

Declaration of the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Sakharov Prize by the Sakharov Prize Network



L-R front: Shirin Ebadi (representing N. Sotoudeh), Xanana Gusmao, Wei Jinsheng, Taslima Nasreen, EP President Martin Schulz, Malala Yousafzai, former EP President Lord Plumb, Vildana Selimbegovic of Oslobodjenje, Leyla Zana, Salima Ghezali, Fernando Savater of Basta Ya, Dom Zacarias Kamwenho.

L-R back: Nurit Peled, Guillermo Farinas, Alexander Milinkievich, Christophe Deloire of RSF, Rosa Maria Paya (representing Oswaldo Paya), Berta Soler of Damas de Blanco, Hauwa Ibrahim, Salih Osman, Ahmed El Senussi and Karim Lahidji (representing J. Panahi).

20 November 2013, Strasbourg

A. Having regard to the founding declaration of the Sakharov Prize Network of 2008 which stated that "recognising the special role of Sakharov Prize winners as Ambassadors for Freedom of Thought, we, the undersigned, have agreed to enhance joint efforts in support of human rights defenders around the world through common actions by the Sakharov Prize winners jointly and under the aegis of the European Parliament";

B. Whereas the European Union Member States in the Council conclusions on Human Rights and Democracy of 25 June 2012 committed themselves to working with partners within multilateral forums and international organisations in the field of human rights and democracy; whereas the Council of the European Union emphasised the importance of an EU Special Representative (EUSR) on Human Rights for enhancing the effectiveness and visibility of the EU's Human Rights

policy and declared itself committed to working in close cooperation with the European Parliament and the European Commission and in a spirit of genuine partnership with civil society;

C. Whereas the European Parliament, in its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the review of the EU's human rights strategy stressed the need for better utilisation of the potential of the EP's Sakharov Prize Network by the other EU institutions, recommended that EP delegations going on mission to a country where the human rights situation is worrying should have members specifically tasked with raising the human rights issues, and expressed the opinion that each standing delegation of Parliament and each relevant committee should have a member specifically tasked with monitoring the human rights portfolio on the region, country or thematic area concerned, and that the persons designated should report regularly to Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights;

ALERTS, CAMPAIGNS AND SUPPORT ACTION

1. The Sakharov Prize Network will endeavour to identify human rights issues on which Laureates can work together and with the European Union and civil society in favour of human rights around the world, paying particular attention to the Sakharov Laureates' political situation; the Members of the Network commit themselves to act individually or together as a global human rights violations alert system and to take a stand for the respect of universal human rights through joint and individual action, including participation in human rights events, and the launching of appeals, statements and declarations and the promotion of their substance in their countries and fields of action;
2. The Members of the Network may jointly or individually, symbolically adopt human rights defenders in order to draw international attention to their cause and their situation and in so doing help to protect them against repression, arbitrary detention, torture, summary execution or death penalty; the Sakharov Prize Network commits itself to support Laureates and other human rights defenders imprisoned or undergoing judicial trials for their human rights activities by, jointly or individually, calling international attention to their plight and, where possible, attending court to help protect them against arbitrary condemnation and imprisonment;
3. The Sakharov Prize Network denounces impunity and commits itself to defending freedom from harassment and other forms of state-sponsored activity hostile to individuals and groups; the Sakharov Prize Network pledges to work against impunity mechanisms which protect state organisations and individuals working within the state structure committing genocide or other acts violating UN human rights conventions and acts against humanity, torture, beatings and arbitrary detentions amongst other violations; the Network calls on international bodies to maintain an impunity register as has happened in various jurisdictions in the post-war period;
4. The Sakharov Prize Network will consider the establishment of a Sakharov Prize Human Rights Defenders Shelter initiative providing temporary shelter for Sakharov Prize Laureates and other human rights defenders and their family members at risk in their own countries, in cooperation with civil society organisations; the Members of the Network commit themselves to recommend genuine human rights defenders in real need of shelter or respite in their struggle; the Members of the Network may sign a letter of support for human rights defenders seeking visas for shelter;

COOPERATION AND GOOD PRACTICES WITH EU'S INSTITUTIONS

5. Sakharov Prize Laureates commit themselves to keep the European Parliament, particularly the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), and human rights focal points in EU Delegations informed and promptly alerted of important developments concerning human rights issues in their respective countries and fields of action; Laureates commit to facilitate contacts between the EU and civil society in their country; international civil society organisations may also be relied upon for practical support and protection of Laureates and civil society in their countries;

6. The Sakharov Prize Network commits itself to provide input on important human rights issues to EU electoral observation missions with the aim of enhancing democratisation and human rights;

7. The Sakharov Prize Laureates commit themselves to meet and discuss issues of common concern on human rights when parliamentary delegations travel to third countries and Laureates visit the European Parliament;

8. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the EU for a substantial diplomatic commitment to its Members through the European External Action Service and Member State representations in particular for the protection of Sakharov Prize Laureates and human rights defenders at risk;

9. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the EU to speak out when faced with cases of persistent human rights violations to ensure that its message is heard both by abusive governments and their people;

10. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the EU Foreign Ministers and governments to hold public debates and events on human rights with the participation of Sakharov Prize Network Members; the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) will raise awareness amongst partner committees in EU national parliaments about the work of the Sakharov Prize Network;

11. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the National Parliaments of the EU Member States to use their power of influence at both bilateral and multilateral levels, within the framework of inter-parliamentary contacts and inter-parliamentary fora, in order to urge their counterparts to get involved and to commit to the cause of defending human rights and human dignity in their respective countries;

12. The Sakharov Prize Network invites to consider establishing an ad hoc committee comprising Sakharov Prize Laureates and Members of European Parliament organising jointly with EU institutions visits to countries where human rights situations are at risk in order to investigate violations of human rights and civil liberties on the ground, through meetings with victims, human rights defenders, NGOs and civil society groups in the country or region in question;

EDUCATION AND GLOBAL AWARENESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

13. The Members of the Sakharov Prize Network, jointly or individually, pledge their support to international human rights campaigns, in cooperation with international human rights organisations and civil society groups, by speaking out publicly against violations of human rights, at international, regional and local fora, in the media and in academic, cultural and other relevant fora;

14. The Sakharov Prize Network commits itself to provide a Sakharov Prize Scholarship in Human Rights to enhance the awareness of international human rights standards in their own country and their incorporation into national legislation; the Members of the Network will endeavour to recommend candidates able to advance the cause of human rights around the world; the Members pledge to contribute their expertise and experience towards the scholarship programme; the European Parliament will consider offering traineeships for human rights defenders to enhance their knowledge of international human rights issues and standards;

15. The Members of the Sakharov Prize Network, jointly and individually, commit themselves to support the international campaign to end violence against children and promote child education, by lending their voice to raise awareness globally and regionally on children's rights through their participation in online campaigns and events, making statements and carrying out visits on the ground where children are living in difficult conditions;

APPEALS

16. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the Iranian authorities for a full pardon for Sakharov Prize Laureates Nasrin Sotoudeh, condemned for her legal defence of political prisoners, and Jafar Panahi, for exercising his freedom of expression and association, and calls for their names to be cleared of all charges and their travel bans to be lifted;

17. The Sakharov Prize Network calls on the Chinese authorities to stop the frequent restrictions imposed on Sakharov Prize Laureate Hu Jia and allow him his freedom of expression and association, and freedom to travel abroad, and halt arbitrary house arrests and protect him from beatings; the Sakharov Prize Network calls on the Chinese authorities to allow human rights defenders and political dissenters to express themselves freely, without fear of retribution, and calls for all human rights defenders in prison to be freed;

18. The Sakharov Prize Network expresses its strong concern about and solidarity with the Syrian people and Sakharov Prize Laureate Razan Zaitouneh, who is still in Damascus, living through a tragic and protracted war; calls on the Syrian authorities to stop military action against civilians and respect human rights and dignity and urges the international community to provide humanitarian and medical assistance to the Syrians inside and outside Syria;

19. The Sakharov Prize Network condemns all actions against other Sakharov Prize Laureates which can be qualified as a breach of human rights, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and civil rights, particularly arrests, beatings and restrictions in the freedom of association; the Network calls for the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Cuba and elsewhere around the world, including Sakharov Prize Laureate Dama de Blanco Sonia Garro, and calls for an inquiry into the death of Sakharov Prize Laureate 2002 Oswaldo Payá;

20. The Sakharov Prize Network welcomes on-going peace talks between Turkish Government and imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan to find a lasting solution to the decades-old Kurdish conflict;

21. The Sakharov Prize Network commits itself to meet at least once during the Parliament's legislative term and to build stronger links among its members to further enhance its strong commitment to support universal human rights and human dignity.