

*Words of welcome by Pierre Schori, chairperson  
of the Olof Palme Memorial Fund, at the Award  
ceremony of the 2012 Olof Palme Prize in  
Stockholm, Sweden, 25 January 2013*

A very warm welcome, **Radhia Nasraoui** and **Samar Badawi** to this august hall, where members of the Second Chamber of the Swedish Parliament used to meet. We thank the Social Democratic Parliamentary group for hosting us here today.

A special welcome to the members of the Palme family. Welcome also to members of the Swedish government and Parliament, of the United Nations branches, the diplomatic Corps and the Ministry for foreign affairs, to former prime minister Ingvar Carlsson and his successor as leader of the Social democratic party, Stefan Löfven, to the spokesperson of Miljöpartiet, Gustaf Fridolin, and other members of political parties, trade unions, the cooperative movement, of the the National Swedish Police Board, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, welcome to representatives of international and national non-governmental organisations and the European

parliament, media, publishers and the business sector, think tanks, universities, youth, students' and women's organizations, of arts and culture, theater and film, representatives of the organization Jews for Peace between Israel and Palestine, of the Red Cross and its Center for treatment of tortured people, Save the Children, Greenpeace, the Salvation army, Amnesty, the Civil Rights Defenders and Foundation for Human Rights and all other citizens here present committed to human rights and the legacy of Olof Palme.

Dear Radhia and Samar, all of us have come here this afternoon to honour you and our absent friend, who most regrettably was not allowed to leave his country, your husband, Samar, **Waleed Sami Abu al-Khair**. You are in other words surrounded by a hard core of Swedish and international solidarity who in this moment manifest their strong support for you and your like- minded friends.

Waleed shares the disputable honour of having been denied foreign travel with a few other laureates of the Olof Palme Prize, namely Vaclac

Havel in 1989, Wei Jingsheng in 1994, Aung San Suu Kyi in 2005 and Parvin Ardalan in 2007.

The first Olof Palme Prize was awarded in 1987, to *Cyril Ramaphosa*, a prominent leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. So this is 26th time that we celebrate distinguished democrats and human and civil rights defenders. A couple of weeks ago in Ghana, I met the Palme Prize laureate of 2006, *Kofi Annan*, who sends his warm greetings to the two of you. Let me also in this context congratulate *Maj-Britt Theorin* who was awarded the Martin Luther King Prize last week by a fine coalition of Swedish NGOs.

The Olof Palme Prize should not be seen as an attack on a specific regime or country, the Prize is a sign of deeply felt solidarity with and appreciation of difficult, self-sacrificing hardships by outstanding personalities and organizations working for democratic and just societies and a better world. Any regime should be happy and proud of having such citizens in their midst.

This very day, two years ago, on 25 January 2011, the Egyptian people made their voices

heard on Tahrir square Two weeks earlier, the popular revolts in the Arab world had started in Tunisia. The fact that you, Radhia and Samar, both represent a region that is undergoing important, even historic change is a reminder to us in the so-called developed world, that change, to be credible and sustainable, must come from within and not by foreign gunships or from Western teachers.

Recent history, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, tells us that interventions and occupations fail, while homegrown, popular revolts, as in North Africa, bring hope about dignity and a better future. But history also tells us, that it is not enough to demand human rights, the talk must also be followed by credible action.

Individual autonomy is the essence of the Human Rights Charter of the United Nations. And as the Saudi scholar **Abdullah Hamidaddin** has stressed "denial of autonomy usually starts in the home". And he continues: "There is a need to accentuate the inconsistency of me raising the human rights banner in the street while forcing my daughter to into a marriage to which she does

not consent. There is a need to amplify the dissonance between me saying that I believe in human rights and at the same time that I believe in a God who punishes people for simply not believing in Him”. (End of quote)

*Maitre Radhia Nasraoui*, you are not a newcomer to this struggle, your thirty- year track record is impressive, as is your determination and courage. Together with your family, and your husband who is here with us today, you have formed a formidable team for human and civil rights.

*Waleed Sami Abu Alkhair*, lawyer and cyber activist, is of a younger generation in a younger country and he cannot be with us today, but *Samar Badawi*, his wife, colleague and fellow human rights activist, will read his message to us in a while. Waleed and his friends, two of them have come here with Samar, use extensively Facebook, Twitter and the cyberspace with their own ingenuity to share vital information and promote the universal values laid down in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, particularly the rights of both men and women, in Saudi Arabia.

When we learnt that Samar had received a Prize, International Women of Courage, in her own right, on 8 March 2012, from the hands of Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton in Washington, I was both happy and relieved. We have contributed to restoring gender equality in their family by our Prize.

Rhadia and Waleed/Samar, we thank you for what you do for your fellow citizens, for your country and for us all.

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For further information on the laureates and the Olof Palme Memorial Fund please consult [www.palmefonden.se](http://www.palmefonden.se)