

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER No. 8/2018

SAKHAROV WEEK 2018: Laureates and finalists arriving to Strasbourg

The Sakharov Prize 2018 will be awarded to **Oleg Sentsov** in Strasbourg on **12 December**. The Prize will be presented by President **Antonio Tajani**. The imprisoned laureate will be represented by his cousin Natalya Kaplan and lawyer Dmitriy Dinze, who will have meetings with political groups, Committees and Delegations and will give media interviews. Announcing this year's Laureate, President Tajani stated that Oleg Sentsov has become "a symbol of the struggle for the release of political prisoners held in Russia and around the world". Representatives of the two Sakharov Prize 2018 finalists, **Nasser Zefzafi's parents** and **NGOs protecting human rights and saving lives of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea**, will also attend the award ceremony and meet with MEPs.

[Info about the laureates](#), [Info about the finalists](#)

Call for application for Sakharov fellowship opens

07-12-18 Human rights defenders from all over the world can apply for the Sakharov Fellowship until 7 January 2019. 14 Fellows will be selected for this third edition, which takes place earlier next year due to the European Elections (from 1-5 April in Brussels and 6-13 April in Venice).

EU pledges €5 million to support work of Nadia Murad and Dr Mukwege

26-11-18: Against the background of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, fresh **Nobel Peace Prize winners** and **Sakharov Prize laureates Nadia Murad (2016)** and **Denis Mukwege (2014)** discussed how to eradicate violence against women and its impact on development with the EU Development Ministers, EC Development Commissioner **Neven Mimica** and HR/VP **Federica Mogherini** in Brussels. In this context, the EU [announced](#) the allocation of €4 million to Panzi Hospital in Bukavu/Democratic Republic of Congo where Dr Mukwege and his team offer holistic help to victims of sexual violence. Nadia Murad's Sinjar Action Fund, an initiative to reconstruct the Sinjar region in Iraq and to encourage the return of displaced populations, received a further €1 million of EU support. At his visit in Brussels, Dr Mukwege also held meeting at the European Parliament with the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights **Antonio Panzeri** and several other MEPs.

Sakharov laureates and fellows contribute to EP Human Rights week

19-11-18: The EP hosted Sakharov laureates and fellows in its Human Rights week celebrated in cooperation with the UN around the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Ensaf Haidar highlighted the role of her imprisoned husband **2015 Sakharov Prize laureate Raif Badawi** as a symbol for freedom of expression in a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights on the EU human rights policy towards Saudi Arabia. She also had bilateral meetings with MEPs and with the City of Brussels. **Sakharov fellows Andrew Sushko (Belarus, 2016)** and **Salome Zurabishvili (Georgia, 2017)** figured as speakers respectively on communicating on human rights and on new areas of engagement on women at the concomitant EU-NGO Forum. **Sakharov fellow Asma Kaouech (Tunisia, 2017)** discussed freedom of conscience and religion in Tunisia in a conference on individual liberties and gender equality in Morocco and Tunisia organised by the EP Maghreb Delegation.

EU should grant temporary protection for Venezuelan refugees

23-11-18: Thousands of Venezuelans who have sought refuge on European soil after fleeing the Maduro regime should be given temporary protection. The mayor of Caracas and **2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Antonio Ledezma**, meeting with met MEPs **Ramón Jáuregui** and **Beatriz Becerra**, urged the European Parliament to request that the EU should issue such a temporary status. In addition, Ledezma asked to deepen sanctions against corrupt officials of the Maduro regime. The EP should continue exhorting "the governments of Europe to follow the examples of Germany and France to support the lawsuits against Nicolás Maduro at the International Criminal Court in The Hague".

Beginning of appeal hearing for Hirak trial

15-11-18: The appeal trial of **2018 Sakharov Prize finalist Nasser Zefzafi**, along with other members of the social movement in the Moroccan Rif region he was leading (Hirak), was opened before the Casablanca tribunal mid-November. After Zefzafi and his companions were arrested in Al-Hoceima province, the epicentre of the Hirak protest, they were condemned to up to 20 years in prison in June.

Oyub Titiev awarded the Franco-German Prize for human rights and the rule of law

21-11-18: **Oyub Titiev**, head of the Chechnya branch of the Human Rights Centre of **2009 Sakharov Prize laureate Memorial**, was among the 15 winners rewarded by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France and Germany for their exceptional contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law in their country and at the international level. Titiev has been imprisoned since January 2018 on fabricated charges. Despite a strong international outcry in his defense, the court in Chechnya refused to consider evidence that the case is manipulated and extended his detention until 22 December 2018. [Press release](#)

EP RESOLUTIONS ON VIETNAM, CUBA AND BANGLADESH

15-11-18: In three resolutions adopted during its November plenary session, the European Parliament called on the [Vietnamese](#) authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience detained or sentenced for merely exercising their right to freedom of expression. It also strongly condemned the arbitrary detention, persecution and harassment of, and attacks against, peaceful dissidents, independent journalists, human rights defenders and political opposition in [Cuba](#). The EP further expressed serious concern at the deteriorating human rights situation in [Bangladesh](#) and, in particular, at the ongoing crackdown on the freedom of expression and assembly against the media, students, activists, and the opposition. [EP Press release](#)

OLEG SENTSOV - winner of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2018

Oleg Sentsov is a Ukrainian film director and writer, an outspoken opponent of Russia's annexation of Crimea. In 2012, Sentsov made his debut with the prizewinning film *Gámer*. In 2013, he became an active member of the AutoMaidan movement, which called for freedom and human rights. During the illegal annexation of Crimea, in 2014, Sentsov, organised humanitarian missions for Ukrainian soldiers, providing them with food, medication and assisting in the evacuation of their families.

In May 2014, Sentsov was arrested by the Russian security service (FSB), transported to Russia and put in front of a military court for alleged terrorist activity. He spent a year in detention prior to what Amnesty International described as "an extremely cynical show trial". Sentsov has adamantly maintained he is innocent. No clear proof of his involvement in criminal acts was established, and the main witness of the prosecution retracted his testimony, saying it was extracted under duress. Nevertheless, Sentsov was sentenced to 20-years in jail and sent to a high-security prison in Siberia.

In May 2018, Sentsov went on a 145-day long hunger strike, asking for the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners in Russia. He was forced to end his hunger strike in October 2018, under the threat of force-feeding and due to the critical state of his health. Even in prison, Sentsov continues to fight for his convictions and for the freedom of his people. He embodies a spirit of resistance that has become an inspiration for people all over the world who face oppression.

On 14 June 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution insisting on the immediate and unconditional release of Oleg Sentsov and all other illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia. Many human rights groups, personalities and world film celebrities have called for his release.

[Sakharov Prize Network website](#)