



Distinguished guests, dear friends,
brothers and sisters co-winners,

First allow me to express my sincere appreciation to our hosts, the Frontline Defenders, for their precious work as well as the warm welcoming and hospitality they offered us these days.

It is with great pleasure and sense of responsibility that today I receive this valuable award, which I dedicate to

all the activists of KISA and the world, for their courage and determination to continue to fight for the protection of the rights of the less privileged people in our societies under increasingly difficult conditions.

I also dedicate this award to all those people who, at great sacrifice, choose or are forced to move from their home and their loved ones in order to protect themselves or to work very often under very hard and exploitative conditions for a better future for their families and their children.

In particular, I want to dedicate it to the people and especially the children of Palestine who are being murdered, daily, by the Israeli army with the tolerance and even support of the powerful actors of the international community.

Our work as human rights defenders has not been, and we do not expect it to be, paved with rose petals. However, despite our disagreements about the archived level of protection of human rights and the importance of the work of human rights defenders in our societies, we insist on the obligation of the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders can do their work in a safe and dignifying environment, free of intimidation, defamation, criminalization, treats, violence and attacks.

Cypriot society is faced with a number of very serious issues, such as corruption, the division of the country, impoverishment in society, weak rule of law and other vital issues. Unfortunately, those who are responsible for not effectively addressing or creating these serious issues have chosen to turn the refugee issue into a matter of national security and even the survival of the country. Refugees, migrants and the activists who support them are portrait as the greatest threat to public safety, the demography and even the cultural identity of the society.

Unfortunately, they poisoned the society with hate and paved the way for the rise of far-right and nationalistic forces which we observe with great concern nowadays.

It is within this context that in recent years we have become the target of systematic smear campaigns, hate speech, verbal attacks and even death threats. The culmination of this process of dehumanization of human rights defenders was the bombing of our offices on January 5th of this year. It is completely unacceptable that the government of Cyprus has so far failed to condemn the bombing. We thank you for the solidarity and support initiatives you have taken so far and we call on you to continue to demand that the authorities in Cyprus fully investigate this attack and bring to justice the perpetrators.

In the next few days, elections for the European Parliament will be held. Unfortunately, all indications are that the results of the elections will lead to a further deterioration of the conditions in which we will have to defend human rights both in Cyprus and in Europe. We all have responsibility to evaluate and unitedly respond to these new realities.

I want to emphasize again that your support and solidarity on one hand and the feedback we receive from the people themselves on the other hand are the two fundamental pillars that give us the strength to continue and intensify our struggle for the protection of human rights.

In this context, I will close with the words of a young Syrian who I met in his long Journey from Syria to Europe, words which I often recall and which inspire me to continue in these difficult times: After Cyprus I had to pass 5 European countries. I was alone with no money, and I was so hungry and tired. But I succeeded finally to reach my goal ... I lost 27 kg and 4 years of my life ... and I was going to lose my mind. "But" what kept me a normal person and gave me some power, are the good people like you who I met on my long trip.

Thank you again for this important award and all your support. It encourages and motivates us to continue our struggle, with more determination, for the protection of the rights of the people and the rule of Law in our world



Doros Polykarpou, Dublin, 31.05.2024