**Nobel Peace Prize 2021**

[**Atle Hetland**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/atle-hetland)

October 14, 2021

It is only the third time in the history of the Nobel Peace Prize that journalism and media have been awarded the prize. In all 107 individuals and 28 organisations have received the prize since it was introduced in 1901. 17 laureates have been women. The winner of this year’s prize was announced in Oslo on October 8, 2021.

We remember that Malala Yousafzai received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, and she was the youngest ever to receive it at the age of 17. It was probably just as well that the Norwegian Nobel Committee did not award this year’s prize to Greta Thunberg, who is only 18, for her impressive work as an environmental activist, challenging world leaders and the rest of us; most recently even getting support from UK’s Prince Charles. She would have been a worthy winner, but let them wait a bit, and not put such a heavy burden on her young shoulders, as they did with Malala.

The Nobel Peace Prize this year went to two mature people, the long-time journalist Maria Ressa, 58, CEO of the online paper ‘Rappler’ in The Philippines. She is Philippine-American and has worked for CNN as an investigative reporter. She shares the Prize with Dimitry Muratov, 59, Editor-in-chief of ‘Novaya Gazeta’, the main independent newspapers in Russia. The Norwegian Nobel Committee said that the winners were awarded the prize “for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace”.

[Manchester City forward Torres faces foot injury](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/manchester-city-forward-torres-faces-foot-injury)

The Prize will not quite change the lives of the seasoned journalists, but it will help them to continue their work more vigorously, with greater confidence and with less fear. They are driven, selfless and brave people. Even those who don’t like what they do, those whose secrets and power abuse get revealed cannot but admire them. That was probably a reason for a spokesperson for the Russian Presidency to extend congratulations to Muratov. In The Philippines, the President is not likely to extend congratulations to Ressa because he has already warned her, that if she ‘oversteps’ her activities, he would personally take action.

Maria Ressa was nominated for the Prize by Jonas Ghar Støre, a former Norwegian minister of Foreign Affairs and Health, inter alia, and from today the new Norwegian Prime Minister. Only a limited group of people can nominate candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize, among them Norwegian MNAs. This year, 329 persons and organisations were nominated.

[French court orders state to fix climate damage](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/french-court-orders-state-to-fix-climate-damage)

Since the Nobel Peace Prize is so big and important, ‘everyone’ has an opinion about who should receive it. This year, though, it seems that most are happy with the choice of the independent Norwegian Nobel Committee’s five members, and a sizable staff who works full-time throughout the year. Before the prize was announced, the media was tipped as a possible winner this year, perhaps emphasising the essential role of the established media in a time of the new and untidy social media, and fake news, too. Some suggested that media practitioners and organisations were good candidates, but some said they did not want UN and similar organisations to win just for doing their work well. They rather wanted media practitioners, organisations or individuals, to be recognised. This year’s winners are certainly unique in themselves but they can also be seen as examples, representing many unnamed and uncelebrated colleagues and organisations. We should remember that the media is the essential ‘forth estate’ in any country, in addition to the three other formal bodies of power, the parliament, the government and the judiciary.

[Prices of petroleum products in Pakistan likely to increase from October 16: sources](https://nation.com.pk/15-Oct-2021/prices-of-petroleum-products-in-pakistan-likely-to-increase-from-october-16)

Fredrik S Heffermehl, a retired Norwegian lawyer and author of three excellent critical books about the Nobel Peace Prize, says about this year’s prize that it cannot quite be justified by Alfred Nobel’s will, which says that the prize should be awarded to person/s or organisation/s who in the past year best have worked for reducing standing armies in the world, and contributed to holding peace conferences. Heffermehl wrote in an email to me a few days ago that there would have been thousands of worthy candidates within the media sector, even if the statues were followed. He stresses that the prize is not a general prize for ‘doing good in the world’; it is legally a specific prize against war and for disarmament and peace. Interestingly, Alfred Nobel wrote in 1895 in a private letter from Paris to a cousin at home in Stockholm that he wanted to buy a liberal newspaper so he could end war and other leftovers from the Middle-Ages.

The chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen, stressed passionately in the announcement and her comments afterward, that without a free, independent and professional press, there cannot be a thriving democracy—and no peace. For a Norwegian, this is easy to say since Norway ranks number one on the Freedom of Press Index 2021, prepared by Reporters without Borders (RSB). Yet, Reiss-Andersen noted that there is still room for improvements also in her country.

[Netflix reduces prices for viewers in Pakistan](https://nation.com.pk/14-Oct-2021/netflix-reduces-prices-for-viewers-in-pakistan)

In Pakistan, I believe the media is better than its international reputation, and better than what RSB believes. I have earlier written in an article or two that I am impressed by many journalists’ competence and work, at least in the English language media, which I read. Their skills are as good, and even better than those of many researchers and social scientists at universities; and students are sometimes sharper than their teachers.

As I mentioned above, even those in power, who sometimes don’t always like what the journalists do, yet, they also realise that they need the journalists. I am sure that they are often impressed by their work. We all realise what Reiss-Andersen said, notably that freedom of expression and the media are essential for democracy and peace. True, there will always be some tension with those in power, as there should be; if not, they must not become advertising agencies and entertainment bureaus.

We live in a time when the media volume is at its highest ever, indeed so when we include social media and other digital communication. There are many advantages of this, important to democracy and peace. Yet, there are also many issues that must be studied, discussed and regularised. I believe we will see major changes in the next decades.

[COAS Bajwa visits Army Air Defence centre in Karachi, pays homage to martyrs at Yadgar-e-Shuhada](https://nation.com.pk/14-Oct-2021/coas-bajwa-visits-army-air-defence-centre-in-karachi-pays-homage-to-martyrs-at-yadgar-e-shuhada)

Since the world becomes more complicated, and the powerful gains more power, we need counter expertise and independent analysis, indeed as regards climate change and environmental issues, economic issues, corruption and tax havens, inequality and development for some and underdevelopment for others. This is all needed for safeguarding a peaceful future. Existing investigative and other serious journalism is just a beginning. We also need institutions to carry out research and analyses, and we need many people to be involved in the time-consuming and specialised work. Some of this work should be delegated to media institutions and groups. And then, we must not forget that mass media and technology must not stand in the way for direct people-contact, seminars, discussions, small local initiatives, big movements, civil society and political activities, with or against political parties, and so on. We have a busy time ahead, and I believe the Nobel Peace Prize 2021 has given us important encouragement.