

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER  
5/2015**

**EP HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES FEATURING SAKHAROV PRIZE LAUREATES**

**DEVE Committee exchange of views with Dr Denis Mukwege (DRC)**

The meeting was chaired by European Parliament Committee on Development (DEVE) Chair **Linda McAvan** with the participation of **Louis Michel, Chair of the Delegation to the ACP-EU JPA**. The Sakharov Prize Laureate made a **strong appeal to the EP to change the EC legislative proposal on the conflict minerals**. In his opinion the proposal was very weak. As he underlined, if not changed, it would mean that the products used by EU citizens "will continue to have Congolese women's blood on their components". **As proposed, the new law concerned only 0.05% of involved companies, Dr Mukwege said**. He denounced also the continuing violence in DRC and asked the **EU to support the reform of judiciary and security system as the security forces do not protect the civil population**.

**Empowering women and girls**

Two Laureates have been invited as prominent guests for **the Parliament's Open Doors Day (ODD) public event**. **Dr Mukwege** and **Hauwa Ibrahim (2005)** participated in a **debate on "Empowering women and girls: dignity and development for all"**, organised along with **VP Lunacek** and other MEPs. The debate was **attended by more than 300 people**. Dr Mukwege underlined that women are still excluded from development. There are **structural inequalities which translate into 2/3 of the world's illiterate and 65% of the poorest being women**. Ms Ibrahim informed that still **93% of women in northern Nigeria lack education and incentives such as active encouragement for girls to stay in school are needed**. She pointed out that when she was working on the investigation for the kidnapped **Chibok girls** she saw that media attention was unfortunately like "oxygen" to terrorist groups, which become stronger due to large media coverage. Answering on Dr Mukwege's appeal for a strong EP position in the **upcoming vote on conflict minerals** some MEPs participating in the debate **supported mandatory traceability in EU legislation**.

**One World Human Rights Film Festival**

7th edition of the **One World Human Rights Film Festival (OWFF)** hosted Sakharov Prize Laureates **Ali Ferzat (2011), Reporters without Borders (2005), Dr Denis Mukwege (2014) and Salima Ghezali (1997)** as the main speakers. A series of four human-rights awareness raising film screenings followed by a panel discussion with MEP participation were open to the public. The EP **Vice-President Ulrike Lunacek, DEVE chair Linda McAvan, MEP Barbara Lochbihler, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea Vice-Chair of DROI and Sabine Lösing, Vice-Chair of SEDE, Ramona Nicole Mănescu Vice-Chair of the EP Delegation for Relations with the Mashreq countries** were invited as panellist. The films focused on the **Syrian crisis, the situation of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, the radicalisation of second-generation immigrants in Europe, and child education**. During the debate with Dr Mukwege an emphasis on the need of mandatory traceability of minerals in EU legislation for the improvement of the situation in conflict zones such as eastern DR Congo was made in view of the upcoming EP vote on 19 May. The OWFF was organised in cooperation with the Czech NGO People In Need. **The family of kidnapped SP Laureate Razan Zaitouneh participated with a video message** appealing for her fight to be continued.

### **Gent engaged in human rights actions together with Dr Mukwege**

In a Sakharov event held in the Belgian town of Gent on 8 May Dr Mukwege sponsored the “Gent4 peace” campaign meant to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. Dr Mukwege’s speech was followed by the screening of the film “L’homme qui répare les femmes - la colère d’Hippocrate” assisted by a full room of people. The Mayor of Gent and various Members of the Belgian Federal Parliament participated in the event. [Gent4Peace](#)

### **TV5 debate on freedom of expression**

Two Laureates, **Ali Ferzat** and **Salima Ghezali** (1997) took part in a **debate on freedom of expression organised together by TV5 and the Parliament**. This was a follow-up to the **EP campaign on freedom of expression** currently online on the EP’s Sakharov and Sakharov Prize Network webpages featuring articles by SP Laureates Reporters Without Borders, the Belarusian Association of Journalists, Salima Ghezali and Ali Ferzat, as well as **Laura Rawas** the niece of Razan Zaitouneh, the kidnapped SP Laureate from Syria. The discussion was organized with the participation of **the EP President Martin Schulz and Louis Michel**, Chair of the Delegation to the ACP-EU JPA.

Links: [EP OWFE](#); [EP TV ODD](#); [Sakharov Prize Network Website](#)

### **Taslima Nasreen receives death threats and moves to the US**

14-5-2015: **Taslima Nasreen** has been threatened by extremists following the murders of three Bangladeshi bloggers who were hacked to death in machete-wielding men’s attacks. The Sakharov Prize Laureate 1994 and Bengali writer retweeted a threat she received on Twitter from @jihadforkhilafa, which said “u r also among the 84 who r on the hit list. Count ur days”. **“My free thinker friends are getting killed in Bangladesh. Terrorists who killed them are threatening me. Wanted to meet HM, no appointment I got”**, tweeted the Laureate. Finally she decided to relocate to the United States and she was aided by the Centre of Inquiry (CFI), a US-based nonprofit organization. Taslima Nasreen had already had to flee her native Bangladesh because of a fatwa for her writing when she was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 1994. She has recently been living in exile in India. Early this month, Indian MP Idris Ali labelled her in a hate speech as “an indecent woman with a loose character”, accusing her of “playing the communal card” for her personal gain. Links: [Youtube](#); [The Hindu](#); [The Indian TV News](#)

### **Leyla Zana re-elected to the Turkish Parliament**

8-6-2015: Sakharov Prize Laureate 1995 **Leyla Zana stood for the People’s Democratic party (HDP), a pro-Kurdish party which has for the first time passed the 10% threshold to have a representation in Parliament**. The HDP got 13% of the vote and 79 seats according to preliminary results, on a commitment to peace and widening its appeal beyond the Kurdish minority.

The result of elections is a blow to the Turkish President’s plans to turn Turkey into a presidential republic. Leyla Zana has been elected from Agri province where, according to the information sent by the Laureate, HDP gained 78% of the votes. The Turkey’s Parliament has recorded the largest percentage of parliamentary seats held by women in its recent history. The HDP ran a 48% women list according to its principle of gender parity. Link: [Diclehaber](#); [Sakharov Prize Network Website](#)

### **Aung San Suu Kyi’s party breaks the silence on Rohingya**

19-05-2015: A spokesman of the National League for Democracy in Myanmar publicly acknowledged the humanitarian emergency of the Rohingya minority by pushing forward with the issue of granting citizenship. “If they are not accepted as citizens, they cannot just be sent onto rivers. They are humans, and as such are entitled to human rights” he said. The statement came after fierce criticism arose against Sakharov Prize Laureate 1990 **Aung San Suu Kyi** for her silence on the issue to which she replied saying: **“I am not silent because of political calculation. I am silent because, whoever’s side I stand on, there will be more blood. If I speak up for human rights, they will only suffer. There will be more blood”**. According to the UN, the Rohingya minority is one of the most persecuted

minorities in the world, with more than 140,000 people forced to live in internally displacement camps in Myanmar. In May 2015, thousands of Rohingya tried to flee to the neighbouring countries on rickety boats with scarce supply of food or clean water to escape systematic persecution by the Burmese government. Links: [The Daily Star](#); [Religion News Service](#); [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)

### **Asmaa Mahfouz accused of inciting subversion of the state order**

13-05-2015: A complaint has been filed to the General Attorney to investigate on **Asmaa Mahfouz**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011, and her movement “Bidayya” (Beginning), along with the other founders Ziad Al-Alimy, Tamer Abu Arab, Omar Badr and Muhammad Duma. They have been **accused of inciting subversion of state order, espionage on behalf of foreign countries hostile to Egypt, terrorism, for collaborating with the banned Muslim Brotherhood**, and infringement of the Egyptian association law. Asmaa Mahfouz is struck with a temporary ban on travel until the end of the investigations. In an interview with al Badil newspaper she accused the regime of being behind the massive smear campaign flaring up in the media, and fabricating baseless accusations against the movement for the purpose of manipulating public resentment toward the regime. She also reaffirmed the democratic vocation of her movement aiming at presenting once again a reunited revolutionary front that was dispersed after the election of President Al-Sisi. Links: [ARABIC] [Al-Badil; Youm 7](#); [Tahrir News](#)

### **Nurit Peled supports the boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel**

9-05-2015: Israeli Sakharov Prize Laureate 2001 and Russell Tribunal co-initiator **Nurit Peled** strongly denounced a new law defining as criminal offense the call to boycott Israeli institutions and organisations or people who cooperate with the occupation validated by the Israeli Supreme Court on 15 April 2015. **“It is a duty to support the BDS movement”**, she stated in an editorial for the Los Otros Judios (the other Jews) website, on the 10th anniversary of the movement. Palestinian civil society launched the campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in 2005 to make Israel comply with international law and respect the rights of the Palestinians. Link: [Los Otros Judios](#)

### **Harsher laws in Belarus are linked to the next presidential election - denounces BAJ**

11-05-2015: In an interview with IFEX, the newly-elected chairperson of **Belarusian Association of Journalist (2004), Andrei Bastunets**, speaks about the deterioration of freedom of speech and media in Belarus due to the total control of the state over traditional media and TV broadcasting. “Through the amendment to the Mass Media Law with vaguely worded definitions, which leave room for arbitrary application” -he said- “the authorities are trying to expand their grip on the web and book publishing”. According to the journalist, **the introduction of harsher laws is directly linked to the presidential election expected this year, as the deep economic crisis could strengthen public dissatisfaction with the authorities** who thus increase their control over mass media.

Andrei Bastunets, who has been working as the deputy chair of BAJ for a long time, succeeded **Zhanna Litvina**, who had headed BAJ for almost 20 years. Link: [IFEX](#)

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### **EP votes for conflict mineral ban**

20-05-2015: The EP voted in favour of a regulation establishing a mandatory monitoring system on the traceability of the chain of supply of the so-called conflict minerals including tungsten, tin, tantalum and gold, used for the manufacturing of computers and mobile devices. Prior to the voting day, a strong campaign had been launched on the issue by S&D Chair **Gianni Pittella**, who welcomed the new regulation as “a historic victory”. The campaign was initiated and strongly supported by 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate Dr **Denis Mukwege (see above)**. Links: [EU Business](#); [The Guardian](#); [Doctors Without Borders](#); [EP Press Release](#)

### EP Vice-President Lambsdorff calls on Azerbaijan to release all political prisoners

12-05-2015: EP Vice-President **Alexander Graf Lambsdorff** called on the Azerbaijani authorities to release political prisoners, journalists and human rights defenders before the beginning of the European Games, a multi-sport event to be held in Baku on 12 June. Furthermore, the Vice-President said that **Azerbaijani authorities should ensure that the rights and freedoms of their citizens are observed** under the European Convention of Human Rights and the Declaration on Human Rights. Since 2014, the Azerbaijani human rights defender **Leyla Yunus, Sakharov Prize nominee 2014**, and her husband have been detained and are in poor health conditions. They have been charged with spying against the State. The European Parliament is expected to adopt a resolution on the matter in June, a few days before the inauguration of the European Games. Link: [Radio Free Europe](#)

### EP President Martin Schulz celebrates the Europe Day

08-05-2015: The **EP President Martin Schulz** celebrated the **Europe Day on 9 May**, marking the 70th anniversary of the **end of the Second World War**. "Our continent was able to rise above hatred and fear to unite in solidarity, democracy, and tolerance" - he stated ahead of the commemoration- "Never has our continent known such a long period without conflict. Celebrating Europe is synonymous to celebrating peace".

On the occasion of **at International Young Meeting in the Auschwitz-Birkenau** camp on 08 May, he launched an appeal to all Europeans: "Auschwitz, this nadir of civilization, warns us to make the respect of human dignity the guiding principle of our acts and our policies" - he said. "Today, **the Mediterranean** is the world's deadliest border. Every life lost is a stain on Europe. Yet, EU governments are not stepping up to the challenge, are not taking on their share of the responsibility. It's a shame. Human decency demands that we hold out a saving hand to those drowning off our coasts; that Europe offers protection to those fleeing from war and persecution."

Link: [EP President](#); [EP President](#)

### EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON ZIMBABWE, MYANMAR AND SWAZILAND

21-05-2015: During the May plenary session, the EP adopted three urgency resolutions. In the first, it expresses deep concern on the forced disappearance of **Itai Dzamara, a prominent Zimbabwean human rights activist** and dissident of President Mugabe, and urges the government of Zimbabwe to take all necessary measures for his immediate and unconditional release in compliance with the country's international obligations. [EP](#)

The EP deplored also the escalating discrimination and **persecution of the Rohingya community by the Burmese authorities and human traffickers**. The latter is responsible for the mass gravesites discovered near their camps in Southern Thailand. In the resolution, the MEPs call on "all countries in the region to strengthen their cooperation on counter-smuggling and counter-trafficking measures, to ratify the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, to provide Rohingya asylum seekers at least with temporary protection". Above all, the EP urges the government of Myanmar "to amend or repeal the 1982 Citizenship Law in order to give equal access to Burmese citizenship".

Link: [EP](#)

In the third resolution, the EP calls for the immediate and unconditional release of **Mr. Maseko** and **Mr. Makhubu**, respectively a human rights lawyer and journalist in Swaziland who have been **illegally imprisoned, trailed and sentenced for their advocacy of human rights**. In addition, the EP calls on the Swaziland authorities to take concrete measures to respect and promote freedom of expression and asks the Commission to open an investigation on Swaziland's adherence to human rights and labour environmental conventions. Link: [EP](#)



[Sakharov Prize Network website](#)