

AISS Director: Why we choose to honour HE Edi Rama?

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure for us at the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) to welcome you to our most cherished event, the annual Avicenna Peace Award ceremony. For the third year, we are hosting the ceremony in this beautiful place of worship in London, one of the greatest cities in the world. The first three award ceremonies took place in our own beautiful office in Kabul, at the Nine Towers Fortress.

Tonight, we celebrate an honourable statesman and remarkable individual: His Excellency, Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania.

After extensive research and consultation, our jury has recommended His Excellency as the recipient of the sixth Avicenna Peace Award. They cited three reasons for this honor: his generosity in welcoming thousands of Afghan refugees and evacuees to Albania in the summer of 2021; his steadfast support for the people of Afghanistan, particularly Afghan women; and his role as a bridge-builder, connecting different cultures, faiths, and traditions toward a shared humanistic vision.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just as individuals have distinguishing characteristics, so too do groups like nations, organisations, and corporations. Some may be recognised as powerful nations or strong states, while others may have corrupt institutions. We often use the term "honourable" to describe individuals, but it is rare to refer to nations in the same way. How can we quantify "honour" in the context of collective identity?

Plato, in his masterpiece on political philosophy, addressed the concept of honour. He identified three key concepts: Security, Interest, and Honour. He linked these concepts to his conception of an ideal state and the tripartite nature of the soul.

While there are many examples and benchmarks for "security" and "interest" in politics and international relations, there are few, if any, regarding the concept of "honour."

Honourable guests,

In the summer of 2021, Prime Minister Edi Rama exemplified honour as a statesman on behalf of his fellow countrymen. Offering refuge to vulnerable and marginalised individuals is a clear manifestation of honour. Conversely, abandoning your promise to your allies and partners is a dishonourable act.

After the Taliban's return to power, we were all challenged to act honourably by taking care of our loved ones, colleagues, friends, and comrades. This endeavour has many winners and losers. Albania stood out as one of the honourable nations, despite its distance from Afghanistan, for which we are profoundly grateful.

But we need to be guarded against the absurd and misuse of the concept of “honour “. Mistreating women is not honourable; it is misogyny and cowardice. Empowering women is honourable.

Once again, thank you to all of you who have accepted our invitation to celebrate one of the few true statesmen of our era, His Excellency Edi Rama.

I wish you all a memorable event.