

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
August - September 2014**

NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2014 SAKHAROV PRIZE FOR FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

18-09-2014: The names put forward by the political groups of the European Parliament are: Mahmoud Al'Asali (post mortem) and Louis Raphael Sako (Iraq), CHREDO, Open Doors, Oeuvre d'Orient and Aid to the Church in Need, EuroMaidan (Ukraine), Ayaan Hirsi Ali, (Somalian origin), Dr Denis Mukwege (Congo), Leyla Yunus (Azerbaijan).

The vote cast on 7 October 2014 in a joint meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Development Committee of the European Parliament resulted in a short list of 3 candidates: EuroMaidan (Ukraine), Dr Denis Mukwege (Congo) and Leyla Yunus (Azerbaijan).

The 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate will be known on 16 October 2014, following the decision of the Conference of Presidents. Links: <http://bit.ly/1s9lwAe>; <http://bit.ly/1vMxlOA>

Hu Jia fears for his life under increasingly brutal harassment in China

15-09-2014: Chinese Sakharov Prize Laureate 2008 Hu Jia is being threatened with death and his family, including his 7-year old daughter, are being threatened and harassed daily informs his wife Zeng Jinyan. It has now reached a point where Hu Jia himself believes that a staged car crash in which he dies or is badly injured is a possible scenario. In a letter to the European Parliament supported by Frontline Defenders, on behalf of Hu Jia, Zeng Jinyan calls for the European Parliament to increase its support for Hu Jia.

He has been receiving "regular phone calls in which the callers have threatened to kill his entire family. A paper wreath was sent to his parents and another one, along with a paper coffin, to him in the name of his young daughter. On 16 July he was brutally assaulted by a number of plainclothes men who left him in need of surgery. Link: <http://atfp.co/1uSejaL>

Nurit Peled denounces 'holocaust' in Gaza at a hearing of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights of the EP

11-09-2014: Nurit Peled-Elhanan, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2001 from Israel, was the main speaker in a hearing on the situation of children in armed conflicts, with a focus on Gaza, held by the EP's Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) chaired by Ms Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco. Ms Peled accused Israel of perpetrating a holocaust on Palestinians in Gaza.

"The onslaught on Gaza", Ms Peled said, "left more than 2000 dead, 600 of whom are old people and children. This is not a war, it is ethnocide – the destruction of a whole ethnic group, and for the Palestinians it is a holocaust".

Prior to her visit to the European Parliament, Nurit Peled, together with fellow Sakharov Laureates Salima Ghezali and Taslima Nasreen published an opinion expressing concern about certain, unnamed, EU Member States' opposition to the Palestine joining the International Criminal Court and calling on "leaders and representatives of the EU, to actively and openly encourage the Palestinian Authority to join the ICC".

Link: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/sakharov/home_en.html

Salima Ghezali expresses deep concern regarding the situation in Gaza

In a letter to fellow Sakharov Prize Laureates, Salima Ghezali, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1997 from Algeria, describes the situation in Gaza as "unbearable". She underlines the fact that "in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the issue of equality before the international law, the respect for its implementation and the rejection of impunity can move towards a sustainable and fair peace. Our

joint action as Sakharov Prize Laureates represents the expression of international solidarity in favour of respect for international law and rejection of impunity".

Leyla Zana deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in South Kurdistan and South-East Kurdistan

7-08-2014: Leyla Zana, 1995 Sakharov Prize Laureate, now a Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, addressed letters to the EP President and Sakharov Prize Laureates drawing attention to the high number of people who have died, disappeared or have been displaced as a result of the on-going conflict in Syria. Ms Zana deplores the fact that "the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and associated terrorist groups have benefited from this chaos and situation of brutality and did not refrain from using their extremist ideologies on the local people in places where they entered by barbarous methods". She draws attention to the fact that "these inhuman practices are clear examples of that these terrorist groups, who want to bury the light under darkness, pose threat to the whole world without regard for geography or culture".

In his response, President Schulz, noted that he has "called on the European Union and its Member States to resolutely support all actions which provide relief and humanitarian aid to the affected people and suffocate the terrorist networks, which pose a global threat. And indeed, over the past two months, the European Union has already increased its humanitarian aid to the people in Iraq from 7 to 17 million euros."

Nasrin Sotoudeh wins first court case against disbarment and faces another

5-09-2014: Nasrin Sotoudeh, 2012 Laureate from Iran, has won in court the right to return to practising her profession as a lawyer.

Ms Sotoudeh was banned from practising law for 20 years, reduced on appeal to 10 years, by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran after her arrest in September 2010. She contested this ban upon her release from prison, asserting the Revolutionary Court had no jurisdiction, but the Tehran Prosecutor's office took her to court. The Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal deemed Ms. Sotoudeh's suspension "unwarranted" and decided that it "will be overruled", Ms Sotoudeh's husband Reza Khandan said on his Facebook page.

Nasrin Sotoudeh appeared at a hearing at the Tribunal on Sunday, August 24, 2014, and the verdict was issued on August 30, stating that Sotoudeh could continue practicing law. However, the Prosecutor's office is now bringing another case at a different branch of the Tribunal in an attempt to disbar Ms Sotoudeh. Link: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/sakharov/home_en.html

Renewed violence against Cuban human rights defenders

6-08-2014: Guillermo Fariñas was among those activists who were violently beaten and arrested in the town of Santa Clara. He also received death threats from a secret police agent. In an interview with Radio Marti, on 7 September, Fariñas stated that the pursuing of his protest depends on the Cuban authorities. Links: <http://bit.ly/1v1WExM>; <http://bit.ly/1vV6iPr>

Controversy regarding leaders of Damas de Blanco

24-08-2014: In the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba, a new opposition group of women, "Citizens for Democracy", was founded, after an internal split in the human rights group "Ladies in White, Laura Pollán". The members of the new group, composed of around 60 women, and led by Belkis Cantillo Ramirez, is determined to continue their opposition work. Their main tasks will be to work for human rights and the liberation of political prisoners, but they will also work with women's empowerment, against violence and with social projects for vulnerable people and families of political prisoners. Link: <http://www.cubademocraciayvida.org/web/article.asp?artID=25832>

President Barak Obama pays tribute to Damas de Blanco

23-09-2014: In a speech delivered within the framework of the Clinton Global Initiative, President Obama mentioned the courage and tenacity of the Damas de Blanco in their relentless fight for

freedom, as a "God-given right" and respect for human rights in Cuba. He highlighted the courage of Berta Soler and all the Ladies in White "who endure repeated harassments and arrests in order to win freedom for the Cuban people". Link: <http://bit.ly/1CV09ap>

Xanana Gusmão to stay on as Timor Leste Prime Minister

26-09-2014: Xanana Gusmão, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1999 and Prime Minister of Timor Leste has announced he is staying on as Prime Minister, though he had previously announced he would resign office in 2014. Media reports say he intends to stay in office to deal with a dispute concerning the country's oil resources.

Speaking at the UN on the Ebola crisis, he announced Timor Leste will "provide 1 million U.S. dollars in an act of Fragile-to-Fragile and South-South cooperation". The global response to Ebola, he said "must be twofold, urgently stopping the current outbreak and treating those affected."

Link: <http://bit.ly/ZsWIZT>

Taslima Nasreen attends the World Humanist Congress at Oxford Sheldonian Theater

10-08-2014: A World Humanist Congress was held at the Sheldonian Theater in Oxford. The theme of the Congress was freedom of expression. Sakharov Prize Winner in 1994, Taslima Nasreen, was the star of the final day of the congress, where she delivered a poignant speech. She stressed: "without the right to offend, freedom of expression cannot exist. Without freedom of expression, there can be no democracy." She also declared, "I am truly homeless but I have a home: the hearts of people who oppose the forces of darkness, my shelter and my refuge. Atheists, feminists, humanists, you are my country, you are my home." Links: <http://bit.ly/1EukzbY>; [Declaration on Freedom of Thought and Expression](#); <http://bit.ly/1uBpHH4>

The group involved in the attack on Malala Yousafzai has been arrested

12-09-2014: According to information released by the Pakistani army spokesman, Gen Asim Bajwa, ten members of a faction called "Shura", had been arrested in a joint operation with Pakistan's army, police and intelligence services. "The men are being interrogated and will face an anti-terrorism court soon", he said. However, the army statement does not mention the name of Ataulah Khan, a 23-year-old militant who had previously been accused of shooting Malala.

Link: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29177946>

Michelle Obama challenges the world leaders on the right of girls to education

23-09-2014: In her address at an event dedicated to global learning, organised on the side lines of the UN General Assembly, the First Lady recalled Malala Yousafzai, who became famous after she survived a Taliban shooting. "I'm thinking about girls like Malala, I'm thinking about those brave girls in Nigeria, I'm thinking about all the girls who will never make the headlines, who walk hours to school each day, who study late into the night because they are so hungry to fill every last bit of their God-given potential. If we can show just a tiny fraction of their courage and their commitment, then I know we can give all of our girls an education worthy of their promise", Obama said. However, when Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Global Education, made a plea for \$6bn to achieve universal primary-school education, he was met with only weak applause.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1nOL5V8>

Aung Suu Kyi urges Myanmar artists to get political

25-08-2014: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has called upon writers, poets, cartoonists and artists of all sorts to use their creative skills to inspire political dialogue in Myanmar. In her address, Suu Kyi recalls that NLD party members have been working with writers and artists since 1988 to educate the public on issues of human rights, politics, economics and civil society. She thanked the cartoonists that she said have helped her and the general public understand the state of the nation through satirical

images in local journals. "There are many complicated things that politicians say, but cartoonists can represent what they want the public to talk about, so I like satire cartoons," she said.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1qiB5pr>

Aung San Suu Kyi's dream of becoming Myanmar's next president is not over

10-09-2014: A committee charged with reviewing Myanmar's 2008 Constitution has submitted its recommended changes during a session of parliament on 11 September 2014. "Of particular interest to Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) is a military-drafted clause that bars her from standing for presidency ahead of the 2015 national elections, because her late husband and children are foreigners", the SBS website reports. A concerted campaign for constitutional change organised earlier this year by the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi collected five million signatures petitioning change to certain clauses of the constitution. Link: <http://bit.ly/1rh7icB>

Belarusian NGOs send report to the UN

20-09-2014: The report provides an overview of the current situation of human rights in Belarus. The Belarusian Association of Journalists is one of the many authors of the report, which was submitted to the UN High Commissioner for Human rights, as part of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN. In the report, human rights defenders express concern about the lack of real progress on key problem spheres of human rights in the country.

Link: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/20438.html>