

## Turkish Novelist Burhan Sönmez to Recieve the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation's "Disturbing the Peace" Award

For Immediate Release

New York, NY, September 6, 2017—The Kurdish novelist **Burhan Sönmez** is 2017 recipient of the **Disturbing the Peace Award**, the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation announced today. The Disturbing the Peace Award is awarded annually to a distinguished writer of fiction, literary nonfiction, biography, memoir, or drama, who is courageous in dissent and has been punished for challenging an oppressive regime.

Sönmez, a human rights lawyer, was severely beaten and left for dead by security forces while taking part in a demonstration in his native Turkey in 1996. While receiving treatment in the United Kingdom, he began to write novels and to date has published *Kuzey (North)* (2009); *Masumlar (Sins and Innocents)* (2011), which received the Sedat Simavi Literature Award; and *Istanbul, Istanbul* (2015). Sönmez's works have been published in thirty-one languages, including English. He currently lives in Istanbul.

**Ian Buruma**, the editor of the *New York Review of Books*, will present the award to Sönmez at a ceremony on **September 28 at 8:00 p.m. at the Bohemian National Hall in New York**. The award ceremony will take place on the second night of "Rehearsal For Truth," a festival of Central European theater in honor of Vaclav Havel. The award includes a \$5,000 cash prize.

"We are thrilled to honor one of Turkey's most distinguished writers, who has fearlessly stood up for the democratic values that Vaclav Havel espoused," said the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation executive director, Pavla Niklova, in announcing the prize.

Nominations for the award are collected each year from international institutions prominent in literature and human rights. In 2017, the VHLF consulted with the following organizations: **Amnesty International, Index on Censorship, PEN International, Vaclav Havel Library** and **Words without Borders**.

Sönmez was selected as recipient of this year's Disturbing the Peace Award by a jury consisting of Burmese writer and physician Ma Thida, who was last year's award recipient; Canadian translator and author Paul Wilson; and Bosnian-born novelist Aleksandar Hemon.

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation, located in New York, promotes and preserves Vaclav Havel's legacy in the United States. As a playwright, the former president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, and a leading dissident during the Communist period in Eastern Europe, Havel has had a profound influence on generations of writers and political activists worldwide.

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