

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
2/2015**

EU REPRESENTATIVES URGE DRC AUTHORITIES TO GUARANTEE PERSONAL SECURITY OF DR MUKWEGE

11-02-2015: The Chair of the Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Louis Michel, put forward the proposal for an observation mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) whilst speaking in EP plenary, on behalf of the ALDE group, determined to protect **Dr Denis Mukwege**, Sakharov Prize Laureate in 2014, from threats, increasing pressure and intimidation. The proposal found the support of several MEPs, among them Elena Valenciano, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, who called for a "direct involvement of European authorities" in the struggle for peace and dignity in the DRC and for the personal safety of Dr Mukwege. EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, together with Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, restated the EU's unconditional support for the Panzi Hospital and the life-saving work of Dr Mukwege and "urged the authorities in the DRC to fulfil their responsibility to guarantee his personal security and to allow the Panzi Hospital to continue serving its patients in the best possible way". Link: [Sakharov Prize Network](#)

EU to resume dialogue with Castro regime as Cuban Laureates express their concern about the new US policy towards Cuba

03-02-2015: On 4 and 5 March, the EU will resume negotiations with Cuba on a bilateral Political Agreement for Cooperation and Dialogue. EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, who welcomed the turning point in US-Cuban relations last December, announced that the EU hoped ultimately to be able to "expand relations with all parts of Cuban society". Earlier this month, members of 2005 Laureate **Damas de Blanco** and the daughter of 2002 Laureate **Oswaldo Payá, Rosa Maria Payá**, visited the US Congress and expressed their discontent with the fact that negotiations between the US and Cuba on resuming diplomatic relations have been conducted in secrecy without consulting opponents of the Castro regime. "Cuba continues to be a one-party government where fundamental freedoms that are an absolute right in American society constitute crimes against so-called state security", said Damas leader **Berta Soler** to the Members of the Congress. Ms Soler will be visiting Brussels together with other members of Cuban oppositions and will meet with MEPs and EEAS representatives on the 3-4 March 2015.

Links: [EEAS](#); [Miami Herald](#); [Panam Post](#); [Washington Post](#)

Members of Damas de Blanco and other human rights defenders recently arrested

22-02-2015: Almost 200 **Damas de Blanco** members, the winner of the 2010 Sakharov Prize, **Guillermo Fariñas** and other human rights activists were arrested by the police in several Cuban provinces. They were subsequently released, after interrogation by the police. Soon after the arrests, Roberta Jacobson, Secretary of State for Latin America, and Chief Negotiator in the US-Cuban dialogue, expressed her concern about the recent human rights violations in Cuba. Links: [Diario de Cuba](#); [Yahoo News](#)

Leyla Yunus, nominee to the 2014 Sakharov Prize, remains in prison

18-02-2015: Despite serious concerns about **Leyla Yunus's** health, an Azerbaijani court has extended the human rights defender's pre-trial detention for five months, until 28 July. By the end of this period, the 2014 Sakharov Prize finalist will have remained in prison without a trial for almost one

year. Over the past weeks, a team of international physicians was allowed to visit and examine Ms Yunus. The medical results have not been published. Her lawyer Elchin Gambarov confirmed previous information about Ms Yunus's dramatic weight loss and liver damage. "Doctors say that Leyla Yunus is suffering from liver necrosis," he said, adding that they "believe the symptoms confirm irreversible medical processes". Ms Yunus was arrested on 30 July 2014. Her pre-trial detention had already been extended in October 2014 until end of February 2015. The maximum pre-trial detention length under Azeri law is 18 months. Links: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#); [Global Post](#)

Jafar Panahi wishes for his award-winning movie "Taxi" to be shown in Iran

16-02-2015: **Jafar Panahi's** most recent movie "Taxi" won the Golden Bear at the Berlin film festival "Berlinale". The movie, playing entirely inside a cab, also features Panahi's fellow Laureate, banned lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**. The filmmaker's joy for winning the award was curbed by the fact that the movie will most likely not be shown in his home country, Iran, where Mr Panahi is still banned from making films. "No prize is worth as much as my compatriots being able to see my films," the director said after the jury's decision. In the run-up to the festival, conservative voices from Iran criticised the Berlinale board for showing the movie. Panahi is not allowed to leave Iran and was therefore unable to travel to Berlin. Overwhelmed by emotions, his niece accepted the award on his behalf. Links: [Variety](#); [The Guardian](#)

Xanana Gusmão stepped down as Prime Minister of East Timor

16-02-2015: **Xanana Gusmão** resigned as Prime Minister of Timor Leste on 6 February. Ten days later his successor Rui Araujo, a former Health Minister, was sworn in. Mr Gusmão had declared his intention to resign as Prime Minister already in 2014, wishing to make space for a younger generation of leaders. The former guerrilla leader led East Timor's drive for independence from Indonesian rule. He served as first President of the country from 2002 to 2007, after that he became Prime Minister for more than seven years. He survived an assassination attempt in 2008. He was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 1999 for his efforts for a peaceful resolution to the East Timor conflict. Links: [Sakharov Prize Network](#); [BBC](#)

Adem Demaçi calls for a system change in Kosovo as EU-mediated dialogue with Serbia resumes

10-02-2015: **Adem Demaçi**, 1991 Laureate and writer with a political career who also spent many years in prison for fighting for the fundamental rights of the Albanians in Kosovo, blamed the system for the current discontent in Kosovo. In late January, angry anti-government protests comprising up to 10,000 individuals culminated in violent clashes with the police. The protests were sparked by the remarks by an ethnic Serb minister calling ethnic Albanians "savages" for trying to stop ethnic Serbians on their pilgrimage in an area that was devastated by fighting during Kosovo's 1998-1999 conflict with Serbia. Although the minister later apologized, he was fired in early February by Kosovo's new Prime Minister Isa Mustafa. In Brussels, high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina for the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia resumed on 9 February after a 10-month gap. Link: [Sakharov Prize Network](#)

Latest EP resolutions on human rights

02-2015: During the plenary session in the second week of February, the European Parliament adopted three urgency resolutions: Ahead of this year's elections in [Burundi](#), MEPs condemn the "unjustified detention" of human rights defender and investigative journalist Bob Rugurika and call for his immediate and unconditional release. MEPs strongly condemn the flogging of blogger Raif Badawi by [Saudi Arabian](#) authorities as a "cruel and shocking act" that has to stop immediately. Parliament further condemns the "relocation" of mass graves in [Cyprus](#) as "a great disrespect to the missing persons and a gross violation of the rights of their families to finally know the real conditions of the deaths of their loved ones". Other adopted resolutions deal with the humanitarian crisis and

the battle against the so-called Islamic State in [Iraq and Syria](#); a relaunch of investigations of the alleged cooperation of EU member states in the use of [torture by the CIA](#); and the strengthening of the cooperation in the [ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly](#).

EP President on the terrorist attacks in Copenhagen

President Martin Schulz in the name of the European Parliament conveyed his condolences to the Danish nation and the family of the victims and the injured. "The attacks will only help strengthen our resolve to protect our fundamental values against the assaults of a small minority of radicalized people, acting in the name of their fanatic beliefs" - stated President Schulz in the [press release](#).