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## UN refugee chief honoured with prestigious rights award



High Commissioner António Guterres receives the Gulbenkian International Award in Lisbon, Portugal.

22 July 2009 – António Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**), has been awarded this year's Calouste Gulbenkian International Prize for his efforts to promote human rights and inter-cultural dialogue.

The Prize, created in 2007, is awarded to individuals or institutions whose thoughts or actions have decisively contributed to understanding, defending or fostering universal human values.

The €100,000 prize, **presented** at a ceremony in Lisbon, Portugal, earlier this week, will be shared by Mr. Guterres and the co-winner, the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), which is a non-governmental organization (NGO) bringing Palestinian and Israeli researchers together to further mutual co-existence and peacebuilding.

This year's recipients of the award – created two years ago and named after Calouste Gulbenkian, the Armenian Turk who was a pioneer in the oil industry, an art collector, diplomat and philanthropist – were selected by a six-member panel of judges, led by former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio.

The High Commissioner dedicated half of the prize to humanitarian aid workers who have lost their lives during the course of helping others around the world.

In the past six months, three UNHCR staff members have been killed in Pakistan, while Natalia Estemirova, murdered last week in Russia, worked with UNHCR through the NGO Memorial.

The award comes as "a great encouragement at such a difficult time," Mr. Guterres said.

This is the second honour for UNHCR in two weeks, with the agency receiving the Francisco de Vitoria medal at a ceremony last week, bestowed by the municipality of Vitoria-Gasteiz, in northern Spain, and the University of the Basque Country for exceptional commitment to human rights and international understanding.

UNHCR is the second winner of the annual award, with the first being the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the UN.

The prize is named after the 16th century Spanish Roman Catholic philosopher, theologian and jurist, who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of international law.