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Garzón gives his acceptance speech. Photo EFE

Judge Baltasar Garzón received the First ALBA/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism in New York City, on May 14, 2011. This is his acceptance speech.

Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, members of ALBA, representatives of the Puffin Foundation, authorities, amigas y amigos:

Seventy-five years ago in my country, Spain, one of the darkest and saddest chapters in the history of humanity began. It lasted more than forty years and even today, after 34 years of democracy, it has not been definitively read or closed, or as such, overcome. An unjust and illegal war, though perhaps all wars are, was begun in 1936 by those who scorned the freedom, legality and democracy of the Republic. It was done by those for whom the life of their equals held little value and who, by their decisions, launched a bloodbath between brothers and sisters, with tens of thousands of them tortured, disappeared, and executed without trial; thirty thousand children (known as the Lost Children of Francoism) were stolen from their families simply because their parents were supporters of the Republic, a crime that, according to the new regime, made them unfit to raise their own children.

But it was not just a civil war. The fascist regimes in Germany and Italy aided the rebels led by General Franco, while the western democracies stood by, silent and motionless. But International Solidarity soon stepped up. Forty thousand men and women from fifty-two countries, including twenty-eight hundred from the United States, forming the International Brigades to fight against fascism in Spain, offering their lives for an ideal.

