

Speaker's manuscript – Peace prize 2022 Ales Bialiatski, Memorial and the Center for Civil Liberties

The Nobel Peace Prize

- The Nobel Peace Prize is one of the five prizes established by Alfred Nobel and is awarded every year on 10 December.
- Before he died on 10 December 1896, Alfred Nobel wrote in his last will that most of his fortune was to be used for the awarding of five prizes to “those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.” One of the prizes was to go to “the person who has done the most or best to advance fellowship among nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and the establishment and promotion of peace congresses.”
- This clause has been interpreted in many ways, but the prize is awarded either to people or to organisations that have done something to promote peace. Let's look a little closer at some different interpretations of peace.



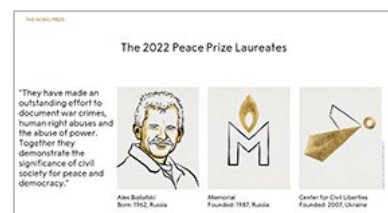
What is peace?

- What do you associate with peace?
- A narrow understanding of the concept holds that peace is the same as the absence of war. However, the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which selects the Peace Prize laureates, adopted a broad interpretation of the concept of peace right from the start, and throughout history the prize has been awarded for many different things. It has been awarded for work that is directly related to conflict resolution, such as disarmament, diplomacy and dialogue, but also for contributions to the struggle for human rights, democracy and climate.



The 2022 peace laureates

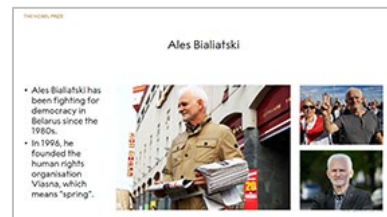
- The Peace Prize for 2022 is awarded to one individual and two organisations: Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organisation Memorial and the Ukrainian human rights organisation Center for Civil Liberties.
- Bialiatski was born in Russia to Belarusian parents. The family later returned to Belarus.



- According to the announcement by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, the laureates have been selected for their work to promote human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence in the neighbouring countries of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. This year's prize is therefore particularly closely linked to Alfred Nobel's vision of peace between peoples and countries – what he called “fellowship among nations”.
- For many years, the three laureates have been standing up for the right to criticise the powerful and in defence of citizens' fundamental human rights. They have made extraordinary contributions to documenting war crimes, human rights violations and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate how important civil society is for peace and democracy.

Ales Bialiatski

- Ales Bialiatski has been fighting for democracy in Belarus since the 1980s. In 1996, he founded the human rights organisation Viasna, which means “spring”. Among other things, the organisation has worked to document and protest against the authorities' use of torture against political prisoners.
- Bialiatski has been punished for his work, including being imprisoned between 2011 and 2014. In 2020 he was arrested again after demonstrating against the regime.
- At the time of the announcement of the prize, Ales Bialiatski was still being held in prison without having been convicted of a crime.



Memorial

- Memorial is an organisation founded in 1987 to collect and document violations of human rights committed by the authorities of the former Soviet Union. Memorial believes that we must confront the crimes of the past if we are to prevent the commission of new ones in the future.
- Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Memorial has developed into one of the largest human rights organisations in Russia. In addition to collecting important information on victims of the Soviet regime, they document political oppression and human rights violations in today's Russia. Memorial is also a powerful voice in the struggle against militarism and the effort to promote human rights and the rule of law.
- The organisation was banned by the Supreme Court of Russia in December 2021.



Center for Civil Liberties

- The Center for Civil Liberties is a Ukrainian human rights organisation that was founded in 2007. Prior to Russia's invasion, the organisation was working to promote democracy in Ukraine. They have striven to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and develop Ukraine into a state governed by the rule of law.



- Since the onset of war in February 2022, the organisation has also been working to document Russian war crimes against the civilian population of Ukraine.

“Common people have a much greater impact than they can even imagine.”

- The quotation comes from an interview given by Oleksandra Matviychuk, Head of the Board of the Center for Civil Liberties, the day after the announcement of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022.
- When asked what brings her hope, she replies, “Ordinary people.” Although the challenges might seem insurmountable, change is possible – if people work together. “Mobilisation of common people can change world history quicker than UN intervention,” says Oleksandra Matviychuk.

