

Dear friends,

I express my deepest gratitude for the trust, for these pleasant moments that myself and my dear ones are experiencing thanks to the people who nominated and supported my candidacy.

In the XI century there still remain countries where human rights are perceived as something harmful, evil, and human rights defenders are seen as dangerous people and are being persecuted, arrested and killed. It is regretful that situation in my country continues to raise concerns. In these moments I remember with deepest pride dozens of my friends - journalists, young activists, politicians, human rights defenders- who have been put in jail due to their conscience. I consider my name in this award as a symbolic name. I appreciate this award also as a recognition and support given to friends in prison and civil society representatives who continue their work despite the very challenging situation. In these moments of honor I also remember my colleagues who have been imprisoned in different places of the world due to their professional activity. It is regretful that in some countries being an advocate has become one of risky occupations. In my country as well, there are advocates who, even despite putting their life and freedom under risk, are carrying on their shoulders the recent years the heavy burden of defending political prisoners. They are true heroes of our times.

This award is also a tribute to them as well. When I got arrested, I received a letter from a friend of mine saying: "Our love is stronger than their hatred." A bit later she herself was also arrested. This person was Khadija Ismayilova who has become an icon of freedom of expression, an icon of courage not only in this country but also outside of Azerbaijan. Despite of the harsh censorship in prison, I receive letters full of love and support from Khadija and other friends in prison, as well as from many other friends in freedom, and from people whom I know and whom I don't know. I reply back to them with same response: "Be strong friends. Our love is stronger than their hatred because the values which we cherish are - peace, democracy and human rights. Their values are- covetousness for power and violence."

Once again, I express my deepest appreciation and respect to CCBE organization for this precious award.