

TORSTEN WIESEL

(Physiology or Medicine, 1981)

Dr. Torsten Wiesel is a Swedish-born neurobiologist, who has established and led several organizations dedicated to protecting human rights and strengthening international co-operation. In 1993, Wiesel co-founded the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (Network) to inform national academies of colleagues around the world suffering serious human rights abuses and to equip academies with the tools to respond effectively. National academy involvement with human rights has since increased substantially, and many academies now maintain formal structures that promote human rights awareness and assist colleagues under threat.

As an outgrowth of Wiesel's chairmanship of the Network, he co-founded the not-for-profit Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization (IPSO), together with Dr. Menahem Yaari, former President of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, former President of Al-Quds University. IPSO worked to promote dialogue and interaction among Israeli and Palestinian scholars and funded numerous high-quality joint scientific research proposals involving members of the two communities.

From 1994-2004 Wiesel served as Chair of the Committee on Human Rights (CHR) of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Under his leadership, the CHR protested rights abuses in hundreds of cases worldwide. Throughout his human rights work, Wiesel has emphasized the importance of confronting violations of internationally protected rights wherever they occur—at home or abroad.

“Sometimes in life you have to do what you think is right in order to correct a situation, and you do it because it is the right thing to do and you have the means available to try and help resolve it.”

