



SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER 02/2016

MEPS PLEAD FOR RAIIF BADAWI'S RELEASE IN A VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA

09-02-2016: A **seven Member-strong Delegation from the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee** led by Committee Vice-Chair **Andrej Plenković** (EPP - Croatia), on a visit to Saudi Arabia, took the opportunity to raise the case of **2015 Sakharov Prize laureate Raif Badawi** in meetings with the Shura Council, Saudi Minister of Justice Walid bin Mohammad bin Saleh Al-Samaani, and the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission Bandar al-Aiban. The MEPs recalled the need for respect for human rights in accordance with international law and standards. The MEPs on the Delegation were **Andrej Plenković** (EPP - Croatia), **Arnaud Danjean** (EPP - France), **Tokia Saïfi** (EPP - France), **Afzal Khan** (S&D - UK), **Pier Antonio Panzeri** (S&D - IT), **Mark Demesmaeker** (ECR - Belgium) and **Jozo Radoš** (ALDE - Croatia). Links: [AFET press release](#); [Daily Mail](#); [Yahoo News](#)

Badawi's case still under review by Saudi courts

22-02-2016: Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, told CNN that the case of jailed Saudi blogger and **2015 Sakharov Prize laureate, Raif Badawi**, is still under review by Saudi courts. The top Saudi diplomat stated during an interview with the channel that the Saudi "courts are independent and whatever decision they make, it will be respected." Link: [CNN Arabic](#)

DROI Chair participates in a commemorative Act organised by EPIO Madrid

15-02-2016: **Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), Elena Valenciano**, participated in an open debate during a commemorative Act (Jornada conmemorativa) for the **2015 Sakharov Prize laureate Raif Badawi** and the EU's human rights activism in Madrid. Palestinian-American journalist Ahmed Shihab-Eldin and Middle East expert journalist Monica Garcia Prieto, among others, also participated in the open debate, which was organised by the European Parliament's Information Office in Madrid. Links: [Ateneo de Madrid](#); [European Parliament](#)

VP Lunacek calls Kosovars to celebrate 'in spirit of Ibrahim Rugova'

16-02-2016: **European Parliament Vice-President and standing rapporteur for relations with Kosovo Ulrike Lunacek** called on the people of Kosovo to celebrate Independence Day peacefully, in the spirit of **1998 Sakharov Prize Laureate Ibrahim Rugova**. VP Lunacek stated this year's Independence Day should commemorate Mr Rugova, who ten years after death "is still the symbol of Kosovo independence, and – most important for today's politics in the country – a symbol of nonviolent struggle, a great poet and leader of Kosovo-Albanians into a European future." Link: [Ulrike Lunacek Official Website](#)

BAJ board-member meets top EU officials in Brussels

04-02-2016: Deputy Secretary General for the European External Action Service **Helga Schmid**, EU Special Representative for Human Rights **Stavros Lambrinidis**, and a number of ambassadors of European countries to the EU and other EU representatives in charge of human rights issues and the ENP met with **Zhanna Litvina**, former chair and board-member of **2004 Sakharov Prize laureate the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ)**, and **Ales Bialiatski**, Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights and 2012 and 2013 Sakharov Prize nominee. The two Belarusian human rights activists stated that there have not been any positive developments since the release of six political prisoners in August 2015. They also underlined that the 2015 presidential elections were largely fraudulent and marred with gross violations. Link: [Charter 97](#)

Launch of Malala-backed girls education campaign

18-02-2016: National Geographic Channel and 21st Century Fox launched a campaign to raise awareness for **girls' right to education and safe schools for children** in partnership with the **Malala Fund** at the broadcast premier of 'He Named Me Malala'. The campaign aims to raise up to \$50,000 through engaging audiences through social media. Link: [AD Land](#)

Leading Pakistani news channel censured for spreading hate-speech against Malala

12-02-2016: ARY news channel has been censured by Pakistan's Electronic Media Regulatory Authority for spreading 'hate speech' against **2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai** and her family. The country's TV regulator stated in its ruling that the news channel used "indecent and uncivilised" language to describe the education activist, referring to her as "a traitor, a blasphemer of Allah and the Prophet (Mohammad)", which 'undoubtedly fall under hate speech', stressing that "the use of such words are strictly banned under the law and constitution." Link: [Asia One](#)

Nurit Peled-Elhanan highlights concerns on education in Israel

09-02-2016: The European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Palestine met in Jerusalem with **2001 Sakharov Prize laureate Nurit Peled-Elhanan**. During the meeting the Laureate focused on racism in Israeli society and **the poor level of education for Palestinians in Israel**. Peled-Elhanan slammed academic education in East Jerusalem as "one of the worst imaginable with overcrowding, coercion to adopt Israeli curriculum by withholding money due and censorship of books". Meanwhile on a tour of Italy in February Peled-Elhanan presented her book 'Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education', which considers **the approach to Palestine in Israeli school textbooks**. She highlighted the important role of text books as a tool that states can use to shape perceptions, among children. Links: [Città di Firenze](#); [BOLOGNATODAY](#); [Città di Venezia](#)

Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo paid tribute by French President

25-02-2016: Members of **Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, 1992 Sakharov Prize laureate**, joined an event in which French President Hollande paid tribute to the victims of the Argentinian dictatorship in Buenos Aires. During the event, Mr Hollande expressed "the solidarity of France towards the victims of the dictatorship, the oppression and the barbarity" Link: [Swissinfo](#)

Denis Mukwege calls on DRC to take responsibility for demobilized former combatants

25-02-2016: **2014 Sakharov Prize laureate Denis Mukwege** called for the DRC government to take responsibility for demobilized ex-combatants, declaring "those people coming from armed groups would be the source of rape and sexual violence in the cities". On 24 February, during a meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Dr Mukwege raised awareness of the fact that "access to justice of those women victims of sexual violence is still poorly recognised". Links: [Radio Okapi](#); [rfi](#)

EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST CRIMEAN TATARS, THE CASE OF MOHAMMED RAMADAN IN BAHRAIN AND THE MISSING BOOK PUBLISHERS IN HONG KONG

04-02-2016: In its February plenary sitting, the EP condemned the disappearances, torture, restrictions of freedoms and human rights abuses against [Crimean citizens and particularly Tatar peoples](#) perpetrated by the police and paramilitary forces, and reiterated its condemnation and non-recognition of Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. The EP also called the Bahraini authorities to grant [Mohammed Ramadan](#) a royal pardon or commute his sentence, and to investigate the use of torture against prisoners. The EP also called the authorities to reintroduce a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition. The EP equally expressed its concern about the disappearance of [Hong Kong book publishers](#), Lui Bo, Gui Minhai, Zhang Zhiping, Lin Rongji and Lee Po and called on Chinese authorities to immediately release them, condemning the restrictions and criminalisation of freedom of publication and expression in the country. Link: [EP Press Release Urgency Resolutions February 2016](#)