

## **The International Hrant Dink Award goes to Amira Hass and Alper Gormus**

The first International Hrant Dink Award was presented to the laureates Alper Gormus from Turkey and Amira Hass from Israel, on September 15 with a ceremony at the Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall. The International Hrant Dink Foundation will make the award a traditional part of its activities, starting from this year.

The ceremony, hosted by Banu Guven, began with the speech of Ali Bayramoglu, the chair of the awards committee. Explaining why the Foundation decided to present the award, he stated, “the award will be given to people who work for a free and just world free of discrimination, racism and violence; who take personal risks in their struggle for these ideals, use the language of peace and give inspiration and hope to others while doing so.”

Rakel Dink, the president of the Hrant Dink Foundation began her words by saying that both Hrant Dink and herself were not used to celebrate their birthdays as kids and that he blew his first birthday candles at his 40th birthday. She continued “My Cutag\* would be 55 today; his right to life is violated 32 months ago. Us, his brothers, nephews and nieces, children and grandchildren, and myself, we decided to establish a foundation for his name. And we decided to present awards on his birthday to celebrate his life and his struggle and to thank people who struggle like him and voice things that ought to be voiced against all odds with courage. We wanted to support their efforts with these awards. The excitement of the laureates was added to ours. Hrant is an award to them and they are awards to Hrant.” She finished her speech by “Happy Birthday my Cutag”.

The ceremony continued by the presentation of the awards to the winners, accompanied by short introductory films prepared by Umit Kivanc. The first awardee, the journalist Alper Gormus accepted his award by the following words: “I have lived fearless since 35 years of age. Then my daughter was born and I live in constant fear, worrying if anything bad would happen to her. I bear another fear since I learnt that I was honoured with the award. The fear of making a mistake, which will make people say that ‘Is this the man who had received the Hrant Dink Award?’ My beloved brother Hrant Dink, your loved ones gave me a present on your birthday. They say that they give this present to me because you followed the ideals of Hrant Dink and took risks... My brother, how I wish I could also hear from you whether you find this suitable...”

The other awardee, Amira Hass said how she wished that this tragic had never happened and that they hadn't be on the stage receiving the awards. She said, “It is not easy for me to say thank you. I am angry and outraged. In Israel we do not have laws like Article 301. We are free to criticize and interview anyone we want; yet, we have the risk of facing with indifference... Last week I wrote an article on the killing of a Palestinian father and his son.

---

\* Rakel Dink used to call her husband “Cutag”, meaning violin.

The danger we face is not repression, but it is ignorance. Do not perceive this as an ego issue . We want the people of Israel read us to prevent bigger tragedies.”

TheKardes Turkuler band and Arto Tuncboyaciyen and Zeynep Tanbay contributed to the ceremony with their performances. Inspired by one of Hrant Dink’s speeches titled “The water found its crack”, the award statue was sculpted by Erdag Aksel. Bulent Erkmen designed the concept and the logo of the award ceremony. The organization of the ceremony was conducted by BGST. Mas publishing and Aktif Courier services contributed to the organization.

**The International Hrant Dink Award was made possible thanks to a big group volunteers, led by the International Hrant Dink Foundation. . We would like to extend our gratitude to all of our friends.**