

Speech of MURAT ASLAN

I am speaking to you from a jail in a country, where the rule of law is suspended, moves far away from democratic values, dissidents are silenced, human rights defenders, journalists, people asking for peace, people who shout out that children should not die labeled as terrorists and jailed.

Imagine a country, where prisons become beaten tracks for human rights and freedom fighters, like an empire of fear plunged into darkness. Yes, it is true that the country has not taken lessons from Europe's unpleasant experiences during the early 20th century; therefore the country lives the same experience of becoming a totalitarian regime laboratory now.

However, it should not drive anyone to despair. We have never sunk into despair. As a matter of fact, the existence of our kids does not allow us to be hopeless. If there is someone in somewhere fighting for rights and freedom, and taking the plunge, then that means there is always some hope for the future. That's why we hopefully set fort and organized in the judiciary.

We founded The Association of Turkish Judges and Prosecutors (YARSAV) in 2006, because we believed that independent and impartial judiciary which safeguards the freedom is sine qua non in a modern and democratic constitutional state that is grounded in human rights.

We fight for judicial independence and impartiality, rule of law, and democracy. We were guided by values that aim at full independence, contemporary civilization based on equality, laicism, the rule of law, human rights and freedoms. We resist to all kinds of interruptions, which threatened these fundamental values. We struggled with defeating the rise of wall of fear where society was locked up.

Prejudgments, baseless allegations unfortunately become the false truth in our society.

We made no concessions of our values that we advocated under all kinds of threats and pressure. We did what supposed to be done, and this approach was appreciated by the international society. Then we became representatives of a worldwide respected Organization.

We did not leave our country's falling judiciary to one's fate. We left salvation markers to every corner for comeback. Today, we are having exiles, arrests in prisons, but it will not change the reality. The price that we are paying just raises our faith in the coming days that the rule of law and democracy will be internalized and raises our fighting spirit.

We will continue to show that there are always exclaimers against injustice and unlawfulness while many others, who were supposed to speak up, and resist, were sinked into silence under the pressure of empire of fair.

Increasing reflection of trauma stemmed from authoritarian mindset will make our inner voice get overflow, and our voice will disturb more those people, who caused this trauma.

We defend rule of law, human rights, and modern democratic values. This resistance would be the last stance for protecting our liberty and democracy.

We should never forget that history of humanity is full of such brave revolutionists, who pay the price for their belief, and this legacy will be carried by them.

I am proud of having this prize, (devoted to great intellectual and politician Vaclav Havel) on behalf of my colleagues and freedom fighters, who were suffered from dismissal, persecution, and prisoned. I hope the prize will bring significant contribution to our freedom fight.

In this occasion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thank to the members of the PACE, the selection panel, the International Association of Judges, (which always supported to our democracy and rule of law fights, and I am always proud of being member of it.), and other judges associations, the European Association Of Judges For Democracy And Freedom-(Medel), the Association of European Administrative Judges and Judges for Judges, and my colleagues, members of YARSAV.

Finally, I want to thank my dear wife Sevilay, and my sons (Burak Emre and Yigit Eren), who are the real heroes of democracy struggle of Turkey.

I salute you all, and hope to meet you in the peaceful bright future.

MURAT ARSLAN