

SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
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Venezuelan political prisoner Leopoldo Lopez is free

30-04-2019: **2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Leopoldo Lopez** has been [liberated](#) during the so-called 'Operation Freedom' by Juan Guaido. Leopoldo Lopez had been under house arrest since 2017. He is the last of the political prisoners of Sakharov Prize winner Democratic opposition in Venezuela to regain his freedom. **EP Vice President Heidi Hautala** and the **DROI Chair Pier Antonio Panzeri** earlier this year had [stressed](#) that all political prisoners in Venezuela should be released.

Lorent Saleh leaves a deep imprint on 2019 Sakharov Fellows in Venice

14-04-2019: In a powerful speech on repressive policies targeting human rights defenders, **2017 Sakharov Prize laureate Lorent Saleh** from Venezuela opened the [Sakharov Fellowship](#) programme in Venice. Lorent was able to share [his story](#) after his release in October 2018 after more than four years of arbitrary detention and torture. The 2019 Sakharov Fellows include 14 committed [human rights defenders](#) from Algeria, Canada, Colombia, Haiti, Iran, Kenya, Morocco, Montenegro, the Philippines, Russia, South Sudan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Selected among over 1300 candidates, they joined a course at the European Inter-University Centre in Venice to enhance their knowledge of human rights law and instruments. Before that, a one-week programme at the EP in Brussels had given them insights in EU human rights policies, advocacy strategies and offered tailor-made networking opportunities with MEPs, staff from the EU institutions and Brussels-based NGOs.

Outrageous prison sentence for Nasrin Sotoudeh

07-03-2019: **2012 Sakharov Prize laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh** was sentenced to 33 years of imprisonment and 148 lashes. This particularly harsh and cruel verdict comes on the background of Sotoudeh's support for women who protested peacefully against the compulsory wearing of the hijab and her outspoken opposition to the death penalty. Officially, she was accused of endangering national security and charged with spreading propaganda, membership of illegal groups, encouraging people to commit corruption and prostitution and appearing without the sharia-sanctioned hijab. Insisting, in vain, to be represented by a lawyer of her own choosing and protesting against the unfair trial, Sotoudeh refused to attend the court session on 30 December 2018. She was not present when the court made its decision. The [EP](#) strongly [reacted](#) to Nasrin's condemnation and, in a [resolution](#) of 14 March 2019, called on the Iranian authorities for her immediate and unconditional release. Sotoudeh's case has attracted a lot of national and international attention and support. She received PEN Canada's [One Humanity Award](#) on 11 April 2019.

A glimpse of light: Salih Osman released

11-04-2019: The changes in Sudan and the ousting of President Bashir triggered the release of **2007 Sakharov Prize laureate Salih Osman** and political prisoners detained since demonstrations in the country that started in December 2018. The EP had repeatedly insisted on the liberation of Salih Osman and all those unjustly detained. In latest letter of 7 March

2019 to the Sudanese authorities, the DROI Chair and Vice-Chairs as well as the Coordinators of all European Parliament groups had pressed again for Osman's release.

Tribute to Nadia Murad and Dr Mukwege at One World Film Festival in Brussels

24-04-2019: **EP Vice President Heidi Hautala** introduced the screening of '[On Her Shoulders](#)', a documentary on **2016 Sakharov Prize laureate Nadia Murad**. This was part of the "One World" International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival. This festival, the biggest of its kind in the world, is organised by the Czech NGO People in Need. Its Brussels edition is made in cooperation with the European Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group and the Sakharov Prize Network. After the screening, **MEP Anna Maria Corazza Bildt** moderated a debate on fighting violence against women as a weapon of war, a cause embodied by Sakharov and Nobel Prize laureates Nadia Murad and Dr Denis Mukwege. **Mirza Dinnayi**, Chair of NGO Luftbrücke Irak, and **Pierrette Pape** from the Mukwege Foundation discussed the urgent needs to address the plight of the victims via recognition, holistic rehabilitation and an international compensation fund. Speaking in Brussels, Mr. Dinnayi was confident that the Yazidi religious authorities would permit children born to Yazidi women as a result of rape by ISIS militants to join the community. The Yazidi Supreme Faith Council stated on 27 April that rape survivors would be accepted, but not their children.

Sakharov Event - NGOs saving lives in the Mediterranean

18-03-2019: [The EP](#) paid tribute to the work of **2018 Sakharov Prize finalist NGOs saving lives in the Mediterranean**, giving a voice to rescuers and rescued, recalling the legal environment of rescue operations, and making a case against the criminalisation of [NGOs](#). Participants highlighted the need to open safe ports, a new relocation system and a proper assessment of FRONTEX activity. NGOs also called on the EU to review the arrangements with the Libyan authorities, stressing the harrowing conditions migrants are subject to once sent to Libya due to lack of rule of law or State authorities further to civil war. The MEPs encouraged NGOs and citizens to pursue the struggle for EU values making **human dignity the core issue**.

Prison sentence for Oyub Titiev from 2009 Sakharov Prize laureate Memorial

18-03-2019: The Shali City Court sentenced Chechen human rights defender **Oyub Titiev**, Director of the Memorial Human Rights Centre office in Grozny, to four years in penal colony on trumped-up charges. Titiev decided not to appeal the Court's judgement. He will be entitled to apply for conditional release after 9 May 2019. In its [resolution](#) on the State of EU-Russia political relations, the EP called for the unconditional release of Titiev and all human rights defenders and other persons detained for peacefully exercising their rights.

2008 Sakharov Prize laureate Hu Jia under house arrest

26-02-2019: **2008 Sakharov Prize laureate Hu Jia** was once more sent to South-eastern Guangdong Province's Zhongshan city. He was allowed to return home in mid-March. Chinese authorities take such [measures](#) every year affecting many human rights activists. The rationale behind is to ensure calm in the capital during the annual sessions of the Chinese Parliament.

Mobilisation for Oleg Sentsov

19-03-19: **MEPs Rebecca Harms, Mark Demesmaeker and Jaromír Štětina** organised a screening of the documentary '#Putin's Hostages'. More than 70 Ukrainians, among them

2018 Sakharov Prize laureate Oleg Sentsov, are political prisoners in Russia. The EP repeatedly calls for their immediate and unconditional release. Ukrainian students have been campaigning in major European cities by staging '[The Missing Director](#)' on the streets by standing frozen in front of an empty chair, showing that they cannot proceed without Director Sentsov.

EP urgency resolutions on Kazakhstan, Iran and Guatemala

14-03-2019: In the March plenary session, the [EP](#) urged the government of [Kazakhstan](#) and [Iran](#) to end all forms of arbitrary detention, reprisals and harassment against human rights activists and immediate release of all political prisoners. It recommended sending to Iran an ad-hoc delegation from the Subcommittee on Human Rights before the end of the current term in order to visit imprisoned human rights defenders. MEPs called on the [Guatemalan](#) authorities to guarantee the fundamental rights of all Guatemalan citizens, including the legal and physical safety of the **2017 Sakharov Prize finalist Lolita Chávez**, in case of her returning to her home country.

EP urgency resolutions on China, Cameroon and Brunei

18-04-2019: At its last plenary session under the current term, the [EP](#) called on the [Chinese](#) Government to immediately end arbitrary detentions of members of the Uyghur and Kazakh minority and Tibetans, to close all camps and detention centres and to immediately release those arbitrarily detained. The EP called on the [Cameroon](#) security forces to respect international human rights law and demanded from the Government to end violence and impunity in the country and establish democracy, including by reviewing its electoral system. The EP addressed the authorities of [Brunei](#) condemning the introduction of death penalty and the criminalisation of homosexuality. The EP urges Brunei to respect international human rights, including with regard to sexual minorities, religious minorities and non-believers.