

**SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
05/2016**

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK HOLDS MID-TERM CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS

23/24-05-2016: The Mid-Term Conference marked two and a half years since the Network's 25th Anniversary Conference. It gathered **nine Laureates and eleven MEPs**, as well as NGOs, journalists and businesses, and the **EU Special Representative for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis**.

European Parliament President Martin Schulz and **Ensaf Haidar**, wife of **2015 Sakharov Prize Laureate Raif Badawi** addressed the conference. President Schulz reiterated his call for Raif Badawi to be pardoned. **The President, Vice-President Ulrike Lunacek** and participating Laureates posed for a photo with posters of Raif Badawi to show their support. As a follow-up the Laureates expressed their wish to sign a letter to the Saudi authorities demanding his release.

About 100 people attended the opening session in the European Parliament, where a video message from **Sakharov Prize Laureate 2012 Nasrin Sotoudeh** of Iran was played and a debate chaired by Vice-President Lunacek was held on the benefits of silent diplomacy versus megaphone diplomacy to protect human rights defenders. Two further debates focused on sectarianism or religious and ethnic diversity, and on defending human rights in a digital era. On behalf of the European Parliament the Network was represented by the President **Martin Schulz**, **Elmar Brok**, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, **Linda McAvan**, Chair of the Committee on Development, and **Elena Valenciano**, Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights. The conference was hosted on behalf of the President by the Vice-President **Ulrike Lunacek**. *(more info about the conference below)*

The Laureates present were:

Ensaf Haidar, wife of **Raif Badawi**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2015

Denis Mukwege, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2014

Ali Ferzat, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011

Vitality Ponomarev, representative of **Memorial**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2009

Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2007

Sophie Busson, representative of **Reporters Without Borders**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005

Zhanna Litvina, Representative of the **Belarusian Association of Journalists**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2004

Taslina Nasreen, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1994

Vildana Selimbegović, Representative of **Oslobodjenje**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1993

Links: [EPTV](#); [UNESCO](#); [EUReporter](#), Links to debate videos: [Day 2 Debates](#); [Day 2 Closing](#) (video from 15:40:44)

Ensaf Haidar, Dr Mukwege, and Kirill Koroteev at the European Youth Event (EYE) 2016

20-05-2016: In a conference called "Human rights: Heroes of our time", **Ensaf Haidar**, wife of **2015 Sakharov Prize Laureate Raif Badawi**, **2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate Dr Denis Mukwege** and **Kirill Koroteev**, representative of **2009 Sakharov Prize Laureate Memorial**, addressed a vast audience of young people in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Under the motto "Together we can make a change" the EYE 2016 gathered 7,500 young Europeans (aged 16-30) to debate with Members of the European Parliament and other political decision-makers and opinion-builders. The laureates gave an inspiring testimony of their engagement for human rights and sent a message of

courage to an audience interested in very personal questions including: "How do human rights defenders handle their fear?" Links: [EP](#); [EYE](#) (video from 17:49:26)

Ali Ferzat speaks at European Parliament's "Open Doors Day", Brussels

28-05-2016: **2011 Sakharov Prize laureate Ali Ferzat** joined MEPs in a public debate titled "United in Diversity" at the European Parliament's Open Doors Day, the annual day when the European institutions open their doors for the public to visit. Mr Ferzat also met **Vice-President Anneli Jäätteenmäki**, where they discussed the refugee situation and the need to advance peace talks on Syria. In response to an audience question on what is needed to end the war in Syria, Mr Ferzat said "the solution is available. It is within the corridors of the UN" as he called on the EU to support the creation of an interim government with the participation of all parties in Syrian society. Discussing freedom of expression, he noted that the Syrian regime has attacked and murdered artists and musicians, noting that these oppressed people "are not terrorists but peace lovers". Links: [EP](#)

Berta Soler of Damas De Blanco threatened with prison

24-05-2016: **Berta Soler**, leader of **2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate Damas de Blanco**, is facing court after being accused of resisting arrest during a peaceful protest. She was arrested on May 22 on her way to the inauguration of the new archbishop in Havana. Video evidence proves she did not assault an officer, and she has said she is prepared to go to prison. She is also banned from travelling during the trial. The Damas de Blanco regularly face repression by the state including through police violence. Links: [PanAm](#); [14y](#)

Ensaf Haidar describes the difficulty of sharing the news of her husband's treatment

17-05-2016: **Ensaf Haidar**, wife of **2015 Sakharov Prize Laureate Raif Badawi**, published an excerpt from her book outlining the difficulty of telling her children about her husband's treatment by Saudi authorities. Raif Badawi was convicted for establishing a forum hosting allegedly blasphemous commentary and online posts, and sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes in 2013, and then resentenced to 1,000 lashes and ten years in prison plus a fine of a million riyals (€226 000) in 2014. He is still serving this prison term. Link: [Guardian](#)

Turkish Parliament approves law to strip MPs of immunity

20-05-2016: The Turkish Parliament has approved a law removing MPs' immunity from prosecution. This paves the way for the removal of Kurdish MPs from the Turkish Parliament, putting democracy, freedom of expression, and attempts to find peace at risk. The **Chairs of the Kurdish People's Democratic Party Selahattin Demirtas** and **Figen Yuksekdog** wrote to the European Parliament describing the move as a "political coup". **1995 Sakharov Prize Laureate Leyla Zana** is among those MPs who could see their immunity removed. Links: [NYT](#); [AJ](#); [Expression](#)

Participants including children attacked at student competition in Moscow

28-04-2016: Participants, including children, were pelted with eggs and doused in a green antiseptic liquid at an annual competition for 14-18 year olds hosted by **2009 Sakharov Laureate Memorial**. The competition encourages children to carry out independent research into the history of the past century. The protestors waved red flags, sang patriotic songs and called the participants "national traitors" and other degrading and offensive names. The police did little to intervene. According to **Human Rights Watch**, "no public dissent from the 'official line' on Russia's contemporary history is tolerated by the authorities, and those who publicly express divergent viewpoints are increasingly subject to attacks". Links: [HRW](#); [24Heures](#)

EP URGENT RESOLUTIONS ON CRIMEAN TATARS IN UKRAINE; THE GAMBIA; AND DJIBOUTI

12-05-2016: In its May plenary sitting, the EP condemned the closing of the Mejlis, the representative body of ethnic Crimean Tatars in [Ukraine](#), urged the immediate release of all protestors arrested in an

April electoral reform demonstration in [the Gambia](#), and called for a thorough investigation into the transparency of the re-election of President Ismail Omar Guelleh in [Djibouti](#). Link: [EP Press Release Urgency Resolutions May 2016](#)

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK EVENTS IN JUNE

During June, the Sakharov Prize Network will participate in or host the following events:

19 June - 2 July, Sakharov Fellowship, Brussels and Venice

The 14 Sakharov Fellows from 14 non-EU countries, for 2016 will attend activities at the European Parliament in Brussels and the European Inter-University Centre in Vienna. **Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005 Hauwa Ibrahim** and **Sakharov Prize Nominee 2014 Leyla Yunus** will address the Sakharov Fellows in Venice. The first edition of the Sakharov Fellowship is an implementation of the 25th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize Conference Declaration endorsed by the Laureates on the 20 November 2013 in Strasbourg.

23 June, Fundamental Rights Forum, hosted by Fundamental Rights Agency, Vienna

Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005 Hauwa Ibrahim will give an address on gender rights and the sustainable development goals.

**The Sakharov Prize Network
for stronger human rights action
23-24 May 2016
Outcome of the Mid-Term Conference**

Two and a half years after the 25th Anniversary conference of the Sakharov Prize Network (SPN), the aim of this meeting was to discuss how to expand human rights actions with the help of the Network and to strengthen the Network itself via interaction and debate on topical issues among a group of Laureates and MEPs. The Laureates and MEPs also devised a strong action supporting Sakharov Prize Laureate 2015 Raif Badawi's release.

Participation of MEPs and EU representatives:

President **M. Schulz**; Vice-President **U. Lunacek** (Greens/EFA); AFET Chair **E. Brok** (EPP); DEVE Chair **L. McAvan** (S&D); DROI Chair **E. Valenciano**; DROI Vice-Chairs: **C. Dan Preda** (EPP), **B. Becerra** (ALDE), **B. Lochbichler** (Greens/EFA); **A. Gomes** (S&D), **M-C. Vergiat** (GUE/NGL) and **M.T. Gimenez Barbat** (ALDE) took part in the event together with **Stavros Lambrinidis**, EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

Participation of Sakharov Prize Laureates:

- **Ensaf Haidar**, wife of **Raif Badawi**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2015, Saudi Arabia
- **Denis Mukwege**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2014, DR Congo
- **Ali Ferzat**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2011, Syria
- **Vitaliy Ponomarev**, representing **Memorial**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2009, Russia
- **Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2007, Sudan
- **Sophie Busson**, representing **Reporters Without Borders**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2005
- **Zhanna Litvina**, Representing the Belarusian Association of Journalists, Sakharov Prize Laureate 2004, Belarus

- **Taslima Nasreen**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1994, Bangladesh
- **Vildana Selimbegović**, Representative of **Oslobodjenje**, Sakharov Prize Laureate 1993, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Main issues:

The conference included a high-level opening session, an address by **President Schulz** and **Ensaf Haidar**, the wife and representative of the most recent Laureate **Raif Badawi**, two panel discussions and a closing session summing up the exchanges. In addition to Laureates and MEPs, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, representatives of EU institutions, experts, NGOs, media and the public were invited. About 100 people attended the opening session, with the European Parliament's Yehudi Menuhin space full. A video message recorded for the conference by **2012 Sakharov Prize Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh** from Iran was played. Exchanges continued at two dinners and a lunch. Participants attended part of the AFET meeting on 24 May, where **Ensaf Haidar** took the floor and called for support for her husband **Raif Badawi**.

A number of **experts** addressed the conference: **Mark Barwick**, Human Rights Without Frontiers International, **Rudolf El-Kareh**, Sociologist and Political Scientist, **Guy Berger**, UNESCO, **Caroline Giraud**, Global Forum for Media Development, **Marc van der Ham**, Google, Public Policy & Government Relations EU, **Oktavía Jónsdóttir** independent advisor and collaborator with Front Line Defenders, and **Estelle Massé**, Access Now. A number of **non-governmental organisations** were also present, such as Front Line Defenders, International Federation for Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, Reporters without Borders, Protection International and ProtectDefenders.eu. The main topics discussed were as follows:

Defending the defenders: silent vs megaphone diplomacy to protect human rights defenders, debate chaired by **Vice-President Lunacek**. While agreeing that the choice of tools – public or silent – depends on the specific situation of each particular case, participants were unanimous that the EU should speak very clearly and loudly on human rights violations. They had a clear preference for the European Parliament and Laureates to take a strong public stance in defence of human rights and human rights defenders. The importance of better coherence and consistency was underlined, so that various EU policies or individual Member-States do not contradict and weaken EU human rights statements, as was the need for better cooperation of Laureates with EU Delegations on the ground. The **Chair of the AFET Committee, Mr Brok** took floor to present the "European Parliament's experience with silent and public diplomacy".

Sectarianism or religious and ethnic diversity, debate chaired by **A. Gomez**. The debate touched upon the different situations in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sudan. Participants discussed identity politics as a source of discrimination and exclusion, with ethnic or religious differences often exacerbated and instrumentalised for political purposes and for confrontation by proxies. They believe the trend of growing sectarian divisions should be resisted and tolerance promoted. Diversity should be seen as a source of richness and strength. Participants agreed that the way out of such conflicts lies in the separation of state and religion and in the rule of law. The SPN could help identify opportunities and interlocutors to promote genuine dialogue in societies.

Defending human rights in a digital era, debate chaired by DROI Vice-Chair, **C. Dan Preda**. Following interventions by experts, participants agreed that freedom of expression is just as important online as it is off-line. They were worried that authoritarian regimes, Russia in particular, are adopting legislation against terrorism, extremism and radicalisation which is increasingly misused to limit freedom of expression and to persecute human rights defenders. They noted that in all countries, the increasing focus on security in the debate on rights on the internet should not come at the expense of

freedom of expression and privacy. Limiting rights on the internet or balancing them with other concerns should be done very carefully, using the same high standards that apply for limiting rights and liberties in general. Freedom of expression concerns should be fully taken into account when applying the EU guidelines on human rights defenders and more strict controls applied to prevent the sale of spyware by EU companies to authoritarian regimes.

An appeal for the release of Raif Badawi. In his address, President Schulz reiterated his call for Raif Badawi to be pardoned. The President, Vice-President Lunacek and participating Laureates posed for a photo with posters of Raif Badawi to show their support. As a follow-up the Laureates expressed their wish to sign a letter to the Saudi authorities demanding his release.

Conclusions:

- The EU should not limit itself to silent diplomacy, but needs to use a loud, public voice in support of human rights and their defenders. Sakharov Laureates can occasionally help the EU find the right balance.
- Network members should resist the division of people along sectarian lines and work for dialogue, tolerance and inclusiveness.
- Freedom of expression is as important online as it is offline. The trade of spyware should be controlled in a similar way as that of arms.
- Laureates underlined that the EP and the SPN offer them a form of protection and the Prize gives them courage and inspiration. Hence, the SPN needs to continue to strengthen its activities.
- Laureates pledged to continue support of the Laureates and other human rights defenders, to participate in common actions, and to strengthen links with the EEAS and the EU Delegations on the ground.
- The participants decided to involve Laureates in the development of the future network formed by the Sakharov Fellows who will take part in the educational programme sponsored by the European Parliament.

