

NOAM CHOMSKY WINS SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE

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The winner of this year's Sydney Peace Prize says he believes Australian and other allied soldiers in Afghanistan are making the world more dangerous.

The Peace Foundation has awarded the \$50,000 prize to US linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky for what it describes as his unfailing moral courage and critical analysis of democracy and power.

Previous winners of the prize include South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, journalist John Pilger, former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi, and Indigenous human rights activist Patrick Dodson.

Chomsky says while nobody wants the Taliban running Afghanistan, international forces are not helping.

"There are very significant Afghan peace forces, pro-democracy forces, but if you check with them, they regularly regard themselves as facing three enemies: the Taliban, the US-backed warlords, and NATO forces," he said.

Sydney Peace Foundation director Professor Stuart Rees said in a statement Chomsky was one of the West's most influential intellectuals in the cause of peace and the most significant challenger of unjust power.

"This inspiring choice comes at a time of violence and protest around the world. Across the Middle East brave people challenge authoritarian rule, yearn for freedom and for a state of their own," he said.

"Yet, in Australia, leading politicians are still to find the courage to craft policies, such as those affecting refugees and asylum seekers, which reflect the hopes and standards set by Chomsky's life and work.

"Come November 2011, I suspect thousands of people will not only take the opportunity to hear Professor Chomsky speak, but will also want to express their gratitude to him."

Chomsky is to travel to Australia in November to give an address and receive the award.

He recently caused controversy with outspoken comments following the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

"It's increasingly clear that the operation was a planned assassination, multiply violating elementary norms of international law," he wrote then.

He also cast doubt on bin Laden's role in the 9/11 attacks, saying US president Barack Obama was "simply lying when he said, in his White House statement, that 'we quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Al Qaeda'".

"Nothing serious has been provided since. There is much talk of bin Laden's 'confession,' but that is rather like my confession that I won the Boston Marathon. He boasted of what he regarded as a great achievement," Chomsky wrote.