



CODE '11 | Budapest Conference on Democracy and Human Rights

Organized by the International Centre for Democratic Transition and the Tom Lantos Institute

Budapest, June 28, 2011

The Tom Lantos Institute

The Tom Lantos Institute (TLI) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, registered in Hungary. It was established in May 2011 to honor the legacy of Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor to have ever served in the US Congress. Having escaped a forced labor camp, he had survived due to the help of Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who used his official status and visa-issuing powers to save thousands of Hungarian Jews. The tragic experiences of his youth made Congressman Lantos an eloquent and ardent champion for the fundamental rights of all people and human rights became the hallmark of his nearly three decades of service in Congress. He was the founding co-chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, which worked to fight against discrimination and persecution of religious, cultural, and ethnic minorities. In 2008, House of Representatives established the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in his memory.

Congressman Lantos was elected to Congress fourteen times, and throughout his long and distinguished career, he worked tirelessly to enact legislation and bring public attention to important issues such as anti-Semitism, violence against women, killings in Darfur and the Congo, the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic, abuses against Tibetans, the plight of the Kurds, the situation in Burma, and the difficulties facing indigenous people all over the globe. TLI's mission is to carry on with the legacy of Tom Lantos, namely to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to remain ever vigilant in guarding democracy and civilization.

The Institute is primarily a research institution and think-tank organization with a particular focus on human rights and minority rights in Central-Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Furthermore, the Institute carries out projects in a wider geographical area as needs arise in order to advance democratization processes and strengthen human rights. TLI has a special focus on youth and minority issues, and it maintains close cooperation with local communities in the implementation of programs and projects. Among these programs, the Institute will have an international scholarship program and will carry out research projects on the subject of human rights. Tom Lantos was a great fighter for freedom and human rights; the Tom Lantos Institute will continue his fight to help those who suffer from discrimination, social marginalization, tyranny, and violence. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described the late Congressman as "the embodiment of what it meant to have one's freedom denied and then to find it and to insist that America stand for spreading freedom and prosperity to others." The goal of this Institute, therefore, will be to strive for freedom and prosperity all over the world.

