

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER No. 5/2019

Run-up to the Sakharov Prize 2019: finalists revealed

08-10-2019: The European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Development and the Sub-Committee on Human Rights voted on a shortlist of three finalists for the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought:

- Brazilian human rights activists: **Marielle Franco**, who defended the young, black, LGBTI people and the residents of the favelas and who was murdered in 2018; **Chief Raoni**, who campaigns for indigenous rights and the conservation of the Amazon rainforest; **Claudelize Silva dos Santos**, who speaks up against the economic interests destroying the Amazon.
- **The Restorers**, five students from Kenya (Stacy Owino, Cynthia Otieno, Purity Achieng, Mascrine Atieno and Ivy Akinyi) who developed I-Cut, an app to help connect women and girls affected by female genital mutilation to legal and medical assistance.
- Uighur intellectual **Ilham Tohti**, who was sentenced to life in prison for defending the rights of his people and for opposing repression and assimilation by the Chinese authorities.

The 2019 laureate - whose name will be announced on 24 October- will receive the Sakharov Prize during a solemn award ceremony in Strasbourg on 18 December.

Links: [European Parliament](#)

Sentsov in Strasbourg

01-10-2019: Last year's Sakharov Prize laureate **Oleg Sentsov** was in Strasbourg for the 70th anniversary celebrations of the Council of Europe. During his visit, Sentsov met with French President Macron and participated in several side events. With the return of the Russian delegation to the Council of Europe, Sentsov highlighted that the participation of Crimean nationals in Russian delegation should not be allowed. On 26 November, Sentsov will finally be able to receive the Sakharov Prize in person during a ceremony at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Links: [RadiofreeEurope](#), [LeMonde](#), [Reuters](#), [RFI](#)

Two released Sakharov Prize Laureates - Salih Osman and Lorent Saleh - join forces on an advocacy visit to the new European Parliament

07/08-10-2019: The European Parliament welcomed 2007 Sakharov Prize laureate **Salih Osman** from Sudan and 2017 Sakharov Prize laureate **Lorent Saleh** from Venezuela, to speak to the Human Rights Subcommittee about the situation in their countries. The laureates also

met with several MEPs and officials from the European Commission and European External Action Service and held a public debate under the title “The challenge of freedom” with the Chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee, Maria Arena, in Cinéma Aventure, Brussels.

Salih Osman stressed that the EU should only consider closer relations with the transitional government in Sudan after it commits to clear justice and accountability benchmarks. Important benchmarks include the ratification of human rights treaties and the extradition of former president Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court.

Lorent Saleh explained how international legislation against torture is not sufficient to prevent psychological torture. He also advocated in favour of individual sanctions against human rights offenders. As Venezuelan regime thrives because of cocaine trafficking and the sale of petrol and arms, Saleh asked the European Parliament to help curb this trade.

Links: [European Parliament](#), [European Parliament](#)

Event: “70 Years of Criminal Communist Rule in China”

30-09-2019: During 70th anniversary of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, the Wei Jingsheng Foundation and the Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition organised a seminar in the US Congress about human rights violations in China. The seminar was opened by 1996 Sakharov Prize laureate **Wei Jingsheng** who called for global attention to the struggle for democratisation in his country. A series of side events were also organised, such as a rally in front of the Chinese Embassy.

Links: Wei Jingsheng Foundation [program](#) and [opening speech](#)

Hu Jia denounces China’s social credits system

23-09-2019: In an interview with France Info, 2008 Sakharov Prize laureate **Hu Jia** lambasted the social credit system currently introduced by the Chinese government. This system of mass surveillance will constantly monitor citizens’ behaviour and reward or punish them accordingly. Hu Jia explained that once the authorities tap into the huge amount of personal data collected by private companies, China will become the first digital totalitarian regime.

Links: [FranceInfo](#)

Ilham Tohti awarded the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize

30-09-2019: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe awarded the seventh Václav Havel Human Rights Prize to **Ilham Tohti**, 2019 Sakharov Prize finalist. As Tohti remains in jail, a representative of the Ilham Tohti Initiative received the prize on his behalf.

Links: [Council of Europe](#)

On-line info: [Sakharov Prize Network website](#)