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Lantos Foundation Announces Inaugural Winner of the Lantos Human Rights Prize

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be the first recipient of the Foundation's human rights award

Washington, D.C. August 24, 2009 – The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice today announced that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will receive the first annual Lantos Human Rights Prize. The prize will be awarded at a ceremony on October 6, 2009, at the United States Capitol Visitor Center.

The Lantos Foundation has established the Lantos Human Rights Prize, in the tradition of renowned prizes such as the Nobel Peace Prize or the Goldman Environmental Prize, to honor and bring attention to the often unsung heroes of the human rights movement. It will be awarded on an annual basis to the individual or organization that best exemplifies the Foundation's mission, namely to be a vital voice standing up for the values of decency, dignity, freedom, and justice in every corner of the world. The prize also serves to commemorate Congressman Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor ever elected to the U.S. Congress and a prominent advocate for human rights during his nearly three decades as a U.S. Representative.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and temporal leader of six million Tibetans, is one of the most highly honored peacemakers of our time. Previously the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, the United States Congressional Gold Medal and dozens of other awards, the Dalai Lama is well-known and respected for his teachings on peace and interfaith harmony. He was born in 1935 and was recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama when he was two years old. He was enthroned as the Dalai Lama in 1940, ten years before the People's Liberation Army of China invaded Tibet. In 1959, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet and has lived in exile in Northern India since that time. He has waged a lifelong peaceful struggle for social justice – for Tibetans and others around the world – and under his leadership the Tibetans have formed a democratically elected government-in-exile. Even though the Dalai Lama has made conciliatory gestures towards the Chinese government, China maintains an iron-fisted rule over Tibet.

His Holiness is the only Dalai Lama to travel to the West, and his first visit to the U.S. Congress came at the invitation of Congressman Tom Lantos. The two leaders shared a deep and abiding commitment to the values of social justice, human dignity and freedom, and they formed a friendship at their initial meeting that lasted until the end of Congressman Lantos' life.

“The Dalai Lama is a unique leader who in a gentle, gracious, yet undeniably powerful way, advocates for the rights of all humanity. He symbolizes the best that is in all of us and we are honored to present the inaugural Tom Lantos Human Rights Prize to this noble individual.” said Annette Lantos, wife of the late Congressman Lantos and Chairman of the Lantos Foundation.

About the Lantos Foundation

The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice was founded to further the work of Congressman Tom Lantos, distinguished Chair of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Co-Founder of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, and the only survivor of the Holocaust to be elected to the U.S. Congress. Chairman Lantos worked tirelessly to advance the role of human rights and justice in American foreign policy. The Foundation's three-part mission is to recognize, support, and honor the heroes of the human rights movement, to educate and mentor a new generation of young leaders, and to partner with and provide assistance to other human rights organizations working in the trenches.

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