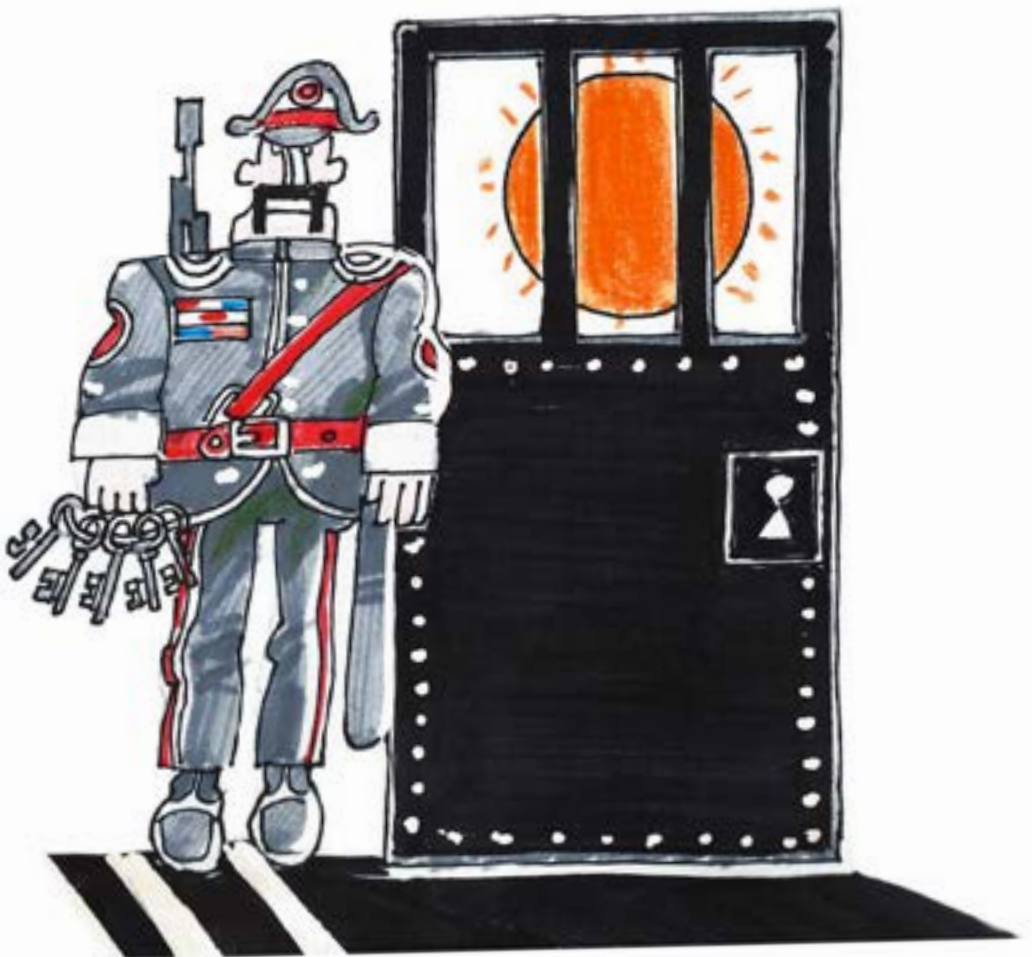


# THE BOOK OF SAKHAROV PRIZE LAUREATES 2016



2016 Nadia Murad Basee Taha, Lamiya Aji Bashar  
2015 Raif Badawi  
2014 Denis Mukwege  
2013 Malala Yousafzai  
2012 Nasrin Sotoudeh, Jafar Panahi  
2011 Arab Spring:  
Mohamed Bouazizi, Ali Ferzat, Asmaa Mahfouz,  
Ahmed El Senussi, Razan Zaitouneh  
2010 Guillermo Fariñas  
2009 Memorial  
2008 Hu Jia  
2007 Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman  
2006 Aliaksandr Milinkevich  
2005 *Damas de Blanco*, Hauwa Ibrahim,  
Reporters Without Borders  
2004 The Belarusian Association of Journalists  
2003 United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan  
and all the staff of the UN

2002 Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas  
2001 Izzat Ghazzawi, Nurit Peled-Elhanan,  
Dom Zacarias Kamwenho  
2000 *¡Basta Ya!*  
1999 Xanana Gusmão  
1998 Ibrahim Rugova  
1997 Salima Ghezali  
1996 Wei Jingsheng  
1995 Leyla Zana  
1994 Taslima Nasreen  
1993 *Oslobođenje*  
1992 *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*  
1991 Adem Demaçi  
1990 Aung San Suu Kyi  
1989 Alexander Dubček  
1988 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,  
Anatoli Marchenko

As we approach the end of 2016, it is difficult to be optimistic. Bombs are raining down on Syrian cities and their inhabitants day and night, the list of prisoners of conscience around the world is getting longer and longer and populist propaganda attacking democratic values has reached the very heart of the Union.

The European Parliament is not standing idly by. In the name of freedom of expression and the right to speak out against suffering and injustice, it is trying to help those whose governments seek to silence them. It does so in any way it can, sometimes in private, and sometimes in public, such as by awarding the annual Sakharov Prize, which casts a spotlight on one particular struggle. The European Parliament knows the prize is not a magic wand; just think of the Syrian human rights activist Razan Zaitouneh, who won the prize in 2011 and has still not been heard from, or the 2015 laureate Raif Badawi, whose courage impressed people the world over. The Saudi blogger and writer is still rotting in a prison in his homeland for speaking out openly about things that many people do not even dare discuss in the privacy of their own homes. The travel ban imposed on Iranian lawyer Nasrim Sotoudeh and her compatriot Jafar Panahi, a film director, is still in place.

But justice also triumphed in 2016. The Azerbaijani human rights activist Leyla Yunus and her husband Arif were released thanks to the tireless work of the European Parliament. Former laureate Guillermo Fariñas from Cuba ended his hunger strike and was received at the European Parliament. By monitoring democratic processes and documenting wars and crises in detail, the European Parliament ensures that no state can hope to silence advocates of freedom without facing opprobrium.

This year, the European Parliament has chosen to honour the courage and dignity of two extraordinary women. Nadia Murad Basee Taha survived sexual enslavement by the terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS) and became the spokeswoman for fellow Yazidi victims of what can only be described as genocide. She and her compatriot Lamiya Aji Bashar — another victim of the terrible atrocities committed by IS jihadists who bears the physical scars of her struggle for freedom and against impunity — have become the standard bearers for Iraq's Yazidi religious community. By awarding the prize to these women, Parliament is demonstrating its recognition of and support for the efforts to bring so-called Islamic State fighters to justice for all the crimes they have committed against women, children and men.

It is once again an honour to include drawings by the Syrian newspaper illustrator Ali Ferzat, the 2011 laureate, in this year's book. They remind us that freedom of expression remains non-negotiable.

## THE SAKHAROV PRIZE

Awarded for the first time in 1988 to Nelson Mandela and Anatoli Marchenko, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is the highest tribute paid to human rights work by the European Union. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU supports laureates, who are strengthened and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.

The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of democracy and implementation of the rule of law.

The European Parliament confers the Sakharov Prize with its EUR 50 000 endowment at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may individual Members (the support of at least 40 Members is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three.

The final winner or winners of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents, a European Parliament body led by the president, which includes the leaders of all the political groups represented in the Parliament, making the choice of laureates a truly European choice.



**ANDREI SAKHAROV** (1921-1989), the renowned USSR physicist, human rights activist, dissident and advocate of reform, accepted the idea of a prize for freedom of thought being named after him 'as an important act of appreciation of my work in defence of human rights'<sup>(1)</sup>, as he wrote in a letter to the European Parliament. He felt that the award of such a prize would be 'useful' as it would 'attract attention to the human rights problem and will encourage people who have made a contribution to this end'. The European Parliament declared its intention to create this prize in a resolution adopted in December 1985.

A pioneer in nuclear physics and the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, Andrei Sakharov was 32 years old when he became a full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and was accorded the privileges of the *nomenklatura*, members of the Soviet elite.

However, by the late 1950s, he became increasingly concerned about the atmospheric consequences of nuclear testing and the political and moral implications of his work, which could lead to mass deaths.

The turning point in his political evolution came in 1967, when he urged the Soviet authorities to accept a US proposal for a bilateral rejection of the development of anti-ballistic missile defence systems, which he described as posing a major threat of global nuclear war in his 1968 essay *Reflections on progress, peaceful coexistence and intellectual freedom*. The Soviet authorities rejected his request and, after the publication of his essay, banned Andrei Sakharov from all top-secret military work and stripped him of his privileges.

In 1970 he became one of the co-founders of the Committee on Human Rights in the USSR, and campaigning for human rights and the victims of political trials became his main concern. In 1972 he married fellow human rights activist Elena Bonner. Despite increasing pressure from the government, Sakharov not only sought the release of dissidents in his country but became one of the Soviet regime's most courageous critics, embodying the crusade against the denial of fundamental rights. He was, in the words of the Nobel committee which awarded him the Peace Prize in 1975, 'a spokesman for the conscience of mankind'. He was not allowed to go to receive his Nobel Prize, but neither repression nor exile could break his resistance.

Andrei Sakharov was exiled to the closed city of Gorky in 1980, after he publicly protested against the 1979 Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. While in exile, he lived under tight Soviet police surveillance and went on hunger strike twice to demand permission for his wife to have heart surgery in the United States. Elena Bonner, also sentenced to exile in Gorky in 1984, was finally allowed to travel to the United States for treatment in October 1985. The European Parliament supported the Sakharovs and even debated leaving an empty seat in its chamber for Andrei Sakharov. The alternative idea, the establishment of a prize named after Andrei Sakharov, was adopted instead. Sakharov was chosen because he was 'a European citizen who was the personification of freedom of thought and expression and who had decided, because of his convictions and his conscience, to renounce all the material advantages and all the honours which were open to him', as Jean-Francois Deniau, the rapporteur on the initiative, said to the Parliament plenary.

The prize was created by a resolution adopted by the European Parliament in December 1985. A year later Mikhail Gorbachev, who launched perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union, allowed Andrei Sakharov and Elena Bonner to return to Moscow. Andrei Sakharov died there in December 1989.

In 2013 the prize that bears his name marked a quarter of a century of support for human rights, going far beyond borders, even those of oppressive regimes, to reward human rights activists and dissidents all over the world. The human rights defenders recognised by it have paid dearly for their commitment to defending human dignity; many have faced persecution, death, loss of liberty, beatings or exile. In a number of cases the winners have not been free to receive their prize in person.

One such winner is 2012 laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh, who, from Evin prison in Iran, where she was being held at the time, wrote letters addressed to the late Andrei Sakharov, exploring philosophically the meaning of dissidence and comparing her cause to his.

'Your daily renewal of life and resistance was amazing. What you managed to achieve was a great victory for all freedom fighters all over the world. May those who come in future realise your unrealised dreams.'

<sup>(1)</sup> Andrei Sakharov's letters quoted in this publication are kept in the Historical Archives of the European Parliament.





THE SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK (SPN) comprises laureates of the Sakharov Prize and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It was launched at the European Parliament in 2008, when the Sakharov Prize celebrated its 20th anniversary. Its creation recognised 'the special role of Sakharov Prize winners as Ambassadors for Freedom of Thought', and its members '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'. The SPN broadly connects MEPs, laureates and civil society to increase cooperation on human rights action in Brussels and internationally. The SPN serves as a channel of communication that enables the laureates and the Parliament to address human rights violations and issues.

On the 25th anniversary of the prize, in 2013, the network adopted a declaration in which members thereof pledged their support jointly and individually to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide through a number of actions. These include an ongoing international campaign to end violence against children and promote child education, and a freedom-of-expression campaign conducted in cooperation with the European Parliament in May 2015.

In 2016 the SPN organised the first Sakharov Fellowship, as agreed in the 25th anniversary declaration, to promote the next generation of human rights defenders. Thirteen human rights defenders from across the globe were given the opportunity to follow human rights training in Brussels and at the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation in Venice.

SPN members regularly give Sakharov lectures around the EU and elsewhere to raise awareness of human rights issues and spark public debate in the European capitals. Since 2013, the members of the network have held Sakharov lectures in Belgium, Ireland, France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Tanzania and Nigeria. The lectures were delivered by the Belarusian Association of Journalists, Damas de Blanco, Salima Ghezali, Memorial, Aliaksandr Milinkevich, Denis Mukwege, Ahmed El Senussi, Ali Ferzat, Nurit Peled, Guillermo Fariñas and Hauwa Ibrahim.

The network has come together for conferences in 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2016. The SPN conferences are a forum for debate among MEPs, laureates, representatives of the European Union and other international institutions, and civil society, and serve as a basis for enhanced network action for human rights.

More information regarding the latest activities of the network can be found on the Sakharov Prize website: [europarl.europa.eu/sakharov](http://europarl.europa.eu/sakharov)

## NADIA MURAD BASEE TAHA and LAMIYA AJI BASHAR

are survivors of sexual enslavement by Islamic State (IS) and have become spokespersons for women afflicted by IS's campaign of sexual violence. They are public advocates for the Yazidi community in Iraq, a religious minority that has been the subject of a genocidal campaign by IS militants.

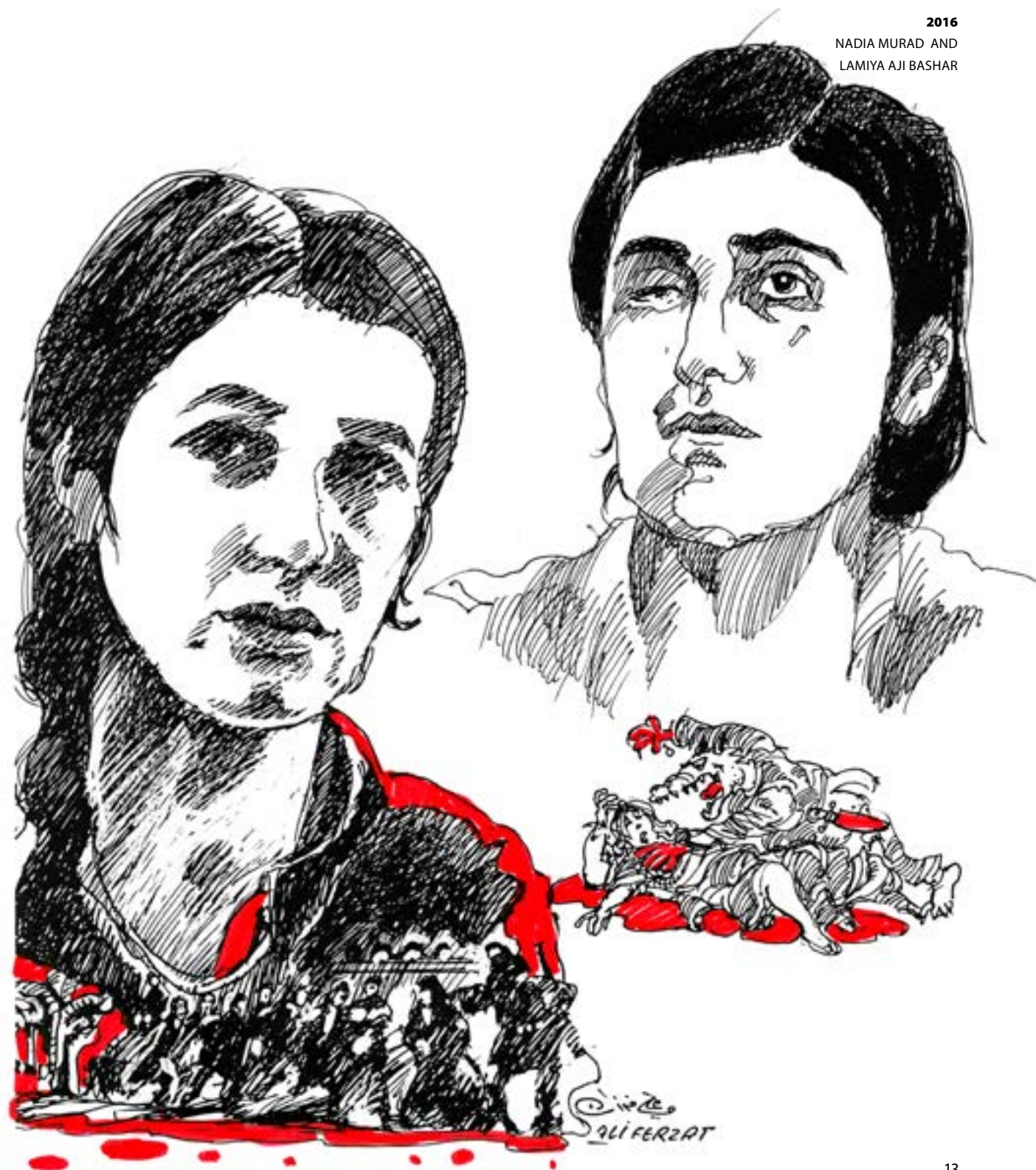
On 3 August 2014, IS slaughtered all the males in the village of Kocho, Aji Bashar and Murad's hometown in Sinjar/Iraq. Following the massacre, women and children were enslaved: all young women, including Aji Bashar, Murad and their sisters were kidnapped, bought and sold several times and exploited as sex slaves. During the Kocho massacre, Murad lost six of her brothers and her mother, who was killed along with 80 older women deemed to have no sexual value. Aji Bashar was also exploited as a sex slave along with her six sisters. She was sold five times among the militants and was forced to make bombs and suicide vests in Mosul after IS militants executed her brothers and father.

In November 2014, Murad managed to escape with the help of a neighbouring family who smuggled her out of the IS-controlled area, allowing her to make her way to a refugee camp in northern Iraq and then to Germany. A year later, in December 2015, Murad addressed the UN Security Council's first-ever session on human trafficking with a powerful speech about her experience. In September 2016, she became the first United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, participating in global and local advocacy initiatives to raise awareness around the plight of the countless victims of trafficking. In October 2016, the Council of Europe honoured her with the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

Aji Bashar tried to flee several times before finally escaping in April with the help of her family, who paid local smugglers. On her way over the Kurdish border, and while racing towards Iraq's government-controlled territory with IS militants in pursuit, a landmine exploded, killing two of her acquaintances and leaving her injured and almost blind. Luckily she managed to escape and was eventually sent for medical treatment in Germany, where she was reunited with her surviving siblings. Since her recovery Aji Bashar has been active in raising awareness about the plight of the Yazidi community and continues to help women and children who were victims of IS enslavement and atrocities.

2016

NADIA MURAD AND  
LAMIYA AJI BASHAR





RAIF BADAWI is a young Saudi Arabian blogger and advocate of freedom of thought and expression who has been jailed and flogged by the Saudi authorities.

He founded and ran the *Saudi Liberals*, and later the *Free Saudi Liberals network*, online forums for the discussion of religion and politics in the conservative country, and had a thousand registered users when he was detained for a day in 2008 and interrogated on suspicion of apostasy, a crime punishable by death in Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, he was banned indefinitely from leaving Saudi Arabia, his bank accounts were frozen and his wife's family attempted to force a divorce. A *fatwa* was put on his head by a hard-line imam.

Badawi valiantly continued to air his moderate liberal views. He wrote in defence of the right to freedom of thought and expression and called for a society open to the views of others. He also asserted that a free thinker in an Arab society straining under the theocratic yoke just needed to express an opinion to bring down on their head a fatwa. This, he feared, would cause the brightest minds to flee.

A voice of liberalism in Saudi Arabia, Badawi wrote from prison in 2015, in a preface to a book of his writings salvaged despite the permanent closure of his websites, that he was using his writings online and in traditional media to enlighten his community and defeat ignorance, challenge the untouchability of the clergy and promote respect for freedom of expression, women's rights and the rights of minorities and poor people in Saudi Arabia.

Badawi was arrested in 2012 and indicted on several charges including apostasy, though no court has ruled on the latter. He was convicted for establishing a forum hosting blasphemous commentary and blasphemous online posts, and sentenced to 7 years in prison and 600 lashes in 2013, and then resented to 1 000 lashes and 10 years in prison plus a fine of SAR 1 million (EUR 226 000) in 2014. He received 50 lashes before a chanting crowd in front of a Jeddah mosque in January 2015 in what was meant to be the first in a series of 1 000 lashes to be carried out over 20 weeks. Doctors who examined him after the first lashings found wounds so deep they judged he would not survive another flogging. The international outcry and concerns about his health have so far stopped further lashings, but his sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2015. He is banned from using any media outlets and from travelling abroad for 10 years after his release from prison.

Badawi's wife Ensaf Haidar and their three children live in Canada, having fled Saudi Arabia in 2013 because of anonymous death threats. She represented her husband at the award ceremony in Strasbourg and at the SPN Conference in Brussels in 2016.

2015  
RAIF  
BADAWI





**DENIS MUKWEGE** is a doctor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who is dedicating his life to rebuilding the bodies and lives of tens of thousands of women and girls in the country who are victims of gang rape and brutal sexual violence in its ongoing war.

Born in Bukavu in 1955, he studied medicine and founded the gynaecology service at the Lemera hospital in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was destroyed when war broke out in 1996. Mukwege fled back to Bukavu and started a hospital from tents, building a new maternity ward and operating theatre, but all of this was destroyed in the Second Congo War of 1998.

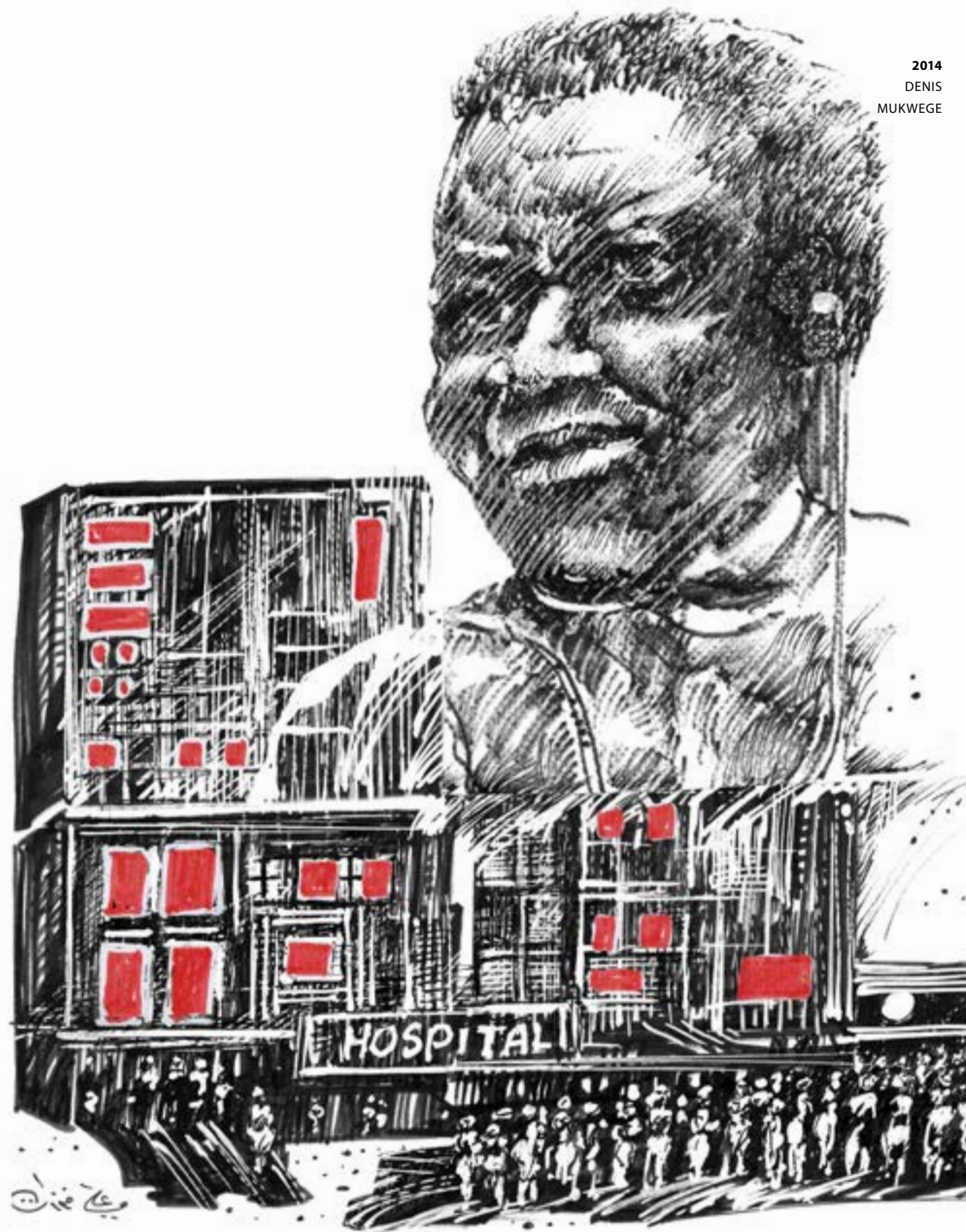
Undeterred, Mukwege rebuilt his hospital in Panzi, working long hours and training staff to treat women victimised by the combatants who had 'declared women their common enemy'. He has treated over 40 000 women since the hospital reopened in 1999 and accepted the first rape victim with bullet wounds in her genitals and thighs. Within weeks, dozens of women went to the hospital with stories of rape and torture.

Mukwege is an internationally recognised expert in the repair of pathological and psychosocial damage caused by sexual violence. The hospital he directs in Panzi offers psychological and physical care, and women are also helped to develop new skills to earn a living, as many have been rejected by their communities. Girls are helped to go back to school and legal aid is offered to those seeking legal redress.

He also became a tireless campaigner on behalf of the victimised women when he recognised a young woman on his operating table as a girl born at the Panzi hospital, at whose birth he had assisted. For Mukwege this was a pivotal moment that galvanised him to go beyond healing and start speaking out at home and abroad for an end to the violence raging over the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources. He became a victim himself in 2012 when armed men invaded his home and held his daughters at gunpoint. His bodyguard and friend was killed, but he escaped, fleeing with his family to Sweden and then Belgium. He returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013 when a group of women, who live on less than a dollar a day, banded together to buy his ticket home.

Mukwege now lives at the Panzi hospital despite continuous threats to his life. He is actively engaged with the European Parliament and the SPN, leaving his mark on the European Parliament's legislative process on conflict minerals with his impassioned pleas to safeguard the lives of women and children in conflict zones.

A 2015 documentary entitled *The man who mends women — the wrath of Hippocrates* illustrates his life and work. The film was subtitled in all EU official languages with the support of the European Parliament.





**MALALA YOUSAFZAI** was 15 years old when she was shot in the face by the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley in 2012. They wanted to stop her and other girls from getting an education. She survived her severe injuries and battled on.

In 2013 Malala became the youngest ever laureate of the Sakharov Prize, dedicating it to the 'unsung heroes of Pakistan' in a powerful defence of every child's right to an education.

'Many children have no food to eat, no water to drink and children are starving for education. It is alarming that 57 million children are deprived of education ... this must shake our conscience,' Malala told the representatives of 28 nations in a packed Parliament and in the exceptional presence of almost all living Sakharov Prize laureates, gathered for the prize's 25th Anniversary Conference. 'One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.'

Malala's fight for education began at age 11, when she wrote an anonymous online diary about a schoolgirl's life under the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley. In 2009 the Taliban decreed all girls' schools closed while the Pakistani army fought them for control. Malala and her family had to flee their besieged hometown and her school was devastated. Returning home after the security situation improved, Malala and her father Ziauddin, who ran a girls' school, continued advocating girls' education despite threats. Malala used a donation to buy a school bus, the same bus on which she was shot, and two other girls injured, in the attack for which responsibility was claimed by the Taliban.

Malala is now a committed campaigner for girls' education, a co-founder of the Malala Fund and a member of the Youth Education Crisis Committee, set up by the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, who estimated that at current rates all girls will be in school in 2086, not 2015 as promised in the millennium development goals. 'In Islam girls are allowed to get education. It's the duty and responsibility of every person, whether a boy or a girl, to get education and knowledge,' Malala says.

Malala's birthday, 12 July, was chosen by the UN, under its Global Education First Initiative, as Malala Day, a platform for children to stand up for their right to education.

In 2014 Malala Yousafzai was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 'for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education', thus becoming both the youngest Sakharov and the youngest Nobel laureate ever.





**NASRIN SOTOUDEH** is an Iranian human rights lawyer who was among the few who bravely undertook the legal defence of dissenters arrested in the 2009 mass protests against an election they believed fraudulent, before her own arrest in 2010.

When she was awarded the prize in 2012, she was serving a 6-year jail sentence on charges of endangering Iran's national security and on a 7-week hunger strike in solitary confinement in Iran's notorious Evin prison, protesting against judicial pressure on her husband and young daughter.

In her frail state, she found the strength to write a memorable message to the European Parliament, read for her at the award ceremony by her friend, colleague and client, Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi: 'The story of human rights, and the mechanisms for guaranteeing them, has come a long way, yet its realisation still largely depends on the intentions of governments, the biggest violators of human rights.' To human rights defenders and political prisoners, Sotoudeh said, 'Just like you, I also know that democracy has a long and difficult road ahead.'

She was unexpectedly released in September 2013, for reasons not divulged by the Iranian authorities, but her sentence was not lifted, and she is still banned from leaving Iran and thus unable to receive her Sakharov Prize. However, Sotoudeh met the first European Parliament delegation to visit Iran in 6 years, in Tehran in December 2013. The meeting — in which she focused on the situation of political prisoners, denouncing trials held in revolutionary rather than criminal courts as non-transparent — caused furore among Iranian hardliners, who accused Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi



**2012**  
NASRIN  
SOTOUDEH

of being seditionists. On her release from prison, Sotoudeh returned to her activism, defending women victims of acid attacks, religious minorities and human rights campaigns, including the campaign for an end to the death penalty. She has been temporarily detained by the Iranian authorities on a number of occasions.

Sotoudeh was able to return briefly to her law career, which she had strived for years to be able to practise and had launched by defending minors against the death penalty. In addition to her 6-year jail sentence, she had been banned from practising law and travelling for 10 years. She contested the jurisdiction of the revolutionary court to ban her from practising law, but in October 2014 was hit with a 3-year suspension by the Iran Bar Association, which she believes was urged by the powerful Ministry of Intelligence.

Sotoudeh began demonstrating every working day for the 'right to dissent' and the 'right to work' in front of the bar's headquarters in Tehran. Her protest was not covered by Iranian official media, but many other activists and victims of human rights violations joined her. Sotoudeh's suspension was eventually reduced by the bar, in June 2015, to 9 months, and she ended her protest, though she and her supporters reiterated their demand for the suspension to be completely lifted. She attributed the reduction to the support she received — including that of the European Parliament, the Members of which protested strongly against her ban — and immediately applied for the reinstatement of her licence to practise law.

Sotoudeh means to stay in Iran and fight for reform from within.



JAFAR PANAHI is an international award-winning film-maker from Iran who has been banned from making films for 20 years.

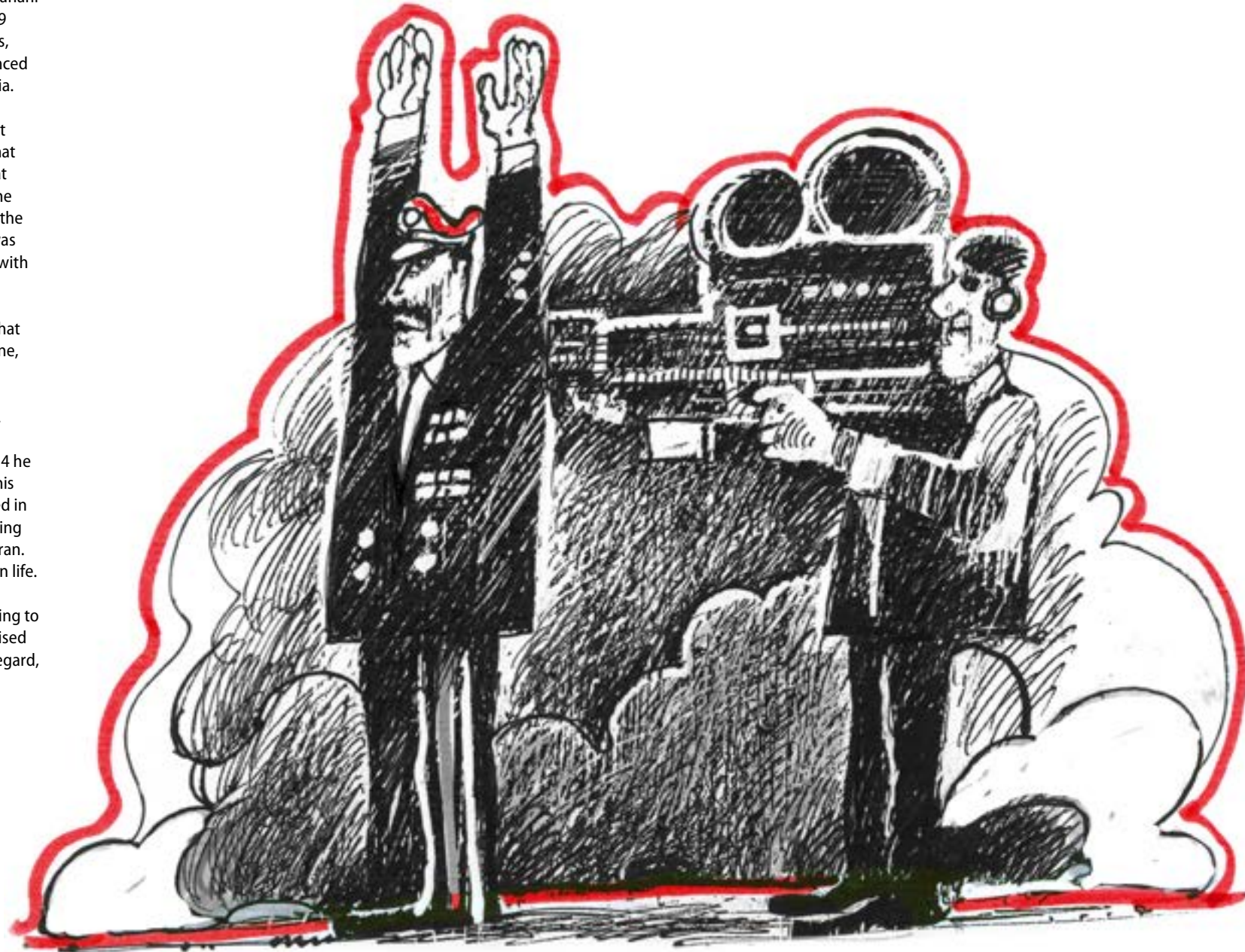
An outspoken supporter of the Iranian opposition and a critic of former President Ahmadinejad, he was sentenced to 6 years in jail for 'propaganda against the Islamic Republic' but his sentence is still awaiting execution of verdict: he is not currently in jail, but could be imprisoned at any time. Panahi was arrested in 2010 as he was making a clandestine film about the 2009 failed Green Movement uprising in Iran. Though released after 3 months, following international protests and a hunger strike, he was then sentenced to jail, and banned from making films, travelling and talking to the media.

He told the European Parliament delegation that visited Iran in 2013 that his testimony and that of his lawyer were ignored during his trial, and that the verdict had been decided in advance. He warned the delegation that human rights issues are being forgotten as the world concentrates on the nuclear agreement with Iran, and opined that once sanctions are lifted, the repression in Iran will increase. The new Iranian leadership's flexibility was only being applied to foreign affairs, not domestic ones, Panahi stated, with the pressure still on the press, on prisoners and on cultural life.

In a media interview in 2014, in defiance of his ban, he said that he felt that he had been released from a small jail only to be thrown into a bigger one, when he was banned from working.

He has nevertheless broken the prohibition on film-making three times. In 2011 he shot *This is not a film* in his own home in Tehran, sitting at his kitchen table, talking to his lawyer, and waiting to be imprisoned. In 2014 he returned with *Closed curtain*, featuring a screenwriter living alone with his dog in his house by the sea, with the curtains shut. In 2015 Panahi starred in his award-winning film *Taxi* as a taxi driver talking to passengers, including fellow laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh, as he drives through the streets of Tehran. Panahi's films are known for their humanistic and realistic perspective on life.

Panahi does not regard himself as a political person, but one who is willing to expose injustice. He has spoken out against censorship in Iran and criticised President Rouhani for not accomplishing his electoral promises in this regard, and has launched the 'Step by step' campaign aiming to end the death penalty in Iran.





**MOHAMED BOUAZIZI** (1984-2011) was the catalyst for the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and an inspiration for the pro-democracy movement that swept through the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, known as the Arab Spring.

A hard-working man from a poor background, Bouazizi had been the main provider for his family since he was 10 years old, selling fruit at the market. He left school at 19 so he could support his younger siblings' education.

Bouazizi died on 4 January 2011, at the age of 26, after setting himself on fire in protest against a system that kept him from making a decent living. He had often been a victim of the Tunisian law-enforcement agents, who would fine him, confiscate his produce and his scales, and on the last occasion even wrestled him to the ground. His family believe it was the humiliation, not the poverty, which led him to self-immolation, after he went looking for justice but was refused it. Bouazizi doused himself in fuel and lit a flame outside the gates of the governorate building in the small town of Sidi Bouzid. A popular man, known for giving away produce for free to poorer families, and whose plight struck a chord with many, his act prompted protests that quickly spread, with Tunisians from all walks of life taking to the streets against a corrupt government, high unemployment and restrictions on their freedom.

Bouazizi was still alive, in agony and wrapped in bandages from head to toe, as the authoritarian regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, in power since 1987, began to fall.

Ten days after Bouazizi's death, Ben Ali was forced to resign and leave the country as demonstrators marched in Tunis, many of them carrying Bouazizi's image.

His family take solace that his death was not in vain, as his action spurred a people's revolution and shook up despotic governments in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Arab world. It spread awareness amongst Arab youths that they could voice their frustrations and fight for their dignity when faced with injustice, corruption and autocratic rule.

The Arab Spring and its early optimism have stalled and some of its gains have been reversed, but its birthplace, Bouazizi's Tunisia, continues determinedly on its path to democracy and freedom of thought, despite fatal terrorist attacks and security fears.

**2011**  
MOHAMED  
BOUAZIZI



**ALI FERZAT** is Syria's best-known political satirist and cartoonist, and one of the Arab world's most famous cultural figures. In 2012 he was voted one of *Time* magazine's '100 most influential people in the world'.

Born in Hama in 1941, Ferzat has published more than 15 000 cartoons in Syrian and international newspapers and won awards for satirising dictators such as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi when they ruled Iraq and Libya respectively. His work pushed the boundaries of freedom of expression in Syria, targeting its feared security forces. As the Arab Spring reached Syria in 2011, Ferzat became more direct in attacking government figures, particularly President Bashar al-Assad, and Syrians protesting the regime waved his cartoons in the streets.

Ferzat was attacked in Damascus's Umayyad Square and was badly beaten by masked men, who deliberately broke his hands as they shouted at him to respect President al-Assad and obey his masters, after he published a cartoon of al-Assad trying to hitchhike with Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, shown driving a getaway car at great speed. Rendered unconscious by the beating, Ferzat was dragged along the road by the car into which his attackers had thrown him, and then left on the street for dead.

Ali Ferzat not only recovered the use of his hands, but broke the barrier of fear to become one of the regime's most outspoken critics through his words and his art. He has won various awards and is the head of the Arab Cartoonists' Association.

Unable to attend the Sakharov Prize ceremony in 2011 as he was undergoing treatment in Kuwait for his injuries, he received the award at the SPN public debate held at the European Parliament in 2012, where he discussed with the President of the European Parliament and other Arab Spring laureates the revolution in Syria and the future of democracy following the Arab awakenings. As a Sakharov laureate, he addressed the first edition of the Council of Europe's World Democracy Forum in 2012.

In 2015 Ferzat was the keynote speaker at the SPN debate on Syria at the European Parliament, highlighting the role of the regional 'sponsors' of the fighting factions in Syria and the need for international pressure to end the fighting.

He is the author of the illustrations of his fellow Sakharov Prize laureates in this book, bringing his unique artistic and humanistic insight to bear with the same pen with which he makes his outstanding contribution to the human rights of all.





ASMAA MAHFOUZ is an Egyptian human rights activist and one of the co-founders of the April 6 Youth Movement.

As the spark of the Tunisian revolution started igniting in Egypt in early 2011, she braved the crackdown imposed by President Hosni Mubarak on activists and posted calls on social media for Egyptians to protest peacefully in Tahrir Square to claim their freedom, dignity and human rights. Her video went viral, with millions of views, and inspired a wave of similar videos, resulting in hundreds of thousands occupying Tahrir Square from 25 January 2011, clamouring for Mubarak to end his 30-year rule of Egypt, until he relinquished power on 11 February 2011.

Accepting her Sakharov Prize, Mahfouz described the award as paying 'homage to the heroes of the revolution.' 'This is a prize that goes out to all young Egyptians, people that have sacrificed their lives,' she told the European Parliament, adding 'we will not betray them, we will continue along the road that they have entered into and we want to make sure that this dream is fulfilled.'

Asmaa Mahfouz was arrested in October 2011 on charges of defaming the military rulers who had taken charge after the fall of President Mubarak. She was sentenced *in absentia* in March 2012, but an appeals court overturned her conviction in May 2012. However, Mahfouz came under increasing harassment, threats and surveillance as Egypt elected a former army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, to the country's presidency in 2014, after the ousting of Islamist President Mohammed Mursi in 2013 and a period of military-backed interim government. A heavy crackdown by the authorities followed, initially targeted at the Muslim Brotherhood. This was broadened to attack critical voices and renowned icons of the January 25 Revolution, and the April 6

Youth Movement, to which Mahfouz belonged, was banned by an Egyptian court in April 2014. Three of the movement's leaders, Ahmed Maher, Mohammed Adel and Ahmed Douma, were sentenced to 3-year jail terms on charges including that of protesting illegally.

2015 saw Asmaa Mahfouz engaging in the new movement *Bidayya* (Beginning). Together with the founders of *Bidayya*, she came under investigation in May 2015 for allegedly 'inciting subversion of the state order' and was struck with a travel ban.





AHMED EL SENUSSI, born in 1934, was Libya's longest-serving prisoner of conscience and is now a strong advocate of Libyan reconciliation.

Condemned to death in 1970 for an attempted coup against dictator Muammar Gaddafi, who had overthrown Libya's first and only monarch, King Idris, in 1969, El Senussi spent a total of 31 years in prison. During his imprisonment he endured torture and 9 years in solitary confinement in a cell so small he could not even stand up straight in it. His death sentence was commuted in 1988 and he was released in 2001 from the notorious Abu Salim jail alongside dozens of other political prisoners.

El Senussi describes the Gaddafi regime as 42 years of suffering, oppression and corruption that obliterated the Libyan identity. His motivation to seek to overthrow Gaddafi, he says, was to give people a choice between a monarchy and a constitutional republic because he had experienced the destruction of countries by military rule in Syria and Iraq. He believes it is in the nature of military dictatorships to violate human rights and oppress the people.

When a popular uprising backed by NATO toppled Gaddafi in 2011, El Senussi took responsibility for political prisoners as part of the National Transitional Council, the de facto government of Libya up to the 2012 elections.

El Senussi, a respected tribal leader, became the heart of the federalist movement in Libya, against a backdrop of lawlessness and instability where factions vied for control with arms. He was elected, in 2012, as leader of the Cyrenaica Transitional Council by 3 000 delegates from the region. This council, with no legal or military force, declared itself for a high degree of autonomy for the region.

As Libya's infighting has derailed its initial path to democracy — with the country now having two governments, in Tripoli and in Tobruk, and Islamic State gaining a foothold in the east — El Senussi advocates an inclusive process of reconciliation as the only way to peace. He is against further military intervention, and supports the holding of a popular referendum to decide on the shape of a future Libyan state.

His own vision is for a central federal government and independent governance for the three Libyan provinces of Tripolitania, Barqa (Cyrenaica) and Fezzan. He is a strong supporter of the reinstatement of the 1951 constitution, on the basis of which federalism was the norm under most of King Idris's constitutional monarchy. Though he is a great-nephew of the king, he does not favour a return to monarchy.

El Senussi has engaged with the European Parliament, the SPN and other international organisations to appeal to the international community to help Libya build the institutions it needs to guarantee the rule of law and human rights for all of its people.

2011  
AHMED  
EL SENUSSI





**RAZAN ZAITOUNEH** is a Syrian journalist and human rights lawyer who was kidnapped in a rebel-held area in the suburbs of Damascus on 9 December 2013. She is still missing, no one has claimed responsibility for her kidnapping and her whereabouts are unknown. Zaitouneh bravely denounced human rights violations by the Damascus regime and rebel fighters alike, despite being threatened. She was kidnapped together with her husband and fellow activist Wael Hamada and two colleagues, poet and lawyer Nazem Hamadi and former political prisoner Samira Khalil, from the office serving two groups she founded, the Violations Documentation Centre and the Local Development and Small Projects Support Office, in Douma.

Zaitouneh is one of the most prominent and credible civilian activists in the Syrian revolution. Her kidnapping is seen by Syrian commentators as a defining episode in the division taking place in Syria between the civilian forces and the extremists, and an event which has dealt a fatal blow to the Syrian revolution.

Her family have appealed for international help to find her and her colleagues. 'We, the family of Razan Zaitouneh, the human rights activist, the lawyer, the writer and, above all, the human being, issue this statement more than 3 months after the deliberate kidnapping which no party declared responsible for, or issued any statement or request about, in a clear attempt to buy time and suppress the free voice of our daughter along with her colleagues to force them to stop writing and prevent them their right of freedom of expression,' the family said in a statement issued in April 2014.

Activists and politicians from all over the world have appealed for their release, including President Schulz. 'On behalf of the European Parliament I call for their immediate release ... Her life was threatened by the regime and by the rebel groups for what she was, a courageous young woman who refuses to compromise and continues to fight peacefully for democracy and a free Syria.'

In 2014 the European Parliament joined forces with scores of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the European public and fellow Sakharov laureates to call for her release with the *#FreeRazan* campaign. Her family has highlighted the beliefs Zaitouneh stands for in the European Parliament and SPN human rights actions.

At the time of her Sakharov award in 2011 Razan Zaitouneh was living in hiding, having fled a raid by state security agents on her house. She nevertheless refused to leave Syria.

Zaitouneh used her Sakharov Prize money to save the life of a fellow activist hit by tank fire.





**GUILLERMO FARIÑAS** A Cuban doctor of psychology, independent journalist and political dissident, Guillermo Fariñas has over the years conducted 23 hunger strikes with the aim of achieving peaceful political change and freedom of expression in Cuba.

His 7-month hunger strike in 2006 drew worldwide attention to internet censorship in Cuba, and caused him severe health problems.

Undeterred, in February 2010, after the controversial death of prisoner Orlando Zapata, Fariñas began a hunger and thirst strike that lasted 134 days, calling for the liberation of political prisoners taken ill after many years of imprisonment. He ended this strike only after the Cuban government announced it was in the process of freeing 52 political prisoners. Fariñas was not allowed to leave Cuba for the 2010 Sakharov Prize award ceremony at the Parliament. He finally addressed the European Parliament at the 2013 Sakharov Prize award ceremony, after the Cuban government eased travel restrictions on Cubans and the *Damas de Blanco* re-entered Cuba after visiting the Parliament.

‘Today, I am here not because the situation has essentially changed, but because of the realities of the modern world, and above all, because of the growing civic defiance of Cubans, which has forced the regime to — like the legendary prince Don Fabrizio from *Il Gattopardo* said — “change something so that nothing changes”,’ Fariñas stated in his acceptance speech. Fariñas has since been an active member of the SPN.

In 2015 Fariñas resumed his role as coordinator of the *Foro Antitotalitario Unido*, having briefly merged this movement with the opposition umbrella group *Unión Patriótica de Cuba* and represented it as spokesperson. Fariñas left the umbrella group amicably due to divergent views with its other leaders on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States announced in December 2014 and taking place in 2015. Fariñas regards this development as a betrayal of the Cuban democrats, which broke a promise made to *Damas* leader Berta Soler and in 2013 by US President Obama himself to consult civil society and the non-violent opposition on any action towards Cuba.

In 2015 Fariñas launched a collection for the 10 000 signatures needed under the Cuban constitution to have included, in the new electoral law announced by Raul Castro’s government for elections in 2018, the recognition and legalisation of existing political movements, the granting of the right to vote and stand for election to all Cuban citizens, including those living abroad, and international electoral observation.

For his activism Fariñas has in recent years been threatened with death and confinement in a psychiatric hospital, beaten and hospitalised and repeatedly arrested and detained, including at the funeral of Oswaldo Payá, another Sakharov Prize laureate and Cuban dissident.

**2010**  
GUILLERMO  
FARIÑAS



**MEMORIAL** Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev and Lyudmila Alexeyeva were awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2009 on behalf of Memorial and all other human rights defenders in Russia.

Memorial was established in the Soviet Union in 1988 with the initial aim of bringing to light the mass repression under Stalin's rule and preserving the memory of its victims through research and public events, a mission that remains relevant to this day. After the dissolution of the USSR the organisation became international, with branches and partner NGOs in former Soviet republics. The aims of Memorial have since been broadened to include monitoring of human rights violations, advocacy and legal assistance for victims of these violations in Russia and in former Soviet republics. Among its founders was Andrei Sakharov, who also co-founded the Moscow Helsinki Group with Lyudmila Alexeyeva.

Oleg Orlov has been one of Memorial's leaders since 1994 and is a member of the board of its international branch. He has collected evidence of abductions in eastern Ukraine, as pro-Russian separatists fight Ukrainian forces, finding the practice there comparable to the abductions that Memorial documented for decades during two wars in Chechnya, where he himself was kidnapped.

Sergei Kovalev, the long-serving chair of the Russian branch of Memorial, is well known for negotiating the release, in 1995, of around 2 000 people held

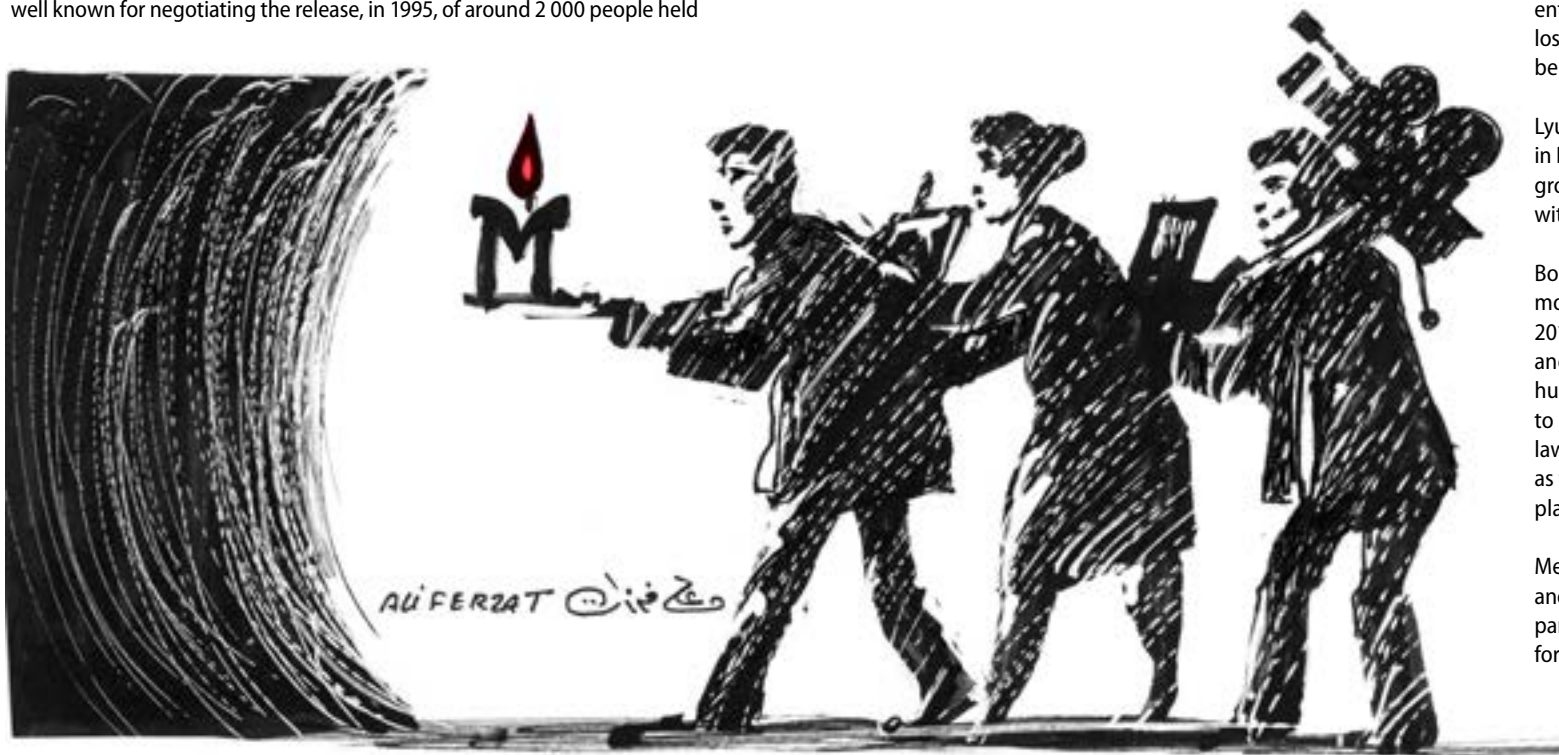
hostage in the Budennovsk hospital by Chechen rebels, the only time that a terrorist attack in Russia did not result in mass hostage deaths. He accuses Russia of interfering in Ukrainian internal affairs and provoking the conflict in the east.

Many Memorial members and close associates have been threatened, abducted and assassinated over the years. In 2014 Memorial was registered as a 'foreign agent' by the Russian authorities, after legislation was introduced allowing the authorities to register NGOs receiving funds from outside Russia as 'foreign agents' without their consent. As Memorial's senior lawyer, Kirill Koroteev, put it, when addressing the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, a 'foreign agent' in Russia means a 'spy'. In September 2014 a lawsuit against Memorial was filed by the Ministry of Justice, arguing that its charter and structure ran counter to national legislation. The lawsuit could have resulted in its liquidation. However, in January 2015, the court decided in Memorial's favour, rejecting the ministry's complaints. In the spring of 2014 the Moscow branch of Memorial (Human Rights Center Memorial) contested its classification as a foreign agent but lost its case. In 2015 and 2016 other branches of Memorial, in Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Ryazan and Komi, were also declared foreign agents. Natalia Sokolova, Memorial's executive director, is pessimistic about Memorial's future: 'Unfortunately, the current situation leaves us little or no hope that we will be able to operate as a legal entity and if we do, how long will it be for. However, many of us still have not lost the fight to ensure that the right for freedom of association will someday be a reality, using all legal mechanisms available.'

Lyudmila Alexeyeva is one such brave soul who continues to fight for freedom in Russia. As head of the Moscow Helsinki Group she refused to register the group as a 'foreign agent', preferring to continue working for human rights without foreign grants.

Born in 1927, Alexeyeva is one of the few Soviet-era dissidents still active in modern Russia, renowned for campaigning for fair trials for dissidents. In 2012 Alexeyeva resigned from Russia's Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, disappointed because it had no real influence over the human rights situation in the country. In 2015, however, Alexeyeva decided to rejoin the council in order to focus on investigating the application of the law on foreign agents that is targeting a growing number of NGOs, as well as the operation of the courts and the many human rights violations taking place in prisons.

Memorial representatives and Lyudmila Alexeyeva are active SPN participants and interlocutors for the European Parliament. Memorial's most recent participation was in May 2016, at a conference on 'The Sakharov Prize Network for Stronger Human Rights Action'.





One of China's most vocal and respected democracy activists, HU JIA lives under constant surveillance and endures periods of arbitrary detention, constant threats, beatings and harassment, which have escalated to a point where he feels his life is in danger and he fears for his family.

Hu Jia is also a human rights and environmental activist, who tackled AIDS issues when HIV/AIDS was still a prohibited topic in China and the number of suspected cases was treated as a 'state secret'. He has repeatedly called for an official inquiry into the Tiananmen Square massacre and compensation for the victims' families, and has been placed under house arrest every year around the anniversary of the Tiananmen killings on 4 June since taking flowers to the square in 2004.

In 2007, via a conference call before the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, he bravely called attention to the 1 million people persecuted by the Chinese national security department for fighting for human rights, with many detained in prison, labour camps or mental hospitals. He called for 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics, to be the year of human rights in China. As a result, Hu Jia was arrested on 27 December 2007, charged with 'inciting subversion of state power', and sentenced on 3 April 2008 to 3½ years imprisonment and denied his political rights for a year.

When he was announced as the winner of the Sakharov Prize on its 20th anniversary, Hu Jia and his parents were subjected to pressure by state security police to refuse the prize. Hu Jia bravely accepted it, calling it 'an important prize for China'. Zeng Jinyan, his then wife and co-nominee for the prize in 2007, addressed the award ceremony, which Hu Jia could not attend, via a video recording. She declared the award an affirmation of Chinese human rights defenders on the long and hard road of the defence of human rights, for which they and their relatives pay an extremely high price.

In a letter to the President of the European Parliament in July 2012, Hu Jia said he considered the prize 'truly a great honour', which 'provided me with encouragement and greatly improved the way I was treated in prison'. He was released in June 2011, and has remained in China to sustain from within his outspoken criticism of the repression, denouncing the continuing crackdown on activists under President Xi Jinping, which he calls a sign of nervousness by a regime seeking to maintain its hold on power against a growing tide of support for democracy.

As a coordinator of the 'barefoot lawyers', an informal group of legal advisers who defend human rights activists in China, Hu Jia has also warned that China's new draft counterterrorism law will restrict the right to a lawyer for those accused of terrorism in a country where, 'because the government controls propaganda, if they say you are a terrorist, then you are.'





**SALIH MAHMOUD MOHAMED OSMAN** a Sudanese lawyer, had been providing free legal representation to people arbitrarily detained, tortured and subjected to serious human rights abuses in Sudan for over two decades when the European Parliament unanimously awarded him the Sakharov Prize in 2007.

'I am a native of Darfur, born in Jebel Marra. I have worked as a lawyer in Darfur in Sudan for many years. I have been a victim of detention and torture because of my work. Members of my own family have been tortured and displaced by the militia in Darfur. For many years, in my work, I have represented thousands of people who needed my help in front of the courts. I have seen thousands of people who have been tortured, I have seen hundreds of women and young girls who have been victims of sexual abuse,' Salih Osman told the European Parliament when accepting the prize.

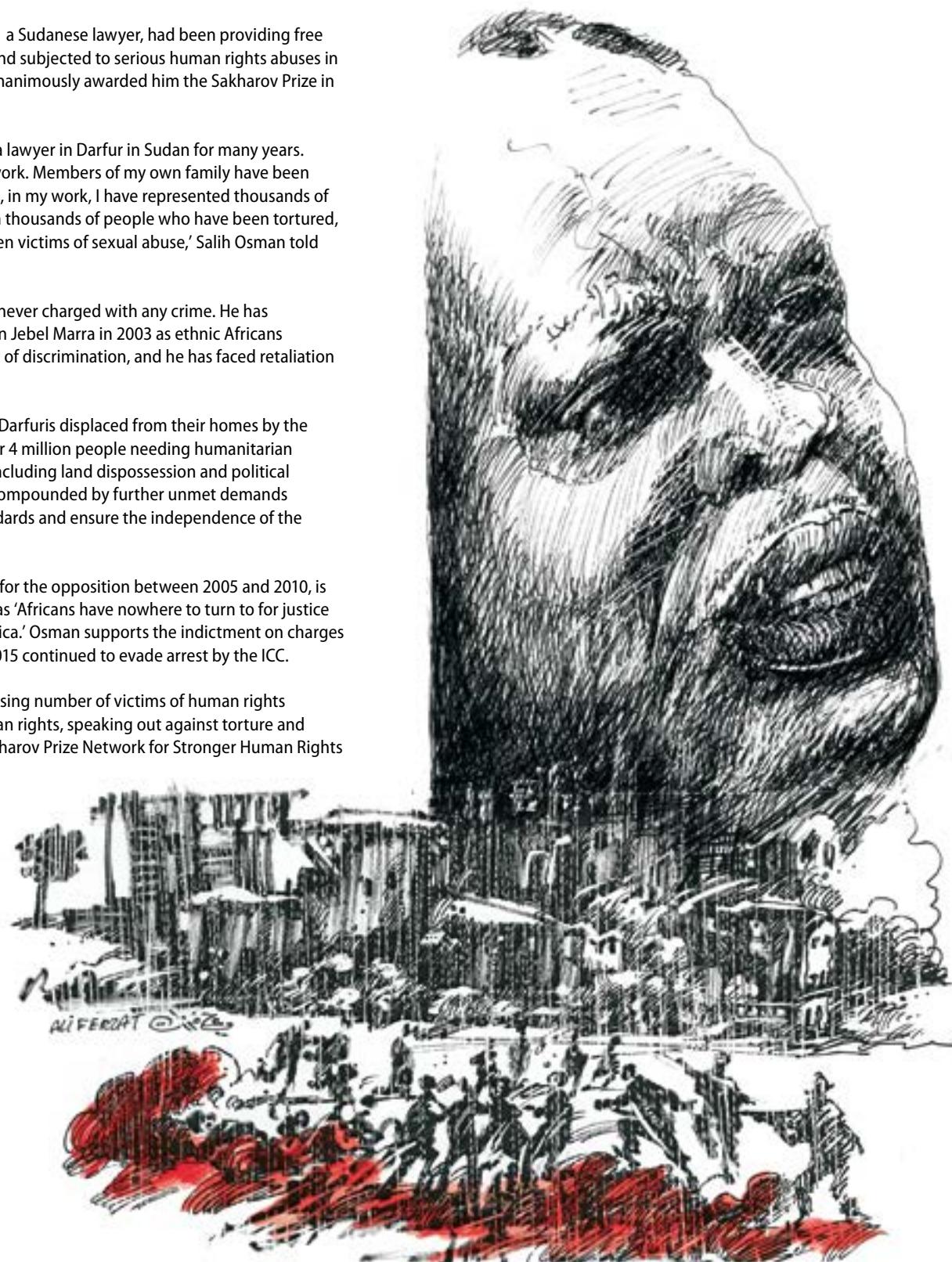
He was himself detained by the authorities several times, but never charged with any crime. He has catalogued crimes that have taken place since war broke out in Jebel Marra in 2003 as ethnic Africans rebelled against the Arab-dominated government, accusing it of discrimination, and he has faced retaliation by Arab militias.

Osman is actively involved in the protection of the millions of Darfuris displaced from their homes by the ongoing fighting in Darfur, which intensified in 2015, with over 4 million people needing humanitarian aid. Osman emphasises that the causes that ignited the war, including land dispossession and political marginalisation, are not only still unresolved, but have been compounded by further unmet demands to bring national laws into conformity with international standards and ensure the independence of the judiciary.

Osman, who served as a member of the Sudanese parliament for the opposition between 2005 and 2010, is a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC), as 'Africans have nowhere to turn to for justice and redress due to the lack of adequate judicial systems in Africa.' Osman supports the indictment on charges of war crimes of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who in 2015 continued to evade arrest by the ICC.

Osman continues to provide free legal assistance to the increasing number of victims of human rights violations in Darfur. He is engaged in the SPN actions for human rights, speaking out against torture and impunity. In May 2016 he took part in the conference 'The Sakharov Prize Network for Stronger Human Rights Action' at the European Parliament in Brussels.

**2007**  
SALIH MAHMOUD  
MOHAMED OSMAN





ALIAKSANDR MILINKEVICH is a leader of the democratic opposition Movement for Freedom in Belarus, who had 'the courage to challenge the last dictatorship in Europe,' as the European Parliament's then President, Josep Borrell Fontelles, put it when awarding him the Sakharov Prize in 2006.

Milinkevich, a scientist, was chosen to be the joint presidential candidate of the United Democratic Opposition in October 2005. Urging a truly democratic future for Belarus, Milinkevich presented himself as a genuine alternative to the authoritarianism of President Lukashenka, whose victory was criticised by the opposition in Belarus and abroad for vote-rigging. After contesting, Milinkevich was arrested under various pretexts, but no charges were ever brought against him.

Milinkevich did not stand for the presidential elections in 2010 as he considered that no changes had been made to the national electoral regulations to ensure fair, free and open elections. Milinkevich denounced the further deterioration of the human rights situation in Belarus after this vote, which confirmed Lukashenka's hold on power.

As a Sakharov Prize laureate and a leader of the opposition, Milinkevich is regularly consulted by parliamentary bodies concerned with Belarus and has participated in SPN events and conferences, and public debates. In an SPN debate in Lithuania with Berta Soler of the *Damas de Blanco*, national authorities, MEPs and members of the Lithuanian parliament, Milinkevich denounced the incessant intimidation and humiliation perpetrated by the authorities against human rights defenders in Belarus. He declared his support for greater European integration for Belarus, and for a critical and constructive dialogue with the Belarusian authorities.

Dialogue was a key element of Milinkevich's interventions during public network debates and hearings at the European Parliament. He urges greater EU engagement with Belarus in order to secure more freedoms for its people. Milinkevich posits that Belarus's need for economic assistance could be used as leverage to force the country into dialogue with the EU, including on human rights.

As Belarus headed towards its fifth post-Soviet presidential election in October 2015, Milinkevich declared that he, or preferably a younger politician, should stand in the elections to challenge Lukashenka's hold on power. However, in April 2015 he decided not to run in these elections and not to support any candidate.

2006  
ALIAKSANDR  
MILINKEVICH





The **DAMAS DE BLANCO (LADIES IN WHITE)** formed spontaneously in Cuba in 2003 in reaction to the imprisonment of 75 of their husbands and relatives during Cuba's Black Spring, a harsh crackdown by the Cuban regime on democracy activists. They marched in the streets and wrote many letters to the Cuban authorities, asking for the prisoners' release, but did not get a single reply. The *Damas* did not give up, and their persistent protests got results, with all Black Spring prisoners released by 2011.

The indomitable *Damas* kept on with their fight for democracy and human rights in Cuba, and are the only group in the communist country permitted to stage weekly marches in a specific area. Ladies wearing white, carrying photographs of loved ones who are victims of repression in Cuba, and gladioli, a symbol of peace, walk down Havana's Fifth Avenue in Miramar every Sunday after mass at St Rita's Church, silent and strong in the face of threats, insults, assaults and frequent arrests.

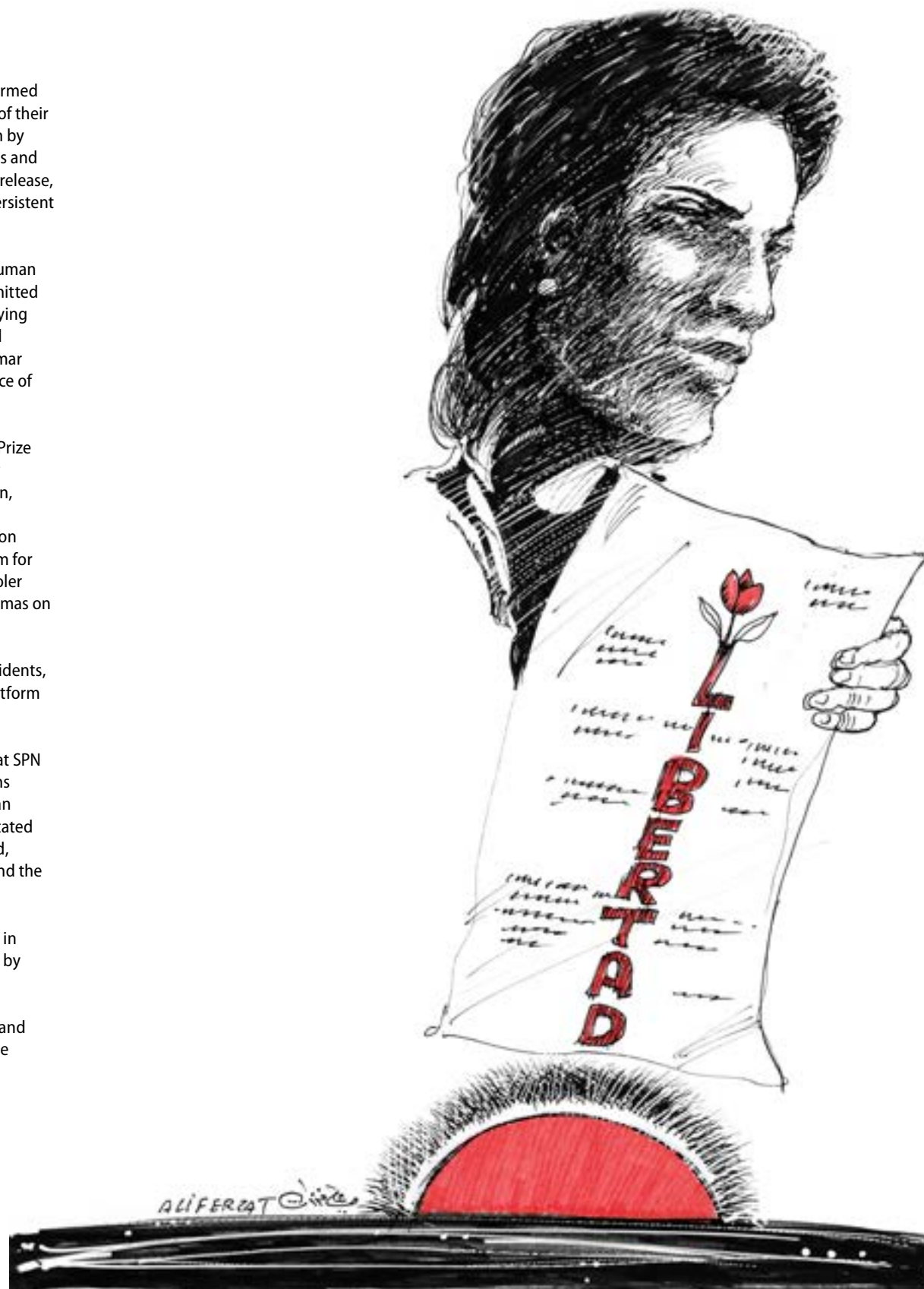
In 2013 the *Damas* were finally able to accept in person the Sakharov Prize they had been awarded in 2005. President Berta Soler and movement representatives Belkis Cantillo Ramirez and Laura Maria Labrada Pollán, daughter of the beloved *Damas* co-founder Laura Pollán who died in 2011, were allowed to exit Cuba, after the easing of travel restrictions on citizens, and address the European Parliament, which recognised them for their courage and commitment to the cause of human rights. Berta Soler compared the Sakharov Prize to a 'shield' which would protect the *Damas* on their return to Cuba.

Shortly after the Sakharov award ceremony the *Damas* and other dissidents, including 2010 laureate Guillermo Fariñas, set up the International Platform for Human Rights in Cuba.

Berta Soler, representing the *Damas* at the European Parliament and at SPN events, has consistently called on the EU — which started negotiations for a bilateral political agreement with Cuba in 2014 — to make human rights a condition in any agreements with Cuba. In 2015, the *Damas* stated that they felt increasingly sidelined by US politicians visiting the island, following moves to re-establish diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States.

The *Damas de Blanco* reconfirmed Berta Soler as their leader in 2015 in a referendum called by the group after her leadership was criticised by some members.

The *Damas* have continued to be subjected to detentions, beatings and torture, being among the groups most targeted for repression by the Cuban authorities.



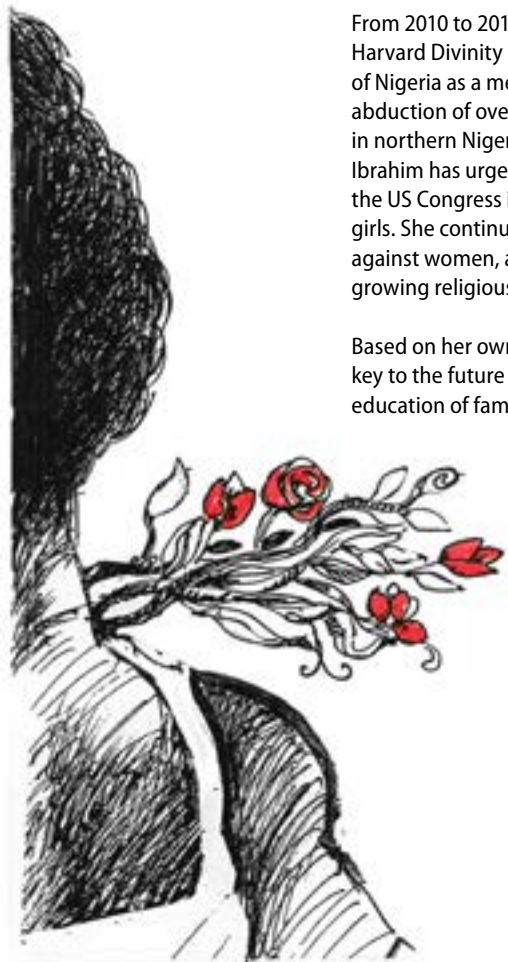
A human rights lawyer, **HAUWA IBRAHIM** was born into a Muslim family in the northern Nigerian village of Hinnah. This was where she learned the values that strengthened her resolve, including her mother's conviction that education was the only path out of poverty. Promised to be given away in marriage at the age of 10, Ibrahim ran away from her family's home to a girls' boarding school so she could continue her education. Ibrahim's intellectual interests, combined with her passion for justice, led her to study law. She became the first female lawyer in the Yamaltu/Deba district of Gombe State and is now widely sought after for her legal counsel.

When Sharia law was introduced in 12 northern states in Nigeria in 1999 it brought into question the protection of fundamental human rights, especially those of women. Ibrahim began a groundbreaking legal practice, representing women and children condemned by Sharia courts to death by stoning for adultery and to amputation for theft. She has defended, free of charge, over 150 cases, saving the lives of Amina Lawal, Safiya Hussaini, Hafsatu Abubakar and many others.

From 2010 to 2013 Ibrahim was a research associate and visiting lecturer at Harvard Divinity School. In May 2014 she was appointed by the President of Nigeria as a member of the presidential fact-finding committee on the abduction of over 200 female students by the terrorist group Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Cited for her credibility and passion for human dignity, Ibrahim has urged international support from the European Parliament and the US Congress in addressing the unresolved tragedy of the kidnapped girls. She continues to voice the need for stronger action to address violence against women, abject poverty and lack of opportunities in order to abate growing religious extremism.

Based on her own experience, Ibrahim feels strongly that education is the key to the future and, furthermore, that the education of girls leads to the education of families and consequently of the community and society.

Ibrahim invested her Sakharov Prize money in an endowment which provides educational opportunities for children in northern Nigeria by ensuring that they have the means to stay in school. Actively involved in the SPN campaign for children's rights, Ibrahim gives Sakharov lectures and participates in debates at the European Parliament, inspiring audiences with her own personal journey. At the invitation of Prince El-Hassan bin Talal, Ibrahim worked on issues of women's empowerment and social justice in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for West Asia North Africa in 2015. She is also working on issues of interfaith dialogue at the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Amman, Jordan. In 2016 she gave a lecture to the inaugural cohort of Sakharov Fellows at the Venice School of Human Rights at the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation.







REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RWB) is an international NGO based in France that fights for freedom of information worldwide.

For RWB, freedom of expression and of information will always be the world's most important freedoms and the foundations of any democracy. The organisation argues that 'if journalists were not free to report the facts, denounce abuses and alert the public, how would we resist the problem of child soldiers, defend women's rights, or preserve our environment?'

RWB continuously monitors and denounces attacks on freedom of information worldwide, fights censorship and laws aimed at restricting freedom of information, assists morally and financially persecuted journalists and their families and offers material assistance to war correspondents in order to enhance their safety. To circumvent censorship, it occasionally publishes articles which have been banned in their country of origin, hosts newspapers that have been closed down in their homeland and serves as a forum for journalists who have been 'silenced' by the authorities of their country. In order to ensure that the murderers and torturers of journalists are brought to trial, RWB's network has been providing victims with legal services since 2002 and represents them in court. It awards two prizes every year, the Reporters Without Borders' Prize and the Netizen Prize, recognising and honouring bloggers, journalists and media from all around the world.

RWB publishes a World Press Freedom Index annually. The 2015 index covers 180 countries and draws attention to the worldwide deterioration in freedom of information in the previous year. 'Beset by wars, the growing threat from non-state operatives, violence during demonstrations and the economic crisis, media freedom is in retreat on all five continents,' RWB warns. Conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq are mentioned as extreme examples of this, where 'all warring parties without exception waged a fearsome information war in which the media became targets, were attacked, or even silenced.' RWB cites in its index important factors that lead to the deterioration of press freedom, including the rise of non-state groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State, political use of religious censorship, the widening gap between EU Member States and authoritarian regimes seeking ever more control of information.

As a Sakharov Prize laureate, RWB has brought together other laureates and promoted SPN initiatives. It is actively engaged in SPN human rights actions, and in 2015 featured in the European Parliament's campaign for freedom of expression.

## THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

(BAJ) represents over 1 000 professionals, and strives to protect journalists who work under extremely difficult conditions and often fall victim to intimidation, harassment, criminal prosecution and expatriation.

Founded in 1995, a year after Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenka assumed power, BAJ has since its creation been the main association for the independent press in Belarus. From its base in Minsk and its five regional branches BAJ aims to provide the Belarusian public with the most objective, truthful, comprehensive and timely information, and, moreover, strives for high-quality and ethical journalism.

BAJ fights determinedly for press freedom in a country where the media law allows the authorities to shut down media they consider too critical and the penal code contains articles penalising defamation of higher-level officials. Foreign media must obtain a licence to operate and their local contributors are harassed by the state security police, while independent media suffer economic discrimination. BAJ denounced increasing legal repression in 2014, when fines were imposed and criminal charges brought against several of its members, including a charge of treason against one.

A priority for BAJ is to fight further restrictive amendments to the mass media law that came into effect in 2015, making it easier for the government to shut down websites. With the support of international press organisations, BAJ is also working for the abolition of a provision forbidding freelance journalists from reporting in the country, in breach of European press freedom standards.

In 2015 BAJ founder and long-time chair Zhanna Litvina stepped down from the helm. She continues to be active within BAJ as a member of its board. A legendary journalist in her country, whose career included heading the Minsk bureau of Radio Liberty and setting up and heading the short-lived but unique independent Belarusian-language 101.2 FM radio station, Litvina had led BAJ for the 20 years since its foundation.

BAJ elected Andrei Bastunets, formerly a deputy, as its new chair. Bastunets, a lawyer, is supported by four deputies: Sviatlana Kalinkina, Mikhail Yanchuk, Aliaksandr Starykevich and Alina Suravets.

BAJ takes an active part in the work of the SPN. In 2015 it participated in the European Parliament's campaign for freedom of expression, and in 2016 in a conference entitled 'The Sakharov Prize Network for Stronger Human Rights Action' at the European Parliament in Brussels.





In awarding the 2003 Sakharov Prize to the UNITED NATIONS, the European Parliament gave recognition to the UN's endeavours for peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

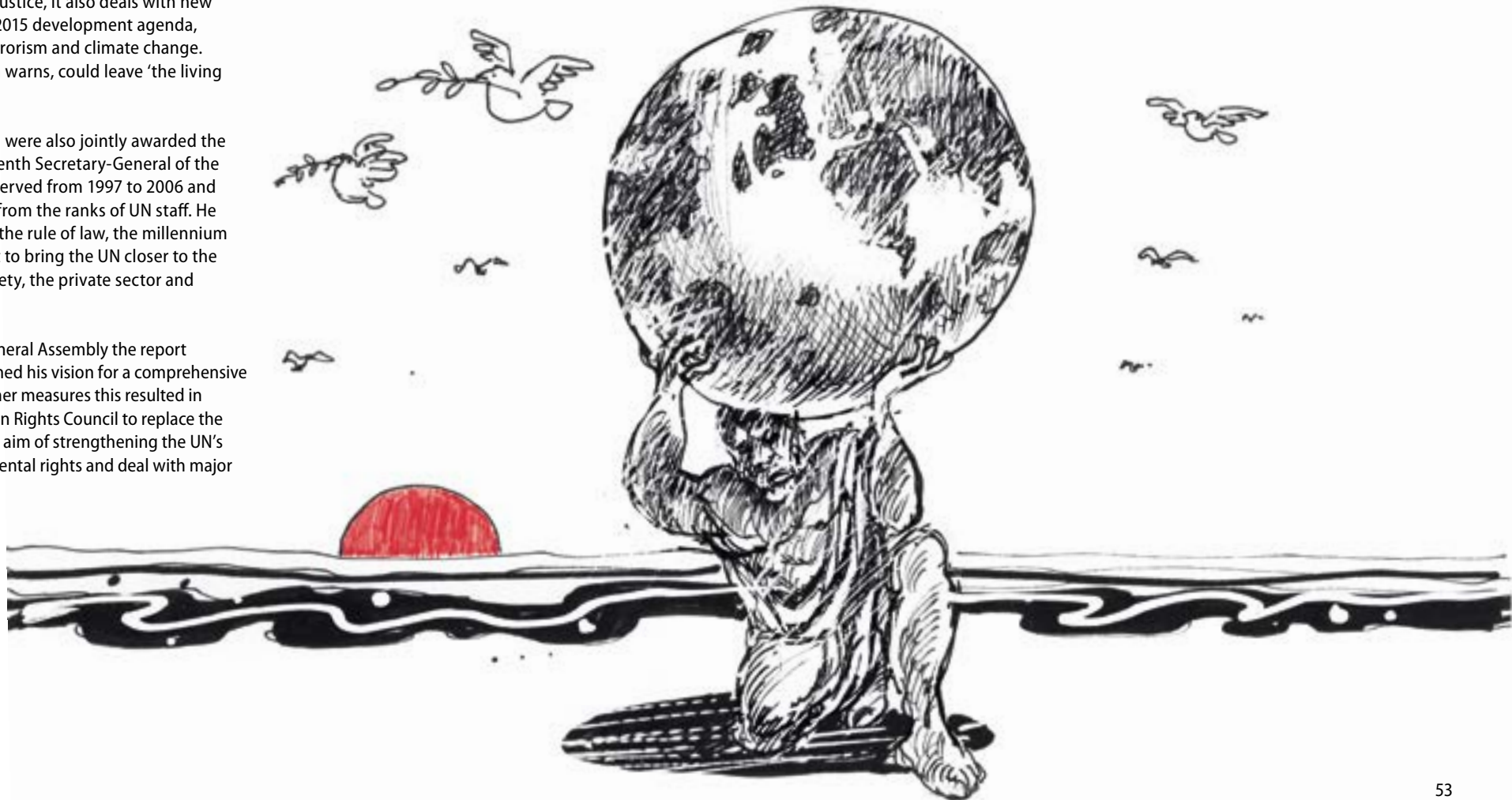
The Sakharov Prize honoured in particular the United Nations' members of staff who work tirelessly for world peace, often under difficult conditions. The prize was awarded in special memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and one of the worthiest representatives of the UN who, while serving as Kofi Annan's special representative in Iraq, was among those killed in an attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad in 2003.

The United Nations, the world's only global body of its kind, not only continues to strive to keep or restore peace, protect human rights and establish the framework for international justice, it also deals with new international challenges such as the post-2015 development agenda, the current refugee crisis, international terrorism and climate change. The severe impact of the latter, Kofi Annan warns, could leave 'the living envying the dead'.

In 2001 the United Nations and Kofi Annan were also jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Kofi Annan was the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. A Ghanaian diplomat, he served from 1997 to 2006 and was the first secretary-general to emerge from the ranks of UN staff. He was a constant advocate of human rights, the rule of law, the millennium development goals and Africa, and sought to bring the UN closer to the global public by forging ties with civil society, the private sector and other partners.

In 2005 Kofi Annan presented to the UN General Assembly the report entitled *In larger freedom*, in which he outlined his vision for a comprehensive and extensive reform of the UN. Among other measures this resulted in the creation, in March 2006, of a new Human Rights Council to replace the old Commission on Human Rights, with the aim of strengthening the UN's machinery to promote and protect fundamental rights and deal with major human rights offenders.

After completing two terms as UN Secretary-General, in 2007 Annan became involved in several organisations focusing on global and African issues, including his own Kofi Annan Foundation. He is currently chair of The Elders, a group of independent world leaders convened by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who aim to work together for peace and human rights.





OSWALDO JOSÉ PAYÁ SARDIÑAS (1952-2012), a Cuban dissident, is best known as the founder of the Varela Project, a campaign in support of a referendum on laws guaranteeing civil rights, free pluralist elections, the release of all political prisoners and economic and social reforms in Cuba.

An active reformer since his youth, he was persecuted and condemned on several occasions for his criticism of Fidel Castro's policies and injustices, but that did not stop him from founding the Christian Liberation Movement in 1988, which became one of the largest opposition movements in Cuba.

In 1997 he drew up the ambitious Varela Project, containing the first legal steps towards the free participation by Cubans in Cuba's political and economic life through freedom of speech and assembly and the release of all political prisoners. Though supported by thousands of Cubans, Payá's Varela Project was blocked by a counter initiative from the Cuban authorities making the socialist nature of the Cuban state permanent, an initiative the authorities claimed was approved by a plebiscite. Many of the Varela Project campaigners were imprisoned during the Black Spring of 2003, but Payá did not give up.

In 2008 he presented a draft law on amnesty for political prisoners to the national assembly, and in 2010 he launched the *Foro Todos Cubanos*.

Payá was never imprisoned, but his family say he received various death threats. On 22 July 2012, he lost his life in a controversial car crash in Cuba. The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, in homage, stated his belief that 'Oswaldo Payá's ideas will survive as his work and commitment have inspired a generation of Cuban activists who were following his example in promoting political freedom and human rights.'

The Christian Liberation Movement continues to call for clarification of the circumstances of his death. His family have rejected the official account that the road collision that caused his death was an accident. His daughter, Rosa María, has pleaded for an impartial international inquiry into her father's death before the UN Human Rights Council and other international organisations, including the European Parliament, and denounced the persecution and threats inflicted on the family by state security agents. In 2013 Payá's family moved to the United States, in what they said was a temporary move.

Payá's daughter represented him at the Sakharov Prize 25th Anniversary Conference at the European Parliament in 2013, the outcome declaration of which called for 'an inquiry into the death of Sakharov Prize laureate 2002 Oswaldo Payá'.



**IZZAT GHAZZAWI** (1952-2003) was a Palestinian writer and academic whose writings focused on the troubles and sufferings brought about by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and his own personal tragedy. His life was marked by the killing of his 16-year-old son, Ramy, by the Israeli army in 1993. Ramy was killed in the courtyard of his school as he went to help a wounded friend. Despite his heartbreak, Ghazzawi always continued to seek cultural and political dialogue with the Israeli people.

Born of refugee parents into a large family that had fled to the West Bank in 1948, Ghazzawi wrote his first play at the age of 13. He gained a master's degree in American-British literature and lectured at Birzeit University. He chaired the Union of Palestinian Writers, wrote novels and short stories, was a literary critic and organised and chaired the first International Writers' Conference in Palestine in 1997.

Ghazzawi was also a member of the executive bureau of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. He was imprisoned and punished on a number of occasions by the Israeli authorities for his political activities. During these times he found that the hardest thing to endure was the separation from his family, particularly his six children, whom he could only see two at a time for 30 minutes a fortnight.

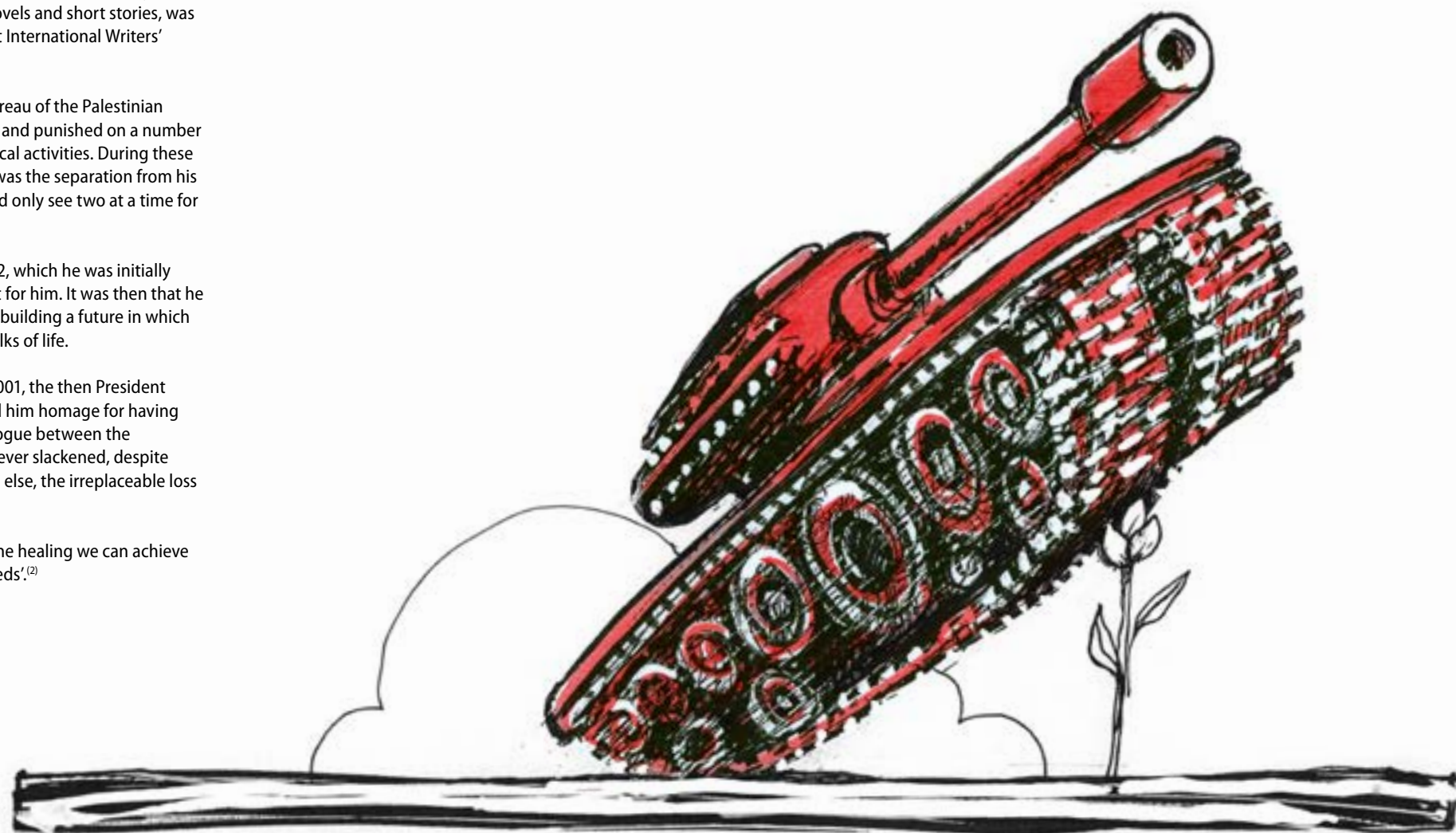
A meeting with Israeli writers in Jerusalem in 1992, which he was initially apprehensive about, proved to be a turning point for him. It was then that he began to see his Israeli colleagues as partners for building a future in which Palestinians and Israelis would be equals in all walks of life.

Presenting Ghazzawi with his Sakharov Prize in 2001, the then President of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine, paid him homage for having 'untiringly promoted the cause of peace and dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Your ardour has never slackened, despite imprisonment and censorship and, worse than all else, the irreplaceable loss of your 16-year-old son Ramy.'

At the European Parliament, Ghazzawi spoke of the healing we can achieve when we are 'able to understand each other's needs'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Shortly after his son's death, Ghazzawi, together with the Israeli writer Abraham B. Yehoshua and the Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani, published *Enemies*, a book on relations between Palestinians and Israelis which became hugely successful.

Izzat Ghazzawi died on 4 April 2003.



<sup>(2)</sup> 25 years of the Sakharov Prize: the European Parliament upholding freedom of thought, Archive and Documentation Centre, European Parliament, Cardoc Journals, No 11, November 2013, p. 112.

An Israeli born in 1949, NURIT PELED-ELHANAN is a university lecturer and author. In 1997 her 13-year-old daughter, Smadar, was killed in a suicide attack carried out by a Palestinian in West Jerusalem.

'My little girl was killed just because she was an Israeli by a young man who was oppressed and exasperated to the point of suicide and murder just because he was a Palestinian. Both are the victims of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Now their bloods are mixed on the stones of Jerusalem that have always been indifferent to blood,' Peled said of the death of her daughter. She did not allow the Israeli authorities, including the prime minister, to attend the funeral ceremony.

Daughter of the famous General Matti Peled, renowned for his pacifist and progressive campaigning, Nurit Peled has become a symbol of those in Israel who are fighting against the occupation and for the freedom of Palestine.

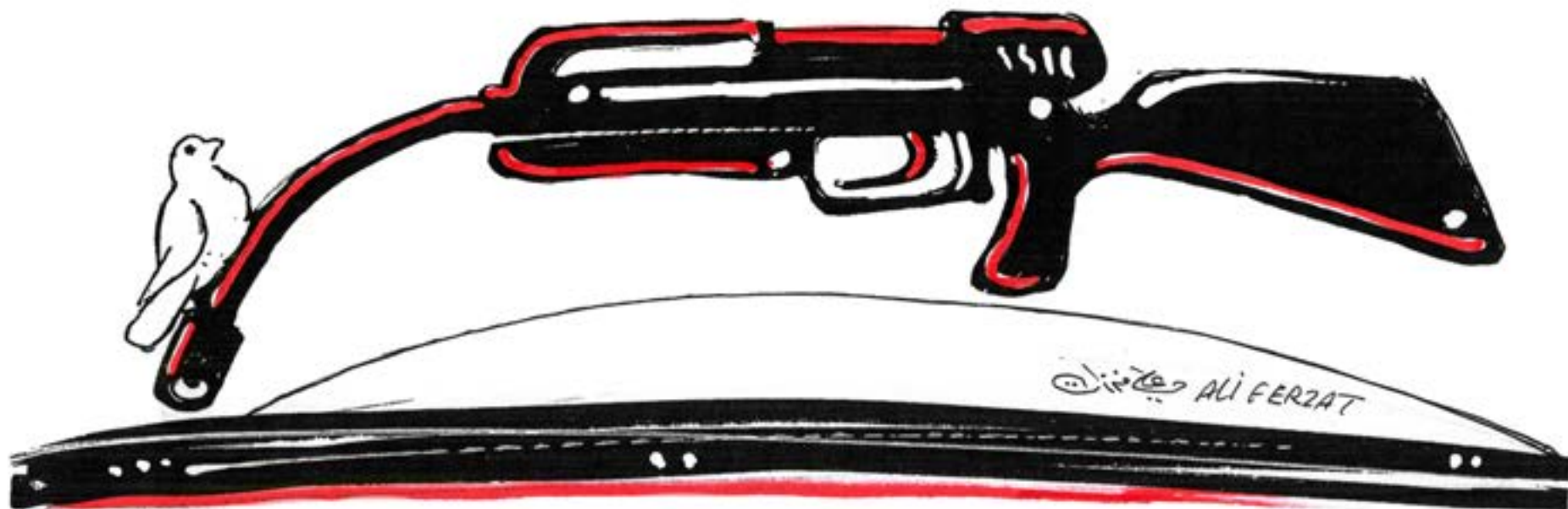
She is also very committed to changing the mentality of Israeli society, particularly that of the young generation. Her latest publication, entitled *Palestine in Israeli school books: Ideology and propaganda in education*, draws attention to an education in Israeli schools that appears to lean towards racism rather than tolerance and diversity. She has been strong in her criticism of world leaders, including George Bush, Tony Blair and Ariel Sharon, for 'infecting their respective citizens with blind fear of the Muslims'.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan is a co-initiator of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, an international people's tribunal established in 2009 to examine the role and complicity of third parties in the violations of international law committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.

She is engaged in defending the rights of Palestinians and urges support for the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against Israel until it complies with international law and respects Palestinian rights.

Peled is particularly vocal in her defence of Palestinian children and their right to education, and has advocated strongly on their behalf at SPN events and in meetings with the European Parliament, including in Jerusalem. In the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza War, Peled, in a passionate and emotional speech at a Subcommittee on Human Rights hearing on the situation of children in armed conflicts, accused Israel of perpetrating a holocaust on Palestinians in Gaza.

Together with fellow Sakharov laureates Salima Ghezali and Taslima Nasreen, Peled has also published an opinion calling on 'leaders and representatives of the EU to actively and openly encourage the Palestinian Authority to join the ICC'.





DOM ZACARIAS KAMWENHO is Archbishop Emeritus of Lubango in Angola and a peace activist who played a pivotal role in the peace process that led to the end of the Angolan civil war in 2002.

Born in Chimbundo in 1934 and ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1961, he was made Archbishop of Lubango in 1995.

Kamwenho was in the vanguard of a movement that, by the late 1990s, through his efforts and those of other church and civil-society leaders, had inspired among the Angolan people an increasing awareness of the need to fight for peace and human rights and foster an 'inclusive national reconciliation'.

He was president of the Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola founded in 2000. This ecumenical body brought together the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé, of which he was also president, the Evangelical Alliance of Angola and the Council of Christian Churches of Angola.

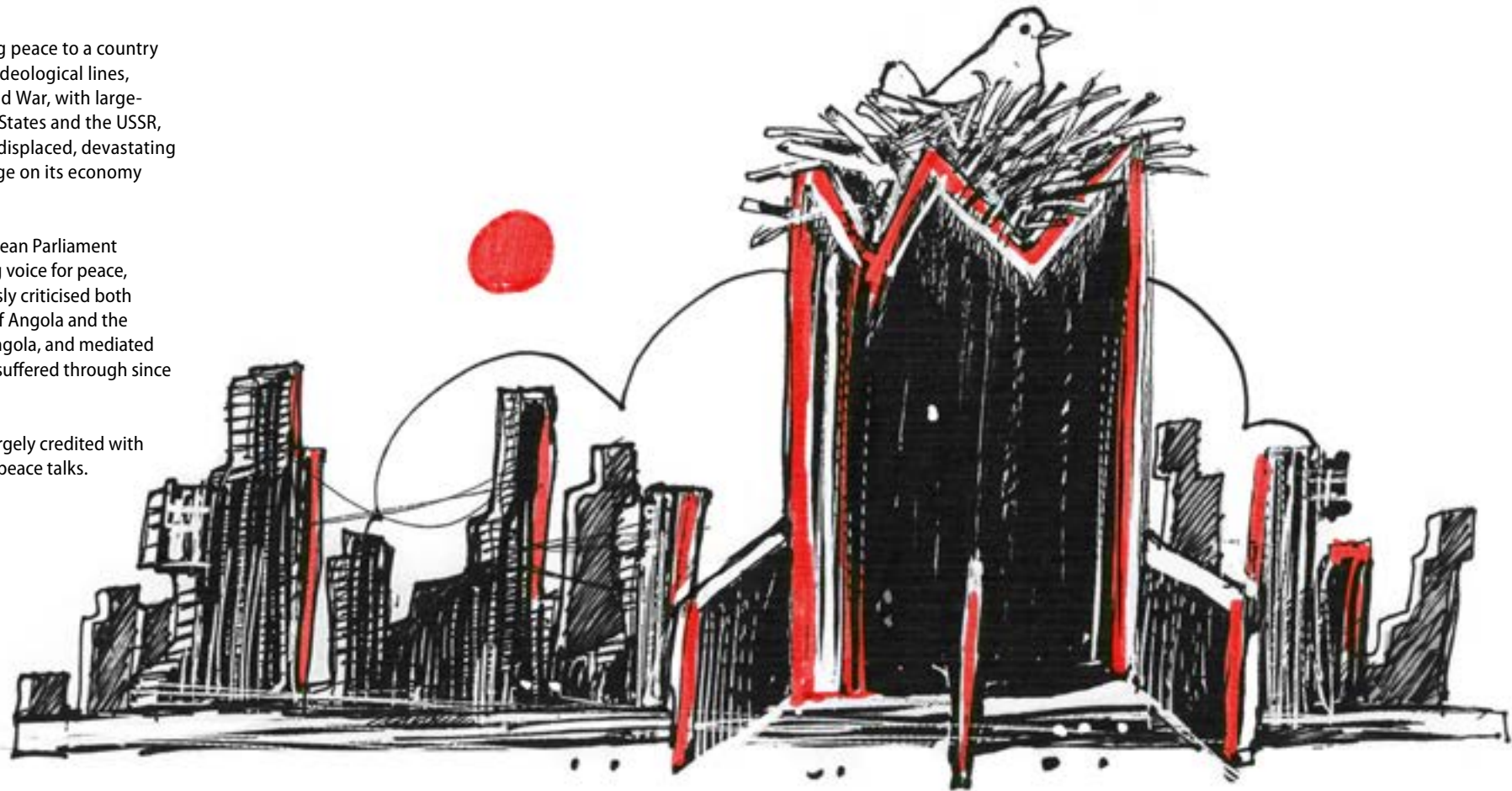
Kamwenho mediated between warring sides to bring peace to a country riven by 27 years of on-off conflict along ethnic and ideological lines, which served as a surrogate battleground for the Cold War, with large-scale involvement by Cuba, South Africa, the United States and the USSR, leaving over half a million people dead and millions displaced, devastating Angola's infrastructure and inflicting grievous damage on its economy and institutions.

In awarding him the Sakharov Prize in 2001, the European Parliament recognised Kamwenho's firm, unbiased and persisting voice for peace, democracy and human rights for Angola as he fearlessly criticised both the governing Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, and mediated between them for an end to the civil war Angola had suffered through since independence from Portugal in 1975.

Kamwenho and other religious and civil leaders are largely credited with bringing about the ceasefire in 2002 and the ensuing peace talks.

In 2003 Archbishop Kamwenho resigned as chair of the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé but continued to work actively through his diocese and the Ecumenical Committee for Peace in Angola for the realisation of democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, the implementation of the rule of law and lasting national reconciliation.

In 2009, having reached the retirement age of 75, Kamwenho became Archbishop Emeritus. He continues to work in his community, addressing corruption, a lack of ethical values and other challenges stemming from the legacy of war, and participates in SPN conferences.



¡BASTA YA! was a citizens' initiative against terrorism and political violence in Spain's Basque Country, formed in 1999 by intellectuals, human rights and political activists, trade unionists and other civil-society representatives.

¡BASTA YA!, whose name translates to 'enough is enough', was a reaction to the terrorism of the Basque terrorist group ETA and the threat to basic civil liberties and human rights posed, particularly to 'non-nationalist' citizens, by ETA and by other more moderate but increasingly more nationalistic and xenophobic parties.

The members of ¡BASTA YA! came from differing ideological backgrounds, but all engaged to oppose terrorism of any sort, to support all victims of terrorism and political violence and to defend the rule of law, the Spanish constitution and the statute of autonomy of the Basque Country.

¡BASTA YA! enjoyed unprecedented nationwide support in 1999 and 2000 as national outrage grew against ETA, which by then had killed hundreds of people in different parts of Spain, and victimised thousands across the Basque Country with intimidation, extortion, blackmail and attacks, including on families and property.

The movement was opposed to all forms of nationalism and also criticised the Basque Country authorities for nationalistic policies and rhetoric. ¡BASTA YA! brought a flood of thousands to the streets of San Sebastián, calling for adequate policies to defeat terrorism and for the respect of the constitution in two large demonstrations in 2000.

¡BASTA YA! was recognised by the European Parliament that same year for its active campaigning for human rights, democracy and tolerance in the Basque Country. With this prize, not only was ¡BASTA YA! given recognition for its work, but also the terrorist problem in the Basque Country began to be discussed as a European problem, not only a Spanish one. ¡BASTA YA! gained the support of international human rights organisations, and other countries listed ETA as a terrorist group.

In recent years ¡BASTA YA! has changed its nature as the situation in Spain has evolved, with ETA declaring a definitive cessation of its armed activity in 2011.

¡BASTA YA!'s leaders, including spokesperson Fernando Savater, who represented the organisation at the European Parliament and SPN conferences, created the political party *Unión Progreso y Democracia* in 2007 on a platform of support for the unity of Spain.

The party is currently represented in the European Parliament. ¡BASTA YA!'s members believe its ideas and spirit live on in the fight for human rights now led by others.





Known as the 'Mandela of Timor', XANANA GUSMÃO<sup>(3)</sup> led the struggle for Timor-Leste's freedom and self-determination. He was the first president of the first new nation of this century and also served as Timor-Leste's prime minister.

Gusmão's political career began with the prospect of independence for Timor-Leste from its colonial power Portugal, but it took over two decades of hard struggle for an independent Timor-Leste<sup>(4)</sup> to be born, as just days after its declaration of independence following the unilateral Portuguese withdrawal in 1975, Indonesia invaded the country crushing resistance with force. The violence following the invasion cost an estimated 200 000 lives, but failed to break the people's determination to resist.

Known by his *nom de guerre* Kay Rala, Gusmão joined the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste and was elected by its first national conference as leader of the resistance and commander-in-chief of the National Liberation Armed Forces of Timor-Leste.

As resistance leader, Gusmão conceived and implemented a policy of national unity, the success of which led to the formation of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) where Gusmão managed to bring together the various political and social groupings.

Gusmão was taken prisoner by Indonesian forces in 1992, a year after their massacre of over 250 people taking part in a memorial procession in Dili finally captured the world's attention. He was imprisoned on charges of separatism in Indonesia, where he studied Bahasa Indonesian, the official language of Indonesia, English and law. He also wrote poetry and painted artworks that were sold to finance the resistance he continued to lead.

Together with his vice-president in the CNRT, Jose Ramos Horta, Xanana Gusmão sought to secure a peaceful solution to the conflict by crafting a peace plan including a UN-supervised referendum on the future of Timor-Leste. He was visited in jail by a number of high-level personalities, including South African President Nelson Mandela and UN and US representatives, as he remained key to an end to the war with Indonesia.

Gusmão had just been released from prison following huge international pressure, having served 7 years of his 20-year jail term, when the Parliament awarded him the Sakharov Prize in 1999, recognising him as the leader of the Timorese resistance and symbol of his people's fight for freedom.

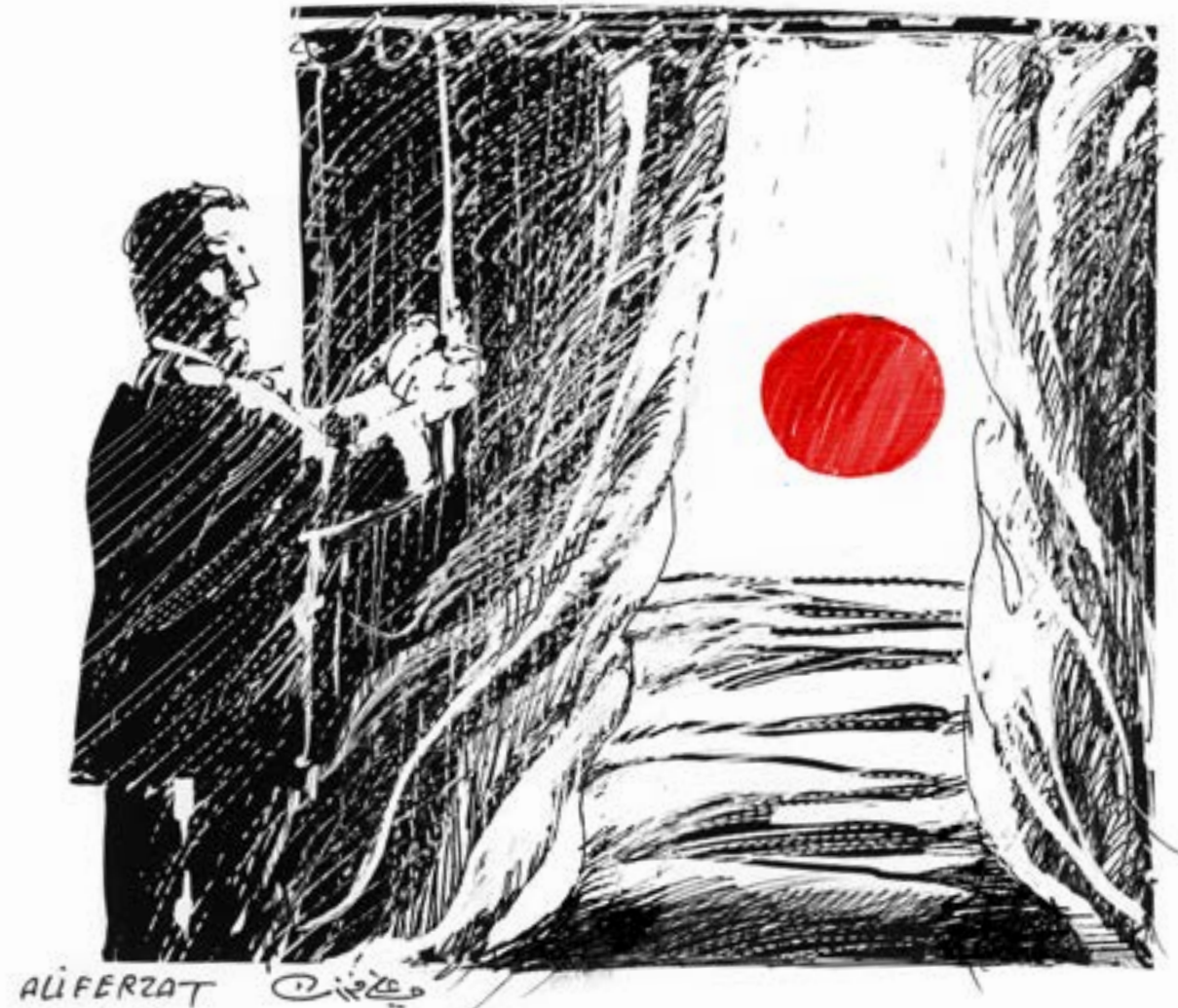
When freed — shortly after the UN-sponsored referendum of 30 August 1999, in which 80 % of the population of Timor-Leste voted for independence, thus heralding the end of the Indonesian occupation and the beginning of the transitional process led by the UN — Gusmão promised 'to do everything in my power to bring peace to East Timor and my people'.

<sup>(3)</sup>Xanana Gusmão legally changed his name from Jose Alexandre Gusmão to Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. Kay Rala was his *nom de guerre* during the struggle for Timor-Leste's freedom and self-determination and Xanana was a name he was known by in his youth.

<sup>(4)</sup>East Timor is Timor-Leste since 2002.

In April 2002 Gusmão won the first free presidential elections held in East Timor with huge popular support. On 20 May 2002, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan officially declared the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste an independent state and Gusmão served it as president until May 2007. In 2008, whilst serving as prime minister, he survived an assassination attempt. He resigned the premiership in February 2015, wishing to make space for a younger generation of leaders, and currently serves as Minister for Planning and Strategic Investment.

He has engaged with the European Parliament in SPN actions.



**IBRAHIM RUGOVA** (1944-2006) was a writer, academic and politician dedicated to a peaceful struggle for the independence of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. He served as the first President of Kosovo.

Born in Cerrca, Kosovo, in what was then Yugoslavia, Rugova studied in Pristina and at the Sorbonne. He taught literature, authored 10 books and also presided over the Kosovo Writers' Union, which was at the heart of growing ethnic Albanian opposition to Serbian rule in Kosovo. In 1989 he founded the Democratic League of Kosovo, the first political party to challenge the communist regime directly, as Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milošević revoked Kosovo's autonomous region status and imposed Serbian control. In the face of increasing oppression, Rugova headed the political movement that declared the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. He was elected president in 1992 of a republic recognised only by Albania. In the face of the subsequent Serbian crackdown he launched a system of education, hospitals and taxation for the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo, parallel to the Serbian system.

The soft-spoken politician with his trademark silk scarf was seen as the moderate, intellectual face of Albanian opposition to the Belgrade regime throughout the 1990s. He secured a second term as president in 1998, even as the armed conflict between Serbian units and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an Albanian guerrilla movement, escalated, precipitating a major Yugoslav military crackdown.

The European Parliament honoured Rugova with the Sakharov Prize in 1998 as a man committed to the principle of peaceful resistance to violence. Rugova viewed it as representing 'for me and for all the people of Kosovo, recognition of our peaceful struggle and our sacrifices'.

He remained firm in his non-violent opposition to the Serbian regime, constantly reiterating his willingness to enter into dialogue with Belgrade, which put him at odds with the more nationalistic Adem Demaçi, his principal political rival. The 'Gandhi of the Balkans' endeavoured to win over world opinion as he urged the international community to offer Kosovo protection.

Rugova, as chief of Kosovo's negotiators, signed the internationally brokered Rambouillet peace agreement on 18 March 1999, but Belgrade's refusal to endorse it led to the launch of NATO bombing attacks. As Kosovo came under UN administration, Rugova, having briefly left Kosovo for Italy in 1999, returned to Kosovar politics, sharing power with KLA leaders now at the helm of the Democratic Party. In 2002 Rugova was re-elected president and served till his death from lung cancer in 2006, just days before negotiations on Kosovo's final status were due to start.

To many, he was the 'father of the nation'.





SALIMA GHEZALI is an Algerian journalist, and a writer and activist for women's rights and democracy in Algeria. Her courageous pacifist stance during the Algerian civil war came under fire from both the government and Islamists, and the Algerian weekly *La Nation*, of which she was editor-in-chief, was closed down by the authorities.

Currently the President of the Association for the Emancipation of Women, Ghezali became involved in the Algerian women's movement in the 1980s, as a founder member of Women of Europe and the Maghreb and as editor-in-chief of *NYSSA*, the women's publication she herself founded.

A teacher turned journalist, in 1994 she became editor-in-chief of the French-language *La Nation*, the most widely read weekly in Algeria. *La Nation*, until its closure in 1996, was the only paper to criticise both the government and Islamist groups and to advocate political dialogue, human rights and freedom of expression for all sides engaged in the conflict. The 11-year civil war began in 1991 after the first multi-party elections in Algeria since independence were cancelled due to fears of an Islamist win, and cost the lives of tens of thousands of people.

Ghezali was part of a human rights community 'that seemed small and powerless' in Algeria when her courageous defence of freedom of speech and her work for women's rights were recognised by the European Parliament in 1997. Ghezali, when accepting the Sakharov Prize, turned a spotlight on the dramatic situation in Algeria following years of war, with millions of men, women and children living in fear as 'a double terror denies them the first freedom, the freedom to live'.

Ghezali resumed the publication of *La Nation* online in 2011 as the Arab Spring awakenings shook neighbouring countries, writing, 'we cannot be indifferent to the dynamics of the young people in the Arab world who are fighting for their dignity and freedom. We cannot be indifferent to what is happening in our country. We want the Algerian people to be happy, because they deserve it. We want strong institutions, better human resources in a real democracy and the rule of law'.

Since 2000 Ghezali has also been politically engaged as a member of the *Front des Forces Socialistes* (FFS, Socialist Forces Front) and advisor to historical FFS leader Hocine Aït Ahmed. Together with fellow laureates Nurit Peled and Taslima Nasreen, she has published an opinion calling on 'leaders and representatives of the EU, to actively and openly encourage the Palestinian Authority to join the ICC'.

Salima Ghezali is engaged with the European Parliament and the SPN in the defence of human rights, particularly freedom of expression.



WEI JINGSHENG, the 'father of the Chinese democracy movement', lives in exile but remains an active leader of the opposition to the Communist regime in China.

Wei is the author of *The Courage to stand alone: Letters from prison and other writings*, articles he initially wrote in prison on toilet paper, which are now published in more than a dozen languages.



He was sentenced to jail twice, for 29 years in total, and served more than 18 years for his activities and writings in support of democracy, including his groundbreaking 1978 essay *The fifth modernisation: democracy*. This began as a signed wall poster on the Democracy Wall in Beijing, on which workers, artists and intellectuals exercised their freedom of expression. Wei's essay caused a sensation, not only because it openly assaulted the 'people's democratic dictatorship' of the Communists, but also because he dared to sign it with both his real name and contact information.

Writing in 1979 in *Exploration*, an underground magazine Wei founded and edited, he wrote an article entitled 'Democracy or a new dictatorship?' identifying Deng Xiaoping, then Communist leader, as the new dictator. Arrested within days, Wei was convicted of 'counter-revolution' and jailed for 15 years. He was on death row, then in solitary confinement, then in forced labour camps under strict supervision until 1993, when he was released due to China's decision to apply to host the 2000 Olympic Games.

Wei was arrested a second time within 6 months of his release, tried again, convicted of 'counter-revolution' and sentenced to another 14 years.

At the time of his Sakharov Prize award in 1996 he was still in prison. In 1997, after overwhelming international pressure, including from then US President Bill Clinton, Wei was taken from his cell and promptly deported to the United States. He maintains he was not freed but that his exile is, rather, further punishment. From Washington, Wei leads the Wei Jingsheng Foundation, the Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition and the Asia Democracy Alliance, continuing to be an active and strong voice for democracy and human rights in China.

He has been actively involved in SPN conferences, urging European and international support for the liberation of jailed human rights defenders in China.



In 1991 LEYLA ZANA became the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish parliament, later serving over 10 years in prison for her pro-Kurdish political activism. In June 2015 she again made history as a member of the first pro-Kurdish political party to win representation in the Turkish assembly, with an agenda of peace and inclusion of minorities.

Born in 1961, she attended elementary school for only a year and a half because she was stopped by her traditional father. At the age of 14 she was married to Mehdi Zana, a man 20 years her senior, who became the mayor of Diyarbakir and later became a political prisoner during the military rule in the 1980s. Leyla Zana was imprisoned for 2 months after leading a protest of prisoners' families who were prohibited from visiting their relatives in prison. During this time she learnt Turkish for her visits to her husband in prison, as security forces meted out beatings for speaking Kurdish. Starting school at the age of 23, Zana earned primary and secondary diplomas in 3 years and eventually took on an unsolicited leadership role.

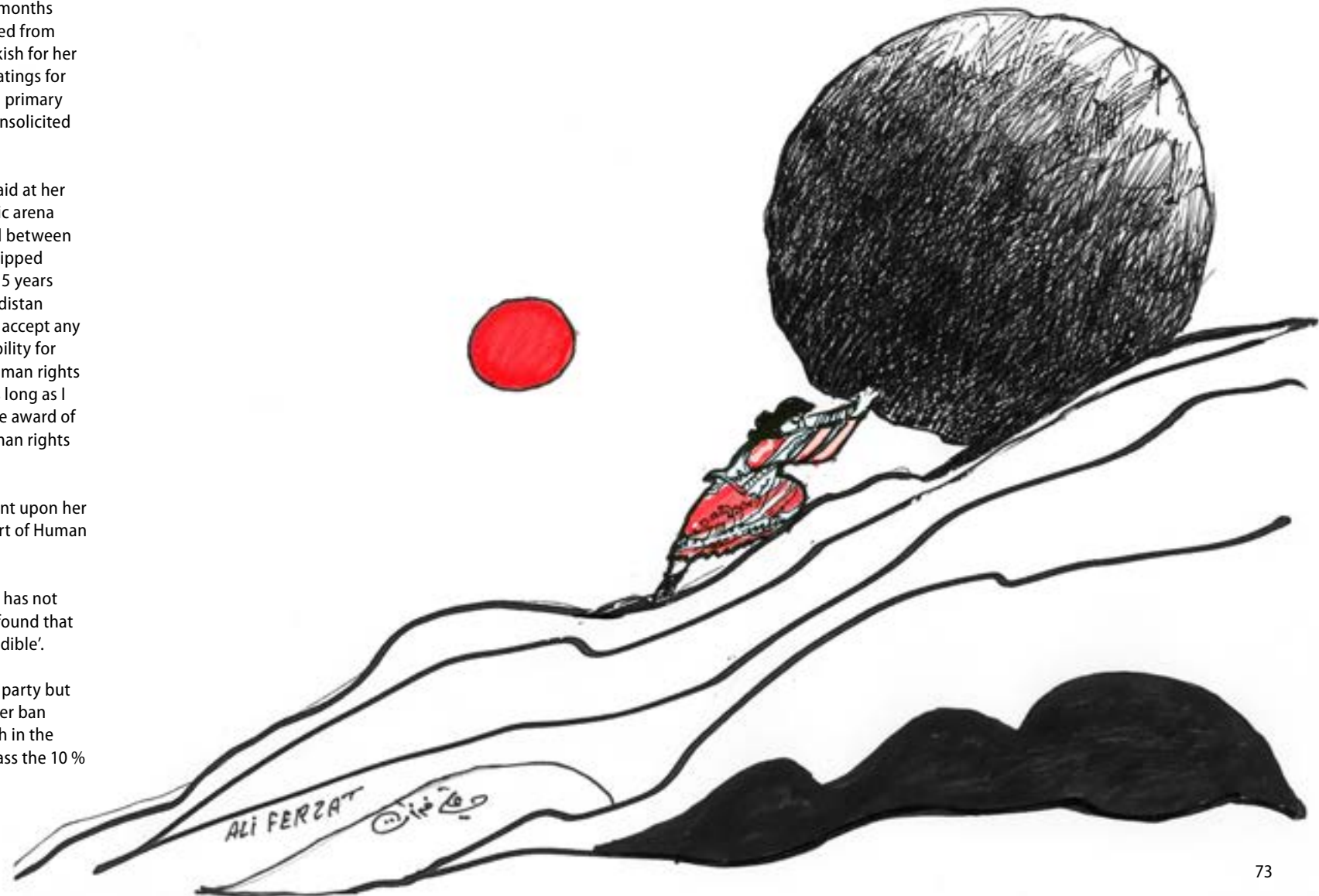
Overwhelmingly elected to the Turkish assembly in 1991, she said at her swearing-in ceremony in Kurdish, when speaking it in the public arena was still a criminal offence: 'I take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people.' For this she was stripped of parliamentary immunity, and in 1994 she was sentenced to 15 years of incarceration for 'treason and membership in the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)'. At her sentencing, Zana asserted: 'I don't accept any of these accusations, and if they were true I'd assume responsibility for them, even if it cost me my life. I have defended democracy, human rights and brotherhood between peoples and I'll keep doing so for as long as I live.' In 1995 she was chosen by the European Parliament for the award of the Sakharov Prize as a symbol of the peaceful struggle for human rights and dignity of the Kurdish people.

In 2004 Zana was finally able to address the European Parliament upon her release from prison on a technicality following a European Court of Human Rights ruling and international pressure.

Zana has since had various court cases brought against her but has not served further jail time. In 2014 the Supreme Court of Appeals found that evidence of Zana's alleged membership of the PKK was 'not credible'.

In 2009 she was handed a 5-year ban from joining any political party but was nevertheless re-elected as an independent in 2011. Once her ban expired in 2014 she joined the Peoples' Democratic Party, which in the June 2015 elections became the first pro-Kurdish party to surpass the 10 % threshold for parliamentary representation.

Zana was actively involved in the peace negotiations that led PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to make his historic call in 2013 for the party to move from armed resistance to democratic political struggle after three decades of conflict. Zana has urged an end to the killings as the ceasefire unravelled in the run-up to fresh elections in 2015.



**TASLIMA NASREEN** The exiled bestselling Bangladeshi writer has been living in exile since 1994, driven from her country by religious extremists because of her writings and her secular views.

Born in Bangladesh in 1962, Taslima Nasreen started writing when she was 13, and is known for her powerful works on the oppression of women and her unflinching criticism of religion, despite her forced exile and the multiple fatwas calling for her death. She is an award-winning author whose writings have been translated into 30 different languages.

She studied medicine and practised gynaecology in Bangladesh. Following the publication of *Lajja* in 1993 she was criticised by Islamic fundamentalists and several hundred thousand people demonstrated against her books. After spending 2 months in hiding, at the end of 1994 she escaped to Sweden. A secular humanist and human rights activist living in exile, she abandoned the medical profession and focused on writing. Owing to her thoughts and ideas some of her books are banned in Bangladesh, and she herself is barred from Bengal. She was also forced out of West Bengal in eastern India in 2011, which she regards as her second home, by a *fatwa* issued by Kolkata clerics.

When she won the 1994 Sakharov Prize she had already sought refuge in Europe, living in exile in France and then in Sweden. In her acceptance speech she said she came from a part of the world where social tensions and human difficulties were unbearable and, as a writer, she could not close her eyes to the daily suffering and starvation.

A campaigner against extremism in all religions, Nasreen has engaged with the European Parliament and the SPN on freedom of expression and belief, and urged support for the secular movements in Bangladesh to counteract the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Together with fellow Sakharov laureates

Nurit Peled and Salima Ghezali, Nasreen has also published an opinion calling on 'leaders and representatives of the EU, to actively and openly encourage the Palestinian Authority to join the ICC'.

In 2015 she wrote publicly of the need to reform and modernise Islam in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris. She stated that 'principles of freedom of expression alone won't do any good. One has to know what mantra makes terrorists tick and influences them to take up arms. It is important to stop the indoctrination of children with irrational religious faith at home or institutions like madrassas or mosques.' She participated in the 2016 conference 'The Sakharov Prize Network for Stronger Human Rights Action' at the European Parliament in Brussels.





**OSLOBOĐENJE** is a Bosnian daily newspaper. Its name means 'liberation', and it gave a lifeline to people caught in the siege of Sarajevo between 1992 and 1996 during the war in the former Yugoslavia. All the while, it managed to go to print every single day except one.

*Oslobođenje* employed Bosnians, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. Not one of them left the newspaper when war broke out, even though they could have done so. They stayed and fought to maintain the unity and ethnic diversity of their city and their country, giving the lie to the Greater Serbian propaganda that it was impossible for Serbs, Croats and Muslims to live together in peace.

By the end of the war, of the 75 courageous journalists who risked their lives day after day, five were killed and 25 wounded. All suffered personal tragedies, including the deaths of their loved ones. They were traumatised by the killing they saw on a daily basis.

*Oslobođenje's* offices, located in one of Sarajevo's most dangerous combat zones, were reduced to rubble. The staff moved into a bomb shelter, improvising power generators from old Lada engines and crossing Snipers' Alley every day on the way to work, with gunners so close by they could hear them chatting and singing.

'Our efforts were directed against death and against the partition or even complete eradication of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the map,' said Zlatko Dizdarević, one of the editors at the time.

*Oslobođenje's* staff made their daily work a symbol of their resistance. Journalists delivered newspapers when the drivers found it too dangerous, and when *Oslobođenje's* network of 700 kiosks throughout Bosnia was burned down, the news pages were cut and faxed, then glued together so citizens in other battered cities like Mostar could read them.

*Oslobođenje's* staff were named International Editors of the Year for 1993 by the *World Press Review* for their 'bravery, tenacity, and dedication to the principles of journalism'. They went on to win several other journalism awards.

In 2006 the paper was acquired by two of the city's largest businesses, and its website now proclaims that though the organisation has changed a great deal, its 'commitment to liberty and justice remains strong'.

Editor Vildana Selimbegovic has represented *Oslobođenje* at SPN conferences, including at the most recent in May 2016. She was one of the wartime staff and, though marked by the experience, she remains dedicated to her job.

1993  
OSLOBOĐENJE



**LAS MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO** was born of the search by Argentinian mothers for their 'disappeared' children during Argentina's Dirty War of 1976-1983, when the military regime abducted, tortured and killed thousands of political opponents, stealing children born to prisoners and obliterating any trace of its victims.

*Las Madres*, mainly apolitical housewives, were the ones who dared protest at the height of the dictatorship and, after the fall of the regime, called for trials for the military officials involved, hundreds of whom have been found guilty. The movement was launched on 30 April 1977, as 14 mothers staged the first protest in the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the presidential *Casa Rosada*. Ordered to disperse, pairs of courageous mothers began to walk slowly arm-in-arm around the square. Every week more mothers joined the protests, as more left-wing activists and people accused of collaborating with them were 'disappeared'.

*Las Madres*, with their emblematic white scarves, the photos and names of their disappeared children and pleas to have them back, began to attract international attention, so the regime killed three of its founders in an attempt to stop *Las Madres'* activities. In December 1977 Azucena Villaflor de Vincenti, Mary Ponce de Bianco and Esther Ballestrino de Careaga were abducted, tortured and thrown to their death from a plane. Other members of *Las Madres* were beaten and detained but continued their peaceful resistance. *Las Madres* turned their focus to a demand for justice as the massive human rights abuses, a plunging economy and losing the Falklands War brought an end to the military regime in 1983.

*Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* split in 1986, with founding members in both the founding line, which focused on legislation and the recovery of remains, and the association, the more radical and political faction that refused to recognise the children's deaths until all the guilty were brought to justice.

The association was fiercely resisting the end of trials dealing with abuses under the dictatorship when the European Parliament recognised *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* with the Sakharov Prize in 1992.

Hebe de Bonafini, who was elected leader of the undivided *Madres* in 1979, and is still leading the association, accepted the Sakharov Prize award on behalf of the mothers' children 'who were the first to struggle for freedom'. *Las Madres* used the prize's purse to finance their various social initiatives, which include the *Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, and de Bonafini participated in the founding conference of the SPN in 2008.

*Las Madres* continue their Thursday march in the Plaza de Mayo, accompanied by crowds of supporters, while questions remain over the fate of their missing children.

**1992**  
LAS MADRES  
DE PLAZA  
DE MAYO





**ADEM DEMAÇI** is a symbol of the struggle for Kosovo's independence. Involved as a senior leader in the country's politics for many years, he was also a long-time political prisoner who spent a total of 28 years in jail for speaking out against the treatment of ethnic Albanians and criticising communism under Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz Tito.

A writer born in Priština, Kosovo, in 1936, Demaçi published his first short stories when he was still in secondary school. He went on to study literature, law and education and to publish, between 1953 and 1958, around 20 short stories and a novel entitled *The snakes of blood* exploring blood vendettas in Kosovo and Albania, which gained him literary fame. Demaçi's writings led to his first arrest in 1958. Thereafter, up to 1990, Demaçi spent a great deal of his life in prison for fighting for the fundamental rights of the Albanians in Kosovo and making known the bitter truth about the Serbian oppression of the 2 million Kosovar Albanians. He was given recognition by the human rights community as a prisoner of conscience and became known at the 'Mandela of the Balkans'. After his release Demaçi took on the leadership of the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms.

In 1991 Demaçi was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament for his integrity in his opposition to 'an authoritarian and intolerant regime'. Demaçi, accepting the prize as homage to the people of Kosovo, stated that 'freedom of speech is the first, crucial step towards democracy. Without freedom of speech there is no dialogue, without dialogue the truth cannot be established, and without the truth progress is impossible.'

Demaçi embarked on a political career in 1996, joining the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo and becoming its chair. He called for open protests against the Serbian regime on the grounds that non-violence does not mean passivity. He began a visible, yet non-violent protest campaign against Serbian rule, calling on Kosovars to stand still in the streets for 1 minute at precisely the same time. As the head of the second-largest party in Kosovo, Demaçi refused to run against his main rival, Ibrahim Rugova, in elections scheduled in 1998, feeling it was not appropriate 'to play political games' whilst armed conflict escalated with Serbia as it cracked down on Kosovo.

Demaçi joined the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) as its political representative in 1998, having come to believe that the policy of non-violence was not achieving freedom for Kosovo's people, who, he held, had a right to resist the harsh repression they were under.

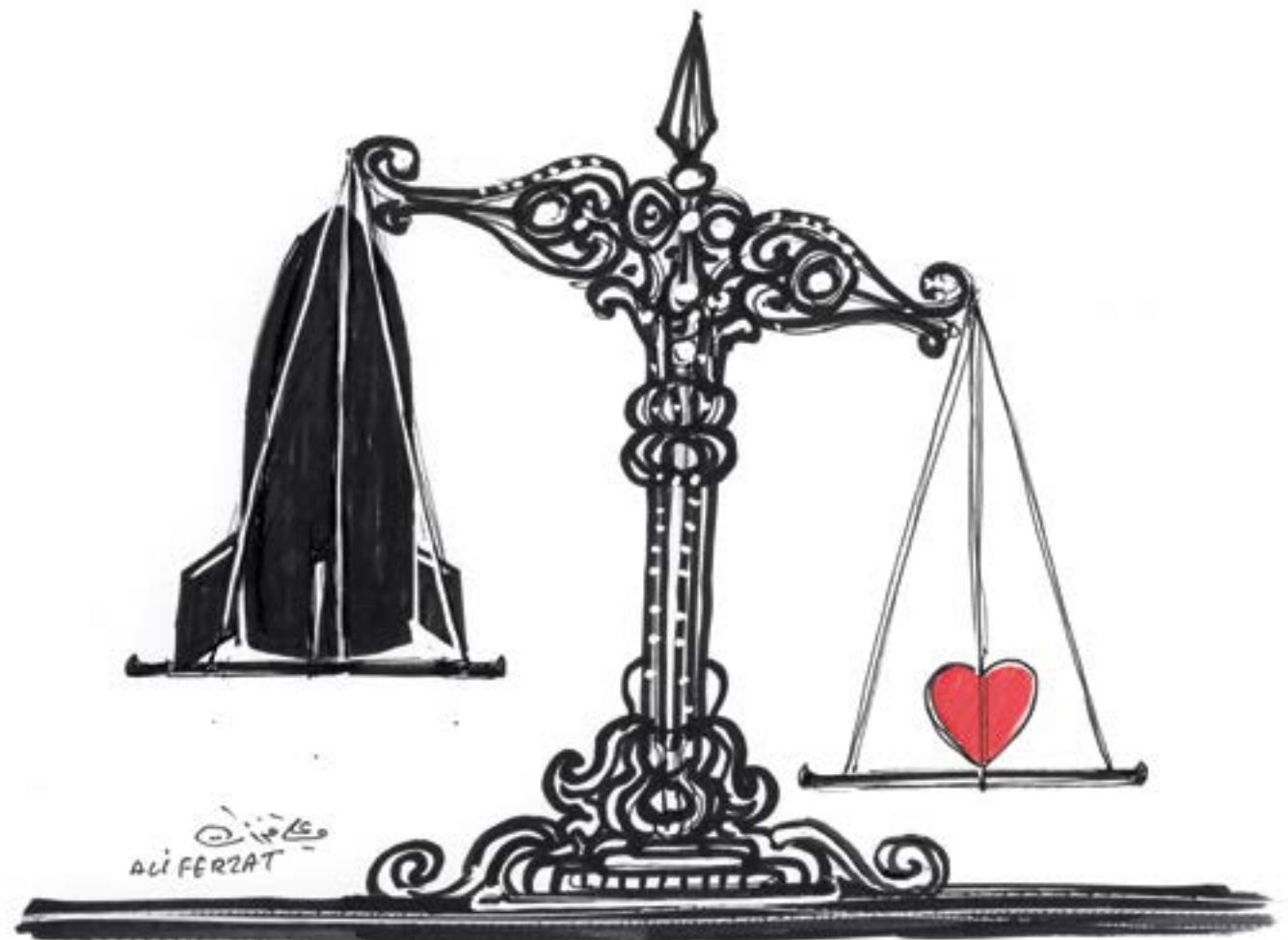
Demaçi left the KLA in 1999 in protest at its decision to attend the Rambouillet peace talks to end the conflict with Serbia. Demaçi criticised the deal proposed for failing to guarantee Kosovo's independence.

He stayed in Kosovo during the conflict reignited by the failure of the talks in 1999, and criticised other leaders, including Rugova, for leaving the country at

a historic moment. Demaçi described Kosovo during the war as 'the biggest prison in Europe'. He was himself arrested twice by the Serbian authorities.

After the war he devoted himself mainly to ethnic reconciliation and the return of refugees. Demaçi became chair of the Committee for Mutual Understanding, Tolerance and Coexistence, representing all ethnic groups in Kosovo, 'because Kosovo belongs to everyone' and 'we want a free, democratic and multi-ethnic society'. He is still a political opinion-leader in Kosovo, advocating change in the electoral system in Kosovo, against a backdrop of resumed talks between Pristina and Belgrade in 2015.

Demaçi participated in the founding conference of the SPN in 2008.





AUNG SAN SUU KYI's leadership of Myanmar/Burma's pro-democracy struggle was recognised by the Sakharov Prize in 1990. Twenty-three years later, on 22 October 2013, Aung San Suu Kyi was finally able to receive the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in person.

In a ceremony at the European Parliament, addressing the elected representatives of the 28 Member States, the long-time political prisoner made a vigorous case for democratic values, emphasising that Myanmar/Burma's transition towards them remains far from complete. She said that the constitution ensured a privileged role for the military which must be reformed in order to guarantee the right of citizens of Myanmar/Burma to 'live in accordance with their conscience' and to 'shape their own destiny'. She called for the support of the international community to continue to aid the development of democracy and human rights in Myanmar/Burma, and acknowledged the European Parliament's long-standing support for her cause.

Daughter of Aung San, a national hero of independent Myanmar/Burma who was assassinated when she was 2 years old, and Khin Kyi, a prominent diplomat of Myanmar/Burma, Suu Kyi witnessed a brutal crackdown on protesters opposing U Ne Win's military regime when she returned to Myanmar/Burma to nurse her dying mother in 1988. The massacres led Suu Kyi, known as 'The Lady', to begin her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights. In 1990 Suu Kyi led her National League for Democracy to an overwhelming victory in the country's election, but the military junta not only refused to hand over power but cracked down on the League's supporters with arrests and bloody reprisals.

Suu Kyi spent most of the following two decades after 1990 in prison or under house arrest, and during this time the authorities refused her British husband a visa to visit her in Myanmar/Burma, despite the fact that he was diagnosed with cancer in 1997. The authorities in Myanmar/Burma ignored international calls for him to be granted a visa to visit Suu Kyi under these difficult circumstances, urging her to leave the country instead. She refused, anticipating that she would not be allowed to return, and she did not see her husband again. He died in 1999. 'The Lady' was still under house arrest during Myanmar/Burma's first elections in two decades in 2010, but was released 6 days later.

Suu Kyi stood for a parliamentary by-election in April 2012, in which her party won 43 out of the 45 open seats, making her the leader of the parliamentary opposition, as the country began democratic reforms. As opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi campaigned for a change in the country's constitution to enable her to stand for the presidential election, from which she is barred by a provision ruling out candidates with strong ties to a foreign national. Suu Kyi's sons are British.

In 2015 the National League for Democracy won a majority in elections in Myanmar/Burma. As Aung San Suu Kyi was constitutionally barred from becoming president, her long-time ally Htin Kyaw took up the role in March 2016, although Suu Kyi announced she will be 'above the president', and took up the role of Minister for Foreign Affairs.



ALEXANDER DUBČEK (1921-1992) was the leading figure in the reform movement known as the Prague Spring in 1968 Czechoslovakia.

The son of a family committed to building socialism in the Soviet Union, in 1939 he secretly joined the Communist Party and the underground resistance against the pro-German Slovak state.

In 1968 Dubček, a devoted communist, became the new First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and sought to liberalise the Communist regime. He began a series of reforms, granting the press greater freedom of expression, rehabilitating victims of the Stalin-era political purges and initiating economic reforms and a wide-ranging democratisation of Czechoslovak political life. However, his reforms aroused concern in Moscow and his endeavours to give socialism a human face were shattered on 21 August 1968 when Warsaw Pact tanks seized control of Prague. Dubček was kidnapped by the KGB, taken to the Kremlin and briefly detained.

In 1970 he was accused of treason, stripped of office and expelled from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. For 15 years he lived as an ordinary worker and only returned to political life as a civil rights activist in 1988.

When he was awarded the Sakharov Prize on 22 November 1989 Dubček was still a citizen deprived of his human rights<sup>(5)</sup>, but just a few days later, on 28 November, Czechoslovakia's Communist Party relinquished its hold on power, toppled by the Velvet Revolution.

'I am convinced that the 'breath of freedom' which the Czechs and the Slovaks enjoyed when Dubček was their leader was a prologue to the peaceful revolutions now taking place in eastern Europe and Czechoslovakia itself,' Sakharov wrote in a message to the European Parliament on 10 December 1989, just 4 days before he died.

After the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia, Dubček was elected chair of the federal assembly from 1989 to 1992. Addressing the European Parliament in January 1990 as he received his Sakharov Prize, Dubček noted that 'even during the most difficult moments of their history, the nations which make up my country have never ceased to feel that they are part of humanity's great struggle for freedom' and from the Prague Spring to the Velvet Revolution, 'the ideals of freedom, sovereignty and social justice remained alive'.

Alexander Dubček died in a car accident in 1992.



<sup>(5)</sup> 25 years of the Sakharov Prize: the European Parliament upholding freedom of thought, Archive and Documentation Centre, European Parliament, Cardoc Journals, No 11, November 2013, p. 55.

NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA 'What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made in the lives of others', Nelson Mandela once said.

Nelson Mandela died on 5 December 2013 at his home in Johannesburg, at the age of 95. His passing was met with a worldwide outpouring of grief but also with celebration of a life dedicated to freedom, democracy and equality.

He was the first, along with Soviet dissident Anatoly Marchenko, to be awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize in 1988. At the time he was still being kept under house arrest by South Africa's apartheid regime, which imprisoned him for 27 years for his fight against racism.

Mandela was an active member of the African National Congress, and co-founder of South Africa's first black law firm, who became more militant as apartheid grew more oppressive. He was condemned to life in prison in 1964 and finally released in 1990, as the apartheid regime began to buckle under international and domestic pressure.

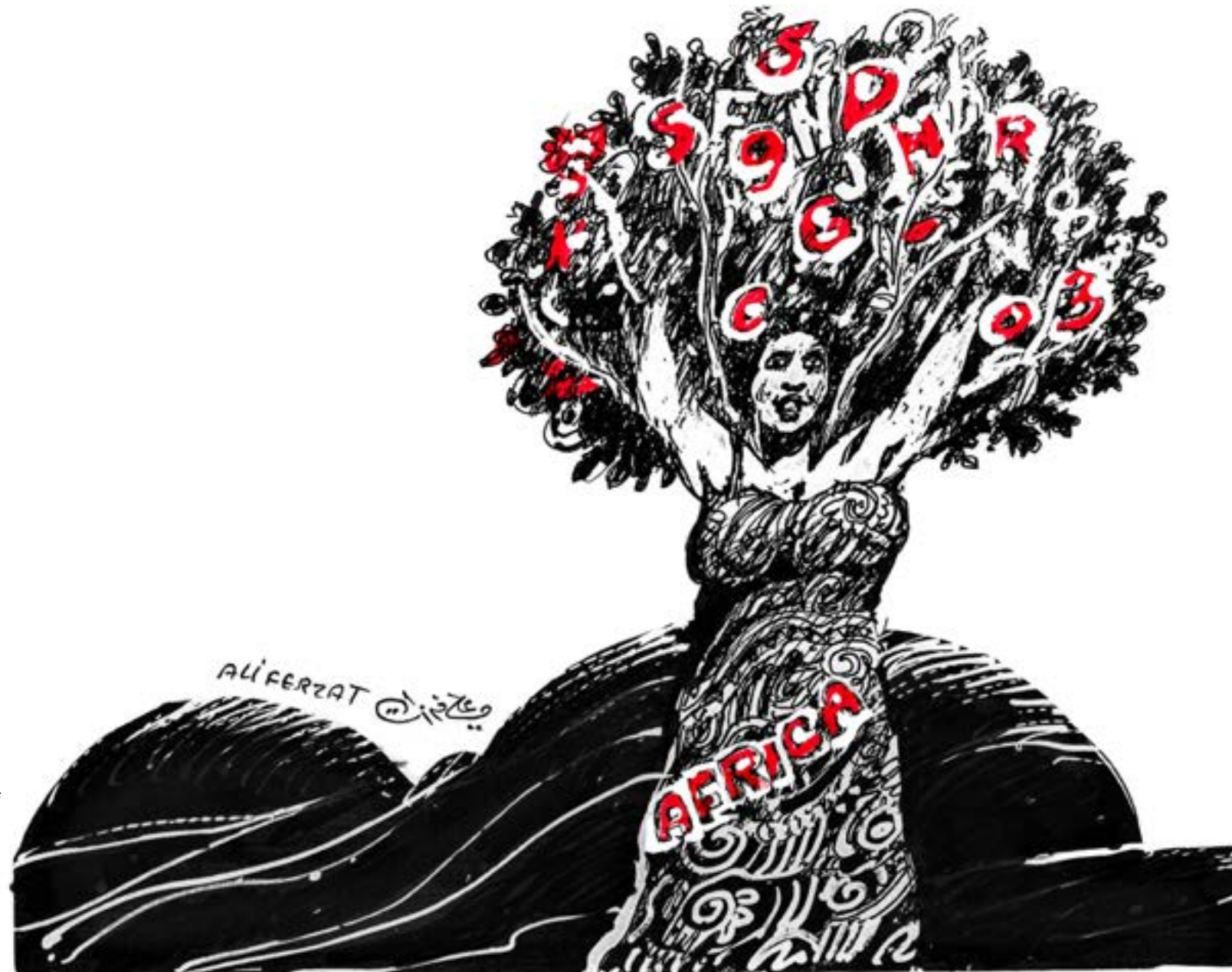
Shortly after his release, Mandela spoke to the European Parliament of the need for a just and lasting solution to transform South Africa into a 'united, democratic and non-racial country'. Anything less would be 'an insult to the memory of the countless patriots in South Africa and the rest of our region, who have sacrificed their very lives, to bring us to the moment today when we can confidently say that the end of the apartheid system is in sight.'

During the 1990s Mandela led South Africa's transition from apartheid to a racially inclusive democracy. As president, from 1994-1999, he championed 'truth and reconciliation' as the path to peace.

On his death in 2013 tributes flowed, including from the SPN. 'South Africa today loses its father, the world loses a hero. I pay tribute to one of the greatest humans of our time. Nelson Mandela dies today, but his legacy will last forever,' European Parliament President and co-chair of the SPN Martin Schulz said.

'He made us all understand that nobody should be penalised for the colour of his skin, for the circumstances into which he is born. He also made us understand that we can change the world, we can change the world by changing attitudes, by changing perceptions,' said Aung San Suu Kyi.

And in the words of Kofi Annan, 'Nelson Mandela led a singular life of sacrifice, dignity and political genius that brought about the peaceful end of one of the great evils of modern times.





'ANATOLI MARCHENKO's heroic life and his work represent an enormous contribution to the causes of democracy, humanism and justice,' Andrei Sakharov himself wrote to the European Parliament, recommending him for the prize. Anatoli Marchenko (1938-1986) was one of the former Soviet Union's best-known dissidents. He died in Chistopol prison following a 3-month-long hunger strike for the release of all Soviet prisoners of conscience. Anatoli Marchenko was only 48 years old when he died, but had spent over 20 years in prison and internal exile. The international outcry following his death was a major factor in finally pushing Mikhail Gorbachev, then Secretary-General of the Communist Party, to authorise the large-scale release of political prisoners in 1987.

Marchenko became widely known through *My testimony*, an autobiographical book on his time in Soviet labour camps and prison, which he wrote in 1966. This book, copied by hand by the dissident underground and later published in the West, was the first in which the camps and prisons of the post-Stalin period were discussed, awakening the world to the reality that the Gulag had not ended with Stalin.

Its publication landed Marchenko in prison again for anti-Soviet propaganda, but before being re-incarcerated in 1968 he openly became a dissident, publicly denouncing jail conditions for political prisoners. He warned in an open letter to the media in July 1968 that the Soviet Union would not allow the Prague Spring to continue, a prediction which came true in August as Warsaw Pact tanks rumbled into Czechoslovakia, and Marchenko was once again sentenced to prison and then to exile.

The greater the repression, though, the stronger Marchenko's will to act became. He became one of the founders of the influential Moscow Helsinki Group, together with Andrei Sakharov and current leader Lyudmila Alexeyeva. The group was founded in 1976 to monitor the Soviet Union's compliance with the human rights clauses of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the first act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, meant to improve relations between the Communist bloc and the West.

He was arrested and jailed for the last time in 1980 for publishing his final book *To live like everyone*. He did not survive his 15-year sentence. His death in prison was never publicly investigated.

His widow, Larissa Bogoraz, herself an activist and a Sakharov Prize nominee, received the prize on his behalf, which was awarded to him posthumously in 1988, the year the European Parliament created the Sakharov Prize.



EU citizens, according to opinion polls, believe that human rights are the value the European Parliament should defend as a matter of priority. Human rights are embedded in the EU treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as in the EU's external relations policies, including the 2015-2020 action plan on human rights and democracy. In its relations with non-EU countries, the European Union is bound to work for democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The European Parliament is a key actor in defending and promoting democracy, freedom of speech, fair elections and universal human rights.

The European Parliament not only awards the annual Sakharov Prize, it also upholds and defends human rights through resolutions on urgent human rights matters, an annual report on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policies on the issue, parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy with counterparts and authorities in non-EU countries, hearings on human rights issues in its committees, participation in electoral observation missions worldwide, joint actions of the SPN, the Sakharov Fellowship for human rights defenders and other human right actions in partnership with national parliaments and civil society.

In its human rights urgency resolutions, adopted at every Strasbourg plenary session, the Parliament turns a spotlight and takes a position on human rights abuses around the world. It also reiterates its unequivocal positions on the prevention of torture and against the death penalty, the protection of human rights defenders, conflict prevention, women's and children's rights, the protection of minorities and the rights of indigenous peoples and people with disabilities all over the world. The European Parliament's resolutions often serve as the basis for action by the EU's Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European External Action Service, and at times have an immediate impact on the actions of the governments concerned.

The European Parliament oversees the EU's external relations as its legislative powers allow it to block the conclusion of EU agreements with other states if there are serious breaches of human rights and democratic principles. The Parliament insists on strict compliance with the human rights clauses that are systematically included in such agreements. In April 2011 the Parliament called for the EU to suspend negotiations for an association agreement between the EU and Syria and, in September 2011, the EU cooperation agreement with Syria was partially suspended 'until the Syrian authorities put an end to the systematic violations of human rights'.

In the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the development cooperation policy, EU law states that its objective is 'to develop and consolidate democracy and rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'. This objective has been explicitly incorporated largely thanks to the European Parliament. Every year the Parliament adopts its own report on the annual report from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP.

The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) is the body mainly responsible for parliamentary work on human rights and provides a regular forum in which MEPs, international actors, experts and civil society propose and assess EU and international action on human rights issues. DROI also regularly joins or invites other Parliament committees for such discussions. Its reports and resolutions are adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Committee on Development also holds regular discussions about human rights in developing countries. Committee delegations also address human rights issues during country visits.

The Parliament has also strengthened its role in the defence of human rights by supporting parliamentary democracy and parliamentary political dialogue, with its standing delegations holding hearings with civil-society representatives from non-EU countries and sending ad hoc delegations to assess the human rights situation on the ground. The main forums for political dialogue between the European Parliament and members of non-EU countries are the EU–African, Caribbean and Pacific States party to the Lomé Convention Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly with Eastern European partners.

The European Parliament has used its budgetary powers to substantially increase the resources earmarked for programmes dealing with democracy and human rights and has successfully fought to maintain the functioning of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, a key financial and policy instrument to support civil society and human rights defenders, particularly those in danger of losing their lives.

Complementing its human rights work, the Parliament is committed to supporting free and fair elections in countries outside the EU as they are essential for creating democracy, bringing legitimacy and raising public confidence in institutions. MEPs regularly lead and take part in the EU's election observation missions, aiming to ensure that people's right to choose their leaders is fully respected.



ANDREI SAKHAROV  
& ELENA BONNER





NADIA  
MURAD



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AJI BASHAR



RAIF  
BADAWI



DENIS  
MUKWEGE







MALALA  
YOUSAFZAI



NASRIN  
SOTOUDEH





JAFAR  
PANAHI



MOHAMED  
BOUAZIZI

فقيه الثورة  
حسين بن نصرالله





ALI  
FERZAT



ASMAA  
MAHFOUZ



AHMED  
EL SENUSSI



RAZAN  
ZAITOUNEH





GUILLERMO  
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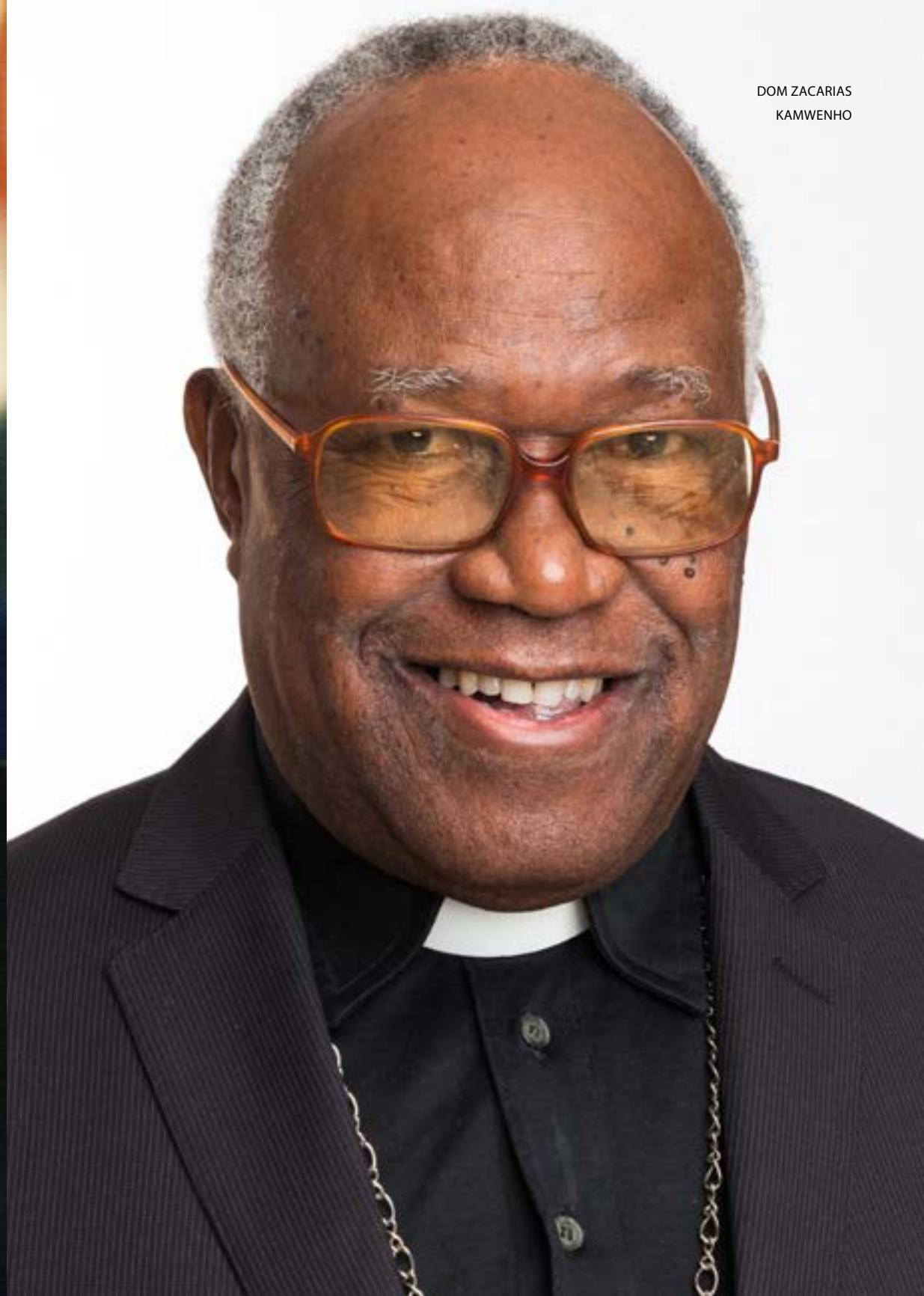


NURIT  
PELED-ELHANAN





IZZAT  
GHAZZAWI



DOM ZACARIAS  
KAMWENHO





FERNANDO SAVATER  
¡BASTA YA!



XANANA  
GUSMÃO





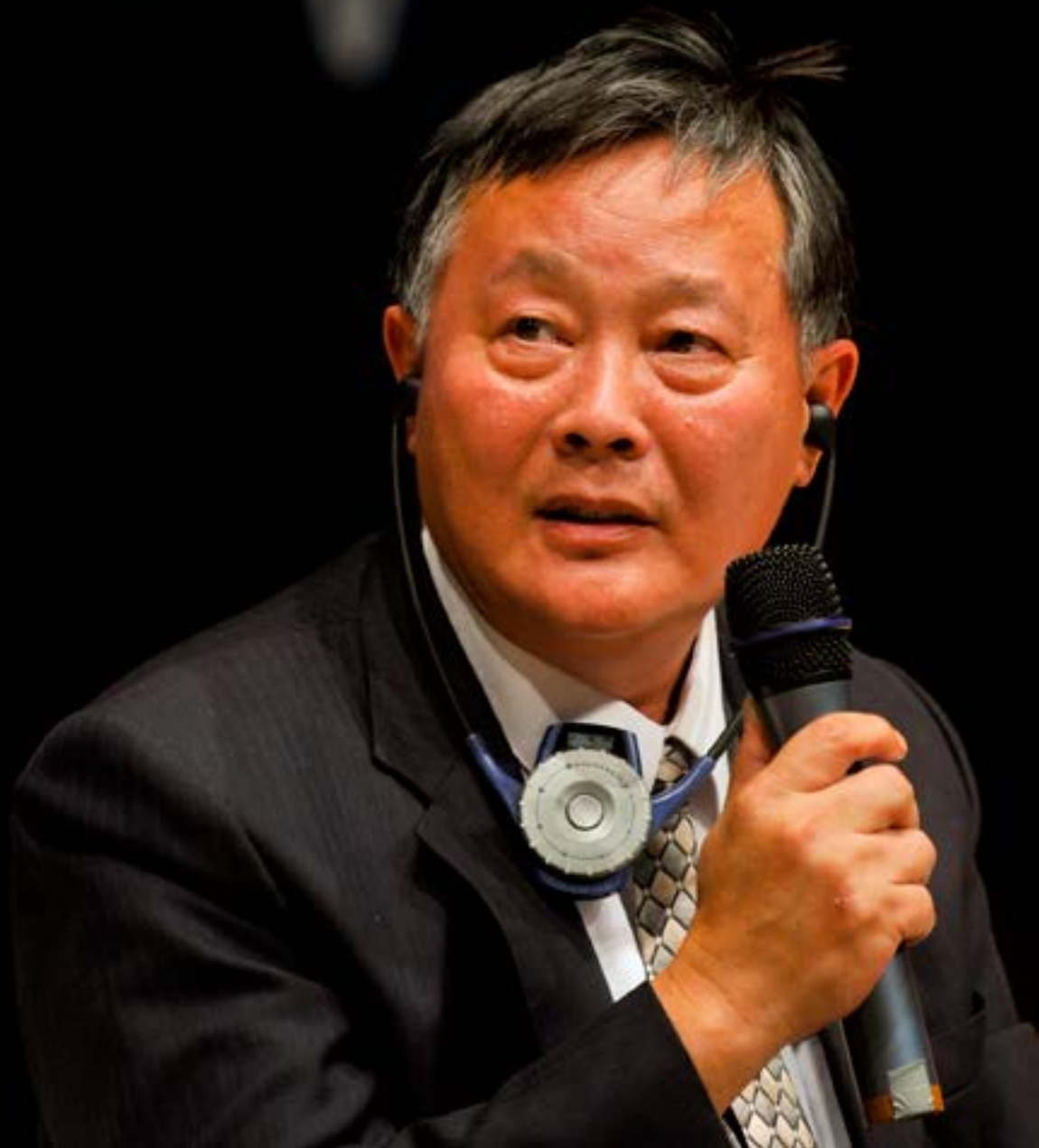
IBRAHIM  
RUGOVA



SALIMA  
GHEZALI



WEI  
JINGSHENG



LEYLA  
ZANA











LAS MADRES  
DE PLAZA DE MAYO



ADEM  
DEMAÇI



AUNG SAN  
SUU KYI



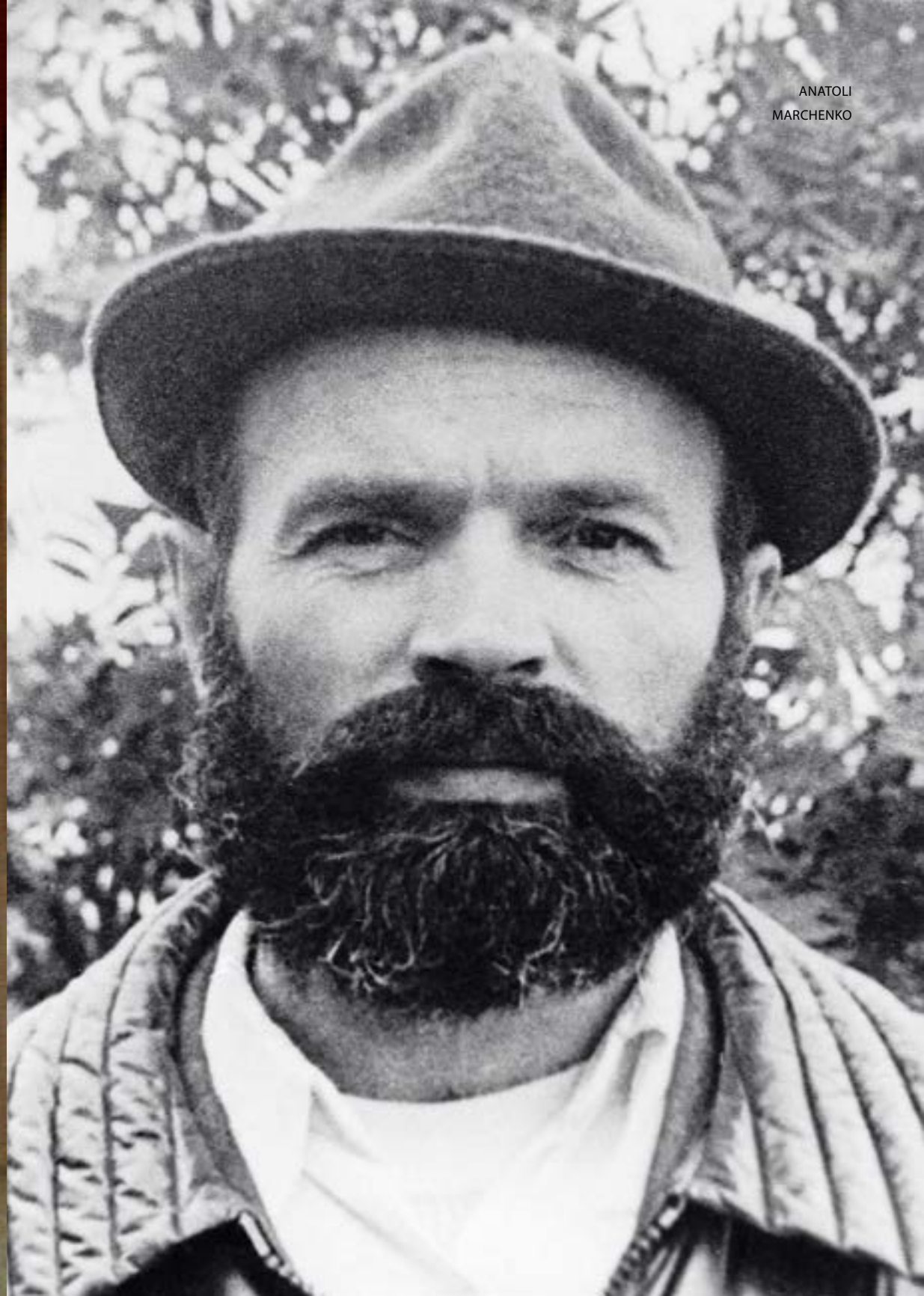
ALEXANDER  
DUBČEK







NELSON  
ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA



ANATOLI  
MARCHENKO

**All drawings by Ali Ferzat, 2011 Sakharov Prize laureate**

More information on the European Union is available on **europa.eu**

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