

# Václav Havel

LIBRARY FOUNDATION

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## Dmitri Strotsev Wins the 2021 Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk

June 29, 2021

The Vaclav Havel Library Foundation announced today that the winner of the 2021 Disturbing the Peace Award to a Courageous Writer at Risk is Belarusian poet and publisher Dmitri Strotsev,. The award is given annually to support a talented creative writer who has suffered persecution because of his or her outspoken commitment to human rights.

Since the mid-2000s, Strotsev has chronicled state repression in Belarus in poetic form. Strotsev has helped lead the unprecedented popular movement that emerged in 2020 to challenge the repressive regime of President Alexander Lukashenko, often called Europe's last dictator. He describes the political crisis in Belarus in his poetic cycle *Belarus Overturned*, which is written in a unique style that he calls "poetic reportage." Strotsev's cycle has been a sensation in both Belarus and internationally and has been translated into more than fifteen languages.

In October 2020, Strotsev was kidnapped and interrogated by the Belarus KGB. He was sentenced to thirteen days of administrative arrest and confined to a punishment cell. Since his release from prison, Strotsev has continued to work on *Belarus Overturned*. He received the Norwegian Authors' Union Freedom of Speech Award with Belarusian poet Hanna Komar in 2020.

Strotsev is the author of seventeen books of poetry. He has published samizdat literature of the Soviet period and works by Minsk poets, including Belarusian and Yiddish authors of the interwar period and victims of Stalinist repression.

Previous recipients of the Disturbing the Peace Award are Cuban author Angel Santiesteban Prats (2020), Turkish writer and journalist Aslı Erdoğan (2019), Chinese author and poet Liao Yiwu (2018), Kurdish novelist Burhan Sönmez (2017), and Burmese writer Ma Thida (2016).

Serving on the jury for this year's award were Angel Santiesteban Prats, a renowned Cuban short-story writer, social commentator, and blogger, last year's awardee, together with his wife Camila Acosta Rodriguez, independent journalist; Jiri Pehe, director of NYU Prague, author of six books on politics and four novels; and Lila Azam Zanganeh, writer, recipient of the Roger Shattuck Prize, a global ambassador for Libraries Without Borders.

Dmitri Strotsev will receive the Disturbing the Peace Award from Polish writer and former dissident Adam Michnik during the Vaclav Havel Library Foundation gala evening on September 23, 2020, at the Bohemian National Hall in New York City.

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