

# Civil Courage Prize

for steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk

Newsletter of the NORTHCOTE PARKINSON FUND

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## 2005 Prize Winners' Acceptance Speeches Stress Vital Importance of Democracies' Support for Efforts to Resist Oppressive Regimes

### Politkovskaya of Russia And Min of Burma See Prize as Aid in Struggle

AT A CEREMONY HELD in New York October 11, 2005 to honor the dual winners of the Civil Courage Prize, the acceptance speeches of Min Ko Naing of Burma and Anna Politkovskaya of Russia were dramatically marked by their expressions of the strongest determination, despite the pressures of their governments, to spearhead efforts to end repression.

**Min Ko Naing** said that courage means "the guts to stand firm, alone, for our own beliefs. Our people have sacrificed their lives and livelihoods, and we will continue to do so in the future. So, the Prize is to honor those political prisoners behind bars who stand firm, and it also honors their family members...and...the public who support us." He concluded, "This day when the people of the world recognize us and support us with this symbol, I could clearly see with my own eyes that we are not on our own." Since Bo was unable to leave



Bo Kyi, who accepted the Civil Courage Prize on behalf of co-winner Min Ko Naing, and co-winner Anna Politkovskaya at the Awards Ceremony held in New York City.

Burma to attend the ceremony, his remarks were read by his colleague, Bo Kyi.

**Anna Politkovskaya** said that, "Once again, the gulag has become part of the reality of Russia. Political prisoners are now being held in the same camps where once so many Soviet dissidents died. Now the new prisoners are dying there too."

She continued, "Prisoners are being tortured by the police controlled by the prosecutors and also by the FSB—the new name for the KGB. Officially, however, all this is explained by fighting terrorism. Only per-

sons known in the West, or with support from the West are likely to be released..."

*(continued on page 2)*



Min Ko Naing, 2005 Civil Courage Prize winner

Nominations for the Civil Courage Prize for 2006 may be made until March 1, 2006 using the form enclosed with this Newsletter, or using the form to be found at [www.civildcouragprize.org](http://www.civildcouragprize.org)

# Prize Winners Describe Aspirations and Challenges in Acceptance Speeches; Both Decry Oppression and Call for Broadest Support in Defending Basic Human Rights

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**Anna Politkovskaya**, who had traveled from Russia to accept her prize, said that “Russia announced a Moratorium on capital punishment, but conditions in these camps are so harsh that once more they are the equivalent of capital punishment...I have investigated cases where under the most frightful tortures, resulting in the victims’ being permanently mutilated or even crippled, confessions were extracted that could not possibly have been true, followed by frightfully long terms—15 or 20 years—in Siberian camps where all communications with the prisoners are forbidden...The Red Cross is not admitted...Frequently there is a tacit order in force never to release these prisoners...One prisoner was told “Winter is coming. Then you will kick the bucket, that’s what the commandant says. The deputy commandant has said that he’s not going to see you again.”

“Given what I do,” she continued, “it is in fact a miracle that I am alive today, and that I am not in prison.”

Politkovskaya serves as a special correspondent for the Russian twice-weekly newspaper, *Novaya*

*Gazeta*, published in Moscow. She is noted for her coverage of the war in Chechnya, writing detailed, accurate and vivid reports on the plight of the civilian populations caught in the war and brutality perpetrated by local and Russian forces since 1994.

In so doing, she has placed herself in great personal danger. She was arrested in 2000 in Chechnya and imprisoned in a pit with no water or food for three days. In 2001, a Russian officer threatened to kill her and she went into hiding. During her coverage of the Beslan hostage crisis in 2004, she lost consciousness and believes she was poisoned.

She is the author of three books, and among her honors she received the Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women’s Media Foundation in 2002 and a special award from Amnesty International in 2001.

**Min Ko Naing** remains under tight surveillance by the government in Burma after being imprisoned for most of the fifteen years after 1989. After the crack-down by the authorities in 1988, riots erupted that were put down, brutally injuring hundreds. Min, a student at Rangoon’s Arts and Science University, joined the protesters, and aided in establishing the All Burma Federation of Student Unions. Matters came to a head in August 1988, when thousands of demonstrators were gunned down in the streets of Rangoon. Thousands were jailed.

The Federation continued to operate in secret. Min, however, was arrested in an ambush at a meeting of the group, and placed for very long periods in solitary confinement.

In a telephone interview with the Voice of America’s Burmese Service, Min said recently, “This [Civil Courage] award shows that people in the world have not forgotten us and still support democracy and human rights in our country. We are very grateful for this.”

## Posthumous Winner’s Widow Speaks out for Justice in Indonesia

**Suciwati Munir**, widow of the late Munir Said Thalib, the 2005 winner of a posthumous Civil Courage Prize, who allegedly was assassinated by poison while en route from Indonesia to The Hague, turned up at the trial of his alleged killer to reproach the Indonesian authorities and demand justice.

In the courtroom, with the accused—who has pleaded not guilty—looking on, Suciwati demanded respectfully that the accused, Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto, a pilot for Indonesia’s airline, be found guilty. Her demand was supported by evidence unearthed by an inquiry that showed 34 phone calls had taken place between Pollycarpus and a number at Indonesia’s intelligence agency prior to the death of Munir.

She vows to fight on, though she has received anonymous threats.

## 2001 Winner Kamara of Sierra Leone Freed after Long, Harsh Confinement

Campaigns by Human Rights Activists Helped Secure Release after Bail Application Denied; Colleague Reported Dead from Brutal Assault

THE CRUSADING JOURNALIST, Paul Kamara, of Sierra Leone, editor and founder of the independent daily, *For Di People*, finally was released November 29, 2005 from prison after 14 months—many spent in solitary confinement. Kamara, who won the Civil Courage Prize in 2001, declared on leaving jail that the government should keep its promises of democracy and put an end to its repression of the news media.



Paul Kamara of Sierra Leone (2001)

Kamara, who had been imprisoned for alleged sedition, had appeared in court for the start of an appeal hearing on November 9, 2005, that was then postponed to November 16. He had been convicted in October 2004 on two counts of publishing allegedly seditious articles that appeared in his paper. The articles focused on a 1967 Commission of Inquiry that implicated Sierra Leone's current president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in the embezzlement of public funds during the time he served as a permanent secretary at the Trade Ministry. Kamara then was sentenced to two concurrent terms of two years each.

A close colleague of Kamara, Harry Yansaneh, acting editor of the former's paper, meanwhile was assaulted by six persons on May 10, 2005, allegedly on the orders of Fatmata Hassan, a member of Parliament for Sierra Leone's People's Party. Yansaneh subsequently died of kidney failure as a result of the beating. In a letter to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists sent by Yansaneh before he died, he said that the attackers included two of Hassan's sons, who also led in the destruction of the newspaper's office and publishing plant.

Yansaneh also had lodged an official complaint before his death in July, and the August 2005 coroner's inquest attributed his death to unlawful involuntary manslaughter. Three suspects, including Mrs. Hassan, were arrested and later released on bail. The other alleged perpetrators are believed to be in the U.K. and their extradition is being sought.

In a message from prison in May 2005, Kamara recalled Robert Kennedy's statement that, "Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends out a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, these ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of repression and resistance."

## 2005 Honoree Meets with Human Rights Groups in New York and Washington

DURING HER VISIT to the U.S. to receive the 2005 Civil Courage Prize, **Anna Politkovskaya**, the Russian journalist, met with human rights leaders in New York and Washington, D.C., who showed great interest in her personal accounts of the situation in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia.

Neil Hicks and Matthew Easton of Human Rights First were her hosts at a meeting in New York as part of that group's Defenders Program. At the Open Society Institute in New York she met with Leonard Bernardo and Marija Sarac of the Institute's Russia and Eastern European Program. Meetings at the offices of both The Committee to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Watch completed her New York City itinerary.

In Washington, Politkovskaya was received by Christopher Swift of the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya at the office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, for discussions on the current situation in Russia.

At the International Center for Journalists, she held discussions with Program Director Robert Tinsley.

## At the 2005 Civil Courage Prize Award Ceremony

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Left to right:  
Priscilla Clapp, former  
Chargé d'Affaires,  
U.S. Embassy, Rangoon;  
Ann Brownell Sloane,  
Trustee; John Train,  
Chairman and Trustee;  
and Bo Kyi, who  
accepted the Civil  
Courage Prize  
on behalf of winner  
Min Ko Naing.



A November 2005 meeting of Northcote Parkinson Fund Trustees and Officers.  
L to R: Ariadne Calvo-Platero, Virginia Armat Hurt, John Train, Edward Streator,  
and Enid C.B. Schoettle.

## The Civil Courage Prize

THE CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE of the Northcote Parkinson Fund is awarded annually by the Trustees to honor civil courage—steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk—rather than military valor. The acts that the Prize recognizes should have taken place deliberately over time. It may be awarded posthumously. By increasing awareness of civil courage, the Fund's trustees hope to encourage that virtue. The value of the Prize is \$50,000 for a living recipient.

The Fund, which supports economic and political liberalism, has provided grants also for public television programs espousing free enterprise and played a significant role in the evolution toward democracy of Eastern European countries. The Fund was established in 1987 by John Train, Chairman.

**NOMINATIONS** for the Civil Courage Prize are solicited primarily from non-profit, non-governmental organizations worldwide. An organization may only submit one nomination. The office of the Northcote Parkinson Fund and The Civil Courage Prize may be reached by email via the Nominations page on our website: [www.civildCourageprize.org](http://www.civildCourageprize.org).