



## SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER 12/2015

### 2015 SAKHAROV PRIZE AWARD CEREMONY IN STRASBOURG

16/12/2015: **Saudi blogger Raif Badawi was officially awarded the 2015 Sakharov Prize** in Strasbourg on Wednesday. Badawi, who continues to be imprisoned, was represented by his wife, Ensaf Haidar, who accepted the Prize on his behalf. Ms. Haidar delivered a moving speech on the occasion, noting that awarding the Prize to Raif is "an act of bravery by [...] all those who voted for Raif beneath this great dome". In his laudation, **EP President Martin Schulz** stressed: "no terror, no inhumane penal system will prevent us from fighting for human rights. No security argument, no weapons deal or oil money may deter us".

Link: [European Parliament](#)

### 2015 Sakharov Prize Laureate Raif Badawi moved to isolated prison, on hunger strike - says wife

10/12/2015: **Raif Badawi**, has been moved to a new isolated prison, where he has been observing a hunger since, said Ensaf Haidar. The new prison is "located in a deserted and isolated area" and is "designed for prisoners, whose verdict has been confirmed with a final adjudication", stated Ms. Haidar. Amnesty International was told that Badawi was transferred to the prison for "administrative reasons". The group has not been able to independently confirm the news relating to the hunger strike. The Saudi Embassy in Ottawa declined to comment on the news.

Link: [Reuters Arabic](#) [The Guardian](#) [Europe Newsweek](#) [Facebook Ensaf Haidar](#)

### Leyla Yunus released from custody

09/12/2015: **2014 SP finalist Leyla Yunus was released from custody** due to her deteriorating health condition following a request by her lawyers. Leyla Yunus is a renowned Azerbaijani human rights defender that had been sentenced to eight and a half years in prison on charges of tax fraud.

The European Parliament had called on her release in two resolutions, most recently in September 2015. **EP President Martin Schulz** welcomed the release of Leyla Yunus and her husband in a statement and reiterated the European Parliament's request "for the charges against them to be dropped and their names fully cleared". "This proves that Parliament's commitment to human rights worldwide can yield concrete results and help innocent political prisoners like Leyla Yunus" commented **EP Vice President Ulrike Lunacek**.

Link: [Radio Free Europe- Free Liberty](#) [EP President Schulz Press Release](#) [Twitter EP President Schulz](#)

### Venezuelan Opposition wins parliamentary elections in Venezuela

07/12/2015: **The opposition in Venezuela represented by the Mesa de Unidad Democrática**, one of the three short-listed nominees to the 2015 Sakharov Prize, won the majority of seats declared in the parliamentary elections held last 6 December. The opposition alliance Mesa de la Unidad Democrática in Venezuela (MUD, Democratic Unity Alliance) has said its victory is the beginning of a change in Venezuelan politics. Maduro and his Socialist party, that has ruled Venezuela the last two decades, has blamed the electoral defeat on the "economic war" but assured Venezuelans they will respect the result, announcing a Cabinet reshuffle. However, Maduro has vowed to veto any potential amnesty law for jailed political prisoners. The opposition in Venezuela was represented during the SP week in Strasbourg by Ms. Maria Alejandra Aristeguieta Alvarez.

Link: [BBC News](#) [Todays Zamman](#)

### **Sakharov Prize Network action for Child Rights in Nigeria**

9-10/12/2015: Nigerian Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005, Hauwa Ibrahim, took part in two-day action marking international human rights day and supporting the implementation of the 2003 Child Rights Act at the state level in Nigeria. Ms Ibrahim, who is a Sharia lawyer, focused on violence against women and girls, especially in Nigeria's North East region where the terrorist organisation, Boko Haram has been waging an insurgency since 2009.

The meetings and public discussions, organised in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Nigeria, included a roundtable discussion with a group of EU-supported civil society organisations (CSOs) advocating state-level enactment or implementation of the Child Rights' Act passed in Nigeria in 2003, focusing on strategizing advocacy for state-level adoption of the Child Rights Act, particularly in Northern sharia states that are lagging behind in adopting the Child Rights Act. The discussants agreed on a need to focus advocacy on avoiding harm to children, rather than focus on the language of rights for children, as a more effective strategy to overcome the deeply-rooted cultural perceptions about the relationship between parents and children.

In an expert meeting Ms Ibrahim discussed the findings of a study on women and girls associated with Boko Haram and children born of sexual violence and the steps that could be taken to mitigate the risks faced by women and girls victims of sexual violence, in order to inform advocacy initiatives and programmatic interventions for this group. This was followed by special sessions with government partners and security agencies on justice, support and welfare aspects of policy and programming recommendations.

Ms Ibrahim noted especially the 'enormous support, financially, and morally that the European Union gives to these foot soldiers', referring to those carrying out the work on the ground, and 'the opportunities for the SPN, in collaboration with the EU delegation, to provide additional support'.

### **Oleg Orlov from Memorial participates at the EU-NGO Human Rights Forum in Brussels**

3-4/12/2015: Oleg Orlov representing 2009 Sakharov Prize Laureate Memorial, took part in a high level Forum organised by the European External Action Service and the European Commission in conjunction with the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) and focused on the clear and disturbing trend towards an increasingly restricted space for independent civil society as outright threats to individuals and organisations. Mr Orlov stressed the absence of freedoms of assembly and speech in his country and the lack of protection mechanisms in place. In fact, Russian civil society organisations who dare to speak are considered 'foreign agents' for receiving external support, accused of instigation and charged for undermining the constitutional order. He emphasised the key role that the public declarations and public component play to create a more consistent and coherent dialogue between the EU and Russia.

### **EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON MALDIVES, MALAYSIA AND IBRAHIM HALAWA'S CASE IN EGYPT**

17/12/2015: **In its December plenary sitting**, the EP called on [Maldives](#) authorities to release former President Mohamed Nasheed, former Vice-President Ahmed Adeeb and former Defence Ministers Tholhath Ibrahim and Mohamed Nazim, together with Sheikh Imran Abdulla and other political prisoners. On [Malaysia](#), the EP expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the country and urged the authorities to immediately withdraw the National Security Council Bill and to release all political prisoners. The EP drew attention to the case on the Irish citizen [Ibrahim Halawa](#), who was a juvenile when his arrest took place and could face death penalty on charges of attending an illegal protest in Egypt in August 2013.

Link: [Press Release EP Urgency Resolutions](#)