

**MARÍA ISABEL GÁMEZ - Journalist  
from El Salvador**

Photo: María Isabel Gámez

Since the end of April, 27 year old radio journalist María Isabel Gámez and her son Jimmy have been guests of the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People. This year she has been honoured with the 'Sievershäuser Ermutigung' peace prize for her courageous work.

María Isabel Gámez has worked for 'Radio Victoria' in the Cabañas department in El Salvador since she was 13. She made a name for herself as a gutsy and determined journalist, leading her to her position as head of the radio station's news team. In the northern hills of El Salvador, Radio Victoria also serves as a training school for young people who would otherwise have no access to school. María Isabel Gámez has herself been training young people in journalism since 2007. She has reported on many risky topics for her radio programme, including environmental crime in coal mining, social grievan-

ces, violation of human rights and corruption. This has led to the journalist receiving a threat to her life.

The 'Sievershäuser Ermutigung' peace prize is awarded by the Documentation Centre for Warfare and Peace in Sievershausen. This year the prize was offered to individuals or single initiatives, who through independent, risky journalism often susceptible to bribery, have excelled in peace and human rights issues.

"In awarding this prize to María Isabel Gámez, the jury are distinguishing an individual who addressed these themes in her journalism in an exemplary and responsible manner. Her commitment to impartial reporting and her acceptance of the considerable personal risk and disadvantages involved should be recognised, supported and, through this prize, rewarded.

In María Isabel Gámez the jury has consciously selected a young journalist, who has embraced and mastered this job and in doing so demonstrated a high level of journalistic competence and commitment to peace." (Jury's statement).

As a grant holder of the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People, María Isabel Gámez can enjoy the feeling of personal safety for the first time in years. The fact that she can now accompany her son to swimming lessons and to the park without any danger is for Isabel a dream come true. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to Hella Langer, the sponsor of this grant.

**EDITORIAL**

*My friends, or better said: My dear family!*

*The time for my departure, for my return, has arrived. I must confess, my emotions are mixed, as if two hearts were beating within my breast. One heart is beating fast, because I know that I am returning home, to my family, to my friends, to my people. The other is distressed and sad, because I am leaving a wonderful country of remarkable people, full of warmth and who have treated me as an equal, that is to say, as one of their own.*

*I am happy, because I am returning to my native country and to the people who I love and who give me the strength to carry on. But I am also sad, because in parting, I am leaving behind a big family in Germany, one that not only opened the doors of its homes to me, but also of its hearts.*

*I was able to live a dream which I had never imagined; I could touch history, extend my knowledge. I would like to say to you, that in my whole life I could never repay this kindness, this tenderness, and all this protection which has allowed me to trust again and to find the right way.*

Pedro Matías,  
Journalist from Oaxaca/Mexico,  
Grant holder from  
June 2009 June, 2010

**INFORMATION ON EL SALVADOR**

Extreme violence, gang crime and corruption threaten the security of El Salvador's **6.2 million** inhabitants. The violations on human rights carried out

during the years of armed conflict (1980 -1992) remain uncompensated for. The General Amnesty Law of 1993 remains in force. (Source: AI)

## DR. LEYLA YUNUSOVA - Institute Director from Azerbaijan



Photo: Dr. Leyla Yunusova

**Dr. Leyla Yunusova is a founder and leader of the "Institute for Peace and Democracy" in Baku. She has been working as a human rights activist in Azerbaijan for 20 years and is a strong critic of the judicial system. She and her husband, Arif, are taking a six month break in Hamburg from their stressful work.**

In summer 2009 the government began an intimidation campaign aimed at Dr. Leyla Yunusova, her relatives and her employees. The campaign ranged from slander in the government press to anonymous death threats.

The background to the campaign is a hijacking case in 2008, which led to no conviction. In an interview, Dr. Yunusova compared the methods of the police in Azerbaijan with those in Mexico and Nigeria. This led to her being accused of offending the government and causing moral damage to the country. The Minister of the Interior filed an action for slander against her, but later withdrew it. In spite of many threats, Dr. Leyla Yunusova presented a report at a conference on 19 May 2010 on nationwide torture practices in Azerbaijan between 2006 and 2009. She published a list of 32 torture victims, commenting that there were many more for which she didn't have any information. According to "Human Rights Watch" the Baku government has arrested and terrorised countless journalists and human rights activists in the past two years. Anyone who criticizes the government risks being arrested.

Leyla and Arif like to spend their time in Hamburg taking long walks in the parks or attending concerts.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Christoph Rinser, who has made this grant possible.

### AWARDS

**PEDRO MATÍAS**, Mexiko  
Prize for Freedom of Opinion and Press,  
from the Johann Philipp Palm Foundation

The award ceremony will take place on 7 December 2010 in Schorndorff. The Honorary speech will be held by the Director of the Hamburg Foundation, Martina Bäurle.

**MARÍA ISABEL GÁMEZ**, El Salvador  
Peace Prize "Sievershäuser Ermutigung" 2010.

The award ceremony will take place on 12 December 2010 at 4pm in the peace centre "Antrikriegshaus" in Sievershausen. The honorary speech will be held by Journalist Dr. Johannes from Dohnanyi.

**TAMARA CHIKUNOVA**, Usbekistan  
National Order of the French Legion of Honour

The award ceremony took place at the Department for Foreign Affairs in Paris on 10 May 2010.



Photo: Tamara Chikunova

### FORMER GUESTS

**Jahangir Akash** from Bangladesh, journalist and former guest of the Hamburg Foundation until April 2010, is now living with his family in Graz.

The International House of Authors in Graz awarded the journalist a one year continuation grant in May 2010.



Photo: Jahangir Akash

### IMPRINT

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Hamburger Stiftung für politisch Verfolgte  
(Hamburg Foundation for the Politically Persecuted)  
Osterbekstr. 96, 22083 Hamburg, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)40 42863 5757, Fax: +49 (0)40 42863 5756  
kontakt@hamburger-stiftung.de  
www.Hamburger-Stiftung.de