



SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER 6/2015

DR MUKWEGE CALLS FOR CONGOLESE ARMY REGENERATION TO STOP RAPES

17-06-2015: 'If we want to fight against sexual violence then we need to be courageous and say that we need to create an army where people have never been in a militia before or have never been involved in rape or destruction,' Sakharov Prize Laureate 2014 **Dr Denis Mukwege** said, calling for Congolese soldiers to lay down their weapons and be replaced by new recruits. The UN estimates that more than a third of the rapes in eastern DRC are committed by the army. Mukwege also called for psychological support for the perpetrators as many of them were children when joining the army and should be considered as victims themselves. Link: [The Guardian](#)

Nasrin Sotoudeh's ban from practising law reduced

20-06-2015: After months of protest, prominent Iranian human rights lawyer and Sakharov Prize Laureate 2012 **Nasrin Sotoudeh's** ban from practising law has been reduced from three years to nine months. Nasrin Sotoudeh had been protesting in front of the Bar Association each day since last October, demanding her right to work. She has now ended her daily protest, in which she was joined by many other activists including fellow Laureate **Jafar Panahi**. Link: [Payvand Iran News](#)

Baha'i leaders express appreciation for Nasrin Sotoudeh's support

20-06-2015: Baha'i leader Saeid Rezaie, who is in his eighth year of a twenty-year prison sentence for his advocacy of Baha'i empowerment, expressed his gratitude to **Nasrin Sotoudeh** for her support to the Baha'i cause. On the anniversary of the seventh year of his imprisonment, Nasrin Sotoudeh in a video message denounced the unfairness of the trials against Baha'i leaders and called for their immediate release. Link: [Iran Press Watch](#); [Iran Press Watch Video](#)

Lyudmila Alexeyeva returns to the Russian Council for Human Rights

28-05-2015: **Lyudmila Alexeyeva**, one of Russia's most active human rights defenders and Sakharov Prize Winner 2009, has re-joined the Presidential Council for the Promotion of Civil Society and Human Rights, the Kremlin's human rights watchdog in charge of enhancing the development of civil society in Russia. In an interview with RBTH, Lyudmila Alexeyeva expressed her commitment to fighting the 2012 law on 'foreign agents' which she labelled as 'a complete foolishness'. The law requires NGOs to register as foreign agents if they receive funding from abroad. Appointed to the Human Rights Council the first time in 2000, Lyudmila Alexeyeva left in 2012 in protest against the selection process of new members of the Council. Link: [Russia Beyond the Headlines](#); [The Moscow Times](#)

Aung San Suu Kyi barred from presidency

25-06-2015: Ahead of general elections in November, the Parliament of Myanmar rejected constitutional amendments that would have allowed opposition leader and 1990 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Aung San Suu Kyi** to run for President.

In June, Aung San Suu Kyi completed her first four-day visit to China in a move to reboot relations between the two countries. During her visit **Hu Jia**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2008, urged Aung San Suu Kyi to speak against the imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo, sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment for his commitment to democratic reform.

Links: [The Guardian](#); [The Guardian](#)

Eight out of ten charged over the attack on Malala Yousafzai acquitted

05-6-2015: Two people were sentenced to life in prison by a Pakistani court, police sources said, for the attack on Malala in 2012 by the Taliban, in which she was shot in the face. This news contradicted earlier reports, in April, that all ten militants involved in the deadly attack on Sakharov Prize Laureate 2013 **Malala Yousafzai** were convicted to life imprisonment by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court. An official court report says however that there was not sufficient evidence to convict all of the accused. The eight acquitted of the shooting are still being held on other charges. It's not known if the man who shot Malala was among those arrested, convicted or acquitted. In the meanwhile, Malala Yousafzai has stepped up her human rights endeavour this month launching a personal call for Myanmar's leaders to take immediate action to halt the persecution of the Rohingya people and grant them citizenship. Links: [Business Standard](#); [CNN](#)

Kofi Annan and Reporters Without Borders concerned about violence and repression in Burundi

05-06-2015: **Kofi Annan**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2003, called on Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza to resign as violent turmoil has flared up the country since last month in view of his third nomination for the presidential election. Opposition leaders urge the Burundian President to withdraw his third-term bid in respect of the country's constitution and the Arusha Accords, a peace deal that ended ethnic civil war and established the foundation for Burundi's post-conflict recovery in 2005.

Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005 **Reporters Without Borders** condemn the actual clampdown on the media by Burundian authorities, provoking 'the total closure of privately-owned radio stations, the mass exodus of journalists and the constant threats against those still in Burundi'.

Links: [IBTimes](#); [Reporters Without Borders](#)

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Egyptian activist under investigation after speaking to the EP

11-06-2015: The Chair of the EP's Subcommittee on Human Rights **Elena Valenciano** expressed her support for Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) Director Bahey El-Din Hassan, who has come under investigation by the Egyptian authorities after speaking at a recent exchange of views at the EP. Valenciano said she was 'alarmed at the possibility that the actions taken against the CIHRS may be in any form in retaliation for its testimony in our Subcommittee'. **President Martin Schulz** condemned the investigation, tweeting 'harassment on human rights defenders in #Egypt is unacceptable'.

Speaking in the EP, the CIHRS Director had stated that 'Egypt has become a republic of fear in which politics are absent, and the current administration is controlling the political process with no notable accountability or oversight'. He pointed to the range of harassment measures targeting human rights defenders 'from politically-motivated investigations for foreign funding, travel bans and defamation campaigns in the media to threats to their lives, but also their homes, workplaces and ability to travel'.

Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011 **Asmaa Mahfouz** has also voiced to the EP her growing concerns on the defamatory campaign targeting Bidayya, a movement campaigning for the release of all political prisoners, which she founded with other Egyptian human rights activists.

Links: [European Parliament News](#); [The Cairo Post](#)

EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON SYRIA AND PARAGUAY

11-06-2015: The EP adopted an urgency resolution on Syria condemning the seizure of Palmyra by IS/Da'esh and requesting the immediate and unconditional release of Syrian journalist and 2015 UNESCO Press Freedom Prize winner **Mazen Darwish**, as well as activists **Hani Al-Zaitani** and **Hussain Ghreer** who have been jailed for over three years for their commitment to freedom of

expression and been subjected to severe torture and ill-treatment. The resolution also recalls the fate of Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011 **Razan Zaitouneh**, the Syrian human rights lawyer abducted in December 2013.

On the same day, the EP passed a resolution on Paraguay, expressing concerns about the high number of child pregnancies in this country resulting from rape. The EP urged the Paraguayan authorities to conduct relevant investigations on the victims and to raise the maximum prison sentence for such a crime to 30 years. Link: [EP Resolution](#)

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