

Four Freedoms Awards 2016

Acceptance Speech Mazen Darwish

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Esteemed Laureates, Members of the Roosevelt family, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the 6th January 1941, the American President F.D. Roosevelt announced that the USA would defend four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. The American leader explained that those freedoms are for all peoples of the world not for the Americans only. Moreover, he promised "That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation."

I do not know much about the metaphysical world and life after death. However, I really hope that FDR is not able to see the current status of our world now.

What would we tell him? Would we dare to tell him about those who die in the Syrian prisons due to torture and bad health conditions? Would we dare to tell him about the twenty-first century women who are taken captive and then sold as slaves? Would we dare to tell him about the children of Doma in Damascus Countryside whose bodies have been devoured by chemical weapons? Would we dare to tell him about the young pupils of Ekremah Schools in Homs whose bodies and innocent dreams were torn into pieces? Would we dare to tell him about the Syrian children who die of starvation, and, meanwhile, politicians play the 'Red Lines' game in accordance to the rules of their own interests rather than the rules of ethics?

We will not despair! We will not give up! We will cling to our right to enjoy the four freedoms and our established human values. We will tell President Roosevelt that dictatorship and terrorism are not an inevitable destiny. As a number of peoples managed to get rid of them, we can, too. We will tell FDR that the Syrian youth are still able to sing after the explosive barrels bombardment stops. We will tell him that even if the UN and great powers fail to fulfill their ethical obligations, we still find that rights-promotion institutions, men and women are keen on doing their best to protect the future of humanity. We are very proud of them wherever they are! We live in one big country, the World! On one hand, we see politicians who let us down. On the other hand, we see a lady that astonished us with her great ethical leadership.

(We may seek salvation in electing women for political leadership posts.)

Please, let me extend my thanks and gratitude to you as you granted me the honour to be the fourth one in an elite that taught me a lot. Besides, let me thank MD Marie M. Warburg and Prof. Dr. Michael Naumann, my new family in Germany, and all those great people I met in Berlin, Wittenberg, Aurich and everywhere. Thank you for proving that human ethics do exist and are not meaningless words.

Finally, let me address Razan Zaytouna, Khalil Matouk, Hussein Eisso, Rami Hanawi and all those detained or kidnapped in Syria and say: My friends, without you, freedom is just a big prison.