

## SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK NEWSLETTER No. 9/2017

### **SAKHAROV WEEK 2017: Laureates and finalists arriving to Strasbourg**

**The Sakharov Prize 2017** will be awarded to the **Democratic Opposition in Venezuela** in Strasbourg on **13 December**. The Prize will be presented by President **Antonio Tajani**. The Laureates will take part in a series of meetings with political groups, EP Committees and Delegations, media interviews, discussions with youth and on Facebook. **The award not only recognizes the opposition's courageous struggle, but also pays tribute to political prisoners and to the Venezuelan people struggling to survive a brutal regime on a daily basis.** The EP in cooperation with city of Strasbourg organizes a debate with citizens and an opening of an exhibition on human rights. The Sakharov Prize 2017 finalists **Aura Lolita Chavez Ixcaquic** and a daughter of imprisoned **Dawit Isaak** will also attend the ceremony and meet with **MEPs**. [Info about the laureates](#), [Info about the finalists](#)

### **Saudi Arabia - MEPs call to release Badawi and other human rights defenders**

29-10-17: A parliamentary delegation including Members of **the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI)** reiterated the call for the release of 2015 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Raif Badawi** and other human rights defenders on a visit to Saudi Arabia. Following several requests for information about Badawi's health, the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Society confirmed to the delegation that Badawi is in good health and that **a procedure for a Royal Pardon is underway** and that he will be pardoned whenever a decision is made in this respect.

### **Salih Osman addresses young Israeli and Palestinian leaders**

28-11-17: The 2007 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Salih Osman** spoke in Brussels about his experience as a human rights defender in Darfur/Sudan to eighteen politically engaged activists from Israel and Palestine participating in the Parliament's [Young Political Leaders Programme](#). They showed a strong interest in the split of Sudan into two countries and in the effectiveness of International criminal court. **The EP ambition is, by investing in dialogue, to reach out to the next generation of leaders outside the European Union and empower them in building better, more peaceful societies.** Mr Osman also met with a number of **MEPs** to discuss the Parliament's role in addressing critical human rights violations in Sudan and demand the implementation of the ICC's warrant to arrest Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

### **Dr Mukwege at a conference on new EU-Africa partnership in Parliament**

22-11-17: 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Dr Denis Mukwege** took part in a high-level conference *"Towards a renewed partnership with Africa"* in the European Parliament alongside **President Antonio Tajani**, EU foreign affairs chief **Federica Mogherini**, **African political leaders, and other leading figures from the private sector and civil society**. As a guest speaker in a panel discussing democracy, good governance and human rights, Dr Mukwege shed light on the new responses to the challenges Africa is facing and the ways the two continents can deepen the partnership between them. [Europarl](#)

### **Myanmar and Bangladesh sign agreement on return of Rohingya**

10-11-17: Amidst maintained international pressure, the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh sealed a deal that could allow the return of more than **600,000 Rohingya Muslims** who have fled from massive violence since last summer. Attending two major regional summits this month, 1990 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Aung San Suu Kyi** had expressed a strong willingness to allow the return of refugees to the country and to engage in real reconstruction. **The return could start within two months, but its conditions still need to be spelled out.** Trust has faded as a result of the crisis and Rohingyas seek guarantees to be accepted as full citizens and be given back their land. [RTE](#), [The Globe and Mail](#), [Washington Post](#), [BBC](#)

### **Hauwa Ibrahim to investigate human rights violations by the Nigerian military**

24-10-17: Nigerian human rights lawyer and 2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Hauwa Ibrahim** is part of the Presidential Investigation Panel established to review compliance of the Armed Forces with human rights obligations and rules of engagement. **The panels will be sitting in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria on various dates to hear petitions of alleged human rights abuses brought against the Nigerian military** by various individuals. [All Africa](#), [TVC News](#)

### **Marta Vasquez dies at 90 years old**

19-11-17: **Marta Vasquez**, the President of the 1992 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo**, died at 90 years old in the city of Buenos Aires, after 40 years of searching for her daughter and husband. They were abducted during the military dictatorship in Argentina in 1976, but Vasquez could not find any information on her relatives. Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo invited followers to join the memorial service to provide their farewell and commit to continue working for truth and constitutional justice. [La Capital](#), [Telesur](#)

### **Nadia Murad's memoir published**

07-11-17: **'They thought I was too weak to escape. They thought they had me for ever. They were wrong'** writes Murad in **THE LAST GIRL: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State**. The 2016 Laureate continues her mission to share her personal tragedy with the world and advocate for holding ISIS accountable for their crimes. In a press statement for the publication of the book, Ms Murad said: *"If my story can influence world leaders to act then it must be told"*. Ms Murad's book is already available in bookstores. [Twitter](#), [Penguin Random House](#), [The Times](#)

### **Guggenheim Museum honours Hu Jia's while he remains under surveillance**

26-10-17: Beijing-based 2008 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Hu Jia** is now on forced 'vacation' in Yunnan under the escort of state security police officers displaying that the newly established congress of the ruling Chinese Communist Party are not showing any moderating effects in security measures. To honour his work, the Guggenheim Museum in New York organised a screening of Hu Jia's documentary. **In Prisoners in Freedom City, Hu Jia captures his life and of his wife under the disturbingly close watch of the police.** A couple is simultaneously the subject and documentarians in this film, which presents his years of house arrest. [Guggenheim](#), [Radio Free Asia](#)

### **EU Election Observation Mission to Timor-Leste 2017 report**

24-11-17: 1999 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Xanana Gusmão**, the country's first president after independence (2002-2007) and the leader of the Timorese resistance, has played a critical role in the outcome of every presidential election held since. Prior to the 2017 elections, a power-sharing arrangement between two parties, CNRT (led by Gusmão) and FRETILIN, took place. **The EU EOM report suggests that the political consensus between the two parties contributed to a peaceful electoral environment**, where "unity" was a central theme of most election platforms. This was even exhibited by the parties' slogans at rallies. One of FRETILIN's slogan read, "If FRETILIN wins, Xanana wins", which was not disputed by Gusmão. FRETILIN won 29.66% of the votes, granting the party 23 seats in Parliament, which was followed closely by CNRT with 29.46% of the votes and 22 seats.

### **EP URGENCY RESOLUTIONS ON ARBITRARY DETENTIONS IN SUDAN, TERRORIST ATTACKS IN SOMALIA AND THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS IN MADAGASCAR**

16-11-17: In three resolutions adopted during its November plenary session, the European Parliament called on the [Sudanese](#) authorities to end the arbitrary detention of journalists and expressed its deep concern over the sentencing of writer **Mohamed Zine al-Abidine**. The Parliament also expressed its solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks in [Somalia](#) and stated that the EU should support Somalia in the fight against terrorism and food insecurity. Furthermore, MEPs called on the government of [Madagascar](#) to guarantee fair presidential elections in 2018. Link: [EP Press release](#)

## **The winner of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2017**

### **THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION IN VENEZUELA**

The Democratic Opposition in Venezuela includes the country's National Assembly (signified by Julio Borges) and all political prisoners as listed by Foro Penal Venezolano represented by Leopoldo López, Antonio Ledezma, Daniel Ceballos, Yon Goicoechea, Lorent Saleh, Alfredo Ramos and Andrea González.

For the past several years, Venezuela has been undergoing a severe political and economic crisis. In March 2017 the country's Supreme Court stripped the democratically-elected national assembly of legislative power. Julio Borges is the President of Venezuela's National Assembly. He was first elected in 2000 parliamentary elections, representing *Primero Justicia* and Miranda State until 2005. He was subsequently elected to the National Assembly from 2010 to 2015, and again in 2016.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 130 people have been killed in street protests, most of them in anti-government demonstrations and more than 500 people have been arbitrarily imprisoned. The number of political prisoners now amounts to more than 600, according to the latest report by Foro Penal Venezolano (Venezuelan Penal Forum). They include prominent opposition leaders as well as student activists who continue to face imprisonment for being political opponents and critics of the government.

While Venezuela opposition leader Leopoldo López was temporarily granted house arrest in July after more than three years in detention, he was transferred back to prison in August 2017. Antonio Ledesma, another prominent opposition politician and the former mayor of Caracas, has been under house arrest since 2015, while fellow former mayors Alfredo Ramos, of Iribarren, and Daniel Ceballos, of San Cristobal, have also been imprisoned, as well as a student activist Lorent Saleh. Two Spanish citizens, Andrea Gonzalez and Yon Goicoechea, are also among the political prisoners.

[Sakharov Prize Network website](#)