

PRESS RELEASE**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung gives Human Rights Award 2020 to Zoran Zaev**

On the second anniversary of signing the Prespa Agreement, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung announces that Zoran Zaev will be awarded the Human Rights Award 2020. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung honours Mr. Zaev's personal commitment to the conclusion of the Agreement and his efforts towards a European future and a free and open society. Zoran Zaev is former Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia and President of the Social Democratic Union of North Macedonia. The official award ceremony is planned to be held in Berlin later this year.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung presents Mr. Zaev with the award in recognition of his contribution to peace policy, based on the conclusion of the Friendship Agreement with Bulgaria in 2017 and the Prespa Agreement with Greece in 2018. As stipulated in the Prespa Agreement, the name of the country was changed and thus the name dispute finally resolved, so that, after 27 years, the blockade on North Macedonia's NATO membership and on the start of EU accession negotiations could be lifted. Both agreements represent crucial milestones on the way to better living conditions for the citizens. With his willingness to make reasoned decisions that not everyone approves of, Mr. Zaev has shown that they are more important to him than his own political fate.

Kurt Beck, Chairman of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, particularly pointed out Mr. Zaev's achievements with regard to Europe: "Mr. Zaev is committed to a free, open and social society. His determined reform policy has not only contributed to peace and stability, but also taken North Macedonia a huge step towards the EU."

Mr. Zaev already played a crucial role during his time as opposition leader. During the "Colourful Revolution", he advocated for the rule of law and initiated peaceful re-elections. As Prime Minister, he set new standards, especially in the area of social policy. He raised the minimum wage by 60%, increased social benefits, and improved the salaries of medical staff and doctors.

After many years of authoritarian regression in the region, Zoran Zaev personally represents a shift in direction, offering hope to progressive forces in Southeast Europe. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung honours Mr. Zaev's extraordinary achievement by awarding him the Human Rights Award 2020.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Human Rights Award was first presented in 1994, based on the legacy of Karl and Ida Feist from Hamburg. The couple had written in their will that the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung should administer their estate and use it for an annual award for persons or organisations who have made a special contribution to human rights in different regions of the world. The annual award includes a monetary prize of €10.000. Last year, it was awarded to Miriam Miranda, a women's and environmental rights activist from Honduras.

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