

Scientists worldwide honoured for courage in the ecological crisis

Vienna Science Award honors six extraordinary individuals from around the world fighting for justice in the face of ecological and climate collapse.

Vienna, October 13, 2026. Sending a strong signal for courage in action against ecological collapse, the *Courageous Scientists Award* was presented for the second time on October 13 during a celebratory gala at Vienna's Porgy & Bess Jazz Club. Initiated by the Austrian architectural historian Dr. Norbert Mayr, the award—endowed with €5,000 per laureate—honors exceptionally courageous scientists and activists from around the globe.

Among the six honorees are Nigerian environmentalist and Right Livelihood Award laureate **Dr.h.c. Nnimmo Bassey**, as well as **Berta Cáceres** from Honduras, who was assassinated in 2016 due to her resistance.

Courage begins where knowledge turns into action

"The award was created out of the conviction that, in light of ecological collapse, courageous and unconditional action for nature and the environment must be supported and made visible," says founder Dr. Norbert Mayr. "People around the world defy ruthless environmental destruction, even under the most adverse conditions. Their commitment, endurance, and courage make them indispensable role models."

Dr. Michael Staudinger, jury member and former Director of the ZAMG (now GeoSphere Austria), adds: "Connecting scientific findings with local or indigenous knowledge was, alongside a considerable amount of courage decisive for selecting the laureates. Their stories show that persistent action and strong local as well as international connections can truly make a major difference."

About the Laureates

- **NIGERIA – Dr.h.c. Nnimmo Bassey (Honorary Award for Lifetime Achievement):** Honored for decades of dedication against the ecological and human rights consequences of oil extraction in the Niger Delta. (Right Livelihood Award Laureate 2010).
- **HONDURAS – Berta Cáceres (Honorary Award for Lifetime Achievement):** Honored for her selfless resistance against the Agua Zarca dam project to protect the indigenous Lenca people. Cáceres was shot dead in 2016. Investigations exposed a top-level plot by dam operating company DESA, leading to convictions of seven co-conspirators and, in 2022, the sentencing of its CEO as the mastermind.
- **AMAZON / BRAZIL – Ana Laide Soares Barbosa, M.Sc.:** Fights alongside the movement *Movimento Xingu Vivo para Sempre* against exploitative mega-projects threatening the rivers, forests, and indigenous territories of the Xingu region.

- **OKINAWA / JAPAN – Akino Miyagi:** The butterfly researcher raises awareness about the environmental impact of US military bases despite state persecution. In 2025, she was sentenced to a three-year suspended prison term for civil disobedience.
- **NEW CALEDONIA – Dr. Malik Oedin:** Oceania’s leading bat researcher is honored for his work protecting biological diversity and involving local communities through the organization *Gardiens Des Îles*.
- **ETHIOPIA – Seble Samuel, M.Sc.:** A community organizer and climate justice campaigner, she co-founded Lem Ketema (Amharic: “urban bloom” or “flourishing city”) to reclaim public space and traditional ecological practices and transform the right to the city across urban Ethiopia. As Head of Africa Campaigns and Advocacy at the global Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, she builds alternatives to the fossil economy alongside a mighty global movement.

Further information, press imagery, and quotes from the laureates can be found at:

<https://nx4720.your-storageshare.de/s/HBiYQqJ5kaj6ZPg>

About the Award

The *Courageous Scientists Award for Environmental and Climate Justice* has been awarded annually since 2025 and is funded by the Forum for Eco-Social Transformations (Vienna) under the leadership of Dr. Norbert Mayr. The award honors scientists and socially engaged individuals who, aware of ecological collapse, stand up for the protection of the climate and our shared environment—despite significant personal risks and political resistance.

For more information, visit <https://courageousscientistsaward.org/>.



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