

BSF 2024 Distinguished Partner Award

Alexei Navalny "It is Better to Die Standing up (for your Beliefs) than Live on your Knees"



Photo: ACF archive

and an inspiration to people fighting for justice in oppressive regimes.

Navalny rose to prominence as a charismatic social and political leader at the time Putin first assumed power in Russia. Navalny was an outspoken critic of corruption and authoritarianism, and a believer in the power of ordinary citizens to effect change through civic engagement and political participation. Through his actions he inspired a new generation of opposition activists.

Political repressions against Navalny culminated in his long-term imprisonment following a narrowly survived poisoning attempt in 2020. Even with him in prison, the Kremlin felt threatened by his charisma and influence, indicating the extent to which he has challenged the status quo. Alexei Navalny died in prison on 16 February 2024.

Yet death did not extinguish his light. Navalny's story is a poignant reminder of the dangers of authoritarianism and the importance of defending democratic institutions everywhere. In the context of this year's Bled Strategic Forum theme, "A World of Parallel Realities," the life of Alexei Navalny serves

as a stark contrast to the parallel reality of Russia propagated by the Kremlin. While Navalny fought for an open, dynamic and collaborative Russia, it has been anything but that under Vladimir Putin. Russia has become increasingly isolated, contributing to the destabili-

zation and political polarization of the rest of the world. Nevertheless, Navalny's lifelong pursuit of freedom and accountability stands as a beacon of hope for activists fighting oppression. ■



Photo: ACF archive

This year, the Bled Strategic Forum's Distinguished Partner Award is posthumously given to Alexei Navalny, to honor the memory of this prominent Russian opposition leader. Navalny's work was dedicated to exposing and challenging the Kremlin's corruption, impunity, and abuse of power. His courage and unwavering determination in championing democratic principles, transparency, and accountability, was an example to many, and he will remain a towering figure



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