

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
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Uyghur activist Ilham Tohti is the 2019 Sakharov laureate

24-10-2019 The European Parliament's political leaders decided to award the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to **Ilham Tohti**. Tohti, an economics professor, dedicated his life to advocating for the rights of China's Uyghur minority. Despite always being a voice of moderation and reconciliation, he was sentenced to life in prison on separatism-related charges following a two-day show trial. EP President Sassoli highlighted that "by awarding this prize, we strongly urge the Chinese government to release Tohti and we call for the respect of minority rights in China." Tohti was nominated by the political group Renew Europe and 61 other MEPs. The other finalists were activists from Brazil and Kenya. From Brazil, Marielle Franco, a defender of the rights of women, black, LGBTI people and favela residents, murdered in March 2018 and Chef Raoni and Claudelice Silva Dos Santos, who fight human rights violations and the deforestation of the Amazon. From Kenya, the Restorers are five students who developed i-Cut, an innovative app that helps women and girls who suffer from genital mutilation. The 2019 Sakharov Prize ceremony will take place in Strasbourg on 18 December, during the plenary session of the European Parliament.

Links: [EP](#)

Oleg Sentsov: 11 handwritten stories in 11 days

15-10-2019: Sakharov Prize 2018 laureate **Oleg Sentsov** recently published a book with a collection of stories about his student years. Sentsov wrote the book by hand, in 11 days, while still imprisoned in Russia. In September 2020, to mark the one-year anniversary of his release, he plans to publish writings about his time in jail and his hunger strike. On 26 November, a special ceremony is planned at the European Parliament in Strasbourg for Sentsov to receive his Sakharov Prize diploma in person.

Links: [RadioFreeEurope](#) , [UATV](#)

Venezuela elected to the UN Human Rights Council

17-10-2019: Despite its appalling human rights record, Venezuela won a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. **Julio Borges**, 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate as member of the Democratic Opposition in Venezuela, commented on Venezuela's election, saying he hopes that the "elected democracies in this body will increasingly isolate the dictatorship and will expose its human rights violations."

Links [TheGuardian](#) [WashingtonPost](#)

In memory of Boris Nemtsov

9 October 2019 would have been the 60th birthday of 2015 Sakharov Prize finalist **Boris Nemtsov**, a Russian opposition politician assassinated in 2015. To commemorate this day, several Russian-language media outlets paid tribute to Nemtsov and his ideas. Moreover, the fourth annual Boris Nemtsov Forum was held in Warsaw on 9-10 October in his honour. The forum aims to facilitate dialogue between Russian liberals and Western countries.

Links: [NovayaGazeta](#), [TheMoscowTimes](#), [EchoMoscow](#), [RadioFreeEurope](#), [BorisNemtsovForum](#), [FreeRussiaFoundation](#)

A Leaders for Democracy Award for Can Dündar,

16-10-2019: 2016 Sakharov Prize finalist **Can Dündar** was awarded one of the Leaders for Democracy Awards in Washington. Dündar is a Turkish journalist who had to flee his country as he was sentenced to more than five years in prison for his investigative journalism. The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) gives the Leaders for Democracy Awards to individuals who challenge the authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East.

Link: [Pomed](#)

EP urgency resolutions on Uganda, Egypt and Indonesia

24-10-2019. During its October plenary, the EP adopted urgency resolutions on LGBTI rights in **Uganda**, on fundamental democratic rights in **Egypt** and on the proposed new Criminal Code in **Indonesia**.

MEPs expressed their deep concern about the deterioration of the human rights situation of LGBTI people in Uganda, and condemned in particular the draft bill, which would impose the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality”. The EP urged Ugandan authorities to refrain from approving such bill, and called for the protection of LGBTI rights activists, including thorough investigations into the attacks against Brian Wasswa and Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa.

In the resolution on Egypt, the EP deplored the disproportionate use of force to crackdown democratic opposition and the restriction of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, association and assembly. MEPs called on Egyptian authorities to protect religious minorities and women’s rights and condemned the enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders. In particular, MEPs urged the government to abolish the death penalty and asked it to shed light on the kidnapping and killing of Italian student Giulio Regeni.

Finally, an urgency resolution criticised the draft new criminal code in Indonesia, whose provisions violate the rights of women, religious minorities and LGTBI people, as well as freedom of speech and association. The EP expressed concern about human rights violations in West Papua. It called on the Indonesian government to re-establish a moratorium on all executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty in the country.

[Uganda](#) [Egypt](#) [Indonesia](#)