

**SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER  
03/2016**

**SAKHAROV PRIZE LAUREATES MEET PRESIDENT OBAMA IN CUBA**

22-03-2016: **Sakharov Prize Laureates Guillermo Fariñas (2010) and Berta Soler of Damas de Blanco (2005)** were among a group of Cuban human rights activists to meet **US President Barack Obama** during his visit to Cuba. President Obama was encouraged to meet all the Sakharov Prize Laureates in Cuba by the Chair of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee Ed Royce. Both in advance of and during the visit, which signals an increasing normalisation of relations between the two countries, human rights defenders were arrested and imprisoned. Links: [New York Times](#), [New York Times, House Committee](#)

**Countries attempt to silence Cuban rights activist at UN Human Rights Council**

16-03-2016: At the Human Rights Council in Geneva Cuba, backed by other countries including China and Russia, attempted to prevent **Rosa María Payá, daughter of 2002 Sakharov Prize Laureate Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas**, from speaking on behalf of NGO Freedom House. Payá called on the Council to "try to prevent the impunity of the Cuban government and try to help save the lives of those who are defending human rights and democracy in Cuba", and called on President Obama to speak in favour of human rights and a national consultation process during his visit. She also reaffirmed her belief that the Cuban state had murdered her father. Link: [CNS](#)

**Swearing in of a new president in Myanmar**

30-03-2016: Htin Kyaw from the National League for Democracy (NLD) was sworn in as President of Myanmar on 20 March. He is the candidate of the party of **Sakharov Prize Laureate 1990 Aung San Suu Kyi**. My Kyaw is a close aide of Ms Suu Kyi. She cannot become the next president as the constitution bars citizens of Myanmar whose close relatives hold a different nationality from the presidency. Ms Suu Kyi's children hold British citizenship. However, Ms Suu Kyi has indicated that she would be "above" whoever her party nominates as the new president. In the government she will take on responsibility for foreign affairs, the president's office, education, and energy and electric power. Link: [BBC](#)

**Washington DC event co-hosted by Wei Jingsheng and Reporters Without Borders**

12-02-2016: **Sakharov Prize Laureates Wei Jingsheng (1996) and Reporters Without Borders (2005)** co-hosted an event on human rights in China with the European Parliament Liaison Office in Washington DC. The event also saw the presentation of a Human Rights Without Borders Prize Award to US Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Human Rights Watch founder Bob Bernstein. Speaking for the European Parliament, Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office Antoine Ripoll highlighted that "the work of people like Wei Jingsheng and their remarkable courage and perseverance provides us all with the inspiration that we really need at such a difficult time". Links: [EP](#), [Wei Jingsheng Foundation](#)

**Nurit Peled underlines need for educational reform when addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict**

14-03-2016: In response to new French proposals for the EU to kick-start talks between Israel and Palestine, **2001 Sakharov Prize Laureate Nurit Peled** has argued efforts won't work as long as "The maps in Israeli books show that Israel rejects international law and solutions", and noted that Israeli and Palestinian students never meet. She was speaking after having attended a film screening at the One World Film Festival in Prague on behalf of the Sakharov Prize Network alongside **European**

**Parliament Vice-President responsible for the Sakharov Prize Network Ulrike Lunacek**, where she also gave a lecture to the Prague branch of the International Solidarity Movement. Links: [EU Observer](#), [International Solidarity Movement](#)

#### **Argentine legislature pays homage to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo**

24-03-2016: The Argentine Parliament held an event in homage to the efforts of the **Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1992**. Claudia Domínguez Castro, who last year was identified as the daughter of two people disappeared during the Argentine conflict, appeared at the event. She underlined that efforts to identify the children of the disappeared were important, and that learning about her own parentage helped her to better understand her identity, and to demonstrate to society more broadly that such disappearances cannot be allowed to happen again. Link: [Los Andes](#)

#### **EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN KAZAKHSTAN, EGYPT (NOTABLY THE CASE OF GIULIO REGENI) AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

11-03-2016: In its March plenary sitting, the EP condemned the deteriorating climate for the media and free speech in Kazakhstan, the torture and assassination under suspicious circumstances of EU citizen Giulio Regeni in Egypt, and the worsening security and human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On [Kazakhstan](#), MEPs noted that "Freedom of speech for independent media, bloggers and individual citizens is a universal value that cannot be bargained away". On [Egypt](#), MEPs demanded that Egypt supports Italy to carry out a joint investigation into the torture and assassination of Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old Italian doctoral student conducting research in Cairo on the development of independent trade unions. MEPs also expressed concern about the deteriorating human rights and security situation in the [DRC](#), and called on DRC authorities to comply with the constitution, and to guarantee an environment conducive to transparent, credible and inclusive elections. Link: [EP Press Release Urgency Resolutions March 2016](#)