

**SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
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**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ANNOUNCES 2017 SAKHAROV PRIZE NOMINATIONS**

14-09-2017: The candidates for this year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought have been nominated. **Asia Bibi**, a Pakistani Christian woman sentenced to death in 2010 under the country's blasphemy law has been proposed by the European Conservatives and Reformist group (ECR). **Aura Lolita Chavez Ixcaquic**, an educator, human rights defender and leader of the Council of K'iche' Peoples in Defense of Life, Mother Nature, Earth and Territory (CPK) from Guatemala has been chosen by the Greens/European Free Alliance group. The European United Left/Nordic Green Left group (GUE/NGL) put forward the co-chairs of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) and members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly **Selahattin Demirtaş** and **Figen Yüksekdağ**. The candidate of the European People's Party (EPP) and the Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) is the **Democratic Opposition in Venezuela: National Assembly (President Julio Borges) and all Political Prisoners as listed by Foro Penal Venezolano represented by Leopoldo López, Antonio Ledezma, Daniel Ceballos, Yon Goicoechea, Lorent Saleh, Alfredo Ramos and Andrea González**. The Socialists and Democrats (S&D), MEP Cecilia Wikström and 46 other MEPs promote the candidacy of **Dawit Isaak**, an imprisoned Swedish-Eritrean playwright, journalist and writer, who was arrested in 2001 and has been held in incommunicado detention since without trial. The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group (EFDD) picked Burundi's human rights activist and founder of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons, **Pierre Claver Mbonimpa**. The candidates' biographies can be found on the [EP website](#).

**Decision on 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate coming soon**

The full profiles of the candidates for the 2017 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought will be presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees and Human Rights Subcommittee on **Monday 2 October** before a vote for the shortlist of three finalists is held at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees on 10 October. The Conference of Presidents, consisting of the President of the European Parliament and the political group leaders, will select the winner of the 2017 Sakharov Prize on 26 October. The winner will be honoured with the Sakharov Prize during a solemn ceremony at the plenary, in Strasbourg, on 13 December.

**Aung San Suu Kyi breaks her silence**

18-09-17: In a TV address to the nation, **Sakharov Prize laureate 1990 and Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi** finally spoke out on the Rohingya case and **condemned publicly "all human rights violations and unlawful violence"**. While insisting that most Rohingya villages had not been affected by violence, she **did not mention clearly atrocities against Rohingya**. However, she declared her readiness to allow international observers into the country and pledged to take action. Her previous silence on Myanmar's crackdown on the stateless Muslim Rohingya minority had triggered fierce international criticism including by **2013 Sakharov Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai**. **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein** said the treatment of the Muslim Rohingya group in Myanmar appears to be a "[textbook example](#)" of ethnic cleansing. Link: [Deutsche Welle](#), The [Guardian](#)

**The EP defends Rohingya and MEPs mull over the option of revoking of the Sakharov Prize**

14-09-17: In a letter to State Counsellor **Aung San Suu Kyi** following a recent [EP resolution](#) on Myanmar, **EP President Antonio Tajani** asked for her help to put an end to the violence against the Rohingya population. In the resolution, the EP urges the Government of Myanmar and Aung San Suu Kyi in particular, to "condemn unequivocally all incitement to racial or religious hatred and to combat social discrimination and hostilities against the Rohingya minority" and to "push for the implementation of the recommendations given in the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State". The EP further reminds the **1990 Sakharov Prize laureate** that "the prize is awarded to those who defend human rights, safeguard the rights of minorities and respect international law,

among other criteria” and “draws attention to the need to consider whether the Sakharov Prize could be revoked in cases where laureates violate those criteria after the prize has been awarded”.

#### **Nurit Peled-Elhanan at the European Parliament**

5-09-17: **2001 Sakharov Prize laureate Nurit Peled-Elhanan** visited the EP to take part in a discussion with the Delegation for relations with Palestine. The discussion focused on the organisation of a possible conference regarding the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in European, Israeli and Palestinian schoolbooks.

#### **Dr Mukwege at the initiative of the Global Positive Forum in Paris**

1-09-17: On 6 July 2017, the [Global Positive Forum](#) launched a call to both civil society and the private sector to participate in a six-month international dialogue and share ideas and initiatives. On 1 September, **2014 Sakharov Prize laureate Dr Mukwege** attended the first Forum during which, among other topics, the Congolese question was raised.

#### **Leyla Zana may face dismissal from the Turkish Parliament**

6-09-17: **1995 Sakharov Prize laureate Leyla Zana** from the Kurdish HDP party may face dismissal for failing to attend parliamentary sessions. Five other lawmakers from the opposition in the Turkish Parliament have been [threatened](#) to be stripped of their status of members of parliament. Some 50,000 people have been jailed in Turkey for suspected ties to the attempted military coup in July last year. These include elected officials, academics, human rights workers, and journalists. Detainees have complained about an increase in overcrowding, poor medical care, solitary confinement, and mistreatment. To make space for the growing number of political prisoners, state officials released more than 38,000 non-political criminals last August, including some guilty of violent offenses. In his annual State of the Union speech, **European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker** ruled out EU membership for Turkey for the foreseeable future, as it continues its crack down on political opponents.

#### **Nadia Murad meets with French foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian**

03-09-17: **2016 Sakharov Prize laureate Nadia Murad** met with France’s Foreign minister to address [the future of the Yezidi community in Shingal](#) as well as methods to hold alleged ISIS perpetrators accountable. **Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari** sent a letter to the United Nations on 9 August asking for assistance in documenting ISIS war crimes and holding members accountable in accordance with Iraqi law.

#### **UN Human Rights High Commissioner calls for an international investigation in Venezuela**

11-09-17: **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein** has warned the international community that the Venezuelan government may have committed crimes against humanity. He stressed out that Venezuela's security forces had committed extensive and apparently deliberate human rights violations in crushing anti-government protests and that democracy was “barely alive”. The Democratic Opposition in Venezuela has been selected among 6 others as a candidate for the Sakharov Prize 2017 (see above). Link: [Reuters](#)

#### **EP URGENT RESOLUTIONS ON MYANMAR, CAMBODIA, LAOS AND GABON**

14-09-17: [In a resolution](#) adopted on 14 September, the EP describes the Rohingya minority in as the world’s most persecuted people and demands Government of Myanmar to reintegrate every single Rohingya refugee who has had to flee their homeland (see above). In three other resolutions adopted in its September Plenary sitting the Parliament further condemned the arrest of Mr [Kem Sokha in Cambodia](#), the arrests of [Somphone Phimmasone, Lod Thammavong and Soukane Chaithad in Laos](#), and the [repression of the opposition Gabon](#).

**On line info:** [Sakharov Prize Network website](#)