

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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## BQ 797 – No. 20/2024

### Thomas Paul Schirmmacher and Sorin Mureşan congratulate Pinchas Goldschmidt on winning the International Charlemagne Prize Aachen 2024

#### The President of the Conference of European Rabbis, Pinchas Goldschmidt, has been honoured with the Charlemagne Prize of the City of Aachen

(Bonn, 21.06.2024) Bishop Thomas Paul Schirmmacher, President of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) and the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF), and Dr. Sorin Mureşan, Managing Director of Gebende Hände gGmbH, were among the first to congratulate the Chairman of the European Rabbinical Conference, Pinchas Goldschmidt, on receiving the International Charlemagne Prize in Aachen.

Pinchas Goldschmidt, born in 1963, was Chief Rabbi of the Moscow Choir Synagogue in Russia from 1993 to 2022. He also founded and has headed the Moscow Rabbinical Court of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) since 1989 and has been President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), which brings together more than seven hundred communal rabbis from Dublin to Khabarovsk, since 2011.

At Goldschmidt's invitation, Bishop Schirmmacher is a member of the advisory board of the Institute for Freedom of Faith and Security in Europe (IFFSE) in Brussels, which is organised by the Conference of European Rabbis. He had already met with the award winner before the



Thomas Paul Schirmmacher together with Pinchas and Dara Goldschmidt © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan

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ceremony, who had travelled to Aachen with his wife Dara, his mother Elisabeth and other family members from the USA and Israel.

Schirmmacher emphasised that the award was not only a necessary sign of solidarity with Jewish fellow citizens throughout Europe, but also paid tribute to a man who, despite much hostility and the most adverse circumstances - such as the need to leave Moscow – had conducted a dialogue based on peace and cooperation like few other Europeans.

The jury's citation for the award states: "In appreciation of his outstanding work for peace, the self-determination of peoples and European values, for tolerance, pluralism and understanding, and in recognition of his significant commitment to interreligious and inter-cultural dialogue, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen in 2024 honours the President of the Conference of European Rabbis, Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, and together with him the Jewish communities in Europe. With this award, the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors wants to send a signal that Jewish life is a natural part of Europe and that there must be no place for anti-Semitism in Europe. Jewish life is an important part of European history and the present – now and in the future."

At the award ceremony in the Coronation Hall of Aachen City Hall, Goldschmidt emphasised in front of 700 invited guests: "Anti-Semitism was never dead; but since the Islamist pogrom against Israel on 7 October 2023, it has flared up in a way that seriously threatens the security and freedom of Jewish life – especially in Europe."

The two award speeches were given by Robert Habeck, Vice-Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Parliamentary Republic of Albania. In his laudatory speech, Habeck stated: "On the one hand, we have to face the fact that Judaism has never had a secure place in Europe, that anti-Semitism is engraved in the history of Europe and has not simply disappeared even after 1945." Turning to Goldschmidt, he said: "The Bible, you write, dear Mr. Goldschmidt, the root of our common Jewish-Christian heritage, repeatedly speaks of the importance of welcoming



Other winners of the Charlemagne Prize with Edi Rama and Pinchas Goldschmidt © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan

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'the stranger'. This is also part of our European identity. If we profess a common identity, then we should also endeavour to share it with others."

In his award speech, Edi Rama asked: "What form can tolerance take in a time of increasing intolerance?" and sees Europe in a dilemma: "Because fear of evil also means promoting intolerance." People like Pinchas Goldschmidt are bridge builders to humanity. Seeking dialogue, resolving conflicts with respect, self-reflection, tolerance – there is no alternative to all of this, "even if it means that we have to leave our comfort zone every now and then. We have to come to terms with the complexity of history so that the real weapons never come back. Because only one form of tolerance can protect us: Trust in humanity".



Thomas Paul Schirmmacher welcomes the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) paid tribute to Goldschmidt with the words: "Goldschmidt was born in Zurich on 21 July 1963. His studies took him to the USA and Israel, where he was also ordained as a rabbi. In 1988, he moved to Moscow with his wife and children to help revitalise the Jewish community after the devastation of the Soviet era. In 1993, he became chief rabbi of the Russian capital – and remained so until 2022. The intrepid rabbi recognised Russia's attack on Ukraine, which violated international law, for what it was: a catastrophe not only for Ukraine, but also for Russia and the Jewish communities there. Goldschmidt took a big risk with this positioning. [...] In order to prevent damage to the community, Goldschmidt resigned as chief rabbi and left Russia. Since then, he has lived in Israel and in Munich, where the European Rabbinical Conference moved its headquarters in September. [...] Undaunted, he fights for tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Despite everything, Pinchas Goldschmidt believes in the power of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Goldschmidt, who was one of the co-founders of the European Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council in 2015, was also keen to get this message across in advance: After Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October, moderate Muslims needed the support of civil society and European governments."

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- **Photo 2:** Thomas Paul Schirmmacher welcomes the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 3:** Thomas Paul Schirmmacher and Hendrik Wüst, Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 4:** Thomas Paul Schirmmacher with the Lord Mayor of Aachen Sibylle Keupen © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Foto 5:** Pinchas Goldschmidt signs the Golden Book of the City of Aachen, on the left Edi Rama and Sibylle Keupen © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 6:** Entry by Pinchas Goldschmidt in the Golden Book of the City of Aachen © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 7 and photo 8:** Dr. Sorin Mureşan with the award winner Pinchas Goldschmidt and his wife Dara © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 9** (from left): Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Jürgen Rüttgers, Thomas Paul Schirmmacher © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 10:** Ecumenical presence before the award ceremony © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
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- **Photo 12:** Other winners of the Charlemagne Prize with Edi Rama and Pinchas Goldschmidt © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- **Photo 13:** Aachen Town Hall during the award ceremony © IIRF/Sorin Mureşan
- Video of the Charlemagne Prize ceremony 2024:  
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- Announcement on the Charlemagne Prize 2024:  
<https://www.karlspreis.de/de/aktuelles/karlspreis-2024>
- Press release 'Unerschrockener Kämpfer für Dialog und Toleranz' in the FAZ:  
<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/karlspreis-2024-19707560.html>
- Thomas Paul Schirmmacher on the website of the Institute for Freedom of Faith and Security in Europe (IFFSE): <https://www.iffse.eu/about/advisory-board/archbishop-prof-dr-theol-dr-phil-thomas-schirmmacher/>
- Press release 'Schirmmacher wird Beiratsmitglied des IFFSE':  
<https://www.thomasschirmmacher.info/blog/schirmmacher-wird-beiratsmitglied-des-iffse/>

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