

Fritz-Bauer-Award 2014 to Edward Snowden

EDWARD SNOWDEN'S REMARKS TO HUMANISTISCHE UNION

It is an honor to have the opportunity tonight to address so many at the Humanistische Union who have been working so hard for so long on the issue of human rights. I apologize for my inability to attend in person, but regrettably I am told I am today still barred from entering Germany.

Yet this is not, I think, a cause for dismay, because the fact that this prohibition occurs at the same time the Parliament wishes to interview me speaks, I think, speaks to us much more clearly than any statement I might make. By any measure, the last year was a significant one for civil society, but it was only a beginning, and our most important work lies still ahead. I suspect we will remember the last year less for the changes in our policies than for the changing of our minds.

What we have, as a public, accomplished in one year is to reveal to the world the reality of new restrictions on our rights, on our freedom to speak and associate, even to think and to be. But more critically, we revealed that it is not we the people who changed, but our policies, and that this occurred in secret, without neither public consent nor debate. This clandestine movement of government away from the participatory state toward one that is closed and technocratic, I think, cannot survive the light thrust upon it. We say, "Always a citizen, never a subject."

And while it is true we will not correct these excesses today or tomorrow or in a month, it is becoming ever more clear that the work of a generation has begun, and those gathered here represent the vanguard of our rights, a union of people who recall that security has never in history been bought at the price of lost liberty. As we saw just this week, when Der Spiegel revealed in new detail how the German government was knowingly complicit in weakening privacy laws for the benefit of American intelligence agencies, the reporting will continue, and so will the work of reform.

Today, we know more than we did yesterday. Yes, we know that the domain of our liberties has been narrowed, but we now also see the dawn of opportunity. We know that we have arrived at a shining new moment to realize for those that will come after us to enjoy the same rights which we inherited.

Together, we can restore the balance of freedom not just for our States or our selves, but for the family of the future, our broader body of humanity.

It is my great honor to work alongside of you, and I thank you very much for your efforts and support.

Moscow, 21st June