General Kayani and General Ahmad Shuja Pasha, the head of ISI, were called to testify in parliament, something that had never happened. Our country had been humiliated and we wanted to know why.

We also learned that American politicians were furious that bin Laden had been living under our noses when all along they had imagined he was hiding in a cave. They complained that they had given us $20 billion over an eight-year period to cooperate and it was questionable which side we were on. Sometimes it felt as though it was all about the money. Most of it had gone to the army; ordinary people received nothing.

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A few months after that, in October 2011 my father told me he had received an email informing him I was one of five nominees for the international peace prize of KidsRights, a children's advocacy group based in Amsterdam. My name had been put forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. He was a great hero of my father for his fight against apartheid. My father was disappointed when I didn't win but I pointed out to him that all I had done was speak out; we didn't have an organisation doing practical things like the award winners had.

Shortly after that I was invited by the chief minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, to speak in Lahore at an education gala. He was building a network of new schools he calls Daanish Schools and giving free laptops to students, even if they did have his picture on their screens when you switched them on. To motivate students in all provinces he was giving cash awards to girls and boys who scored well in their exams. I was presented with a cheque for half a million rupees, about $4,500, for my campaign for girls' rights.

I wore pink to the gala and for the first time talked publicly about how we had defied the Taliban edict and carried on going to school secretly. 'I know the importance of education because my pens and books were taken from me by force,' I said. 'But the girls of Swat are not afraid of anyone. We have continued with our education.'

Then I was in class one day when my classmates said, 'You have won a big prize and half a million rupees!' My father told me the government had awarded me Pakistan's first ever National Peace Prize. I couldn't believe it. So many journalists thronged to the school that day that it turned into a news studio.

The ceremony was on 20 December 2011 at the prime minister's official residence, one of the big white mansions on the hill at the end of Constitution Avenue which I had seen on my trip to Islamabad. By then I was used to meeting politicians. I was not nervous though my father tried to intimidate me by saying Prime Minister Gilani came from a family of saints. After the PM presented me with the award and cheque, I presented him with a long list of demands. I told him that we wanted our schools rebuilt and a girls' university in Swat. I knew he would not take my demands seriously so I didn't push very hard. I thought, *One day I will be a politician and do these things myself*.

It was decided that the prize should be awarded annually to children under eighteen years old and be named the Malala Prize in my honour. I noticed my father was not very happy with this. Like most Pashtuns he is a bit superstitious. In Pakistan we don't have a culture of honouring people while they are alive, only the dead, so he thought it was a bad omen.

I know my mother didn't like the awards because she feared I would become a target as I was becoming more well known. She herself would never appear in public. She refused even to be photographed. She is a very traditional woman and this is our centuries-old culture. Were she to