

# *National Herald*

## Hero Journalist James Foley Honored by Washington OXI Day Foundation

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WASHINGTON , DC – The 4th annual gala of the Washington OXI Day foundation filled the magnificent Great Hall of the U.S. Institute for Peace with Greek-Americans and philhellenes celebrating past and contemporary heroes of the fight for freedom and democracy around the world.

OXI Day recognizes October 28, 1949, when John Metaxas, the Prime Minister of Greece, told a representative the Mussolini government, nazi Germany's ally, "that Greece would not surrender. Subsequently, Greece inspired the world as the first country to stop the Axis horror, inflicting a wound that was instrumental to Hitler's ultimate defeat."

Among the recipients of awards were Shimon Perez, the former president of Israel, John and Diane Foley in honor of their son, the late journalist James Foley, whose life was taken by the forces of ISIS in Syria, Ruslana Lyzhychko of Ukraine, and Dr. Takis Koulouvaris on behalf of the Mobile Medical Units of Greece, winners of the first annual Stavros Niarchos Foundation Philotimo Award.

The guests were welcomed by Andy Manatos, the founder and president of the Foundation and of the National Coordinated Effort of Hellenes, who shared MC duties with his son, Mike Manatos.

The invocation was offered by Fr. Alexander Karloutsos, Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who asked God to endow those present with the power of philotimo, and to "enable us to always stand with those who courageously say no – OXI – against evil forces, inhumane actions, and the barbaric acts that threaten our very freedoms."

Ambassador Christos Panagopoulos of Greece followed greetings and declared that after OXI day, Greek philotimo "made the difference and gave the world confidence that the darkness could be defeated."

A trailer of the Foundation's film "Philotimo, The Greek Secret," was shown with excerpts of leading Greek-Americans expressing what that untranslatable word – the usual English phrase "love of honor" does not do it justice– means to them.

The video message of President Peres, who was presented the Chysostomos Award, named for the Archbishop of Greece who risked his life by standing up to the nazi terror and saved the lives of Greek Jews, was the first of many highlights.

He said "I am very touched," and proceeded to reveal strong personal and ideological connections with the spirit of OXI Day.

Perez' father joined the British Army and fought the fascists in Greece, and when his life was in danger he was given shelter for two years by monks. Perez said his father was very taken by the support of the Greek people and would often sing Greek songs to the children in his family.

The ideological connection was through his mentor, David Ben Gurion, Israel's first president. Perez explained with emotion that later in life Ben Gurion decided to learn to read Greek "because he thought something was missing our history" of great kings and prophets – the story of statesmen. He studied Greek philotimo to learn what it was like to be the head of a state," Perez said.

President Bill Clinton also addressed the gathering – by video. It was he who nominated this year's recipient of the OXI Day Award. "As a journalist, he took on the important job of shining a light on some of the darkest parts of the world...he fought always to bring us the truth....Just as the Greek Prime Minister in 1941 answered the Axis forces' request for surrender with one word – OXI – James Foley said NO to the forces of destruction, division and domination. His life is a model of what a 21st century citizen ought to be, and now it's our turn to model his story, and share it with others."

The crowd's loud applause carried over into their welcome for Foley's parents, John and Diane Foley. They thanked everyone and spoke of their son's sense of mission, and the humanitarian light that shined throughout his captivity, sustained by the prayers of others, and his own faith and praying, which fueled the comfort he offered his fellow captives.

Andreas Dracopoulos, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Director and Co-president, introduced Dr. Koulouvaris, who presented a video and spoke about the vital work during the crisis in the most remote islands of Greece of the Mobile Medical Units.

George Logothetis, Chairman and CEO of the Libra Group, who gave the Keynote Speech, declared that philotimo is what binds together 20 million Greeks in a world of 7 billion people. He offered as prime example of philotimo two of this year's recipients of the Libra Group's Hellenic Entrepreneurship Award, who said they were honored to be named, but returned the monetary prize so that others might be helped.

Ambassador Melanne Verveer, the Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, introduced Lyzhychko, who communicated live via skype. The Ukrainian pop star, who had received death threats when she refused to stop participating in demonstrations in her homeland, has been called "The Soul of Ukraine's Revolution."

B. Theodore Bozonelis, a trustee of the Nicholas J. and Anna K. Bouras Foundation announced the winner of the new Philotimo Scholarship Award.

Among the dignitaries were retired U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes, Congressman John Sarbanes and Greece's former Ambassador to the U.S. Vassilis Kaskarellis,

Sophia Pelekakis opened the program with a thrilling rendition of the national anthems and the evening concluded with a moving benediction by R. Steven Zorzos, Dean of St. Sophia Cathedral.