



Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

NEWS

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Award ceremony in Morocco

Royal award for Max Planck Director

Jean-Jacques Hublin, Director of the Human Evolution Department at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, was honored by King Mohammed VI of Morocco on 30th July 2017 as one of three winners of the Wissam Al Kfaa Al Fikria Medal. This highest Moroccan award in the field of culture and science, honors Hublin's research in the area of paleoanthropology and his latest findings on the origin of our species *Homo sapiens*.



Recently, Hublin and colleagues reported in the journal *Nature* on their discovery of the so far oldest fossils of our species. Based on these fossils and stone tools from Jebel Irhoud in Morocco, the researchers around Hublin were able to push back the origins of our species by one hundred thousand years. They showed that by about 300 thousand years ago important changes in

our biology and behaviour had taken place across most of Africa.

The Moroccan site of Jebel Irhoud has been well known since the 1960s for its human fossils and for its Middle Stone Age artefacts. New excavations by Hublin and his team from 2004 onwards led to the discovery of additional skeletal remains of *Homo sapiens*. The fossil remains from Jebel Irhoud comprise skulls, teeth, and long bones of at least five individuals.

After the ceremony King Mohammed VI expressed his determination to protect the site at Jebel Irhoud during a private meeting with the recipients of the award and organized an immediate audience with the Minister of Interior of Morocco to decide the measures to be taken to implement this protection and support the public outreach of Hublin's team research in Morocco.

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Further information:

- Throne Day: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_Day_\(Morocco\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_Day_(Morocco))
- Field research of the Department of Human Evolution in Jebel Irhoud in Morocco: <http://www.eva.mpg.de/evolution/field-projects/africa-and-the-origins-of-modern-humans.html>
- Press release "The first of our kind", 07 June 2017: <https://www.mpg.de/11322481/oldest-homo-sapiens-fossils-at-jebel-irhoud-morocco>

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