

Dear friends, distinguished guests, we are all welcome here.  
Սիրելի բարեկամներ հարգելի հիւրեր բոլորս բարի եկանք  
Haval u hogirno em hami kher hatin

Today marks the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of my *Chutag*, whom I love and miss dearly. We celebrate his life and his struggle as well as similar struggles through the International Hrant Dink Award, named after him. You are all welcome to the award ceremony.

Dear friends, our world and humanity has been grappling with a spiral of physical and psychological violence and hatred. Regrettably, we have ended up in an era, where patience, compassion, respect and love has been gradually diminishing each year, in fact each day. And we strive to live in such an era.

‘The power of terror, and the terror of power’ gains more traction in the international arena. Even in our parliament, violence takes over speech. As threats directed against certain identities normalises violence in the society, individual accounts of violence inflicted upon women, children, animals surround us, straining our hearts. Be it in Norway or Eskişehir, some people just venture into ‘settling their own accounts’ and claim lives. Encouraged by the green light they got for stripping animals off their right to life, some people just take the matter into their hands. At a time when we should talk about children’s rights, we keep receiving the news of murdered children.

Surely, one knows where they live the best. For you live it under your skin, you feel it, you see it. So many children have gone missing every year. So many women have been murdered...Is it ever averted? No. Doesn’t humanity suffer enough from customs, traditions, and false beliefs that are devoid of empathy and love? Especially women and children.

Violence perpetrated by states fuels violent discourse, violent climate, and ultimately acts of social and individual violence. Rising violence serves for death, and not for life.

Although politicians always brag about civilisation, neighbourly relations, rightful share of others, they continue to plot new wars and feed the arms industry. While in rhetoric, they seem to express solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine, their war-mongering discourse immediately follows suit. Deceit, hypocrisy, and cruelty has skyrocketed. Thousands of people and children have been killed, millions have been displaced, the world has turned into a rubbish dump, yet some only cares about arms and power.

Rights, law, and justice are being trampled on and breached each day. Those who write about it, those who speak out are arrested, and silenced. Our previous laureate, the International Memorial based in Russia, which has been putting on record the repressive policies of the Soviet era, is faced with foreign agent charges levelled by those cannot tolerate freedom of expression and the truth of the past. Last year’s laureate, Açık Radyo, broadcasting with the mantra ‘open to all sounds, colours and vibrations of the universe’, faced a silencing operation by those who fail to tolerate different voices.

We are still waiting for justice to be served for many great souls who are unlawfully kept behind bars. I would like to particularly extend my warmest love to our dearest Çiğdem, member of our award committee.

Everyone is puzzled, worried and dismayed about what the future holds in store for us.

The only way to break this spiral is to distance ourselves from all policies that preach violence, to be vigilant against these discourses, to defend the right to life instead of violence, and pluralism instead of monism.

We must raise our voices together for the sake of our children, our grandchildren. We must not remain silent. For we want a promising future for them, a future of well-being and goodness.

We demand justice.

We no longer want to see anyone crying, we no longer want to see any tears.

We call for respect to the right to life as well as to the nature.

We do want to live together.

We want solace and hope, joy and prosperity.

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’ Jeremiah 29:11

‘If I had no hope in God, my soul would faint within me.’

Distinguished guests,

As the Hrant Dink Foundation, we always stand with solidarity, benevolence, equality and justice, the right to life for the nature and for human beings. We continue our struggle for a better, peaceful, and just world and a country, where we live in peace with our neighbours, where love and respect take root instead of polarising, dividing politics.

Dear friends,

Tonight, we will once again get to know very precious people. We salute with love and respect all laureates, Inspirations as well as all people around the globe who never give up on their courage and resolve, encouraging us to ‘keep going’ in this world with hope, who does not refrain from taking risks in their quest for the truth, justice and freedom, who inspire us all with their unrelenting stance.

We would like to thank everyone for sharing this evening and hope with us.