

## PRESS RELEASE

### KURT WESTERGAARD IS AWARDED THE M100 MEDIA PRIZE 2010

#### Prize Ceremony on 8 September as part of the M100 Sanssouci Colloquium

Potsdam, Germany, 6 September 2010. The Danish cartoonist **Kurt Westergaard** will receive this year's **M100 Media Prize**. The prize is awarded on 8 September, as part of the international Media Conference M100 Sanssouci Colloquium in Potsdam. Since 2005, the M100 Sanssouci Colloquium has been inviting **international editors-in-chief and leading media professionals** to join the intensive dialogue in the scenery of Potsdam's historical Palaces and Gardens. This year's topic is "Freedom of the Press in Europe". The former Federal Commissioner Preserving the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic and Chairman of the Association "Gegen Vergessenheit - Für Demokratie" ("Against Oblivion - For Democracy"), **Joachim Gauck**, will hold the Laudation.

**Kurt Westergaard** created one of the 12 Muhammad cartoons accompanying a feature entitled "The Face of Muhammad", published on 30 September 2005, in the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten*. His illustration triggered an international controversy about freedom of speech and sparked world-wide, partly violent demonstrations of Muslims who felt insulted. "It wasn't my intention to attack Islam", stated Westergaard in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, "but instead terrorists who abuse Islam for their spiritual ammunition." Despite an alleged bounty of eleven million Dollar on him and his colleagues, Westergaard defended the publication by invoking the right to freedom of speech.

**The board of the M100 Sanssouci Colloquium** honours his courage to stand by these democratic values and defend them, notwithstanding threats of violence and death.

The Lord Mayor of Potsdam, **Jann Jakobs**, who also chairs the M100 board, declared: "With Kurt Westergaard we honour a personality who has become a symbol for freedom of speech and opinion. When the drawing of a caricature results in death threats it is our duty to publicly back the illustrator. The Prize is setting a signal."

As part of the M100 Media Prize ceremony Federal Chancellor Merkel will hold the main speech. In this context she stated, "Within these months, us Germans commemorate how, 20 years ago, the SED dictatorship was overcome and our country reunited. We are still conscious of what the lack of freedom implies and should therefore never forget how precious it is. Freedom of the press is one of the main features of a liberal democracy."

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"Convinced of Potsdam's unique qualities to provide the setting for the annual discourse of leading European opinion makers, the conference was initiated six years ago as part of the city's application to become the Cultural Capital 2010", **M100-CEO Moritz van Dülmen** evaluated the conference-format. "The idea and concept have been very successful, indeed. The appeal for national as well as international media professionals and opinion leaders is terrific, and continues to increase each year."

M100 is an initiative by **the state capital of Potsdam** and **Potsdam Media International e.V.** and takes place as part of **Medienwoche@IFA**.

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