



**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck  
at the award ceremony for the International Peace of  
Westphalia Prize to King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the  
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
in Münster  
on 8 October 2016**

Before I turn my attention to our prizewinner, I would like to ask him, his esteemed wife and all of us to pause for a moment to consider that we are presenting a peace prize while war is raging. We have heard about Münster and about the fact that this city looked very like Hamburg, Dresden and Cologne in the wake of the Second World War. At this moment we think of Aleppo, where right now people are dying – just as they did here in centuries gone by and the recent past. We realise this and yet we nonetheless award prizes with the aim of encouraging people to fight for peace amid the ongoing cries of war, continued killing, a persistent lack of understanding and the enduring tendency of some to place power above the law.

We therefore celebrate this day with a combination of sadness and great joy that there are still people who do not allow themselves to become discouraged. That is why we now want to turn to you, Your Majesty.

“Civilisation is built on mutual respect. Human settlement occurs where there is respect among peoples, where they have a future.” You will recall these words, Your Majesty. You used them in your address to the European Parliament in March of last year. Two sentences that put in a nutshell the greatness and tragedy of the Middle East.

King Abdullah II of Jordan, who is today being awarded the Peace of Westphalia Prize, is the ruler of a young country with a long – a very long – history. Jordan is not only breathtakingly beautiful, it was also home to some of mankind’s earliest culture and civilisation. It is a small country, with scant resources, yet rich in testimony to different peoples and religions. And it lies at the heart of a culturally very diverse region.

Yet even by focusing on the geographical location, we can see that at the same time Jordan is affected by the most urgent problems of our times – war, terrorism and displacement. In a region that was once home to the first high cultures, where the first cities and states were born, where world trade began and where the first written testimonies to our civilisation originated – that is exactly where our present-day civilisation is particularly threatened by barbarity.

The devastation of the war in Syria and in northern Iraq can be felt across the Middle East. However, for Jordan, the effects of these wars have become an existential challenge. We cannot imagine what that is like here in Germany. It is hard to understand what people are complaining about here when compared to what we see in Jordan.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the end of last year, there were nearly five million Syrian refugees. Some 656,000 of these live in Jordan alone, many of them housed in refugee camps along your border with Syria, camps that have grown into the size of cities. Still more have been taken in by the villages, municipalities and large towns in your country. And there not everywhere looks like it does here in Münster. Caring for these people uses up a sizeable portion of your state budget.

Your Majesty, I wish more people in Germany and in Europe could get beyond the mere numbers and gain the kinds of impressions that Daniela Schadt and I did during our visit to the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan last year. I will never forget what I witnessed in Jordan. Anyone who has seen these things will sense the immensity of what your people and you, Your Majesty, are doing for these refugees. We ought to be bowing our heads in respect.

A collective spirit has taken hold in the municipalities. School-age children are taught in two shifts – one in the morning, one in the afternoon. Jordan has made a commitment to ensure that, as of this school year, every Syrian refugee child will attend classes. This means more than 230,000 additional pupils in only two years. That is almost as many pupils as Jordan currently has. Who in this room can imagine what it would be like if, in Germany for example, the number of pupils would increase at such an incredible rate? I think very few people can envisage it. I certainly can't.

In this and in earlier crises, Jordan went to the limit to help. The country has been opened up for others, and it has been generous in an exemplary way.

For this, Your Majesty, I want to extend my most heartfelt thanks today. You and your fellow citizens are setting the gold standard for humanity and generosity.

Many Syrian refugees want to stay close to home, if at all possible. Despite all of the readiness to help, Jordan will not be able to

cope with the consequences this war is having on the country without outside support. The helper, too, will require help, and on this the international community agrees. Help not only in tackling the most pressing problems, but also in meeting the long-term challenges.

Displacement and terrorism have become a scourge for us all. However, the fight against radical Islamism is being first and foremost carried out in Muslim countries. These nations must defend not only their statehood, but also the faith of their largest population groups. That is what you, Your Majesty, said in your address to the European Parliament.

Again and again, you stand up in public against violence and against radicalisation, as you did when you spoke out against the terrorists who last year assassinated staff members of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and at a Jewish supermarket. You immediately travelled to Paris and marched against the nihilism espoused by the perpetrators.

Your word carries great weight, Your Majesty. Not only in Europe and in the United States. It is heard by Muslims around the world. You have often used your authority for mediation, especially in the Middle East conflict. Under your father, King Hussein, as well as under your leadership, Your Majesty, Jordan has defended Israel's right to exist, as well as worked to promote a two-state solution, also in difficult times. We deeply respect your commitment.

We are here to award King Abdullah II, a monarch and career army officer, the Peace of Westphalia Prize. This is truly a first. Some may ask why it is being done. But if you recall what the Peace of Westphalia was and who concluded its treaties, then you will see that today's laureate could hardly be more worthy of this Prize. For we are honouring a statesman who, with great skill, has maintained peace in his country even under the most adverse conditions. The region, and even the international community, have a great deal to thank Jordan and you, Your Majesty, for.

The domestic tools of an enlightened monarch include steps to increase participation by citizens. Moving a country into the modern age is a task that spans generations. It takes time for a society to free itself of outdated behaviour. Prudent reforms are a tedious process. New steps are required again and again. Your Majesty, we want to do everything we can to assist your, that is, the Jordanian, reform process.

In your country, Muslims and Christians live side by side, also because you yourself, Your Majesty, believe that Islam dictates such peaceful coexistence. You have repeatedly pointed out what Muslim children are taught from their earliest days: that they must respect, and care for, their neighbours. And you quote the words of the Prophet

Muhammad: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself." End of quote. We know this from our Holy Scriptures of the Christians and Jews. This is the foundation of our civilisation, it is the golden rule of loving our neighbour as ourselves – a thing that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share.

Peace between religions, as well as tolerance and federalism, were the key elements of the Peace of Westphalia, which was concluded more than three hundred years ago. The Middle East today needs a Peace of Westphalia. That is what our Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said a few weeks ago.

If we take this to mean creation of the national and international prerequisites for religious tolerance and coexistence, then we should do everything within our power to promote the conclusion of such a peace treaty. We have already been told by you, Your Majesty, what this will require: All of us will need to fight to win people's hearts and minds. And I quote: "The fight is not between peoples, communities or religions; it is between moderates of all faiths against extremists in all religions." For this fight the Middle East needs people like yourself, Your Majesty, today's laureate, King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Thank you very much, and many congratulations!