

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
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DR DENIS MUKWEGE WINS SAKHAROV PRIZE 2014

21-10-2014: On Tuesday, 21 October, the Conference of Presidents unanimously decided to award this year's Sakharov Prize to Dr Denis Mukwege from the Democratic Republic of Congo "for his fight for protection especially of women", as President Martin Schulz explained. Dr Mukwege, the 59-year-old gynaecologist founded the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu in 1998, and to this day, he treats at this hospital victims of sexual violence who have sustained serious injuries, including from gang rapes. He has survived an assassination attempt and consequently had to flee DRC temporarily. He travels internationally to advocate women's rights, and provides psychological counselling and skills training at the Panzi hospital. The two shortlisted candidates for this year's Sakharov Prize are Ukraine's EuroMaidan movement and human rights defender Leyla Yunus, currently imprisoned in her home country of Azerbaijan.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1yVlpxg>; <http://bit.ly/10rBBHs>; <http://bbc.in/1zk9SIZ>

Euromaidan representatives invited to Sakharov Prize award ceremony in Strasbourg

21-10-2014: For the first time ever, a runner-up for the Sakharov Prize is invited to the prize award ceremony in Strasbourg set for 26 November. The four representatives of the Ukrainian EuroMaidan movement, journalist Mustafa Nayem, musician and Eurovision winning artist Ruslana Lyzhychko, activist Yelyzaveta Schepetylnykova and journalist Tetiana Chornovol have been invited to the ceremony. "The decision for Dr Mukwege was not a vote against the two runner-ups", President Martin Schulz pointed out.

Human rights defender and Sakharov Prize finalist Leyla Yunus in distress

5-11-2014: The regime of Ilham Aliyev has stepped up its repression of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan. Among the victims is Leyla Yunus, runner-up for this year's Sakharov Prize and Director of the Peace and Democracy Institute in Baku. Mrs Yunus and her husband Arif Yunus got arrested in summer on what observers consider to be politically motivated charges and have been held in pre-trial detention since. Although both Mrs and Mr Yunus suffer from poor health, they have been denied access to adequate medical treatment. Leyla Yunus has been repeatedly verbally and physically attacked and abused by prison guards and her cellmate, who is, according to Mrs Yunus, acting on behalf of the regime. In late October, a Baku court ruled to extend Mrs and Mr Yunus's pre-trial detentions until the end of February 2015 and early March respectively. During a meeting with French President François Hollande on 27 October, President Aliyev assured that he was "committed" to the Yunus case. Shortly after, Leyla Yunus got deprived of two of her lawyers, while her third lawyer faces increasing difficulties to represent his client. The European Parliament, the US Government and human rights organisations have, among others, condemned the course of action of the Azerbaijani regime and called for the immediate release of Mrs and Mr Yunus.

Links: <http://bit.ly/ZLBOVX>; <http://bit.ly/1wZm9Nw>; <http://bit.ly/1z1TEjW>; <http://bit.ly/1sjaZAd>; <http://bit.ly/1xiluWP>

A special EP delegation in support to Leyla Yunus

21-10-2014: The Conference of Presidents has decided to send immediately a delegation to Azerbaijan composed of the representatives of every group in the European Parliament to meet and support Ms Yunus in her fight for freedom and democracy in the country, President Schulz said,

when announcing the 2014 SP winner , referring to the third shortlisted nominee, Leyla Yunus, a prominent human rights defender currently in jail in Azerbaijan on charges of espionage and treason widely-believed to be politically-motivated.

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

Memorial under fresh judicial attack

23-10-2014: Memorial, one of Russia's oldest human rights organisation and 2009 Sakharov Prize Laureate, is once again in the sights of the Russian authorities. On 10 October, the Russian Justice Ministry has appealed to the country's Supreme Court to close down the organisation on the grounds of technical issues related to its legal registration. A hearing in the lawsuit to "liquidate" the group is set to be held on 13 November, only days before a Memorial conference including all regional branches of the organisation. The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, backed by the leaders of all political groups, sent a letter to the Kremlin on 21 October, expressing concern about the measures the Russian Government wants to take against Memorial. "This is for us a very important point because Memorial is the organisation administrating the legacy of Andrei Sakharov, the man who gave his name to our Sakharov award", Schulz stated. On 23 October, MEPs "strongly condemned" the actions of the Russian Government and urged the Justice Ministry to withdraw its lawsuit before the court hearing. In the Resolution, MEPs also consider that the July 2012 law on "foreign agents", requiring NGOs that receive foreign funding and are engaged in "political activity" to apply for inclusion in a special government list, is in breach of Russia's commitments to the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Links: <http://bit.ly/1u2Yv41>; <http://bit.ly/1sbTLDx>; <http://bit.ly/1yhQFq3>; <http://bbc.in/1tLv2vv>

World Forum for Democracy attended by Memorial representative

5-11-2014: Kirill Koroteev, a representative of Memorial, participated in the World Forum for Democracy of the Council of Europe. Memorial's participation was initiated by the European Parliament as part of the Sakharov Prize Network activity which aims to give higher visibility to Sakharov Prize Laureates who in this particular case are facing harsh political pressure from Russian Government.

Mr Koroteev took part in a debate held in the Laboratory entitled "Democracy Watchdogs", and exchanged views with a great number of young counterparts on ways to build trust between decision-makers and young citizens. The participants also acknowledged the necessity to ensure that institutions are really responsive and accountable to all the citizens, including the young ones.

Nasrin Sotoudeh protests against the suspension of her right to work as lawyer

21-10-2014: 2012 Sakharov Prize Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh contested in a sit-in in front of the Tehran Bar Association headquarters her suspension from practising law for three years. Ms Sotoudeh warned that other lawyers were also at risk of losing their law licences. She was joined in the protest by fellow Sakharov Prize Laureate from Iran, Jafar Panahi, and many of her clients, colleagues and activists. The police dispersed the protest after some hours and confiscated the camera of a journalist working for AFP, deleting pictures of the protest. The Bar Association ruling suspending Ms Sotoudeh from practising law for three years was made on a complaint filed by the Islamic Revolution Court's Prosecution Office based in Evin prison with the Bar Association requesting Ms Sotoudeh's law licence to be revoked on the basis of her conviction and sentence in 2011. Link: <http://bit.ly/1xiK4I4>

The EP supports Ms Sotoudeh

21-10-2014: The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, expressed his support for the Laureate: "Nasrin Sotoudeh once more is victim of arbitrary decision by the regime in Tehran. We call on the government in Iran to let Ms Sotoudeh work as a as a lawyer freely and without

restriction." Ulrike Lunacek, Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for the Sakharov Prize Network, publicly asked the President of the Tehran Bar Association to immediately reverse the decision, a call echoed by Ms Elena Valenciano, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, who declared "On behalf of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, I wish to express my strong solidarity with Nasrin Sotoudeh as well as my firm condemnation of this kind of judicial harassment. I therefore call on the Iranian authorities to immediately reverse this arbitrary decision." Janusz Lewandowski, Cornelia Ernst, respectively Chair and vice-chair of the EP's Delegation for Relations with Iran, in separate statements denounced the harassment of the Sakharov Prize Laureate and the arbitrary ruling to suspend her licence.

Over 50 MEPs have signed a letter initiated by MEP Marietje Schaake urging EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Lady Ashton, who will remain chief negotiator with Iran on the nuclear negotiations, to "raise the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh, and to share our grave concerns about human rights and justice violations, with Iranian authorities at the highest level".

Ms Sotoudeh expressed her appreciation of the support which she deems helpful in her situation.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1vO5jiX>;

Malala Yousafzai receives 2014 Nobel Peace Prize

09-10-2014: 2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai and Indian child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi were awarded the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize "for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education". Malala is the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Prize, just as in 2013, at age 16, she became the youngest person to be awarded the Sakharov Prize. Malala said that the award made her feel "more powerful and courageous". Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament and co-Chair of the Sakharov Prize Network, congratulated Malala and her fellow Nobel laureate, as did other Sakharov Prize Laureates. Links: <http://nyti.ms/1vU5TwZ>; <http://bit.ly/10rKMrn>

Sakharov Laureate 2001 thanks to Malala for her donation

30-10-2014: Malala Yousafzai donated the prize money of \$50,000 of the World's Children's Prize that she won towards the reconstruction of schools in Gaza, through the United Nations relief agency UNRWA. Israeli Sakharov Prize Laureate 2001 Nurit Peled-Elhanan thanked Malala for her donation: "I would like to extend my admiration and thanks to Malala for her contribution to schools in Gaza". Links: <http://nyti.ms/1z1WaGX>

Oswaldo Payá's death and the responsibilities of the Cuban government

16-10-2014: Eduardo Cardet, Council member of the Christian Liberation Movement (MLC), criticized Fidel Castro's letter to the New York Times. Castro denied that the Cuban authorities were involved in the death of the Cuban activist and 2002 Sakharov Prize Laureate, Oswaldo Payá. Cardet pointed out that there is compelling evidence that the death of Payá in a car accident in 2012 was organized by the Cuban regime and called for an international investigation on his murder. Moreover, Angel Carronero, sentenced to four years for his involvement in the Payá' death, was allowed to travel to the United States where he presented photographs of the car accident to the media in order to prove his innocence. Links: <http://bit.ly/1wzsCAZ>; <http://hrld.us/1tLCPTu>

The Ladies in White continue their fight, facing on-going repression

14-10-2014: The Ladies in White, 2005 Sakharov Prize Laureates, commemorated the 3rd anniversary of the death of their founder Laura Pollán. In several Cuban cities, the Ladies in White marched in honour of their late leader, who died in unclear circumstances. The activists also protested in solidarity with political prisoners Sonia Garro, Ramón Alejandro Muñoz and Eugenio Hernandez, whose trial proceedings got further delayed. Meanwhile, the Cuban authorities continue to oppress the activists in the country, having arrested dozens of "Damas" in October.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1xc7KzY>; <http://bit.ly/13Mg2Uj>

Madres de Plaza de Mayo University becomes a national University Institute

22-10-2014: The Madres de Plaza de Mayo University in Buenos Aires, founded by the 1992 Sakharov Prize Laureates, will become the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Human Rights University Institute as Argentina's Lower House of Parliament backed a bill that had received the approval of the Senate in May. According to the bill, the new nationalised institute's purpose is to tackle a lack of comprehensive and dedicated human rights education at the federal level. The new institute will therefore focus on human rights research, education and training for state officials, educators and the media. Human rights activists welcomed the nationalisation, whereas opposition representatives criticised the decision, referring to, amongst other things, corruption accusations against one of the university's founders. Links: <http://bit.ly/1ppNvhc>; <http://bit.ly/1z1SXa8>