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THE
NOBEL
PEACE
PRIZE

Speech given by

Chair of The Norwegian
Nobel Committee
Berit Reiss-Andersen

Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov

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Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The “democratic peace” thesis argues that democracy is an effective defence against war and conflict. Democracies do not go to war against each other, and – with only a few exceptions – rarely go to war at all. The core value of a democracy is citizen participation in public life. In addition, it includes some freedoms, such as freedom of speech and freedom of information. This is a benefit for the individual, but it is in fact a basic prerequisite for democracy itself. Only where there is full freedom of speech and freedom of information can each and every citizen exercise their right to freely express opinions, elect leaders on an informed basis and be active participants in public debate.

For political leaders it might be irritating and very uncomfortable to be scrutinized in public. But the effect of such scrutiny is increased trust between leaders and the public at large. It is no coincidence that the same countries which score highest on the ranking of press freedom in the world also top rankings measuring to what extent people trust their governments.

Democracies come in many forms and are never entirely perfect. But it is a fact that citizen participation and the possibility of free elections and free information reduce friction among people within a state and between states. In an ideal world, democracy and basic freedoms should be available to all. Unfortunately, this is not the state of world affairs. Democracy is under pressure and in retreat. Freedom of information and freedom of speech are on the decline all over the world. Sadly, we also see democracies abandoning democratic ideals, and sliding towards authoritarianism. War and conflict do not thrive in an atmosphere where propaganda might be ridiculed, and where leaders are held accountable by the public. The planning of wars and genocides has never taken place in the limelight of the public eye. Bringing the story to the public may in itself be a prevention of war.

A free fact-based press is in the front line of efforts to defend the values of democracy, freedom of speech and information. The role of the press is to reveal aggression and abuse of power, thereby contributing to peace. This work is carried out unremittingly by journalists every day all over the world. The Nobel Peace Prize for 2021 has been awarded to two outstanding representatives of the press: Maria Ressa working in the Philippines and Dimitry Muratov working in the Russian Federation.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to focus on the link between peace and security on the one hand, and a free fact-based press that defends freedom of information and freedom of speech on the other hand.

Maria Ressa uses freedom of expression to expose abuse of power, use of violence and growing authoritarianism in her native country, the Philippines. In 2012, she co-founded Rappler, an online news website for investigative journalism, of which she is the president. Maria Ressa is a fearless defender of freedom of expression. Rappler has focused critical attention on the Duterte regime's controversial, murderous anti-drug campaign. The campaign has death tolls so high that it resembles a civil war. Ms Ressa and Rappler have also documented how social media is used to spread fake news, harass opponents and manipulate public discourse.

Dmitry Muratov stands out as one of the most prominent defenders of freedom of speech in Russia today. He is one of the founders of Novaya Gazeta and has been its editor-in-chief since 1995. Novaya Gazeta is the most independent newspaper in Russia today, with a fundamentally critical attitude towards power. The newspaper's fact-based journalism and professional integrity have made it an important source of information on aspects of Russian society rarely mentioned by other media.

Both laureates have been the object of ridicule, harassment, threats and violence as a result of their work. Being a journalist is for many a high-risk occupation. Six journalists working for Novaya Gazeta have been killed. In the Philippines, a total of 87 journalists have died in the line of duty since 1992. Maria Ressa has received death threats on public TV from the Philippine President.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all international press organizations that document and report on the working conditions of journalists.

Journalism is not always used to promote truth and peace. Sometimes the press is part of the problem, such as when helping to spread propaganda and fake news. In Rwanda, the genocide started with radio broadcasts containing hate speech against Tutsis. Hate speech, fake news and polarized public discourse are a problem in all nations today. With this year's award, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to underscore the importance of free speech and a free press in combating the destructive developments in our societies.

Maria Ressa and Dimitry Muratov are participants in a war where the written word is their weapon, where truth is their goal and every exposure of misuse of power is a victory. We need to stand on their side and support every journalist in every part of the world working for the same goals. By doing so, we are defending freedom of speech and democracy and giving peace a chance.

There is a clear connection between this year's Nobel Peace Prize and the 1935 Peace Prize awarded to Carl von Ossietzky for having exposed the illegal rearmament of the German air force. Mr Ossietzky was the editor of the German weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne*, but later perished after harsh treatment in a Nazi concentration camp. The Hitler Government refused to allow him to come to Oslo to receive his Nobel Peace Prize.

With this year's Peace Prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee honours the will of Alfred Nobel by identifying freedom of speech as a prerequisite for fostering fraternity between nations, exposing warfare and promoting disarmament.