

**Sakharov Prize Community appeal  
to urgently release all prisoners of conscience in view of the Covid-19 pandemic**

We, the undersigned Laureates of the Sakharov Prize Award and Members of the European Parliament united in a Sakharov Prize Community, launch an urgent appeal for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders, including all Sakharov Prize Laureates, given the Covid-19 pandemic.

We share the concerns of UNSG Antonio Guterres that the Covid-19 pandemic is a health, social and economic crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis as well. We support his resolve that human rights cannot be an afterthought in times of crisis and that no one should be left behind. We are deeply concerned that many governments abuse the crisis to increase repression against opposition and human rights defenders.

In the current global health crisis, those deprived of their liberty are among the most vulnerable to contagion. Detention facilities in many countries have unsanitary conditions and do not provide sufficient means for maintaining personal hygiene. Overcrowded confined spaces, lack of ventilation, clean food and water, restricted access to healthcare are risks that facilitate the spread of diseases.

We welcome reports that, in line with UN recommendations, some governments have taken measures to reduce prison overcrowding by pardoning prisoners and inmates of detention centres and releasing them early.

We are, however, greatly disappointed that in too many cases including China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela these releases have excluded prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders, thus exposing them deliberately to the risk of a deadly disease. This ignores clear UN Covid-19 guidance related to people in detention. We remind those states of their legal obligation, under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to take any necessary measures to prevent such treatments in any territory under their jurisdiction and we urge them to fulfil their commitments.

We strongly call upon all governments to release urgently every person detained without sufficient legal basis, including human rights defenders and others detained simply for expressing critical or dissenting views. Cases such as those of Abdullah al-Hamid, founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, and of Shadi Habash, Egyptian filmmaker, both died of health problems in jail over the last couple of weeks should not happen again.

With regard to our jailed fellow Sakharov Prize Laureates, we call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to release immediately human rights lawyer and Sakharov Prize Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh.

We reiterate the European Parliament's calls for the immediate release of Sakharov Prize Laureate Ilham Tohti in China and of the political prisoners of Sakharov Prize Laureate Democratic Opposition in Venezuela.

We remain very concerned about the health situation of Sakharov Prize Laureate Raif Badawi and appeal to the Saudi authorities to grant him a pardon on medical grounds.

## Sakharov Prize laureates

2019 Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti, represented by his daughter Jewher Ilham

2018 Oleg Sentsov

2017 Democratic Opposition in Venezuela, represented by Leopoldo López, Lorent Saleh, Yon Goicoechea, and Isadora Zubillaga

2016 Nadia Murad Basee Taha

2016 Lamyia Haji Bashar Taha

2014 Denis Mukwege

2010 Guillermo Fariñas

2009 Memorial, represented by Oleg Orlov and Sergei Kovalev

2005 Ladies in White, represented by Berta Soler

2005 Hauwa Ibrahim

2005 Reporters Without Borders

2001 Nurit Peled-Elhanan

1996 Wei Jingsheng

1993 Osloborjenje

## Members of the European Parliament

1. HAUTALA Heidi
2. ARENA Maria
3. ANGEL Marc
4. BENIFEI Brando
5. BEER Nicola
6. BILBAO BARANDICA Izaskun
7. BLOSS Michael
8. BRICMONT Saskia
9. BURKHARDT Delara
10. BÜTIKOFER Reinhard Hans
11. CARVALHAIS Isabel
12. COMIN I OLIVERES Antoni
13. CUFFE Ciaran
14. DE SUTTER Petra
15. DELBOS-CORFIELD Gwendoline
16. DONATH Anna
17. DURAND Pascal
18. GEORGOULIS Alexis
19. GLUCKSMANN Raphaël
20. GUILLAUME Sylvie
21. GUSMÃO José
22. GUTELAND Jytte
23. HAHN Svenja Ilona
24. INCIR Evin
25. JOVEVA Irena
26. KOKKALIS Petros

27. KÖSTER Dietmar
28. KUHNKE Alice
29. LAGODINSKY Sergey
30. LALUCQ Aurore
31. LEITÃO-MARQUES Maria-Manuel
32. LEXMANN Miriam
33. LÓPEZ GIL Leopoldo
34. MARQUARDT Erik
35. MATIAS Marisa
36. NEUMANN Hannah
37. NOICHL Maria
38. O'SULLIVAN Grace
39. PAET Urmas
40. PAGAZAURTUNDÚA Maite
41. PIRI Kati
42. PONSATÍ OBIOLS Clara
43. PRIECELOVA Veronika
44. PUIGDEMONT I CASAMAJÓ Carles
45. RAFAELA Samira
46. REINTKE Terry
47. RIBA I GINER Diana
48. RIES Frédérique
49. RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS Maria Soraya
50. ROOKMAKER Dorien
51. ROPÉ Bronis
52. SÁNCHEZ AMOR Nacho
53. SANTOS Isabel
54. SATOURI Mounir
55. SIKORSKI Radosław
56. SCHIEDER Andreas
57. STRIK Tineke
58. URTASUN Ernest
59. VANA Monika
60. WISELER-LIMA Isabel
61. YENBOU Salima
62. ZULLO Marco