

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**IN ABOLITION ANNIVERSARY YEAR, HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER RECEIVES WILBERFORCE AWARD**

*Gary Haugen, president and CEO of International Justice Mission, accepts honor for his organization's work rescuing slaves*



*Here, Gary Haugen visits a genocide memorial site in Rwanda, 10 years after he led the United Nations investigation into the genocide. It was this experience in 1994 that led him to found International Justice Mission.*

WASHINGTON, DC – January 22, 2007 – On Saturday, January 13, 2007, International Justice Mission President and CEO Gary Haugen was awarded the 2007 [Wilberforce Forum Award](#). Presented by Prison Fellowship and The Wilberforce Forum, the annual award recognizes an individual who has made a difference in the face of formidable societal problems and injustices.

In 1997, Haugen founded International Justice Mission, a human rights organization that takes on individual cases of human rights abuse around the world and uses investigative, legal and social work expertise to rescue and provide care for the victims, bring the perpetrators to account and seek structural prevention of future abuses. In Haugen's words, the organization has seen many "widows given back their rightful land, men who choose to rape or traffic children put in jail and entire families freed from slavery."

Haugen received a B.A. from Harvard University and a J.D. from the University of Chicago, where he was the Ford Foundation Scholar in International Law. In 1994, Haugen was working at the U.S. Department of Justice when he was put on loan to the United Nations to serve as the Officer in Charge of their genocide investigation in

Rwanda. Haugen directed an international team of lawyers, criminal prosecutors, law enforcement officers and forensics experts in the gathering of evidence against the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. It was after these experiences that Haugen felt compelled to found an organization dedicated to bringing immediate relief to victims of violence and oppression around the world and to pursuing prosecution of perpetrators who abused power to violate and suppress the weak.

Haugen founded IJM in 1997 in order to achieve these goals and to apply his legal background to the work of strengthening public justice systems on behalf of the poor.

At the awards presentation, Haugen issued a call to American Christians to celebrate this year's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade by not only honoring Wilberforce's life, but by striving to emulate Wilberforce through focused activism on the enormous issue of slavery that still exists today.

"William Wilberforce and a vibrant movement of Christian abolitionists didn't miss their opportunity in 1807. So what will it take for us not to miss our opportunity in 2007?" asked Haugen.

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Among the challenges issued for activists fighting slavery today, Haugen noted that establishing a platform of rule of law in countries around the world is the next critical step in providing relief and advancement for the poor. Haugen accepted the award on behalf of the staff of IJM.

### **About the Wilberforce Forum Award**

Since 1989, Prison Fellowship and The Wilberforce Forum have presented the award to over a dozen distinguished Christian leaders who exemplify the principles and the commitment of William Wilberforce, the great English statesman who waged a 40-year campaign to end the slave trade in Britain. According to the Wilberforce Forum Web site, the award is presented to "honor individuals who battle philosophies that demean humanity."

The first award recipient (posthumously) was **Benigno S. Aquino, Jr.**, the Philippine senator and a leading oppositionist to the autocratic rule of [Ferdinand Marcos](#). Aquino was an early mentor and inspiration for Haugen at Harvard before Aquino's assassination at the [Manila International Airport](#). Recent recipients include Hon. [Joseph R. Pitts](#) (2006), [Constantin Asavoaic](#) (2005); Dr. [Phillip E. Johnson](#) (2004) and the Hon. [Sam Brownback](#) (2003). A complete list can be found at: [Wilberforce Award Recipients](#). (<http://www.wilberforce.org/contentindex.asp?ID=188>).

### **About International Justice Mission**

International Justice Mission is a human rights organization that rescues victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression. A multi-national team of law enforcement professionals and a highly qualified legal staff conduct criminal investigations and collect evidence to rescue victims and bring perpetrators to justice. IJM was founded by Gary Haugen who was the Officer in Charge of the U.N. investigation into the Rwandan genocide.

### **About the Wilberforce Forum**

Named for Britain's great 18<sup>th</sup> century reformer, William Wilberforce, who fought for 20 years in the House of Commons to abolish the slave trade, the Wilberforce Forum offers experts on bioethics and life issues, character, education, family life, human rights, humanism, movies, moral self-deception, natural law, politics and public affairs, and religion, from their office based in Washington, D.C.

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