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## HERVE MORIN PRESIDENT OF NORMANDY REGION UNVEILS THE FREEDOM PRIZE 2020 FINALIST

L AL HATHLOUL FATHER OPAKA & N SOTOUDEH

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**USPA NEWS** - Hervé Morin, President of the Normandy Region, Bertrand Deniaud, Vice-President of the Normandy Region in charge of high schools and education, Alain Tourret, President of the International Institute for Human Rights and Peace, Member of the Calvados and Emmanuel Davidenkoff, Deputy Editorial Director of Le Monde, President of the Jury, have revealed, today, the names of the finalists for the second edition of the Prix Liberté: Loujain Al Hathloul, Father Pedro Opaka, Nasrin Sotoudeh.

THE FINALISTS FOR FREEDOM PRIZE 2020 : Loujain Al HATHLOUL, Father Pedro OPAKA, Nasrin SOTOUDEH-----

An international jury made up of 24 young people of 13 different nationalities met at the Abbaye aux Dames, in Caen, for two days to select three finalists from 167 proposals received from around the world and from France to the Normandy region in January. latest.c13 countries are represented on this jury: Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, United States, Spain, France, India, Ireland, Lebanon, Madagascar, Togo.cThe 167 proposals received designate either a person or an NGO committed to their exemplary fight for freedom. They come from Burkina Faso, Canada, Colombia, the United States, Spain, France and Madagascar.-----

The Normandy Region launched the call for candidates for "Our 2020 Freedom Prize" in July 2019 following the presentation of the First Edition Prize to Greta Thunberg for her fight for climate justice.-----

"Many situations around the world show that freedom remains fragile, repeatedly undermined. The fight for freedom is constantly and tirelessly defended. By inviting young people from all over the world to elect each year a personality who will have made an exceptional commitment to this ideal, the Prix Liberté intends to relay this message across borders and thus do work of education and transmission " declares Hervé Morin , President of the Normandy Region.-----

"Freedom is a living value that cannot be learned only from books. I find it great that the Region, the International Institute for Human Rights and the academic authorities allow young people from thirteen countries to work together around the educational dimension of the Freedom Prize. This educational experience around the Prize seems to me to be as important as the final result, " says Emmanuel Davidenkoff.

ABOUT THE THREE FINALISTS OF THE PRIX LIBERTE (FREEDOM PRIZE)-----

LOUJAIN AL HATHLOUL-----

Born in 1989, Loujain Al Hathloul is a Saudi Arabian women's rights activist in her country. In 2014, she was arrested for the first time for trying to cross the border between the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia while driving a car. After 73 days in prison, she is released. Arrested again in May 2018 for braving the ban on women driving in the kingdom, she has since been imprisoned. His family has stated on numerous occasions that Loujain was subjected to torture and sexual violence during his detention. After a mock trial in March 2019 (no lawyer, no clear charges), Loujain remains in prison. In August 2019, the Saudi prosecution offered to release her in exchange for a testimony in which she must state that she had never been the victim of violence in detention, which she refuses. She is still in prison today. The nomination of Loujain Al Hathloul was proposed by the young people of CIFAC de Caen and the Lycée Charles de Gaulle de Caen).

FATHER PEDRO OPAKA-----

Father Pedro Opaka, born in 1948 in Argentina, visited Madagascar for the first time in 1970 before settling there as a priest from 1975. He made the fight against poverty his daily battle. In 1989, he created the Akamasoa association, "good friends" in Malagasy, to intensify his fight against precariousness. The association offers decent accommodation (3,000 houses spread across 22 villages) as well as decent paid work. Since its creation, more than 500,000 people have been supported by the association. Father Pedro travels the world to draw the attention of the international community to the situation in Madagascar and to raise funds so that his association can function in self-sufficiency. The appointment of Father Pedro Pablo Opaka was proposed by several young people, including a former member of the Freedom Prize Jury in 2019.

NASRIN SOTOUDEH-----

Born in Iran in 1963, Nasrin Sotoudeh is a prominent Iranian lawyer specializing in the defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms. She has defended opposition activists and politicians, as well as prisoners sentenced to the death penalty for crimes committed when they were minors. Arrested for the first time in 2010, she was sentenced to 11 years in prison and banned from practicing as a lawyer. Pardoned in 2013, she was arrested again in 2018 and sentenced to 38 years imprisonment and 148 lashes for defending the rights of women and protesting against the legislation which imposes the wearing of the hijab (veil) in Iran. Since then, the international community has tirelessly demanded his release. The nomination of Nasrin Sotoudeh was proposed by young people from the Lycées Saint Just \* 3 in Lyon and Arcisse de Caumont de Bayeux. The winner of the Freedom Prize will be chosen following an international online vote ([prixliberte.normandie.fr](http://prixliberte.normandie.fr)) from March 9 to April 12, 2020, open to young people aged 15 to 25. The Prix Liberté will be awarded on June 3, 2020 at the Abbaye aux Dames in Caen as part of the Normandy Peace Forum. The winner will receive a check for 25,000 euros to defend their cause as well as a trophy in progress by the Lycée Napoléon de L´Aigle.

The Freedom Prize offers young people from all countries, aged 15 to 25, to elect each year a person or an organization engaged in an exemplary fight for freedom. It revolves around an educational device promoting the involvement of young people from one end of the process to the other, either as part of their training course or in their personal time.

Proposed by the Normandy Region in partnership with the International Institute for Human Rights and Peace, academic authorities and Canopé, the Prix Liberté is a tribute to all those who have fought and continue to fight for this ideal. Source : Region Normandie

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