



Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

Vol. 14, No. 1 • January 2018

For Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk

Gilmour Sees Civil Courage As Necessary To Combat Backlash Against Human Rights Defenders

The keynote speech at the 2017 Civil Courage Prize Ceremony was given by Andrew Gilmour, the U.N.'s ASG for Human Rights. He began by pointing out that "there is currently a frightening backlash against human rights, civil liberties, and dignity. This is what makes the Civil Courage Prize more important now than it has ever been before."



Andrew Gilmour

He recalled lessons he learned in school as a member of Amnesty. The first was "balance: the need to uphold civil courage against both sides in the Cold War. The second was learning how much people who defend human rights can irritate other people, either because those others are not that interested in human rights or alternatively because somehow they feel it threatens them."

He spoke about progress; how dictators and even whole oppressive systems were disappearing until 9/11, when "for understandable reasons, a number of governments decided that the most important thing to do was to take up the cause of counterterrorism." In the process, they committed "immense violations of human rights and also, under the guise of counter-terrorism, managed to create way more terrorists than there were before they started." He recounted the killing, torturing, and imprisonment of thousands

continued on page 2

The 2017 Civil Courage Prize-Winner Pierre Claver Mbonimpa Continues His Fight In Exile For Justice In Burundi

On Wednesday, October 18th, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa was awarded the 2017 Civil Courage Prize. Train Foundation Co-Chairman George Biddle introduced the honoree and spoke about how the world urgently needs heroes like him. Mbonimpa came to the podium and made his remarks in French. Dawn M. Liberi, former U.S. Ambassador to Burundi, followed with a heartfelt tribute to



Pierre Claver Mbonimpa

her friend for his valiant efforts to seek justice in his embattled country. She spoke of his courage and determination in face of seemingly insurmountable odds and how he still remained humble despite all of the recognition he received. She then read Mbonimpa's speech in English.

He began by addressing "this noble and solemn occasion" on behalf of the members of his organization, APRODH, as well as himself, and expressed delight to be included among the recipients.

Mbonimpa went on to say, "We must all recognize that there is no endeavor without risk, and that the career I have chosen as a

human rights defender, today has become extremely dangerous."

He spoke of leaving prison twenty-two years ago, after two years of incarceration. He and his fellow prisoners endured abuse and torture that "motivated us to re-

flect on how we might change this situation." In 2001, the result was the creation of APRODH, an organization with the purpose of providing "protection and promo-

tion for activities within the field of human rights, with a special focus on the rights of prisoners."

Mbonimpa went on to say that for seventeen years, APRODH, along with monitoring torture and abuse in prisons and detention centers, has been "raising awareness about the national and international instruments related to human rights; fighting against torture, sexual violence as well as other forms of gender-based violence; and providing advocacy and legal aid for victims of grave governmental oppression."

He stated that "denouncing injustice and cases of grave human rights violations has always been

continued on page 2

Mbonimpa Seeks Justice For Burundians

continued from page 1



*Amb. Dawn M. Liberi and
Pierre Claver Mbonimpa*

our primary focus."

He paid the price for his advocacy by serving another 140 days in prison in 2014, and barely escaping a 2015 assassination attempt by a man who was later identified as part of Burundi's National Intelligence Service. He has no doubt that the man was sent "to silence me once and for all." After the attack, he was evacuated to

Brussels to save his life and has remained there, continuing "to pursue this fight resisting governmental evil in Burundi."

Mbonimpa described the root cause of the present-day social and political turmoil in Burundi, which started in 2015, due to the President's "expressed intent to serve for a third term: a violation of their constitution, despite opposition from Congress, 80% of which is composed by the ruling party." There were mostly peaceful demonstrations from the opposition, civil society groups and political officials, many of which were violently repressed by the police and armed militias, along with persecution of those who opposed the President. Mbonimpa noted the staggering numbers: an estimated 1,000 people killed, 450,000 exiled, at least ten civil society groups, including his own, raided or shut down, four television and radio stations shut down, and approximately 4,000 political detainees.

To Mbonimpa, the honor of this award "sends a powerful message of support and encouragement that the struggle for human rights in Burundi is echoed beyond our borders [and is] a great gesture of recognition; an encouragement for me and fellow human rights defenders to continue to fight with dedication and determination, against all odds, to achieve rule of law in Burundi."

Mbonimpa, along with his "deepest gratitude" for selecting him from among the "many deserving candidates," is also grateful to his colleagues in Burundi and "the many international partners, who, near or far, have not ceased to provide support in the pursuit of our mission."

His final words echoed this mission. "May this prize contribute to broader awareness of and respect for human dignity - in Burundi, Africa, and the world."

Gilmour's Keynote Speech on Civil Courage

continued from page 1

of people, many of whom had nothing to do with terrorism, and how systematic discrimination and regular brutal human rights abuses created resentment "among the very groups who they should have been working closely with to stop acts of terrorism." There was a violent backlash against human rights and the "alarming rise of far right-wing parties."

His speech focused on how necessary civil courage is at this time and he cited examples of people who made a difference. He spoke about how deeply moving it was to see that after the U.S. Muslim ban was issued while passengers were in the air, in "an incredible act," thousands of Americans flocked to international airports to ensure that the arriving refugees would receive support and legal advice. In another example, he spoke of a "great act of civil courage [when] a racist thug started abusing two young Muslim girls [and] three men went up to him to stop it." Two of them were killed.

Civil courage is also necessary, he said, because "what we are seeing around the world today is an antagonistic nationalism, and a cheap populism," which seeks out victims from society's most vulnerable groups. He spoke about the many ways that the backlash takes its toll on the upholders of civil courage and the defenders of human rights. Some countries have passed laws preventing NGOs from doing their work and there are reprisals that run from travel bans and denial of medical assistance to rape and murder. He follows reprisals very closely as he is "the U.N. focal point for those people who suffer reprisals for cooperating with the U.N. on human rights."

He described these "brave defenders who suffer reprisals as canaries bravely singing in the coal mine, until they are silenced by the toxic backlash against rights and dignity as a dark warning to us all," and how he conceived of "no higher or more self-evident duty on the part of any of us than to do more to defend the defenders." For him, this is exactly what the prize is all about and why he thinks it's so important.

Gilmour concluded that "as the backlash gathers momentum, so must the resistance to it. It is now a vital civic duty to promote and reward civil courage."

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

www.civildcourageprize.org

Twitter: @TrainFoundation

Facebook: Civil Courage Prize

2017 Civil Courage Prize Reception and Ceremony



1. Mario Calvo-Platero and Judy Rivkin
 2. Barbara Becker and Virginia Armat Hurt
 3. Amb. Edward Streator and Jennifer Coutts Clay
 4. John Micklethwait
 5. Top Row (l-r): George Biddle, Musa Klebnikov, Ariadne Calvo-Platero; Bottom Row (l-r): Amb. Edward Streator, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, Hon. John Train, Amb. Nicholas Platt

6. George Biddle
 7. Andrew Gilmour and Isabel Fonseca
 8. Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and John Campbell, U.S. Ambassador to Burundi
 9. (l-r) Ariadne Calvo-Platero, Nina Train, Andrew Gilmour, Amb. Dawn M. Liberi, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa

The Train Foundation

Trustees and Officers

The Hon. John Train
Trustee, Chairman

George Biddle
Trustee, Co-Chairman

Ambassador Edward Streator
Trustee, President Emeritus

Ariadne Calvo-Platero
Trustee, President

Musa T. Klebnikov
Trustee, Secretary

Louis N. Bickford
Trustee

Ambassador Nicholas Platt
Trustee

Ann Brownell Sloane
Trustee

Sumner Gerard III
Treasurer

Charles Berry, Esq.
Counsel

Nina Train
Advisor

Lisa Train
Advisor

C. Bowdoin Train
Advisor

Civil Courage Prize Advisors

Ambassador Glenn R.W. Babb

Prof. Philip C. Bobbitt

Sir Jeremy Greenstock

Bill Keller

Count Aymar de Lastours

Baroness Rawlings

Lydia Cacho Ribeiro

Grace Kennan Warnecke

Ambassador Frank G. Wisner

Patrons

Mrs. Jennifer Coutts Clay

Clarence & Anne Dillon Dunwalke Trust

Mr. Richard Gilder

Founding Patron

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Past Honorees

2017 Pierre Claver
Mbonimpa
*Campaigner for justice in
Burundi*

2016 RBSS
(Raqa 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 Rios
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 in-
tellectuals*

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 abuses 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 ex-
iled 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.

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

—Edmund Burke



Civil Courage News

Journal of the Civil Courage Prize

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

Tel: 212.888.5959
Fax: 212.888.4018
www.civildCourageprize.org