



# Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

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For Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk

## Kerry Kennedy to Participate in Discussion With Laureate at The Prize Ceremony

At this year's Civil Courage Prize ceremony, Kerry Kennedy will engage in a dialogue with prize-winner Gonzalo Himiob Santomé.



Kerry Kennedy

Kennedy is a human rights activist, writer, and president of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights. She has authored two books and her articles have appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, and *The New York Times*.

She is the chair of the Amnesty International Leadership Council and has led human rights delegations into El Salvador, Gaza, Haiti, Kenya, Northern Ireland, and South Korea.

Kennedy gives lectures around the country, calling upon audiences to fight against human rights violations. She is deeply committed to equal justice, the protection of basic rights, and the preservation of the rule of law.

Ambassador Samatha Power, currently at the Harvard Kennedy School, nominated Himiob for the Prize. She will be unable to attend the ceremony, but will send a video address.

Power is a human rights advocate, academic, author and diplomat. In 2012, President Obama chose her to chair a newly formed Atrocities Prevention Board. The following year, she became U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. During her four years there, her focus included issues of human rights and democracy.

## 2019 Civil Courage Prize Winner Gonzalo Himiob Santomé Speaks Out About Government Abuses in Venezuela

On Monday, October 21st, the 2019 Civil Courage Prize will be awarded to Venezuelan Gonzalo Himiob Santomé.

Lawyer, university professor, author, poet, columnist, and human rights activist, Himiob is one of the founders and currently the National Director of the NGO Foro Penal



Gonzalo Himiob Santomé

(Penal Forum), a nationwide civil rights network of more than 100 criminal lawyers and over 5,000 human rights activists. Foro Penal provides pro-bono legal assistance to Venezuelans who are victims of arbitrary detention, and documents abuses that arise from these detentions.

For the past 15 years, Foro Penal has worked to ensure that detainees' legal rights are protected and enforced. They are advocates for thousands of peaceful protesters who are routinely beaten, held incommunicado and tortured. They have directly or indirectly assisted more than 10,000 people and helped family members find relatives who have been detained.

In a country where the justice system is an extension of President Nicolas Maduro's authoritarian

government and information is limited, Foro Penal's database has become the primary source of information about detentions for news organizations, governments,

foreign NGOs, and international human rights organizations.

Along with Alfredo Romero (the Executive Director of Foro Penal), Himiob is a founding partner of the Himiob, Romero & Associates

law firm. He holds two specialist degrees in Criminal Law and Criminology and has worked as an undergraduate and post-graduate professor, educating new generations of human rights defenders.

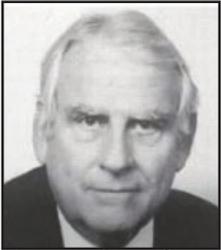
Himiob has been personally involved in the defense of hundreds of pro-bono cases at Foro Penal and has been recognized for his human rights work by many public and private organizations.

The situation in Venezuela has deteriorated. Once one of the richest countries in Latin America, under Maduro's rule its democratic, economic and humanitarian institutions have been dismantled, including the separation of powers, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a free press, fair elections, free speech, freedom to organize,

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## Letter From The Chairman

With a heavy heart. I write of the recent death of our long-time President, fellow trustee and friend, the distinguished Ambassador Edward Streater.



Ambassador Edward Streater

A career foreign service officer, whom I knew since his first overseas assignment in Lomé, Togo, he moved through increasingly important overseas posts including acting as immediate assistant to the Secretary of State, and ending in London.

As a generous colleague he offered us the wonderful advantage of giving advice that in our experience was always wise and true.

We offer all our sympathy to his wonderful wife Priscilla and his family.

### Recent News

The 2014 Civil Courage laureate, Nicola Gratteri, Italian magistrate and Special Prosecutor for Reggio Calabria, continues to work toward ending the mafia's ('Ndrangheta) dominance in Calabria. He also educates young people about how they can participate in this effort.

In December 2018, over 700 high school students from all over Italy attended the third edition of "5 Days of Music Against the Mafias." The innovative event included original music, lectures, discussions, and interactive experiences.

In the opening event, Gratteri spoke of the "mafia-political" relationship as "ancient," and how the Italian ruling class has nurtured the mafias. He pointed out the danger to young people of emulating "wrong habits" glorified in fiction

and movies. He spoke of his commitment, "If I stayed in Calabria to do my job, it means that I feel we can do it." And by freeing territories from the mafias, he warns that "when we take away pieces of the 'Ndrangheta, you must occupy those territories, you must engage in social work, otherwise our work will have been in vain."

Calabria has a history of prosecuting the mafia. In his 2018 book *The Good Mothers: The Story of the Three Women Who Took on the World's Most Powerful Mafia*, Alex Perry tells the true story of three mafia wives born into "the most deadly and obscenely wealthy" of the Italian mafias. The 'Ndrangheta has branches from America to Australia, controlling European cocaine and heroin supplies, engaging in extortion, illegal arms deals, weapons supply, and "stealing from Italian and European Union treasuries."

For Perry, the key to the 'Ndrangheta's power is omertà: "violence and silence." Dominated by men, 'Ndrangheta's reverence for tradition and history demands that members have absolute loyalty to The Family syndicate above all else. Women are property and violence against them is common; they are used to build and maintain Family alliances. After a mafia wife was murdered for turning state's evidence in 2009, a determined female prosecutor, Alessandra Cerreti, used the issue of violence against women to persuade two more mafia wives to testify in return for a safe way out of The Family.

#### *An Event At The New School*

On October 22nd, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm, the **Train Foundation** and **The New School** will host a panel with Civil Courage Prize recipient Gonzalo Himiob Santomé. The New School's website <https://events.newschooledu> will have further details.

## The Story of The Civil Courage Prize

Many years ago, John Train became concerned with the situation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian hero and author, whose works helped destroy the prestige of Stalinism. After being exiled, he had moved to rural Vermont, but was living in poverty. Train was able to obtain substantial private support for him, and accompanied him to London, where Prince Philip handed him a check in a Buckingham Palace ceremony.

Train, who delivered the English-language response at the ceremony, realized that there was no word in English for the virtue that Solzhenitsyn so nobly exemplified, but that there should be, perhaps "civil courage," as distinct from valor in war. He resolved to create a prize for this virtue, and asked if Solzhenitsyn would like to receive it, or have it named after him, or be a judge. He chose the last, and acted in that role for the rest of his life. His son has followed him.

The prize, a substantial honorarium and a medal, is "for steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk." It was first awarded, in London, to Natasa Kandic, sometimes called the Serbian Schindler. Subsequent laureates have come from most parts of the world. One, Anna Politkovskaya, reporting on atrocities in Chechnya, was assassinated in the course of the very work for which she was honored, as were several others who were recognized posthumously, notably Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Giovanni Falcone and Raoul Wallenberg.

Civil courage is essential for a good society. Some few must step forward to challenge iniquity. Our hope is that by introducing the expression "civil courage" into the English language, and by holding up for general admiration heroes of conscience who exemplify it, we can encourage the good side of human nature.

To select the prizewinner, we invite nominations from an international list of distinguished organizations and persons. Our administrative office then checks to see if the nominee truly fills our qualifications. Once the nominations have been researched, they are reviewed by the Trustees and a short list is created, which is then sent on to our Advisors for ranking. Their choices are in turn considered by the Trustees, who make the final decision.

When the laureate has come to New York to receive the medal and the stipend, we introduce him to the press and to other organizations with similar objectives here and in Washington. He will probably make contact with twenty or thirty groups and hundreds of individuals. These encounters will fortify his resolve to continue on his difficult course and will help develop useful allies. It adds prestige to a good person pursuing a difficult goal to be able to invoke such connections. We have found that winning the prize confers a measure of protection to a laureate's life at home.

The hero of conscience is usually solitary: his companions are found in history books. He battles for a cause that even his friends may not understand or believe in, or dare to espouse. The noblest causes may be those that seem hopeless at the time. Civil courage empowers us to face the world alone.

For further information and updates on current and previous prizewinners, please go to:

[www.civildcourageprize.org](http://www.civildcourageprize.org)

Twitter: @TrainFoundation

Facebook: Civil Courage Prize

# Prize-Winner Gonzalo Himiob Santomé Fights For Justice in Venezuela

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and freedom to vote. Many now lack access to food, medicine, and regular electricity.

In one of Himiob's most poignant articles, entitled "*¿Hasta Cuándo?*" ("*Until When?*"), he speaks of "the deprivation, the human cruelty, and the denial of common dignity." "Until when," he asks, "can such a desperate situation endure?" He goes on to say, "I do not recognize my country. I cannot believe how low we have fallen."

Since 2012, over 12,000 Venezuelans have been arbitrarily detained; 5,400 alone in 2018, almost 500 times the 11 political prisoners Foro Penal counted at the beginning of Nicolas Maduro's presidency in 2013. Traditionally, the military has ignored the government's abuses because of multiple perks and bribery. However, according to an August *New York Times* article, Maduro now has begun to use arbitrary detention and abuse as weapons against current and retired members of the military to counteract coup and assassination attempts.

The consequences for challenging the authoritarian government can run the gamut from being stigmatized and threatened to being attacked and even shot in cold blood. However, most people are detained on illegitimate charges or no charges at all.

Because of his high profile and his determination to hold the government accountable, Himiob has become a target, singled out by some of the government's most powerful figures. As one of Foro Penal's leading voices, he draws attention to Venezuela's human rights situation and uses his position to expose government abuses by participating in press conferences; writing political essays, legal monographs, and opinion pieces (including a stint as a Sunday columnist for *La Voz* newspaper); and working through social and digital media – one of the few avenues

of free expression left in Venezuela. Since July of 2017, he has also contributed to *The New York Times* in Spanish.

Himiob is clear about what is needed: "Citizens do not want excuses, but solutions; we are fed up with speeches and pamphlets, and we demand concrete answers to our daily questions." He speaks of the government as "not having any real effect, to make us feel safe in the streets, or to put food on our tables or medicines in pharmacies."

He points out the divide between the government and its citizens. "The first thing that is perceived on the street is that there is a clear disconnect between leadership and citizenship...the perception is that the politician does not live in the same country in which we all live, but in a bubble from which reality is distorted and different." This leads to the perception that "we are being disrespected, or that we are considered idiots, that we do not think and, what is more serious, that we do not live with that contrasting reality."

Himiob's remedy? Government officials should leave their "comfort zone" and "be willing to acknowledge their mistakes...and manage within the spectrum of that English word, accountability." After almost twenty years of repression, he says, the regime has made Venezuelans "more aware and mature, politically speaking, and that is a capital that no serious politician can waste. We can accept the truth, however hard it is; what is unacceptable is the lie."

Each day, he confronts the regime, defends the government's victims, and fights for the rule of law in a corrupt system. This has made his existence tenuous. He has already been detained and may face further repercussions. He is aware that his freedom, and possibly his life, could be taken away at any time. Despite this, he is unwavering in his steadfast commitment to help his fellow Venezuelans.

## With Special Thanks to the Civil Courage Prize Nominators

Prof. Olusola Amusa  
University of Lagos

Vicky Bowman  
Myanmar Centre for Responsible  
Business

Travis Brown  
Brown PLCC

Enver Can  
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Nobel Peace Laureate (2003)

Claire Fallender  
Ashoka

Elizabeth T. Gray  
Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Vartan Gregorian  
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Neil Hicks  
Human Rights First

Nancy Prager-Kamel  
Vital Voices Global Partnership

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Future Leaders Foundation, Inc.

Daniel Kovlik  
United Steel Workers

Fran Lambrick  
NotIMore

Ayala Levy  
Rabbis for Human Rights

Cat Lucas  
English PEN

Aryeh Neier  
Open Society Foundations

Nguyen Cong Huan/Huan Nguyen  
The Vietnam Path Movement

Anna Nguyen  
Vietnamese Overseas Initiative for  
Conscience

Jay Nordlinger  
National Review

Okon Nya  
Tregong Media Organization

Christine Oram  
Global Witness

Chloe Ponchelet  
The Fund for Global Human Rights

Samantha Power  
Harvard Kennedy School  
Ambassador to the UN (2013-2017)

Lavanya Ravulapalli

Shadi Sadr  
Justice for Iran

Marietje Schaake  
Member of European Parliament

Suzanne Siskel  
The Asia Foundation

Navereh Tohidi  
California State University, Northridge  
UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies

Christopher Wilcke  
Human Rights Watch

Paul Wolfowitz  
American Enterprise Institute

Dr. Bahadur Singh Yadav  
Dr. Ahmad Saghir Inam Shastri  
Government of Uttar, India  
Lucknow University

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## Past Honorees

2018 Vladimir Kara-Murza  
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2016 RBSS  
(Raqqā is Being Slaughtered Silently)  
*Journalists revealing ISIS atrocities from inside Syria*

Thuli Madonsela  
(Honorable Mention)  
*Anti-corruption crusader, South Africa*

2015 Claudia Paz y Paz  
*Prosecutor of human rights abuses, Guatemala*

Yassmín Barrios  
*Presiding judge in Ríos Montt genocide trial, Guatemala*

2014 Nicola Gratteri  
*Relentless prosecutor of the Italian mafia*

2013 Dr. Denis Mukwege  
*Physician and advocate for victims of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

2012 Yu Jie  
*Author and advocate for reform in China*

2011 Triveni Acharya  
*Defender of victims of human trafficking in India*

Lydia Cacho Ribeiro  
*Champion of abused women and children in Mexico*

2010 Andrew White  
*Steadfast advocate for peace in the Middle East*

2009 Aminatou Haidar  
*Champion of the non-violent campaign for self-determination in Western Sabara*

2008 Ali Salem  
*Egyptian author and journalist. Voice for peace and reason in the Middle East*

2007 Phillip Buck  
*Imprisoned in China for guiding North Korean refugees in their escape to freedom*

2006 Rafael Marques de Morais  
*Journalist who exposed the slaughter of Angolans and the plundering of national assets*

2005 Min Ko Naing  
*Long-imprisoned campaigner for democracy in Burma*

Anna Politkovskaya  
*Fearless reporter on atrocities in Chechnya, assassinated 2006*

Munir Said Thalib†  
*Exposed disappearances and corruption in Indonesia, assassinated*

2004 Emadeddin Baghi  
*Imprisoned for exposing assassinations of Iranian intellectuals*

Lovemore Madhuku  
*Lawyer persecuted for demanding constitutional reform in Zimbabwe*

Abdul al-Latif al-Mayah†  
*Iraqi political scientist and human rights advocate, assassinated*

2003 Shahnaz Bukhari  
*Battler against the burning and other abuse of Pakistani women*

2002 Vladimiro Roca Antunez  
*Champion of freedom, Cuba*

Gustavo Arcos Bergnes  
(Honorable Mention)  
*Early democracy activist, Cuba*

2001 Paul Kamara  
*Editor and journalist fighting tyranny in Sierra Leone*

2000 Natasa Kandic  
*Persecuted journalist and activist, Belgrade*

Sergei Khodorovich  
(Honorable Mention)  
*Solzhenitsyn collaborator exiled to hard labor in Siberia*

Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer†  
*Anti-Nazi martyr*

Judge Giovanni Falcone†  
*Assassinated while prosecuting the Sicilian mafia*

Rosemary Nelson†  
*Civil rights lawyer, assassinated while defending accused persons in Northern Ireland*

Neelan Tiruchelvam†  
*Lawyer and educator, killed by a suicide bomber while working for solutions to Tamil-Sri Lankan conflict*

Raoul Wallenberg†  
*Saved thousands of Jews from extermination*

† = posthumous

The Civil Courage Prize honors civil courage — steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk — rather than military valor. The acts so recognized should have taken place deliberately, over time.

Nominations for the Prize are solicited primarily from non-profit, non-governmental organizations worldwide. Further information may be obtained from our website: [www.civildcouragprize.org](http://www.civildcouragprize.org).

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

—Edmund Burke



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The Train Foundation  
505 Park Avenue  
20th Floor  
New York, NY 10022

Tel: 212.888.5959  
Fax: 212.888.4018  
[www.civildcouragprize.org](http://www.civildcouragprize.org)