



# Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

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For Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk

## Sir Jeremy Greenstock Urges Action Over Rhetoric To Achieve A Lasting Peace

On October 27th, career diplomat Sir Jeremy Greenstock gave the keynote address at the 2016



Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Ariadne Calvo-Platero

Civil Courage Prize ceremony. He described the Prize as "distinctive and necessary, itself displaying moral courage of a significant order because the world is too full of institutions and individuals whose rhetoric is not matched by adequate action."

He felt that RBSS deserved the award because "no group resisting violence and tyranny today is exposed to more lethal risk [and] the organization they are confronting is one of the world's most significant threats to decent civilized life."

His speech focused on the idea that rhetoric is often not matched by action. He heard the rhetoric firsthand at his final posting as UK Permanent Representative to the UN in "official speeches on peace and security, on human rights and humanitarian abuse, on commitments to development assistance, and the environment." He spoke about his belief that the UN charter, the treaties, conventions and declarations

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## 2016 Civil Courage Prize Winner, RBSS, Defies ISIS in Raqqa Using The Power of Words and Images

At the 2016 Civil Courage Prize ceremony, Abdalaziz Alhamza, a founding member of the prize winner RBSS (Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently), a Syrian activist group, gave an impassioned speech about the impact of ISIS on everyday life in Raqqa.

"Our story is the story of the Syrian people; an entire nation stuck between two evils: ISIS and the Assad regime. My colleagues and I never thought or even could imagine the level of suffering our people have been subjected to in the last 5 years. We learned the hard way that freedom doesn't come cheap."

Alhamza went on to say that in 2013, when people in Raqqa thought the Assad regime was out of their lives, they began to see black ISIS banners. He said that no one seemed to fully understand that "the most dangerous terrorist group in the world just showed up at our doorstep with a plan to enslave us." Not content with killing and maiming "in the name of their insane ideology," ISIS set out "to destroy our culture, our way of life, and even our humanity by their brutality."

By 2014, when people in

Raqqa realized that they weren't getting a lot of help from the outside world, "we had to do something. Anything. So we created RBSS. Our goal was not only to expose ISIS criminality, but also to resist them." The group began by capturing images and videos of their lives under ISIS including scenes of extreme violence and humiliation. According to Alhamza, "we wanted to make sure the world, even if it wasn't going to help us, knew what was going on."



Abdalaziz Alhamza

Regardless of the dangers they faced, and still face, in bringing attention to the atrocities, RBSS didn't stop there. "We were not simply passively watching; we wanted to resist ISIS and defy it just as we did with Assad. We began tagging walls, and organizing secret demonstrations; we networked and recruited among our fellow Raqqa youth."

They also started a magazine written in the local dialect and made their cover look like the cover of ISIS' magazine. They went on to "target children and their parents to prevent them from being recruited by ISIS [because] we don't want another generation

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## Sir Jeremy Greenstock: Ordinary People Can Make A Difference

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*Sir Jeremy Greenstock*

are "unimpeachably accurate in laying down the right principles for a stable, growing world [but] action to realize and enforce those principles is sadly deficient."

He also spoke about a relative global peace with no war between major powers since the end of World War II. He pointed out, however, that historically "no previous era of peace has ever ended in anything other than a catastrophic war." He expressed concern that in order to prevent another great war, the human race has to do something unprecedented in the next two or three decades and must agree "through debate, compromise and calculation of shared interest that a collapse from competition into outright war is unthinkable."

Sir Jeremy acknowledged that having the United Nations is an advantage that past eras did not have, in that "we are committed by treaty to the right principles...we have a forum where the habit of talking before shooting is well entrenched." Still, he noted an "accelerating trend towards identity politics, part of the strong reaction to globalization...breeding nationalistic subjectivism and the assertion of local priorities."

Sir Jeremy pointed out that today's complex world appeals to national and local interests so "governments alone cannot be trusted to act in ways that ensure the primacy of international cooperation." To have peace, citizens need to take on responsibility. He praised the Train Foundation for doing that and stated that "other institutions and organizations should be resisting the tendency towards extremism, towards systematic barbarism, in the region in which Raqqa is situated."

He expressed the opinion that the 2011 Arab Spring in part was indicative of "the growing alienation between governments and their own people...creating the most disastrous outcomes where standards of governance are worst." He went on to

## Sir Jeremy Greenstock

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say that removing regimes didn't necessarily remedy the situation since "the poverty of the institutions tends to create a dangerous vacuum [where] the excluded and the dispossessed turn all too readily to violent jihadism." He asserted that extremism must be resisted more courageously and proactively, requiring individuals, along with governments, civil society, and political classes to act on their rhetoric. He credited RBSS for "courageous action by ordinary people, showing their conviction and taking responsibility into their own hands," and he voiced the hope that we all can match what they are doing.

## RBSS Founding Member Speaks About Their Courageous Work

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of ISIS to spring again within us. That is why we do what we do."

Alhamza ended his speech with, "our work shows that we can fight arms with words, and in the end, that is the only way to defeat them, and ISIS knows it. That is why it has killed many of our colleagues both in Syria and even outside of Syria. ISIS is afraid. It is afraid most of one idea: Liberty."

## 2016 Civil Courage Prize Honorable Mention: Advocate Thuli Madonsela

The 2016 Civil Courage Prize honorable mention went to Thuli Madonsela, South Africa's first female Public Protector. She held the seven-year position, created by their constitution, from 2009 to 2016. Her mandate was to safeguard South Africans from abusive behavior at the hands of the state, including "maladministration and corruption," and to uphold the values of the constitution. During her tenure, she was vilified and threatened by powerful political and public leaders as she confronted allegations of their increasing corruption and misuse of government funds, which reached as high as President Jacob Zuma. Ordinary citizens, however, held her in high regard for not only rooting out corruption but assisting marginalized communities in accessing hard to come by basic services.

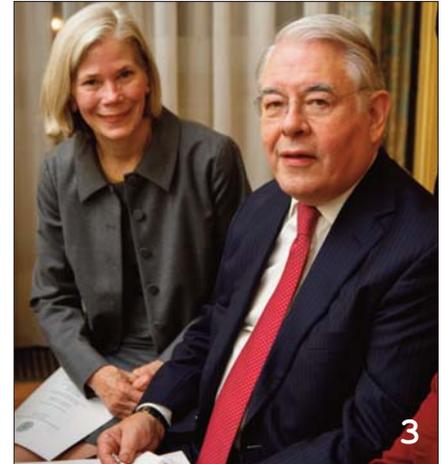
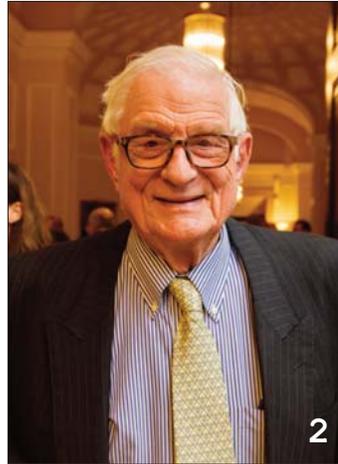
For further information and updates on current and previous prizewinners, please go to:

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

[twitter.com/TrainFoundation](https://twitter.com/TrainFoundation)

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# 2016 Civil Courage Prize Reception and Ceremony



1. Helen Fisher, Nina Train Choa, Barbara Becker, and Ann Brownell Sloane
2. Ambassador Nicholas Platt
3. Jeanette and David Redden
4. Amelia and Peter Matsoukas
5. Alexander Klebnikov
6. Barbara Becker

7. Louis Bickford, Ann Brownell Sloane, Ariadne Calvo-Platero, Abdalaziz Alhamza, John Train, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Amb. Nicholas Platt, and Musa Klebnikov
8. Henry Clark and Jenny Gerard
9. Pamela Morgan and Francie Train
10. Count Aymar and Isabel de Lastours

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## Past Honorees

2016 RBSS  
*(Raqqa 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-Sahara*

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

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

—Edmund Burke



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