



CIVIL COURAGE PRIZE

Acceptance Speech

Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently 2016

2016

Alhamza on behalf of the organization:

The Honorable Mr. John Train,
And the trustees of the John Train Foundation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, please forgive my English, you should know that I learned it from the street. :)

I feel deeply honored to stand before you today on behalf of my colleagues of RBSS, those of whom are still alive, those who are in exile, and in memory of those who have fallen by the hands of the death cult known as ISIS.

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

Back in 2013, when we thought that we were rid of the Assad regime, the black banners began showing up in our city of Raqqa. At first we didn't fully understand that the most dangerous terrorist group in the world just showed up at our doorstep with a plan to enslave us. ISIS wasn't only content with killing and maiming in the name of their insane ideology, but they also wanted to destroy our culture, our way of life, and even our humanity by their brutality.

In 2014, we realized two important things: the first is that the outside world was not going to help us, and the second is that we had to do something. Anything. So we created RBBS. Our goal was not only to expose ISIS criminality, but also to resist them. We did that by capturing and spreading images and videos of life in Raqqa under ISIS. The scenes of extreme violence and humiliation the group visited on our city's people. We wanted to make sure the world - even if it wasn't going to help us - knew what was going on.

But we didn't stop there, because 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. We also started a magazine written in the local dialect. We even made its cover to look like ISIS' own magazine. We also target children and their parents so prevent them from being recruited by ISIS. We don't want another generation of ISIS to spring again within us. That is why we do what we do.

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.

The Honorable John Train,
And the trustees of the Train Foundation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to accept this award on behalf of my colleagues and would like to thank you for your support for our work.

Down with ISIS

Down with Assad

Long Live Free Syria