

Malala, Satyarthi win Nobel Peace Prize

10 October 2014, by Mark Lewis



In this file photo taken Friday, Oct. 11, 2013, Malala Yousafzai speaks about her fight for girls' education on the International Day of the Girl at the World Bank in Washington. Teenage activist Malala Yousafzai has jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize for her "heroic struggle" for girls' rights to education, it is announced Friday Oct. 10, 2014. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

Taliban attack survivor Malala Yousafzai became the youngest Nobel winner ever as she and Kailash Satyarthi of India won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for working to protect children from slavery, extremism and child labor at great risk to their own lives.

By honoring a 17-year-old Muslim girl from Pakistan and a 60-year-old Hindu man from India, the Norwegian Nobel Committee linked the peace award to conflicts between world religions and neighboring nuclear powers as well as drawing attention to children's rights.

"This award is for all those children who are voiceless, whose voices need to be heard," said Malala, who chose to finish her school day in the central English city of Birmingham before addressing the media. "They have the right to receive quality education. They have the right not to suffer from child labor, not to suffer from child

trafficking. They have the right to live a happy life."

She said it was an honor to share the prize Satyarthi, who has worked tirelessly to protect children, and invited the prime ministers of both India and Pakistan to attend the Nobel ceremony in December.

Satyarthi has been at the forefront of a global movement to end child slavery and exploitative child labor, which he called a "blot on humanity."

"Child slavery is a crime against humanity. Humanity itself is at stake here. A lot of work still remains, but I will see the end of child labor in my lifetime," Satyarthi told The Associated Press at his office in New Delhi.

News of the award set off celebrations on the streets of Mingora, Malala's hometown in Pakistan's volatile Swat Valley, with residents greeting each other and distributing sweets. At the town's Khushal Public School, which is owned by Malala's father, students danced in celebration Friday, jumping up and down.

When she was a student there, Malala was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman two years ago for insisting that girls as well as boys have the right to an education. Surviving several operations with the help of British medical care, she continued both her activism and her studies.

Malala was in chemistry class when the Nobel was announced and remained with her classmates at the Edgbaston High School for girls.

Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, said the decision will further the rights of girls.

"(The Nobel will) boost the courage of Malala and enhance her capability to work for the cause of girls' education," he told the AP.

Malala is by far the youngest Nobel laureate, eight years younger than the 1915 physics prize winner,

25-year-old Lawrence Bragg. Before Malala, the youngest peace prize winner was 2011 co-winner Tawakkul Karman of Yemen, a 32-year-old women's rights activist.

In Washington, President Barack Obama called the Nobel announcement "a victory for all who strive to uphold the dignity of every human being."

"Malala and Kailash have faced down threats and intimidation, risking their own lives to save others and build a better world for future generations," he said in a statement.



Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi gestures as he addresses the media at his office in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 10, 2014. Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Satyarthi of India jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, Oct. 10, 2014, for risking their lives to fight for children's rights. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

In a tweet, first lady Michelle Obama said of the two: "You're heroes to me and millions around the world."

Norwegian Nobel Committee chairman Thorbjørn Jagland said it was important to reward both an Indian Hindu and a Pakistani Muslim in the common struggle for education and against extremism. The two will split \$1.1 million.

"There is a lot of extremism coming from this part of the world. It is partly coming from the fact that

young people don't have a future. They don't have education. They don't have a job," Jagland told the AP.

Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said the decision "has given pride to the whole of Pakistan." India's President Pranab Mukherjee said the prize recognized "the contributions of India's vibrant civil society in addressing complex social problems such as child labor."

By highlighting children's rights, the committee widened the scope of the peace prize, which in its early days was only given for efforts to end or prevent armed conflicts.

"In conflict-ridden areas in particular, the violation of children leads to the continuation of violence from generation to generation," the Nobel committee said.

Commentators around the world praised the decision to focus on children's rights.

"The biggest threat to the Taliban is a girl with a book," said Margot Wallstrom, Sweden's foreign minister and a former U.N. envoy on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

"The true winners today are the world's children," said U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Raised in Pakistan's ruggedly beautiful, politically volatile Swat Valley, Malala was barely 11 years old when she began championing girls' education, speaking out in TV interviews. The Taliban had overrun her hometown of Mingora, terrorizing residents, threatening to blow up girls' schools, ordering teachers and students into all-encompassing burqas.

She was critically injured on Oct. 9, 2012, when a Taliban gunman boarded her school bus and shot her in the head. She survived through luck—the bullet did not enter her brain—and by the quick intervention of British doctors visiting Pakistan.



In this Feb. 18, 2014 file photo, Malala Yousafzai, visits Zaatari refugee camp near the Syrian border in Mafraq, Jordan. Children's rights activists Yousafzai, 17, of Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi of India were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize Friday, Oct. 10, 2014. (AP Photo/Mohammad Hannon, File)

Flown to Britain for treatment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, she underwent numerous surgeries but made a strong recovery. Malala now lives with her father, mother and two brothers in Birmingham. She has been showered with human rights prizes, including the European Parliament's Sakharov Award.

Yet her memoir, "I Am Malala," published last year, reminded the world that she was still just a teenager—one who likes TV shows such as "Ugly Betty" and the cooking show "MasterChef," who worries about her clothes and her hair and wishes she was taller.

The Nobel committee said Satyarthi was carrying on the tradition of another great Indian, Mahatma Gandhi, who remains the most notable omission in the 113-year history of the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Showing great personal courage, Kailash Satyarthi, maintaining Gandhi's tradition, has headed various forms of protests and demonstrations, all peaceful, focusing on the grave exploitation of children for financial gain," the committee said.

A.N.S. Ahmed, a well-known sociologist in India, said the award should prod the Indian government to do more in a country where a large number of children must support their families by engaging in dangerous jobs.



Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi gestures as he addresses the media at his office in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 10, 2014. Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Satyarthi of India jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, Oct. 10, 2014, for risking their lives to fight for children's rights. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)

"The award will have a deep impact not just on the Indian government, but also on the civil society, to work with passion and improve the condition of children by enforcing their rights," he said.

The founder of the Nobel Prizes, Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, said the prize should go to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

The committee has interpreted those instructions differently over time, widening the concept of peace work to include efforts to improve human rights, fight poverty and clean up the environment.



In this file photo taken Friday, Sept. 27, 2013, Malala Yousafzai listens as Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust introduces her to reporters at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. Children's rights activists Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi of India and have won the Nobel Peace Prize. (AP Photo/Jessica Rinaldi, File)

The Nobel Prizes in medicine, chemistry, physics and literature were announced earlier this week. The economics award will be announced on Monday.

All awards will be handed out on Dec. 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death in 1896.

© 2014 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

APA citation: Malala, Satyarthi win Nobel Peace Prize (2014, October 10) retrieved 23 May 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-10-malala-satyarthi-nobel-peace-prize.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.