

Tomislav Kezarovski Journalist from Macedonia

Eines ist sicher: Auf die „Auszeichnung“ als „einzigster politischer Gefangener Südosteuropas“ hätte Tomislav Kezarovski wohl gerne verzichtet.



Tomislav Kezarovski

One thing is certain: Being called “the only political prisoner of Southeastern Europe” is a title Tomislav Kezarovski could have done without.

To avoid it, the 52-year old investigative journalist should have listened to the warning from an acquaintance working at the Macedonian Ministry of the Interior.

Nevertheless, he kept researching the fatal accident of publisher Nikol Mladenov – a critic of the government – in March 2013, until he fell victim to the pro-government Macedonian judiciary.

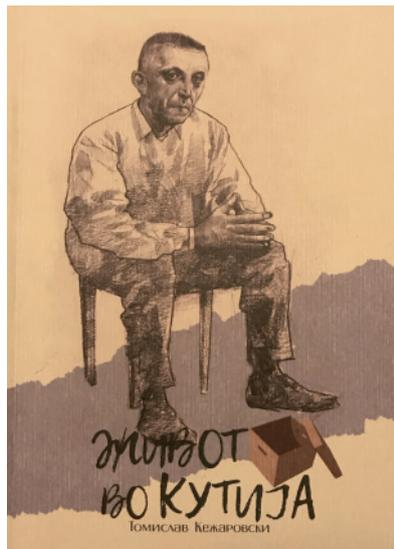
International pressure forced the authorities to reduce the initial 4-year prison sentence by half. However, following his release, the journalist could not find another job, whilst his wife as well as his brother were dismissed from their civil service jobs. One of the last critical voices in the Macedonian media was being silenced.

Since the end of August, Tomislav Kezarovski has been the Foundation’s guest. During this time, he has – amongst other things – finished writing a shocking account of the

scandalous conditions in prison that are unacceptable for an aspiring EU member state: “My Life in a Box”.

Now, there is every indication that not only Tomislav Kezarovski, but maybe even his home country Macedonia are heading towards recovery and reconciliation. The new government in Skopje has promised to do away with corruption and harassment, having been in contact with journalists and other members of the opposition who have taken refuge in Germany.

So far, however, Tomislav Kezarovski has not been rehabilitated by the Macedonian judiciary. To also bring this fact to mind, he took the risk and travelled to Skopje in mid-November. In front of 500 invited guests and with standing ovations, the former political prisoner presented his book.



These are first signs of a Macedonian spring – but the brave journalist remains cautious. From the safety of Hamburg, he wants to keep fighting for his rehabilitation as well as for a proper trial of the former government’s responsible parties.

Editorial



Martina Bäurle

Every year in December, the Executive Board selects the Foundation’s new fellows.

The previous weeks are always the same, similar to a puzzle: Asking applicants for personal documents and data in “plain text“ is often a high risk. Local authorities must under no circumstances be alarmed.

Nevertheless, we need this information. Due to the limited number of fellowships, we have to set priorities. Those, whose lives are in grave danger need our immediate help.

For us, the weeks following our invitations are emotionally the most demanding: Only when our new guests have safely arrived in Hamburg can we breathe a sigh of relief.

And from this day onward, it is about providing them with a sense of safety beyond the duration of the fellowship. Even after they’ve returned, they remain important to us: as members of our worldwide network of transnational cooperation and – more importantly – as close personal relations with individuals. To be able to fulfil this task, we need your help!

Sincerely yours,
Martina Bäurle

This year ...



Niklas Pawelzik, student intern with the Foundation from October to November 2017, with Aleksei Bobrovnikov (Ukraine)

From lecture hall to real life: My internship with the Foundation

My specific request to the Hamburg Foundation: I wanted to experience their work and the people first-hand. Meeting all these courageous people has had a deep impact on me.

From theory to practice, it was a time of unfamiliar tasks. All too easily, we forget about the individuals behind each piece of news and each political crisis. Individuals, who desperately want to regain control of their lives and who are lucky to get assistance from organizations such as the Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted Persons.

During the internship, I have researched and documented the lives of new fellowship nominees. Now, I am eager to know about the Board's selection for 2018. I know now, how painful this task is. This is also an experience I will always remember.

I could not have made a better choice for my internship placement than to take the leap from the lecture hall towards people, who – against the establishment and government authorities – courageously stand up for freedom, for human rights and democratic reforms. I owe great thanks to all those, who have let me be a part of their lives for a short while.

Sincerely yours,
Niklas Pawelzik



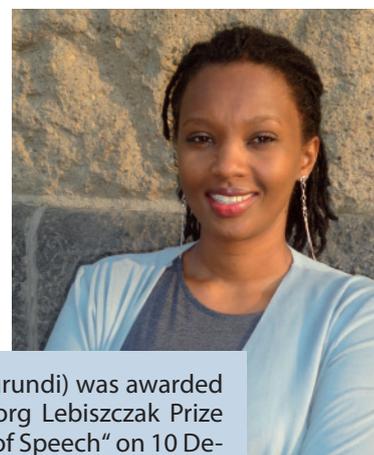
... Humayro Bakhtyar (Tajikistan) and Ananya Azad (Bangladesh) met with the President of the Hamburg City Parliament Carola Veit as well as with about 200 Hamburg school students. Within the scope of the „Hamburg Exile Days“, both of them talked about „What young people dream of“.



... Syrian writer Rosa Yassin Hassan read from her novel „Guardians of the Air“ on five Hamburg stages, supported by German actors Astrid Krämer and Hans Heller.



... skiing season has begun for Jahangir Akash (Bangladesh) and his family in his new home in Norway!



... Ines Gakiza (Burundi) was awarded with the „Dr. Georg Lebiszczak Prize for the Freedom of Speech“ on 10 December in Vienna at the „This Human World“ film festival.

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