge‹ project, the jury has made an excellent choice that draws attention to disturbing developments in the present. This is in the spirit of the Peace Prize's namesake.«

»Trialoge« complements the concerns of the main prize winner Philippe Sands by working with young people. »Trialoge« is a project of Gesellschaft im Wandel gGmbH in cooperation with Transaidency e.V.

**The award ceremony will take place on Thursday, 5 June at 19:30 in the Kongress-Saal of the OsnabrückHalle.**

**Admission is free. Registration is requested at: [www.veranstaltungen-stadt-osnabrueck.de](http://www.veranstaltungen-stadt-osnabrueck.de)**

**Note to editors:**

You can find this and other press material (biographies, photos, etc.) on [www.osnabrueck.de/friedenspreis](http://www.osnabrueck.de/friedenspreis).

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