

THE PRICE OF A HUMAN LIFE

Posted on November 23, 2010 by Keghart



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Prof. Hovhannes I. Pilikian, [The Open University](#), 23 November 2010



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I should be delighted that the European Union Court of Human Rights has ordered a compensation to the family of 105,000 Euros – the precision is jaw-dropping, why not as the British do add £3.03 for postage ... or make it a fiver if you feel generous today!

There is a spine-chilling sordidness about this news I find despicable – the shamelessness that any committee can decide the price of a priceless human being. For me, not even a billion is enough as a price tag for my friend Hrant Dink.

As during the times of slavery, there may soon arise a hierarchy of price tags – what price a Dr Kelly, the British UN weapons inspector in Iraq? What's the price tag for Allende, the once democratically elected President of Peru murdered by now the self-confessed CIA braggarts? Should the European Court force our Mrs Thatcher still alive to pay the compensation, as she was the defiant defender of the arch-murderer Pinochet, when he was arrested in London?

In the Marxist system of Das Kapital, everything, but everything has a price – when it comes to money-making, there is no ethics, no common humane decencies; profit is the only interest (pun intended!) of transactions. And I think it is this which makes me despise it – the commoditisation of the human being, which is what gave rise to formal slavery in the first place, and post-modern whoredom today.

While I welcome the EU decision – it may even be a first in historical terms evaluating the dead (not only compensating the injured) – I abhor its grand formalisation of the capitalist commoditisation of human beings. Hitherto the dead were commemorated in stone, public sculptures and poetry. Now, political assassinations are turned into a profitable business. And this sends chills down my spine.

