

EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
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RARE VICTORY FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH: RUSSIA'S MEMORIAL WILL NOT BE CLOSED DOWN

28-01-2015: The Supreme Court in Moscow rejected a lawsuit filed by the Justice Ministry in October to shut down Russia's oldest human rights organisation and 2009 Laureate, **Memorial**. "It is good that common sense won out," said senior Memorial member Yan Rachinsky. The ministry had argued that Memorial's charter was not in line with current legislation and therefore requested the "liquidation" of the organisation. Memorial responded by amending its Charter at a conference on 22 November. After the court's ruling, the Justice Ministry confirmed that Memorial had rectified all violations and that the case would now be closed. While activists celebrate the verdict a rare victory for freedom of speech, board member Oleg Orlov remains more cautious. "The overall situation with Russian civil society is awful", he concluded. Link: [Deutsche Welle](#)

Panzi employees protest against seizing of hospital's bank accounts

07-01-2015: For several days, employees of **Dr Denis Mukwege's** Panzi Hospital staged a sit-in in front of local tax offices in Bukavu, capital of South Kivu province, demanding the release of tens of thousands Euros seized by government tax authorities. Because of the freezing of the hospital's accounts, based on claims of unpaid tax bills, employees had not received their salaries for December, putting at risk the hospital's daily routine. The 2014 Laureate called the freezing unjustified, suspecting political motivations of the DRC government. The European Parliament, including the President, AFET and the delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, is following the issue closely. Links: [Deutsche Welle](#); [Panzi Hospital](#)

Disappointed Cuban dissidents mistrust new US policy towards Cuba

23-01-2015: While support for the fundamental shift in the relations between the US and Cuba predominates, some members of Cuban opposition were caught off guard by the impending loosening of the US embargo against the Castro regime. The leader of 2005 Laureate **Damas de Blanco, Berta Soler**, boycotted a meeting with high level US diplomats on 23 January in Havana, expressing her dissatisfaction with the new US policy towards the regime, perceived as affront to their struggle. Rosa Maria Payá, daughter of 2002 Laureate **Oswaldo Payá** penned an open letter to Barack Obama, challenging the President's course of action. The Christian Liberation Movement (MCL), founded by Oswaldo Payá declared that "neither the influx of capital, or tourism, or any economic concessions are the sources of political freedoms", and called for "democratic elections in an atmosphere of absolute respect for the liberties and political rights". **Guillermo Fariñas** spoke of "betrayal" by the US President, who, according to Fariñas, had promised to act in consultation with Cuban dissidents. The 2010 Laureate has survived recently an assassination attempt allegedly carried out by a member of Cuban state security, resulting in five injured human rights defenders, among them two White Ladies. In a letter of support, 2014 Laureate and co-chair of the SPN, **Dr Denis Mukwege**, called upon the Cuban government to "investigate this serious matter and prosecute the perpetrators". The regime sends mixed signals about how it wants to handle political dissidents, while arrests continue, 53 regime critics have been released as part of the US-Cuban deal. Links: [New York Times](#); [Huffington Post](#); [Oswaldopaya.org](#); [La Razon](#); [14Ymedio.com](#); [Newsweek](#)

Charlie Hebdo shooting: Sakharov Prize Laureates express solidarity



16-01-2015: Many Sakharov Prize Laureates expressed their grief and support for freedom of expression after the terrorist attacks on the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and the ensuing shootings in Paris, leaving 17 dead. Laureate **Leyla Zana** sent a letter of condolence to French President François Hollande, saying that the attacks aimed at the very culture of living together. In Havana, more than 20 members of 2005 Laureate **Damas de Blanco** lined up in front of the French embassy to sign the book of condolences. Their Co-Laureates from the same year, **Reporters without Borders** (RWB), spoke of "a black day in

the history of France" and voiced their "outrage" over the presence of "predators of press freedom" at the solidarity march on 11 January, blaming heads of states and other high level state officials from countries like Russia and Turkey of hypocrisy. 1994 Laureate and outspoken writer **Taslina Nasreen** actively expressed her views about the dangers of religion, in particular Islam, via social media. 2011 Laureate and cartoonist **Ali Ferzat**, who himself experienced severe physical abuse because of his artwork, responded by drawing several caricatures in support of his Paris colleagues (see picture), pointing out that "**the pen is mightier than any weapon**". As a counterpoint, a leading member of 1992 Laureate Madres de Plaza de Mayo condemned the terrorist attacks and criticised France of having "no moral authority to speak of criminal terrorism" given its colonial past. Links: [Haber 3](#) on Leyla Zana; [14Ymedio.com](#) on Damas de Blanco; [Reporters without Borders](#), on "predators"; [Tweets](#) and [Article](#) by Taslima Nasreen; [CNN](#) on Ali Ferzat; [El Pais](#) on Madres de Plaza de Mayo; [European Parliament](#)

Leyla Zana's 5-year political ban ends

12-12-2014: Independent Kurdish deputy and 1995 Laureate **Leyla Zana** is free to join the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party. A five year political ban, denying her affiliation with political parties, imposed by the Turkish Constitutional Court in 2009, expired in December. Ms Zana, who visited Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan in prison, is in favour of a peaceful resolution to the decades-long Kurdish issue. Link: [Daily Sabah](#)

EP and Reporters without Borders support Saudi blogger

23-01-2015: Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, Elena Valenciano, demanded the stop of Raif Badawi's "inhumane" and "cruel" punishment, calling on the Saudi government to "respect fundamental human dignity" and "immediately and unconditionally" release the blogger. Mr Badawi is still recovering from the first 50 lashes he received on 9 January in the city of Jeddah for "insulting Islam". Since, according to Saudi authorities, the wounds had not yet sufficiently healed, the next round of lashing had to be postponed for two consecutive weeks. 2005 Laureate **Reporters without Borders** has launched a petition in support of Mr Badawi, already signed by more than 40,000 individuals. German media sources, quoting the Saudi Ambassador in

Berlin, reported that Badawi's remaining 950 lashes and a 10-year prison sentence may be remitted; however, this has not been officially confirmed to date. Links: [The Guardian](#); [RWB petition](#); [Statement by Elena Valenciano](#); [International Business Times](#)

Jafar Panahi's latest movie "Taxi" to debut at Berlin film festival

27-01-2015: "Taxi", the latest movie of 2012 Laureate **Jafar Panahi**, also featuring his Co-Laureate and Iranian compatriot, human rights defender **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, in a small role, will debut at the Berlin film festival in February. Mr Panahi, while no longer under house arrest, is not allowed to leave the country and thus will not be able to attend the premiere in Berlin. In December, Jafar Panahi got awarded a grant of US\$ 25,000 at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in Australia for his next project "Goul" ("Flower") that will be directed by his son, Panah Panahi. Links: [Berlin film festival](#); [The Guardian](#); [Variety](#)

Latest EP resolutions on human rights

12-2014/01-2015: During plenary sessions in December and January, European Parliament adopted several resolutions focussing on or featuring human rights issues. MEPs strongly condemned the "brutal massacre of schoolchildren" by Taliban in [Pakistan](#), leaving 141 dead, most of them children. In the [case of anti-corruption campaigner and social activist Alexei Navalny](#) in **Russia**, MEPs underlined that his conviction is "based on unsubstantiated charges" and deplore that the prosecution "seems to be politically motivated". Turning towards [Turkey](#), the Parliament condemned recent police raids and arrests of journalists, recalling that a "free and pluralistic press is an essential component of any democracy" and a precondition for pre-accession funding. MEPs strongly condemned the arrests and detentions of Dr Medani, a renowned human rights activist, in [Sudan](#) and Biram Dah Abeid, a leading anti-slavery activist, in [Mauritania](#). In view of the ongoing influx of refugees over the **Mediterranean**, MEPs call for a [comprehensive EU approach to migration](#) and more effort to prevent further loss of life at sea. Furthermore, Parliament adopted resolutions on a controversial "homosexual propaganda bill" in [Kyrgyzstan](#), the situations in [Libya](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Egypt](#), the [political persecution and imprisonment of peaceful protesters and opposition leaders in Venezuela](#), a diplomatic dispute between Italy and India over the [prosecution of two Italian marines](#), and [on the annual report on the activities of the European Ombudsman](#).

EP resolution: The Parliament supports Palestinian Statehood "in principle"

17-12-2014: During the EP's last plenary session of 2014, MEPs adopted a resolution supporting "in principle recognition of Palestinian statehood and the two state solution", expressing their belief that "these should go hand in hand with the development of peace talks, which should be advanced". However, the Parliament stresses the importance of a united Palestinian leadership, urging all factions, including Hamas, to end internal rivalries. At the same time, the resolution reminds Israel of its obligations, reiterating that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. Members also decided to launch a "Parliamentarians for Peace" initiative to bring together MEPs and national Parliamentarians from Israel and Palestine. In 2001, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize to Palestinian writer **Izzat Ghazzawi** and Israeli scholar **Nurit Peled-Elhanan** who dedicate their work on the dialogue and reconciliation of their people.

Links: [EP Resolution](#); [EP Press Release](#); [EP Interview](#)

Statements by the EP President

12-01-2015: The European Parliament paid tribute to the victims terrorist attacks on the French satirical newspaper **Charlie Hebdo** by holding a minute's silence. "Violence with Kalashnikovs will not make us downgrade our European values", promised Parliament President Martin Schulz.

Link: [European Parliament](#)

27-01-15: President Schulz attended the International Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony in Prague and delivered a speech at the fourth International "Let my people Live!" Forum. President visited Prague and Terezín to remember and honour the millions killed during the Holocaust and to mark the **70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz**. Link: [European Parliament](#)