

Scientology and its Mejora Foundation present the 9th Annual Religious Freedom Awards

Scientology was praised by numerous jurists and human rights defenders. Education and sensitivity along with direct action, the keynotes of these 2022 awards.

MADRID, MADRID, SPAIN, October 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Foundation for the Improvement of Life, Culture and Society, having consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2019, and founded by the Church of [Scientology](#) in 2015, presented this pioneering award for [Religious Freedom](#) and Conscience on Friday 23 September, at an event that also celebrated the 42nd anniversary of Scientology in Spain.



All awardees and attendants of the Religious Freedom Awards 2022 at Church of Scientology of Spain

The ceremony was held in the chapel of the church (inaugurated in 2004 and recognised as a religious entity since 2007) and included a speech by Professor Mercedes Murillo, Director of Religious Freedom at the Ministry of the President, who said:

“

I would like to congratulate this year's winners, who have more than enough merit for such an award”

*Mercedes Murillo, Director
Religious Freedom, Spain
Prime Minister's Office*

"Once again this year, the Foundation for the Improvement of Life, Culture and Society presents its Religious Freedom Awards, now in its ninth year. I would like to congratulate this year's winners, who have more than enough merit for such an award. La Merced Migraciones, an institution that has been committed for years to people, first and

foremost, to the exercise of their freedom and to society as a whole, promoting better knowledge and attention to diversity and seeking the best possible coexistence. Ana María Vega,

congratulations on this well-deserved recognition for an impeccable career of study, research and defence of freedom of conscience and religion that has undoubtedly transcended the academic sphere. And ... Ana Leturia, congratulations on the award which recognises the magnificent work you have been doing, as well as your commitment to advancing the exercise of rights, particularly in such an important area for society as a whole as education".

To begin the ceremony, and after reviewing how Spain went from being a confessional state to a non-confessional one, Isabel Ayuso (Secretary General of the Fundación Mejora) recalled that there is still work to be done around the world: "In Russia, Jehovah's Witnesses are persecuted and condemned every day for meeting; in Tibet, Buddhists are persecuted; in many parts of the world, Christians are severely persecuted. In other words, freedom of religion is a goal that we have not yet reached.

That is why, Ayuso continues, "it is so important that it is always in our activities, we should always defend it every day... because it is so essential to the human being, religion is so, so important, that it becomes a target for anyone who wants to enslave people".

After a few words of reflection, Isabel Ayuso gave the floor to the president of the Foundation, who is also the president of the European Office of the Church of Scientology of Spain, Ivan Arjona, who thanked all the volunteers and sponsors of the Foundation for their constant support, while also congratulating the attendees on the 42nd anniversary of the establishment of the first Church of Scientology in Spain.

As a prelude to the awards, Arjona introduced Jetmira Cremonesi, currently responsible in Europe for representing the life and image of L. [Ron Hubbard](#), founder of Scientology, as a philosopher, writer, founder, and even as a person.



Fundacion La Merced Migraciones - Religious Freedom Awards 2022



Prof. Dr. Ana Leturia - Religious Freedom Awards 2022

Cremonesi told the overflowing chapel, that "it was in 1953 that L. Ron Hubbard toured the European continent presenting Scientology to religious and academic communities in France, Germany and Spain" ... and when he visited "Catalonia, Seville and surrounding cities" explaining in an open letter to Scientologists on June 18, 1953 from his room in the Hotel Miramar in Sitges that " After a fast and violent passage across most of the countries of Europe, we are catching our breath in Spain. We will be here for quite a while". Hubbard related that he came " on a motorcycle, we crossed Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, France and part of Spain... I came down to Spain for a rest [...] Living is better here than in many other places and it is certainly beautiful enough to encourage anybody."

The first to receive the award, presented in the form of a Tizona sword, was the Fundación La Merced Migraciones. "Among other beautiful things, it has above all, the people who

work there" began Isabel Cano, Professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the University of Alcalá de Henares, highlighting that these award winners "have courses to prevent Islamophobia and other phobias that sadly, there are more and more of concerning religion".

La Merced Migraciones Foundation, said Ermes Liriano, on behalf of its director Luis Callejas:

"We humbly thank you for this significant award, which I receive on behalf of Luis Callejas, director of the Foundation... Our organisation is committed to the promotion of human rights. In particular, we strive for the defence of religious freedom. The prevention of discrimination on religious grounds and the visibility of the rich religious diversity that exists in Spanish society ... in La Merced we dream of a more open, more welcoming and intercultural Spanish society, in which we do not add more obstacles to people who have already lived through, for the most part, a difficult and traumatic migratory process. Many of the young people we welcome profess belief in majority or minority religions, and we believe it is essential that their identity, culture



Prof. Dr. Ana Vega - Religious Freedom Awards 2022



Tizona swords - Religious Freedom Awards 2022

and religious beliefs are not undermined in their integration process... Prejudice towards certain religious communities and their members continues to exist... The essence of democracy lies in caring for its minorities. Religious freedom is not a second-class right that is only guaranteed to please small marginal groups. The defence of freedom of belief, conscience and conviction is a declaration of a society's intentions. Through it we recognise that every human being is in search of, that he or she has a longing for a transcendence, and that this intimate and at the same time communitarian path is not only legitimate but enriches the deepest sense of the existence of the human race and its call to harmony with all beings in the world. Thank you very much. "

The next laureate is Ana Leturia Navaroa, professor of State Ecclesiastical Law at the University of the Basque Country. Leturia holds a degree in Law, a Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research Proficiency. She obtained her PhD from the UPV/EHU with the qualification of Excellent Cum Laude and Extraordinary Prize. She obtained the Diploma of Excellence in the Teaching Programme in 2016, was Secretary of the Department and Vice-Dean in the Faculty of Law, and is a member of several Committees, as well as Course Coordinator for the Bachelor's Law Degree. She also coordinates the LEGEAK-LEYES collection of translations of legal texts into Basque. She collaborates in University Debate activities and with the Clínica Jurídica por la Justicia Social (Legal Clinic for Social Justice). Her main lines of research are: (1) Freedom of conscience law, religious pluralism and secularism (2) Right to education, freedom of teaching and education in values (3) Participation and freedom of conscience (4) Public management of cultural diversity, minorities and intercultural dialogue.

Professor Leturia said in her acceptance speech:

"Good afternoon to all of you. Good afternoon to all of you. Thank you very much for this warm welcome. And for your words, Ivan. Also Isabel. The welcome has been magnificent as well as the atmosphere here. The truth is that, although we do not form or I do not form part of this church, the truth is that I have felt well received, welcomed (...) The sword has many symbolisms. I hope to keep the best of them. We have many struggles and battles pending (...) I am advancing the idea that, with the strength of this sword, at least in a figurative sense, we can fight all the battles we have on a daily basis and in different areas of our society. (...) I came into contact with this world of the study of religious freedom, because in 1994 ... when I began to work at the University of the Basque Country ... I began to work in the field of State ecclesiastical law (...) Through this discipline, which is responsible for the study of freedom of conscience and freedom of religion ... it provides jurists with a special perspective, since we acquire that vision of asking ourselves to what extent the law opens up channels to respect or how it promotes, protects or even promotes the exercise of the fundamental right to freedom of conscience and religion. I believe that in this year 2022, it is important for public universities to recognise the existence of professionals who specifically dedicate their work to the study of this area and who, in a non-denominational and secular manner, understanding secularism, in the sense of positive secularism as we understand it in Spain, unlike other countries that give it a different meaning. Well, I think it is interesting that public universities continue to support people who study in this field so that we have the opportunity to study the field of religion, the religious fact, freedom of

conscience from this perspective and we can project it in the syllabuses (...) The syllabuses have not gone in this direction and the truth is that we have an ongoing struggle to continue to be able to project this (...) Now with the inspiration of this replica of the Tizona, I hope to have the tenacity and good work to continue in this activity (...) Among other things, with the inspiration of this replica of the Tizona, I hope to have the tenacity and good work to continue in this activity (...). (...) Among other struggles we have pending, I believe one is to become aware of the importance of democratic models. We are living in difficult times... We are witnessing authoritarianism, dogmatic and exclusionary positions that are closing off these kinds of possibilities and really pose a risk to democracy and the fundamental rights linked to it, including freedom of conscience and religion (...) I hope to continue to have the health and opportunities in the years to come to continue working along these lines and also to have the necessary support. "

The final award of the evening was presented by Professor Zoila Combalía, 2021 laureate. Professor Ana María Vega Gutiérrez is Professor of Law at the University of La Rioja. She holds a PhD in law and a degree in canon law from the University of Navarra. She is a university specialist in bioethics from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Valladolid. Director of the UNESCO Chair in democratic citizenship and cultural freedom. She is the representative of the Women's Education Board, and for years she has directed international summer courses on human rights organised at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva.

Professor Vega said:

"The truth is that I have been preceded by ... two award winners who I would say perfectly complement my way of understanding the defence of the right to religious freedom ... I can say with enormous pride that I have dedicated my career, my professional life, to the study and defence of the right to religious freedom. But it is also true that this defence has been very much conditioned by my understanding of the university and also by my way of working with magnificent colleagues in the UNESCO Chair that I direct, which is entitled Cultural Freedom and Democratic Citizenship (...)(...) These interconnections between religious freedom and cultural rights open up new and necessary horizons in a globalised world that also highlight some of the weaknesses of the liberal State, built from Western traditions that are sometimes not easily accommodated in other parts of the world or that, as we know, pose serious problems in our increasingly diverse societies. (...) Today, religious freedom is claimed not only to protect beliefs, but mainly belongings. (...) The right to be different, which calls for much more flexible and adaptable legislation, is often ignored. (...) We must insist on diversity as an asset for democracy, because without pluralism, as we know, democracy is not possible. (...) Once again it must be said loud and clear that terrorism ... is not because of religion, even if terrorists use it, though because of misinterpretations of sacred texts, coupled with policies of hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression and arrogance. These are some of the personal concerns that inspire and nourish my work on a daily basis, so can you understand the value of this award(?) for me? It is a way for me to see my personal aspirations about the university and the legal profession confirmed and to see my efforts amply rewarded. For this reason, this distinction is also a grateful

acknowledgement to all those who have contributed to enriching and consolidating the knowledge, attitudes and values I have acquired throughout my life. To all of them, those who are especially present, thank you very much. "

Present at the awards ceremony were people from public administrations, professors, the Ambassador of Armenia, the deacon of the Orthodox Church of Getafe, the president of the Church of the Ministerial God of Jesus Christ International, as well as Ms. Inés Mazarrasa, director of the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation, attached to the Ministry of the President.

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