I feel honored to be nominated by the RAFTO Foundation for 2017 RAFTO Prize. Way back in 2006 I was awarded the eleventh the **Ludovic Trarieux International Human Rights Prize** but since my travel documents were deprived to me from 2004 to 2016 without any reason and rhyme, so I was unable to attend the award function and other important international conferences but now I am glad that I am here, as my travel documents were issued after the intervention of the UN Special Rapporteur of Human Rights Defenders. Not withstanding, there is always uncertainty whether the Govt. of India will allow to travel outside as last year while attending the UN Human Rights Commission, my colleague Khurram Parvez, the program coordinator of JKCCS was prevented from going to Geneva and later detained in Kashmir for two and a half months without trial and chargesheet.

In Bergen, attending this scintillating award ceremony is an honor and I really feel excited that I am here amidst the people who have bestowed the honor to the people struggling against injustice and for the promotion of peace.

The RAFTO Award means many things for us. It is acknowledgement of the struggle of people who are speaking truth to power in a conflict area. It will enhance the visibility of the activists struggling against impunity and injustice. The award is a message to the Government who have hitherto succeeded in ex-communicating the activists of the conflict area from the countries concerned about Human Rights. Further it will be an inspiration for the younger generation whose work is ignored by the world outside. The award we hope shall protect the space civil society has created in the conflict area and above all, I am hopeful that it would provide some sort of security to the activists working there. Acting in an area, where fear has been used as the most successful weapon of war by the government.

Unfortunately the conflict in Kashmir is likely to continue meaning the Human Right Violations and suppression and oppression by the state shall continue and the activists shall be the target as they have been in the past. So, in the era of Global Civil Society, the Civil Society in Europe has to play a very important role for International Humanitarian intervention. It is definitely to make a difference when there is concern over the massive violations perpetrated on the people of Kashmir.

At the end I will quote:

*“We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Whenever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must- at that moment- become the center of the universe.”*

 Elie Wiesel, The Night Trilogy: Night/Dawn/The Accident