



Rafto Prize 2009

**Award ceremony at the National Venue of Theatre in Bergen, Norway
Sunday, 1 November 2009**

The 2009 Rafto Prize Laureate, Malahat Nasibova Acceptance speech

I want to thank the Rafto Committee for recognizing the challenges faced by colleagues and compatriots in such an unrecognized corner of the world. I want to thank the Rafto Committee for lending its great prestige to our small struggle and for giving us hope.

I am receiving this award on behalf of all those people in Azerbaijan and around the world who are struggling for democracy, human rights and the freedom of speech. I hope the recognition we received here will bring the attention of the international community to the problems of our region.

I would like to share the joy of this moment with my colleagues Ganimat Zahid, Eynulla Fatullayev, young bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizade, and many other journalists and critical voices who cannot be here this moment, as they are in prison.

This prize will encourage me to continue to work for freedom and democracy in my country, and I hope it will encourage others. This prize means that our efforts are recognized and they are supported by the global human rights community, even if we sometimes feel they are ignored or thwarted at home.

I would like to thank my colleagues, friends and coworkers in the human rights community in Azerbaijan and at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the Turan News Agency for supporting me in my for supporting me in my work all these years, and I would like to recognize them for their bravery and commitment to human rights and democracy every day. I would like to thank the people of Norway and this wonderful city of Bergen for the hospitality and contribution to our struggle. Norway has been a champion in supporting democratic changes, human rights and freedom of speech.

Norway is not sacrificing its values for Azerbaijan's oil and gas. Norway discovered oil after building a democratic state. Azerbaijan has discovered oil much earlier, but it is yet do discover and enjoy democracy. As you can see our task is going to be harder for us. But Norway is a role model.

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I want to thank Azerbaijani people who are not giving up and they struggle to live once in a democratic society.

Let this prize give them hope.

I want to finish my speech with a tribute to one of the greatest poets of Azerbaijan Khalil Rza Uluturk, who fought for freedom. He was a voice of the nation and in this poem he spoke about the values Thorolf Rafto supported throughout his life.

Poem

Khalil Rza Uluturk
"Voice of nation"

I don't need freedom by grams and drops
I want to break the chains on my hand – just tear them off.
I don't want a liberty from someone as favor
I want it for granted like the sky, ocean or air
Move out aggressor
For I am the voice of this nation
I am not asking for stream
I am thirsty for ocean
I don't need freedom by grams and drops
I want to break the chains on my hand – just tear them off.

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