



CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE

Introduction by The Rt Hon Lord Hurd of Westwell,
CH, CBE

Ali Salem

2008

After thanking John Train and the United States Ambassador for their generous and imaginative initiative and hospitality Lord Hurd said:

"Nowadays we all talk the language of one world. We praise or criticise globalisation as a phenomenon of one world; at the moment we particularly worry about its consequences in the financial field.

We also speak of one world when we discuss the behaviour of men and women towards each other under the heading of human rights, freedom and democracy. There is no shortage of worldwide conferences, commissions and declarations on this subject. And yet the inhumanity of human beings towards each other persists. It is true that there has been a slow and patchy spread of freedom, but it is by no means consistent. In one country for example military and civilian regimes seem to rotate. In another there is a period when flowers are invited to bloom followed by a period in which students are shot in the streets.

In a world of one hundred and ninety two nation states there will never be a world authority to enforce the rules of freedom and democracy. To the extent that these causes are regarded simply as the property of a group of states in the West under the leadership of the United States, their range and success will be limited. It is right to salute the United States as the leader of the free democratic world while recognising this limitation.

We should have learned that it is not possible to impose freedom by force. We cannot bestow democracy with bombs, missiles and bullets, not least because however much care is taken it has proved impossible to distinguish successfully between those whom we seek to kill and those who are killed.

The key to the spread of freedom and democracy is the active citizen, who operates in his or her own country, fertilising the seeds which grow in that particular soil. It is right therefore to salute, as we do this evening, the courage and persistence of individuals like Ali Salem, author and playwright. He has been a stalwart defender of peace and freedom, always testing the possibilities and seeking to move the boundaries put in place by authority between what is allowed and what is forbidden.

By giving him this award the Train Foundation encourages the search for peace and freedom in the Middle East. There are many parallel ways in which we can do the same. We can show Judges that law

need not be the servant of Government. We can show Army Officers that they can be proud of a military service which is not the instrument of tyranny. We can show Administrators that they can take pride in a form of governance without corruption or bullying. We can, like Ali Salem, encourage novelists and playwrights to use their skills to further peace and freedom.

Egypt is the intellectual capital of the Arab world. It follows that what happens in Egypt is of huge importance throughout the Middle East. Tonight we salute and thank Ali Salem for helping forward that movement in the right direction by his own work and teaching pursued steadfastly in the face of discouragement and sometimes danger."