

EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK

NEWSLETTER

4/2015

DR MUKWEGE CALLS FOR AN EU MANDATORY LEGISLATION ON CONFLICT MINERALS

23-04-2015: In his letter to MEPs, **Dr Denis Mukwege**, who was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2014, calls upon the European Parliament to legislate on conflict minerals and set out legal measures regulating 'responsible sourcing for all businesses that could bring conflict minerals into Europe'. Dr Mukwege repeated his call in an article published by the New York Times. Earlier, at the meeting with EP DROI subcommittee last month, Dr Mukwege stressed that 'traceability of minerals is the only way to stop sexual violence'. **Gianni Pittella**, leader of the S&D group, upon his return from his visit to Panzi hospital on 7 April, recommended that the EP adopt a resolution on this issue next May. Panzi hospital, which has helped more than 45,000 survivors since its foundation in 1999, has serious economic problems after the Directorate General of Taxes of the DRC froze its assets and income in December 2014. As a result, Médecins du Monde has recently decided to support Panzi hospital by allocating 950,000 euros in order to provide financial aid to the hospital in terms of medical equipment, medicines, but also the salaries of 115 employees. Links: [All Africa](#); [New York Times](#); [Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale](#)

Reporters without Borders (RWB) express concern regarding freedom of expression in Congo

21-04-2015: **RWB**, 2005 Sakharov Laureate, strongly condemn the assassination of radio journalist Soleil Balanga in Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC). They had already alerted on the ongoing violations of freedom of expression by condemning the politically-motivated closure of a popular private radio station, in the Eastern region of Congo. According to 2015 RWB Press Freedom Index, the DRC ranks in the 150th position out of 180 countries. Links: [Reporters Without Borders](#); [All Africa](#)

Taslima Nasreen sounds a warning bell over her safety

21-04-2015: In her interview with the Mail Today, **Taslima Nasreen**, Sakharov Prize winner in 1994, warns that she will be the next target of Bangladeshi terror group Ansarullah, who is already planning to cross over to West Bengal and then travel to the Capital to kill her. 'Members of the Ansarullah are so brazen that they post online hate messages before they attack. They had done that before killing Avijit and Washiqur and now they are posting hate messages targeting me'. Determined never to stop her struggle for freedom of expression, she adds that 'even if it is scary, as long as I live I will not be silenced'. The Bangladeshi terror group Ansarullah draws its ideology from Anwar Al-Awlaki, a Yemen-based al-Qaeda activist, and is held responsible for having executed American writer Avijit Roy and blogger Washiqur Rahman last month for "criticising Islam". Links: [India Today](#)

The European Parliament's multiple efforts on the Douma 4 case

30-04-2015: On the occasion of **Razan Zaitouneh's** 38th birthday (on 29 April) the European Parliament organised several public events featuring the case of the Douma 4. This is a follow-up of the EP's call for the immediate release of Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011, Razan Zaitouneh, as well as that of her missing colleagues Samira Khalil, Nazem Hamadi and Wa'el Hamada, known as the Douma 4. The EP's public efforts to that end include the Freedom of the Press campaign, a special

action in the Parliamentarium, and a panel debate on Syria. Also, the Douma 4 case was discussed in a special hearing on Syria organised by the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights on 23 April.

Recent increase in the number of political arrests in Cuba

15-04-2015: Cuban government has increased by nearly 70% the number of political arrests, beatings, and detentions since US concessions package was afforded to the regime, according to a report by the University of Miami Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. Reportedly, **Ladies in White** have been among the most targeted in February and March 2015. Besides, **Ladies in White leader Berta Soler** and **Guillermo Farinas**, respectively Sakharov Prize Laureates in 2005 and 2010, have been harassed by about 100 supporters of the Cuban government during a civil society forum, at the beginning of the Summit of the Americas in Panama on 10-11 April.

Links: [Associated Press](#); [Breitbart News](#)

Myanmar moving along the path of constitutional and reconciliation reforms

01-04-2015: Myanmar's major political players, including the 1990 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Aung San Suu Kyi** in her position of opposition leader, try to find possible solutions to the critical issues of constitutional reforms and peace agreement through six-party talks before the upcoming national elections in autumn. The first round of talks, held on 1 April, led to a ceasefire agreement with the armed rebel group which has been hailed as "historic and significant" by the UN. The second round of talks in May aims to tackle the urgent issue of constitutional reform where all six participants are called to table their amendments. The constitutional reform is at the core of Aung San Suu Kyi's political reform programme. In this regard, during a press conference, Suu Kyi said that "high-level political talks will be meaningful only if they lead to free and fair polls set for later this year". Boycotting the upcoming election is an option - she added in her interview with Reuters - if the military-drafted constitution remains unchanged'. Links: [Deutsche Welle](#); [Radio Free Asia](#); [Eleven](#);

[Reuters](#)

Life sentence for ten men charged with attacking Malala Yousafzai in 2012

28-04-2015: An anti-terrorist Pakistani Court in Swat sentenced the 10 men accused of shooting 2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Malala**, who was 15 years old at that time, to life term. Malala has recently criticised Nigerian and world leaders for failing to help the 219 schoolgirls kidnapped a year ago by Boko Haram militants. In an open letter to the kidnapped girls, she reiterates her support to their cause and her commitment to 'pressuring Nigerian President Goodluck, Nigerian officials and word leaders to make sure you are freed'. After recalling her financial support to the girls who managed to escape the attack by paying for their studies through the Malala Fund, she expresses her hope 'to someday extend that same scholarship to all 219 of you, when you return home'.

Links: [Time](#); [Business Standard](#); [BBC](#)

Kofi Annan hails the newly-elected President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari

01-04-2015: **Kofi Annan** congratulates the Nigerian newly-elected president Muhammadu Buhari on his electoral success, while expressing appreciation to President Goodluck Jonathan 'for accepting the electoral outcome in a democratic spirit'. In a passionate open letter, he recognizes the 'extraordinary efforts to ensure that the elections were held in a transparent manner as well for ensuring that most Nigerians had the opportunity to cast their vote, despite the threat from Boko Haram'. There have been episodes of violence at some polling stations that aimed to prevent voters from casting their vote. In the light of these happenings, Kofi Annan wanted to exalt 'the determination of the people of Nigeria to have a say in how they are governed and by whom'.

The EP sent a Delegation as part of an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Nigeria. The EU EOM noticed a "strong electoral competition and commitment demonstrated, despite systemic problems". Links: [The Patriotic Vanguard](#)

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'Turkey is sliding into authoritarianism' warns the EP President Martin Schulz

08-04-2015: During an official visit to Turkey, **President Martin Schulz** met with **President Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, **European Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkir** and leaders of the opposition. The meetings focused on Turkey's accession to the EU and human rights. Turkey, as a possible candidate to accession to the EU, is supposed to address the issues of human rights, especially the freedom of expression, as a condition to initiate the EU accession process. In the past, the EU institutions criticized the Turkish government for adopting a security law granting unconditioned powers to the police, such as arresting individuals without a court warrant. In this regard, President Schulz expressed his concern to the Turkish political leaders over a slowdown in human rights reforms and stated that 'Turkey is sliding into authoritarianism'. 'Turkey is more than a key strategic, political and economic partner of the EU: it is a candidate country'. On his return from Ankara, President Schulz said: 'and since I take this candidacy seriously, I believe dialogue must be continuous and unhindered with the authorities, parliamentarians and civil society alike'. Pursuant to the EP resolution of 15 April recognizing the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan accused Europe of racism and warned that the resolution may hurt Turkey-EU relations and Turkey's accession to the EU. Links: [EP](#); [Todays Zaman](#); [Daily Sabah](#)

Buchenwald: the demons of racism and anti-Semitism still haunt Europe'

12-04-2015: **President Schulz** attended the ceremony of the commemoration of seventy years since the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. In his speech, President Schulz called on the citizens to 'fight the demons of racism and anti-Semitism that still haunt Europe'. The Buchenwald concentration camp, the biggest concentration camp in Germany, is located near the city of Weimar and was set up by Hitler's SS in 1937. Around 56,000 people died from torture, medical experiments and starvation. By referring to the recrudescence of anti-Semitic narrative, culminating with the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket in France, Martin Schulz said that 'people allowed the seeds of hatred to grow in their hearts, allowing the Holocaust to happen. To honour the victims...we want to fight the return of demons that we thought were overcome but which still show their ugly face - racism, anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalism and intolerance'. Links: [Deutsche Welle](#); [EP](#)

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN APRIL

15-04-2015: the **MEPs** paid tribute to the centenary of the **Armenian genocide** in which more than one-and-half-million Armenians perished at Ottoman hands. In the resolution, the EP encourages Turkey 'to use the commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide as a good opportunity to come to terms with its past and thus to pave the way for a genuine reconciliation, since there can be no reconciliation without truth and remembrance'.

On the same day, the EP adopted a resolution on the recognition of the **Roma genocide** during World War II, where at least 500,000 Roma are estimated to have been exterminated by the Nazi. In the resolution, the MEPs condemn 'anti-Gypsyism as a recurrent and persistent form of racism founded on racial superiority, which Member States are called to combat at every level and by every

means'. The Roma, with an estimated population of 10 to 12 million in Europe, are Europe's largest ethnic minority. Link: [EP](#)

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK UPCOMING EVENTS

EP campaign for freedom of expression

17-04-2015: The European Parliament has launched an online **Campaign for freedom of expression** in which Sakharov Prize Laureates **Reporters without Borders** (2005), the **Belarusian Association of Journalists** (2004), **Salima Ghezali** (1997), and **Ali Ferzat** (2011) participate and make their personal contribution. The campaign has been launched to mark the World Press Freedom Day and is online since 3 May. Link: [EP](#)

SPN together with the One World Human Rights Film Festival

05-05-2015: The 6th edition of the One World Human Rights Film Festival will take place at the European Parliament from 5 to 7 and 11 May 2015, in cooperation with People in Need (PIN), a Czech human rights NGO. Vice-President **Ulrike Lunacek**, representing the President of the EP, will open the event on 5 May. The following MEPs will participate in the event as panellists: **Linda McAvan**, **Louis Michel**, **Judith Sargentini**, **Barbara Lochbihler**, **Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea**, **Sabine Lösing**, and **Ramona Stanescu**. Sakharov Laureates Dr **Denis Mukwege** (2014), **Hauwa Ibrahim** (2005), **Ali Ferzat** (2011) and **Reporters without Borders** (2005) will take part in panels organized before the screenings. Link: [One World Festival](#)

Open Doors Day

09-05-2015: To celebrate Europe Day, every year the EU institutions organize the Open Doors Day event by opening their doors to the public and organizing a variety of activities. The EP will open its doors in Brussels and Luxembourg on 9 May. The event will open with a public debate launched by Vice-President **Sylvie Guillaume**. Vice-President **Ulrike Lunacek** will welcome the Sakharov Prize Laureates **Hauwa Ibrahim** (2005) and **Denis Mukwege** (2014) who will participate in the event and in public debates. Link: [Open Doors Day](#)



[Sakharov Prize Network website](#)