

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER  
August-September 2013**

**Table of Contents**

Razan Zaitouneh on the chemical attack in Syria: I haven't seen such death in my whole life .....	2
Ali Ferzat at an exhibition of Syrian art showing the toll of war .....	2
Asmaa Mahfouz, together with other Egyptian activists, under investigation for espionage.....	2
Guillermo (Coco) Farinas returns to Cuba without incident.....	2
Berta Soler denounces in her report serious recent repression by the Cuban government...3	3
International appeal for investigation into the death of Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá .....	3
Hu Jia detained on his 40th birthday .....	3
1990 Sakharov Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to visit Prague, Budapest and Warsaw in September 2013 .....	4
Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband, Reza Khandan: life in Evin prison worse "than hell" .....	4
Pussy Riot member goes for parole and loses .....	5
Kremlin to finance "Foreign Agents NGOs.....	5
Madres de Plaza de Mayo meet President Kirchner.....	5
Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) .....	5
Kofi Annan announced as 2013 Reinhard Mohn Prize Winner .....	6
Statements by the President Martin Schulz of the European Parliament.....	6
<i>Violence in Egypt</i> .....	6
<i>Resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks</i> .....	6
<i>EP President and EU leaders back "End violence initiative"</i> .....	6
Urgent issues discussed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament - 28 August 2013.....	6
<i>Syria:</i> .....	6
<i>Egypt:</i> .....	7
<i>Ukraine - Russia:</i> .....	7
Upcoming Sakharov Prize Network events:.....	7
<i>Invitation to the 25th Anniversary of the Sakharov Prize celebration</i> .....	7
<i>The Sakharov Prize impact study - information for Sakharov Prize Laureates:</i> .....	7

## **Razan Zaitouneh on the chemical attack in Syria: I haven't seen such death in my whole life**

2011 Sakharov Prize Laureate, lawyer, journalist and human rights activist **Razan Zaitouneh**, interviewed 2 days after the 21 August 2013 attack with chemical weapons on Ghouta said she couldn't believe what her eyes were seeing in the aftermath of the attack.

"At the beginning, we thought that it's like the previous times, that there will be only dozens of injured cases and number of murders," she told interviewers for [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org).

**"Hours later, we started to visit the medical points in Ghouta to where injured were removed, and we couldn't believe our eyes. I haven't seen such death in my whole life. People were lying on the ground in hallways, on roadsides, in hundreds"**.

**Razan Zaitouneh** said there were not enough doctors or medication to treat everyone:

"Even doctors were crying because they couldn't help the injured people, because the lack of the medication and oxygen. **The paramedics were telling us how they were breaking in doors and houses in Zamalka and Ain Terma, where the shelling took place, and get inside and find whole families dead in their beds. Most of the children didn't make it.**

In cemeteries which we visited, victims were buried in mass graves, 15 or 20 dead bodies in every grave because the large number of injured people".

[http://www.democracynow.org/2013/8/23/syrian\\_activist\\_on\\_ghouta\\_attack\\_i](http://www.democracynow.org/2013/8/23/syrian_activist_on_ghouta_attack_i)

## **Ali Ferzat at an exhibition of Syrian art showing the toll of war**

Political cartoonist **Ali Ferzat**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011, exhibited his cartoons with the work of other Syrian artists smuggled out of the chaos of war in Syria. Paintings show harrowing scenes from the ongoing war. **Ferzat**, known as Syria's 'artist of the people' and voted on Time Magazine's list of '100 most influential people of 2012', was badly beaten up and his hands were broken by pro-regime forces in August 2011. His cartoons were waved in the streets as Syrians began to demonstrate against the Assad regime.

<http://www.p21.org.uk/ABOUTEMERGINGSYRIANARTISTS.aspx>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/22/syria-art-smuggled-exhibition-london-uk>

## **Asmaa Mahfouz, together with other Egyptian activists, under investigation for espionage**

On 25 August 2013, Abdel Aziz-Fahmy, General Manager of Youth and Sports in Gharbiya region government, filed a complaint against some activists, including **Asmaa Mahfouz**, Sakharov Prize Laureate in 2011, accusing them of espionage. These allegations have been dismissed by the spokesman of the 6th of April 2008 movement.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/08/25/activists-investigated-on-claims-of-espionage/>

## **Guillermo (Coco) Farinas returns to Cuba without incident**

After several months spent abroad, 2010 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Guillermo Farinas**, accompanied by his mother, Alicia Hernandez, returned to Cuba on 21 August 2013. He

was warmly welcomed at Santa Clara airport by a great number of friends, human rights defenders and members of the *Union Patriótica de Cuba (UNPACU)*. Representatives of the **Damas de Blanco**, who were present at his arrival, also extended a warm welcome to Coco.

<http://www.martinoticias.com/content/cuba-farinas-regreso-/26610.html>

### **Berta Soler denounces in her report serious recent repression by the Cuban government**

Given recent repeated brutal action by the Rapid Response Brigade, a paramilitary Cuban organisation composed by women and men who are members of the Communist Party, against a great number of representatives of **Damas de Blanco** in several Cuban provinces, **Berta Soler**, leader of the opposition movement, sent a detailed report describing the present situation in Cuba.

**These brigades carry out orders from the State Security: arbitrary arrests, physical and verbal abuse, beatings, etc.** Their action is meant to prevent the Damas from attending church services on Sundays. The report highlights the serious situation of Sonia Garro Alfonso, who was left unconscious as a result of harsh beatings by the law-enforcement agents. On 13 August, the Cuban authorities rejected the request of **Blanca Reyes, representative of the Damas de Blanco in Europe**, to enter Cuba and visit her 93-year-old father who is sick. **Blanca Reyes** says it is her father's wish is to see her before he passes away.

[www.abc.es/internacional/20130814/abci-dama-blanco-blanca-reyes-201308141701.html#UgvAszewu6k.twitter](http://www.abc.es/internacional/20130814/abci-dama-blanco-blanca-reyes-201308141701.html#UgvAszewu6k.twitter)

**Further information:** Attachment to SPN Newsletter August-September 2013 (separate)

### **International appeal for investigation into the death of Cuban dissident Oswaldo Payá**

22 July was the first year anniversary since Sakharov Prize Laureate 2002 **Oswaldo Payá** passed away. To mark this sad event, 124 leading figures from around the world, including the Vice President of the European Parliament **Edward McMillan Scott** urged the UN to investigate the cause of his suspicious death in a car crash in Cuba. According to the testimony of the driver, Angel Carromero, in a Washington Post interview dated 6 March 2013, their car vehicle was followed, harassed and ultimately rammed from behind by a car bearing government license plates. Mr. Carromero also alleged that he was coerced by Cuban authorities into making a false confession in which he took responsibility for the crash. Leaders of the democratic world issued a joint appeal for a thorough investigation.

<http://www.unwatch.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=bdKKISNqEmG&b=1316871&ct=13168729>

### **Hu Jia detained on his 40th birthday**

Chinese dissident **Hu Jia** was detained for several hours his birthday on 24 July 2013 during a dinner with his five-year old daughter Qianci and friends at a restaurant in the Chinese city of Shenzhen, across the border from Hong Kong, **Hu Jia's** wife **Zeng Jinyan** told the Human Rights Actions Unit. Hu said police asked him to refrain from participating in activism in Shenzhen, and expressed concern that his presence could become a rallying point for local activists.

The South China Morning Post reported **Hu's** estimation that dozens of police officers were deployed to break up the party. **"When even a birthday party could be given a political label, this says a lot about the ludicrousness of the stability maintenance system.** They think so long as the activists get together, it's impossible for them not to stir up trouble" **Hu** said. **Hu Jia** declared that the incident has only stiffened his resolve to bring democracy and freedom to his country.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1291040/activists-say-they-were-detained-while-celebrating-hu-jias-birthday>,  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/26/world/asia/chinese-rights-advocate-is-detained.html? r=0>

### **1990 Sakharov Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to visit Prague, Budapest and Warsaw in September 2013**

The leader of the parliamentary opposition was invited to attend a conference of Forum 2000, established by the late Czech President, Vaclav Havel, and accepted the invitation. **Aung San Suu Kyi** will take part in a debate over democracy and civil society around the world. She will also visit Hungary and Poland. Her upcoming visit also highlights the changes that have taken place in her own country since decades of outright military rule ended in 2011.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/burma-suu-kyi-visiting-europe-prague-forum-2000/25076387.html>

**Aung San Suu Kyi's** intention to run for Burma's President is well known. At present, according to media **Aung San Suu Kyi** appears to be pursuing measures necessary to secure her political future from the military regime's grasp. The leader of the parliamentary opposition faced recently some criticism over her report as Chair of the Committee reviewing the Latpadaung copper mine dispute between local farmers and the military.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gordon-welty/its-too-early-to-judge-au\\_b\\_3752907.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gordon-welty/its-too-early-to-judge-au_b_3752907.html)

### **Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband, Reza Khandan: life in Evin prison worse "than hell"**

**"The difference between hell and living without cooling systems in a city like Tehran with some days up to 42 degrees temperature is that one is burnt once in hell and that's over...But living in such a city and in a suffocating place like the prison without any air-conditioning and cooling systems is a little more horrible than living in the hell,"** Reza Khandan, husband of imprisoned 2012 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Nasrin Sotoudeh** wrote on his Facebook page on 24 July 2013.

"If they say their intention is not to hurt the prisoners, they have made the most hilarious claim. Iran is a country that has so much money that it has surprised its economists. The prisons' administration, in addition to the huge budget it receives from the government, earns 45 billion Tomans just by selling goods at an unreasonably high price to the prisoners, who, naturally, have no income and their families have to pay for their life in prison. Almost all the facilities are provided by families and prisoners themselves. For two subsequent years there were mice in women's section. This year a snake was found. Most winters they have no fuel for heating the prison. I am writing this to get it across to the parliament members\* who after their visit in January said Evin prison was a 5-star hotel".

\*Reza Khandan was referring to a prison visit by Iranian members of parliament.

<https://www.facebook.com/?sk=welcome#!/reza.khandan.5?fref=ts>

## **Pussy Riot member goes for parole and loses**

**Prominent international artists signed a letter calling for their release: the letter was published by Amnesty International.** On 26 July 2013, the Supreme Court of the Mordovia region upheld an earlier decision not to release **Nadezhda Tolokonnikova** after almost one year in prison. The Court also quashed a similar attempt by **Maria Alyokhina**. Both Pussy Riot (2013 Sakharov Prize nominee) members continue to plea "not guilty".

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/adele-bono-madonna-yoko-ono-radiohead-patti-smith-bruce-springsteen-and-sti>

## **Kremlin to finance "Foreign Agents NGOs"**

On 26 August, the Russian government took the decision to finance a number of Russian NGOs, which had been complaining that they had to accept financing from abroad, because they had no financing from within the country. "**Memorial**" is among those NGOs fighting for human rights and democracy in Russia.

<http://en.ria.ru/politics/20130826/182979796/Kremlin-to-Finance-Foreign-Agent-NGOs--Report.html>

## **Madres de Plaza de Mayo meet President Kirchner**

On 26 July 2013, Argentine President, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, had a meeting with **Madres de Plaza de Mayo** at her residence in La Plata. **The Madres** also had the opportunity to discuss with Martin Fresneda, State Secretary responsible for human rights in Argentina.

<http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201307/26341-cristina-recibio-a-madres-de-plaza-de-mayo-delegacion-la-plata.html>

At the end of July 2013, the Permanent Representations of France and Argentina to the UN organised a joint panel discussion entitled "International Convention against Forced Disappearance". Maria Vasquez, represented the Founding Line (Linea Fundadora) of the **Madres de Plaza de Mayo** at this event. Referring to the disappearance of her daughter and son-in-law, Maria Vasquez highlighted the permanent sorrow of all the families who lost their loved ones during the dictatorship in Argentina, and who will have to live with it for the rest of their lives. She welcomed the creation of various such international conventions, but admitted that all this is now useless, since too much time has passed and those who disappeared will never return.

<http://madresfundadoras.blogspot.com/>

## **Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) defends a Sakharov Prize nominee**

2004 Sakharov Prize Winner, **Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ)**, published a series of articles concerning recent human rights violations in Belarus on its website. One article refers to Sakharov Prize nominee **Ales Bialiatski**.

On 4 August, International Day of Solidarity with civil society in Belarus, **Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ)**, sent a letter to the Head of the Babruysk Penitentiary, where **Ales Bialiatski** is serving four and a half years prison, as a result of the refusal to allow **Mr Bialiatski's** wife to visit him in July.

<http://www.baj.by/en/node/21833>

<http://www.baj.by/en/node/21810>

## **Kofi Annan announced as 2013 Reinhard Mohn Prize Winner**

On 15 July 2013, Bertlesmann Foundation honoured **Kofi Annan** for his remarkable work and dedication to the cause of peace, democracy and sustainable development throughout the world. Since the end of his mandate as UN Secretary General, **Kofi Annan** has endeavoured in promoting sustainable development in several parts of the world, advocated for food safety, use of resources and tax evasion.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/kofi-annan-announced-as-2013-reinhard-mohn-prize-winner-215476731.html>

## **Statements by the President Martin Schulz of the European Parliament**

### ***Violence in Egypt***

On 14 August 2013, the President of the European Parliament, Mr **Martin Schulz**, issued a statement on the gravity of the current situation in Egypt: "**The casualties reported in Cairo this morning are not acceptable. I strongly condemn any violent intervention by the police forces against the supporters of former president Morsi.**"

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press\\_release\\_speeches/press\\_release/2013/2013-august/html/schulz-on-violence-in-egypt](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2013/2013-august/html/schulz-on-violence-in-egypt)

### ***Resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks***

"**I welcome the resumption of direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. I commend the commitment which the two sides have shown in the build-up to today's talks.**"

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press\\_release\\_speeches/press\\_release/2013/2013-july/html/schulz-on-the-resumption-of-israeli-palestinian-peace-talks](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2013/2013-july/html/schulz-on-the-resumption-of-israeli-palestinian-peace-talks)

### ***EP President and EU leaders back "End violence initiative"***

During a week of the launch of UNICEF's initiative on **violence against children**, all of the top officials of the European Union: President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and **President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz** and the High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton **endorsed the campaign and joined the growing global movement to "END violence"**. President of the European Parliament tweeted: We're all responsible for a world where children feel safe and able to speak up. Join the campaign "END violence!" <http://uni.cf/endviolence>

## **Urgent issues discussed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament - 28 August 2013**

### ***Syria:***

**Elmar Brok**, Chairman of the EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the current situation in Syria: "We believe a political solution is still needed"

On behalf of the committee, Mr **Brok** condemned the use of chemical weapons in the war-torn country and criticised China and Russia for not doing more to help find a peaceful solution.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20130828STO18231/html/Syria-%E2%80%9CWe-believe-a-political-solution-is-still-needed%E2%80%9D>

## **Egypt:**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament calls on Egypt to retake the path to democracy.* It called on the Muslim Brotherhood to return to the negotiation table and give up violence. The Members of the committee debated how to get the troubled country back on the track to democracy. They also insisted on better protection for Christian Copts after 40 of their churches were burnt by Islamic fundamentalists.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20130829STO18238/html/Foreign-affairs-committee-calls-on-Egypt-to-retake-path-to-democracy>

## **Ukraine - Russia:**

**MEPs criticised the Russian trade restrictions ahead of possible EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.** In a separate debate on the future of Ukraine, opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vitali Klitschko told MEPs Ukraine's future lies with Europe.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20130826IPR18104/html/Ukraine-MEPs-criticise-Russian-pressure-ahead-of-possible-EU-deal>

**Webpage of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament which, since it was reconstituted in 2004, has become an important political body for the defense of human rights worldwide:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/droi/home.html>

\*\*\*

## **Upcoming Sakharov Prize Network events:**

### *Invitation to the 25th Anniversary of the Sakharov Prize celebration*

An invitation letter to **the 25th Anniversary celebration** from the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz has been sent to the Laureates. The celebration will be held **in Strasbourg, France between 17 and 21 November 2013.**

Laureates are also invited to attend the **award ceremony of the 2013 Sakharov Prize** and take part in working sessions on future actions of the Sakharov Prize Network.

### *The Sakharov Prize impact study - information for Sakharov Prize Laureates:*

Researchers from the academic institution FRIDE will be conducting **a study on the impact of the Sakharov Prize** to be presented at the Conference to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Sakharov Prize. For this end, they will be getting in touch with Sakharov Prize Laureates to interview you about your personal experience with the Prize. We warmly encourage you to give your views and we look forward to them.