

## “I am honored to represent thousands of human rights activists worldwide.”

### Statement on Re-election as President of the International Council by the Sections of the ISHR for the period 2016–2020

It is an honor for me to continue to publicly represent many thousands of volunteer human rights activists who have joined together in our national sections on all continents. Is there anything nobler than being able to speak for people who – often through great sacrifice and danger – have made the well-being of others their life issue?

Just now I was allowed to speak at the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Heilbronn about “Human Rights in One World.” Not long ago I spoke before 28,000 Ahmadiyya Muslims in Karlsruhe about the same topic. Before the Brazilian Supreme Court I was allowed to present why freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion are indispensable for a modern democracy. In Georgia, I recently discussed with the Prime Minister why human rights promote a country's development. I could not imagine a better task than my position at the ISHR, even if the occasion for it, the mass violation of human rights worldwide, is very sad.

The name “human rights” is ingenious since one can derive the most important characteristics of human rights from it.

Human rights are *universal*. They apply to all “people.”

Human rights are *individual*, since there are only “human beings” in the sense that they each exist as an individual “human being.”

Human rights are also *social* since there is never only one person but always “people” and rights that apply to everyone concurrently.

Human rights are *egalitarian* because they are derived from people who are the same and not from something that distinguishes people from each other or is bestowed upon people.

Human rights are *prior to the state* because being human precedes everything else.

Human rights are *enforceable*. They are therefore not only declarative statements, appeals, or demands. They are simply “rights.”

Human rights are *indivisible* because human beings themselves are indivisible and individual people are at the center, not a system or an ideology.

Human rights are *inviolable* because individual people remain human beings even in the worst situations or as a criminal.

*Thomas Schirrmacher*