

Press Release

11 July 2023

Konrad Wolf Prize 2023 goes to Julian Assange

The Akademie der Künste is to award the Konrad Wolf Prize 2023 to the journalist, author and publisher Julian Assange. The prize, endowed with 5,000 euros, is named after the film director and long-standing President of the East German Akademie der Künste. This year's jury consisted of Thomas Heise and Nele Hertling, both of whom are members of the Senate of the Akademie der Künste, as well as the screenplay author Thomas Wendrich.

From the jury statement:

“Julian Assange’s work and positions have focused our attention on illegal state actions, injustices, murders and war crimes – things that were meant to remain concealed and obscured from the public view, from the citizens – from us. (...). Assange is a worthy laureate, who with his Wikileaks project has exposed government activity, wartime lies, war crimes and cover-ups. His work embodies journalistic awareness-building at its best, and aims to change the world by democratic means - something that is direly needed. (...)”

For the last four years, Julian Assange has been incarcerated in the Belmarsh high-security prison in London. There he is subject to treatment that former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture (2016–2022) Nils Melzer recognizes and has documented in detail as torture. The United States is calling for his extradition, with the intent to prosecute him for espionage in the U.S. If convicted, he faces a prison term of 175 years. His appeal against the court-approved extradition to the United States has been rejected. The Akademie der Künste has in recent years repeatedly called for the German government and political leaders in Europe to secure Julian Assange’s release. Julian Assange is being made an example of in order to intimidate and weaken the fourth estate. Journalists, publicists and whistleblowers must be protected, as they perform an essential service to society.

The award ceremony for the Konrad Wolf Prize will take place at the Akademie der Künste on Friday, **20 October 2023**. Further information is to follow. Laureates in previous years are the Mauretanian-Malian filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako, the director and actor Alexander Lang and the documentary filmmaker Heidi Specogna.

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