

Press Release
IBN RUSHD
Fund for Freedom of Thought

This year's IBN RUSHD PRIZE *for Freedom of Thought*
will be awarded to the Egyptian thinker and philosopher

Mahmoud Amin El Alem

on December 8th, 2001 in the Literaturhaus Fasanenstraße in Berlin. He is honoured for his struggle for freedom and democracy, for his critical thinking and his political commitment, for his writings and analyses, his engagement in support of open dialogue and services to a culture of rational dispute and enlightenment.

Literary criticism, political studies, analyses that show his awareness of contemporary issues as well as writings on the necessity of an 'Arab Enlightenment' appealing for civil rights of each human being can be counted among the many important works that El Alem published in the course of his life.

Furthermore, the now 79 years old El Alem rendered outstanding services to the Arab world as a journalist, publicist and editor. Numerous papers, articles and lectures that appeared in Egyptian, Arab or Western Journals outline an Arab vision of the future.

The IBN RUSHD *Fund for Freedom of Thought* has set out to encourage freedom, democracy and creativity in the Arab world. The philosopher Ibn Rushd, also known as *Averroes* (1126-1198) and famous for his careful mediation between the Western and the Arab world, lent his name to the fund.

Two years ago, the IBN RUSHD PRIZE was awarded to the TV Satellite Channel from Qatar *Al-Jazeera*; last year, the Palestinian feminist Issam Abdulhadi was given the award.

To choose this year's award-winner, an independent jury consisting was formed:

- **Bourhane Ghalione**, Syrian professor of social and political sciences
- **Farida an-Naqqash**, Egyptian publicist, journalist and literary critic
- **Aziz Azmeh**, author and expert on Islamic history from Syria

Mahmoud Amin El Alem

His Vita:

- Mahmoud Amin El Alim was born on February 18th, 1922 in ad-Darb al-Ahmar in Cairo.
- He studied philosophy at King Fuad I. University in Cairo (1954).
- Due to his political convictions, he was suspended from his work as assistant teacher at the university in 1954. For the same reasons he was barred from getting a doctorate.
- 1959 he was arrested several of times for his political engagement in the communist party. From 1959 to 1964 he was held as a political prisoner in various prisons and labour camps, where he was forced to work in quarries and in the desert in most difficult conditions.
- Under president Sadat he was again imprisoned with fellow communists and accused of having committed treason against his fatherland. At the end of the trial, however, it

was Sadat who was disgraced and El Amin was acquitted. He was prohibited from leaving the country for another year. He then went to Oxford and Paris and pursued an academic career. It was not before Sadat's death in 1984 the he came back to Egypt.

- In later years, he received many honours. 1998 he was awarded the highest Egyptian award, *Ga'izat ad-dawla at-taqdiriyya*.

He worked as:

- Assistant at the University of Cairo, Dept. Of Philosophy
- Chief director at the State Institute for Theatre, Music and Folklore
- Chief director at the State Media-Institute *Akhbar al-yawm* (1968)
- Senior Associate Member at St. Anthony's College – Oxford University
- University teacher (Maitre Assistant) at the University Paris VIII (1974-1985) and at the Ecole Normale de Paris
- Editor of several newspapers and magazines, for example *Ros al-Yousuf*, *ar-Risala al-gadida*, *Magallat al-musawwir*.

He is:

- Member of the Egyptian Writers' Union
- Member of the Egyptian Journalists' Union
- Consultant of the Philosophy Board of the High Cultural Council of Egypt

Currently he works also as:

- Editor of *Qadaya fikriyya*., an irregularly published magazine with important contributions to the encouragement of freedom, democracy and creativity.

His most important publications:

- *Egyptian culture*, ed. by M. A. Alem and Abd al-Azim Anis, Dar al-fikr al-arabi, 1955 Beirut
- *Culture and Revolution*, Dar al-adab, Beirut 1970.
- *Searching for Europe*, Al-Mu'assasa al-arabiyya li 'l-dirasat, Beirut 1975.
- *Consciousness and False Consciousness in the Arabs' Way of Thought Today*, Dar ath-thaqafa al-gadida, Cairo 1988.
- *Problematic Concepts and Issues*, Dar ath-thaqafa al-gadida, Cairo 1989.
- *Arab Thought Between Privacy and Globalization*, Dar al-mustaqbal al-arabi, STADT 1996
- *From Criticizing the Present to Creating the Future: A Contribution towards building up a New Arab Renaissance*, al-Mustaqbal al-arabi, STADT 2000
- several other books, studies, articles and lectures
- 2 collections of poems

IBN RUSHD Fund for Freedom of Thought:

IBN RUSHD Fund for Freedom of Thought:

- IBN RUSHD is an independent organization registered in Germany. It has set out to support freedom of speech, democracy and creativity in the Arab world.
- Der Wirkungskreis richtet sich auf die arabischen Länder.
- The fund finances its work by donations and a broad membership exclusively. The founders and members are mainly of Arab origin from Arab countries and the diaspora.
- The sphere of activity, however, is in the Arab countries.
- The fund will remain independent and refuses any influence.