

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER 04/2017

EP PRESIDENT CALLS FOR SECURITY OF DR MUKWEGE

14-04-17: A Congolese gynaecologist who worked at Bukavu's hospital (Eastern DRC) alongside with **Denis Mukwege, 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate, was killed on 14 April by armed men**. Dr Mukwege paid tribute to his colleague, stressing that **Dr Gildo Byamungu Magaju** was "a visionary, a man of conviction who believed in the future of his country and his profession". Following the assassination, thousands of people marched in Bukavu, calling to end impunity. [Mukwege Foundation](#)

03-05-17 Dr Mukwege has been received by **EP President Antonio Tajani** who ensured the Laureate full support of the parliament for his activity and promised to follow closely the issue of his security. Following the meeting the President issued a statement on Twitter **calling for security of human rights defenders in DRC. "We are with you in your combat" – stated Tajani**. Dr Mukwege thanked the President for his engagement and congratulated the EP for its work promoting human rights and fights against sexual violence based on gender. [Mukwege Foundation](#)

Ladies in White leader Berta Soler prevented from travelling to the EP

25-04-17: **Berta Soler, President of the 2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate Ladies in White**, was prevented from leaving Cuba to attend a conference organised by the EPP group in the European Parliament on 25 April 2017. Ms Soler sent a letter jointly with other Cuban civil society activists deploring the **heavy handed arrests and detentions of human rights defenders in Cuba**, the lack of space for civil society and private business, as well as restrictions and control of the internet. They called for inclusion of the right to vote and elect officials in the text of the agreement the EU intends to conclude with Cuba.

Ladies in White warns of plans to dissolve the group and calls for support

20-04-17: Addressing a conference in Miami on 20 April, Ms **Ramos Herreria** warned that the Cuban government plans to dissolve the group before Raul Castro steps down as President in February 2018. Over the past months, arrests and detentions of Ladies in White members took place across Cuba. Ms Ramos reiterated the group's resolve to continue peaceful street protests and called on democratic governments to demand the end of repression in Cuba. [Cubanet](#); [Panampost](#)

Reporters Without Borders has released its 2017 World Press Freedom Index

26-04-17: **2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** describes in its [yearly report on Press Freedom worldwide](#) "a world in which attacks on the media have become commonplace". Warning that "**media freedom is under threat now more than ever**", the organisation stresses that journalism is being weakened by democracy's erosion in many countries.

"I'll be the voice of the voiceless": Lamya Haji Bashar visits Ljubljana and Paris

17 & 28-03-17: Thanks to the support of the Sakharov Prize Network **Lamya Haji Bashar, 2016 Sakharov Prize Laureate visited Slovenia and France**. She gave a powerful speech at the European House in **Ljubljana** (Slovenia) **calling on Europeans not to forget the 3,500 women and children held captive by the so-called Islamic State**. In **Paris** she met **the mayor Anne Hidalgo** and **spoke to the City Council**. She asked the EU and its Member-States to do more to protect the Yazidis and to welcome in Europe those who managed to escape. Meanwhile **Nadia Murad, 2016 Sakharov Prize Laureate** and UN Goodwill Ambassador, gave speeches at Brandenburg Parliament in Germany as well as at [Stanford University](#), demanding to bring ISIS to justice.

Malala named youngest-ever UN Messenger for Peace

10-04-17: **Malala Yousafzai, 2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate** and youngest-ever Nobel Prize winner, has become **the youngest-ever UN Messenger for Peace**. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said Malala is a “symbol of perhaps the most important thing in the world, education for all”. As Messenger of Peace with a **special focus on girls’ education**, Malala is expected to promote U.N. activities around the world. Malala was awarded Canadian honorary citizenship as she visited the country on 12 April 2017. Speaking at the Canadian Parliament, she recalled that millions of girls and young women still lack access to education worldwide. [CNN](#)

Wei Jingsheng warns Interpol from supporting crackdown on Chinese dissidents

05 & 06-04-17: **Wei Jingsheng, 1996 Sakharov Prize Laureate**, participated in a conference in Lyon, which hosts the headquarters of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). He **expressed fears concerning the election of Meng Hongwei, Minister of Public Security in China and in charge of the secret police for the Chinese Communist regime, as head of INTERPOL**. Mr Wei fears the Chinese government will access new sources of information to track Chinese dissidents abroad and could try to label them as criminals or terrorists. Sharing the concerns of Mr Wei, **Reporters Without Borders also condemned this election** in [a press release](#). [Wei Jingsheng Foundation](#)

Hu Jia, in poor health, is admitted in Beijing hospital

29 & 30-04-17: **Hu Jia**, Chinese dissent and **2008 Sakharov Prize Laureate**, has been admitted in Beijing hospital and diagnosed with accurate pancreatitis. He is now being evaluated for surgery. Although Hu Jia’s condition improved slightly after having been critical for a few days, he remains very weak. But he asserted his will to “return to the fray continue [his] activities promoting change in China” after his recovery. [RFA](#)

Turkish prosecutors seek jail sentences for 19 Cumhuriyet columnists, including Can Dündar

18-04-17: The prosecutor seeks **jail sentences** for 19 columnists and journalists of the daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, including for **Can Dündar, 2016 Sakharov Prize finalist**. They are accused of supporting terrorism. It is an irony that the trial will start on 24 July, Press Freedom Day in Turkey. The group of the Greens in the EP expressed support to the journalists by sending an open letter to Musa Kart, one of the cartoonists under investigation. **Reporters Without Borders, 2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate**, published a [statement](#) condemning the indictment. The European Court on Human Rights has also announced it will investigate this case. [Daily News](#)

Leyla and Arif Yunus’ appeal brought up in Azerbaijani Court

19-04-17: One year after **Leyla Yunus, 2014 Sakharov Prize finalist**, and her husband Arif were allowed to leave Azerbaijan to receive urgent medical treatment in the Netherlands, **their cases will be re-examined by the Baku Court of Appeal**. In August 2015, Leyla and Arif Yunus were sentenced to 8.5 and 7 years imprisonment respectively, on charges of tax evasion and fraud. Recently, Leyla Yunus, along with other human rights defenders, participated in establishing an updated list of 162 political prisoners in Azerbaijan. The list was published on 1 April 2017 by the Centre for the Protection of Political Prisoners. [APA](#)

One World Documentary Film Festival at the EP

27-04-2017: **Together with the Czech NGO “People in Need”, the EP participated in the largest human rights documentary film festival in Europe, the One World Film Festival**. The powerful Danish documentary “The Wait” tells the story of a 14 year-old Afghan girl who is obliged to fight for asylum for her parents and siblings. **EP Vice-President Ulrike Lunacek** gave introductory remarks, calling to “make sure that refugees are guaranteed protection and fair and swift asylum procedures”. A debate on EU asylum policies and migrant children followed the screening. Representatives of **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** and Danish NGO “**Refugees Welcome**” took part in the discussion with a hundred of participants, including Afghan refugees.

EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON RUSSIA; BELARUS AND BANGLADESH

06-04-17: In three resolutions adopted during April Plenary Session, the EU Parliament **called upon [Russia](#) to release Alexei Navalny as well as other detained protestors, condemned the crackdown on peaceful demonstrators and the arrests of human rights defenders and journalists in [Belarus](#), and urged the government of [Bangladesh](#) to outlaw child marriage.** Link: [EP Press release](#)