

**Ring for Peace Foundation Councilor Gunnar Stålsett receives Federal Cross of Merit from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier - for his tireless work on the "Responsibility of the World's Religions for Peace"**

Ring for Peace  
Stiftung Friedensdialog der  
Weltreligionen und Zivilgesellschaft SdbR  
Foundation Peace Dialogue of the World  
Religions and Civil Society SdbR  
Neugasse 2 | 88131 Lindau  
+49 8382 911 4500

LINDAU/OSLO Gunnar Stålsett, former Evangelical Lutheran Bishop of Oslo, was awarded the **Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany** by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Friday. Stålsett is Honorary President of *Religions for Peace* and a member of the board of trustees of the Lindau *Foundation Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society*. The award ceremony took place on Friday in Oslo during a state visit of the German President to Norway.

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In his address, President Steinmeier recalled his first meeting with Gunnar Stålsett in 2019, when the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace was held in Lindau. There, Steinmeier said, "I personally experienced the passion with which you stand up for the idea of the responsibility of the world's religions for peace. For the conviction that religions must no longer be a cause of strife and war, but that, on the contrary, they can - and must - be instruments of peace." Stålsett, he said, was committed to his faith with such consistency that he would even have been willing to go to prison for it. "In your many years of work, you have not only achieved a great deal, but have also provided orientation and set an example for countless people," Steinmeier praised.

Pressekontakt | Press contact:

[presse@ringforpeace.org](mailto:presse@ringforpeace.org)

Michael Scheyer

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Gunnar Stålsett expressed his gratitude for the award and emphasized that he was proud to receive it from Steinmeier's hand. He, too, recalled the 10-World Assembly - namely Steinmeier's opening speech: "Your appeal has helped to strengthen cooperation between people of different religions and to establish Lindau as a center for peace dialogue between the world's religions, civil society and diplomacy."

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According to Stålsett, the great questions facing humanity today are not philosophical, but practical: climate and pandemic, equality and children's rights, asylum and integration, banning nuclear weapons and disarmament. "It's about courage for concrete action," said the former bishop of the Oslo diocese. "As a Christian, I see the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a catechism for our time, a handbook for religions and societies, for all people of good will. As much spiritual as political. It helps us to practice mercy on a daily basis."

Wolfgang Schürer, board member of the Foundation for Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society, congratulated Gunnar Stålsett on Friday and thanked him for his worldwide commitment to human rights and climate protection. This, he said, gives hope to the next generation. "With this award, the German president also recognizes the Lindau initiatives inspired by Bishop Stålsett's efforts," Schürer said.

In addition to Gunnar Stålsett, Norwegian singer Wencke Myrhe was also awarded the Federal Cross of Merit. Steinmeier told them both: "You make our societies and our world more livable. And you have filled the German-Norwegian friendship with life and with dreams and enriched it."

#### Background Information:

Gunnar Johan Stålsett was born on February 10, 1935, in Kjelvik, Norway. From October 1972 to October 1973, he worked as a state secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Church, Education and Culture. From 1998 to 2005 he was bishop of the Oslo diocese. He also served on the Nobel Committee for the award of the Nobel Peace Prize (from 1985 to 1990 and from 1994 to 2002 and again since 2012). Stålsett is one of 32 honorary presidents at Religions for Peace and a trustee of the Foundation for Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society in Lindau.

*Religions for Peace* is a non-governmental organization with consultative status at the United Nations in New York. The interfaith network of *Religions for Peace* spans the entire world. The *Foundation Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society* (in short: Ring for Peace) has been organizing international and multi-religious peace conferences in Lindau on Lake Constance in close cooperation with *Religions for Peace* every year since 2019. The German Foreign Office supports the peace conferences.