

**EP SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK
NEWSLETTER
November-December 2014**

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, SAKHAROV LAUREATES AND CIVIL SOCIETY CALL TO FREE RAZAN ZAITOUNEH

9-12-2014: A year from the kidnapping of Sakharov Prize Laureate Razan Zaitouneh in the rebel-controlled area of Douma in Syria, together with her husband Wael Hamada and colleagues Samira Khalil and Nazem Hamadi, Members of the European Parliament with Sakharov Prize Laureates, EU officials and NGO activists are calling for freedom for Razan and the Douma4. Statements, media calls and social media action have already been made, actions appreciated by Razan's family and the NGO she co-founded, the Violations Documentation Centre. Whilst thanking all those who are already supporting this call, we urge you to take a photo of yourself with the words #FreeRazan #Sakharov and send it to us (HumanRights-Actions@europarl.europa.eu) as well as post it on Facebook and Twitter and other social media to highlight our support for Razan and all Syrian human rights defenders. The European Parliament is supporting this call online at:

<http://on.fb.me/1z3sNo5>; <http://bit.ly/1t8du7K>; <http://bit.ly/1xo9lo8>; <http://bit.ly/1sd5d9b>

Assassination attempt on Guillermo Fariñas: Damas de Blanco call for help

28-11-2014: A man attacked Guillermo Fariñas with a knife, injuring two men and two Ladies in White, one of them, Maria Arango Percival, severely, who were stepping in to defend the 2010 Sakharov Prize Laureate. The incident occurred on 25 November in Santa Clara, Cuba, during a meeting of the "United Anti Totalitarian Front" (Frente Antitotalitario Unido FANTU), represented by Mr Fariñas with the participation of representatives of 2005 Laureate Damas de Blanco, discussing visa issues for Cuban dissidents. Several witnesses reported that the perpetrator, José Alberto Botell Cárdenas, drove away, right after the attack, in a white car belonging to state security. He was arrested the next day. Damas de Blanco and Guillermo Fariñas accuse the Cuban government of being responsible for the attack, Mr Fariñas speaking of "concrete plans to eliminate opponents". One day after the attack, Damas leader Berta Soler sent a letter to the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, calling for attention to the on-going repression in Cuba and for support from the European Union. The Damas also ask for the support of the Sakharov Prize Network. The President expressed his support for the Damas via Twitter. Meanwhile, repression of Cuban opposition continued in November, resulting again in dozens of arrested Damas.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1qVhnCF>; <http://bit.ly/1FL4RZW>; <http://bit.ly/1zdSbXE>; <http://bit.ly/11OzU8b>; <http://bit.ly/1rUcvZD>

Memorable appearance of Dr Denis Mukwege, 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate, in the EP in Strasbourg

26-11-2014: "The woman's body has become a battle field, rape is used as a weapon of war" - Dr Denis Mukwege, Sakharov Prize Laureate in 2014, did not shy away from using strong words in the speech he delivered in the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Many Members of Parliament shed tears as the Congolese gynaecologist gave an emotional account of the youngest rape victim he treated, a six month old baby, and the unimaginable atrocities women and girls endure every day in his home country. The award ceremony ended on a more cheerful note, as a crowd of jubilant fellow nationals greeted the doctor from the visitors' gallery, singing and dancing in his honour. During his three day visit, Dr Mukwege did not miss any opportunity to engage in lively exchanges of views with political groups, committees, delegations, journalists, students and the general public.



Dr Denis Mukwege (2nd from the right) engages with Students in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

In numerous high-level meetings, hearings, debates and interviews, the doctor tirelessly addressed the pressing issues of impunity and injustice in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He urged the European Union to adopt binding restrictions on conflict mineral trade, judged by many to be a driving force behind the decades-long civil war in the DRC, as well as to support political reforms for peace and justice. In his eulogy, President Martin Schulz sent "a strong signal" to the government of the DRC to guarantee the safety of its female citizens and for institutional and justice reforms.

Links: <http://bit.ly/12W8kXz>; <http://bit.ly/1A7TTty>; <http://bit.ly/1ysWDVr>; <http://bit.ly/1CYaDcl>

Finalist EuroMaidan calls for continuous EU support to Ukraine

26-11-2014: Ielyzaveta Shchepetylnykova, a student leader actively involved in the EuroMaidan movement and elected to the Presidium of the Maidan Council, represented EuroMaidan at the 2014 Sakharov Prize award ceremony in Strasbourg. Ms Shchepetylnykova's main message in her meetings with Members of the European Parliament, students and journalists was the imperative of reforms in Ukraine which should be carried out in parallel with winning the war. She repeatedly stressed the need for the EU to remain engaged with Ukraine to ensure that the needed reforms are carried out and for support to the Ukrainian economy, which is in great need of it.

Link: <http://bit.ly/12W8kXz>

Daughter of imprisoned Leyla Yunus urges Parliament to act before it's too late

06-12-2014: Representing her mother at the 2014 Sakharov Prize award ceremony in Strasbourg, Dinara Yunus, daughter of human rights defender and Sakharov Prize finalist in 2014, Leyla Yunus, took part in high level bilateral meetings with Members of the European Parliament including President Martin Schulz, as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini. Dinara Yunus called emphatically for support to save her mother's life, and focused on exploring the various options for action by the Parliament in this regard. As of late November, various sources reported that Leyla Yunus's physical health was rapidly deteriorating, giving rise to fresh concerns that Ms Yunus might not live to see her possible release from pre-trial detention by the end of February 2015. Despite her poor health, Ms Yunus was repeatedly exposed to serious intimidation and harassment by the prison authorities and other individuals entering her

cell, whose identities and intentions remain unclear, as she writes in her latest letter to her daughter.

Links: <http://bit.ly/12W8kXz>; <http://bit.ly/1vEsU9O>; <http://bit.ly/1zF4sEI>; <http://bit.ly/15ZnDjq>

Nasrin Sotoudeh arrested on international human rights day

10-12-2014: Iranian Sakharov Prize Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh was arrested and detained for five hours by Intelligence Ministry officials to prevent her continuing her ongoing protest in front of the Iranian Bar Association headquarters in Tehran against her 3-year suspension from practising law after she legally defended political dissenters. Dr Sotoudeh was arrested with no warrant and no explanation "only because I had asked my friends to accompany me on the international day of human rights". She believes she was detained in the belief that no protest would take place without her, but sympathisers including fellow Sakharov Prize Laureate Jafar Panahi nevertheless gathered in protest (photo). Nasrin Sotoudeh also slammed the recent acid attacks on women, causing severe disfigurement, in the city of Isfahan and the dozens of arrests at the ensuing civic protests, resulting in dozens of arrests. "They didn't arrest the acid attacker, but they arrested the protesters."



Links: <http://bit.ly/1swLmp>; <http://on.fb.me/1vivHR1>; <http://bit.ly/1Af8KmR>

Memorial amends its Charter, "liquidation" hearing postponed

16-12-2014: As a result of increasing government pressure, Russian human rights organisation and 2009 Sakharov Prize Laureate, Memorial, amended its Charter at a conference on 22 November. Details of the amendments have been communicated to the Justice Ministry on 10 December. Earlier, the Supreme Court had postponed a court hearing set for 13 November to "liquidate" Memorial until 17 December.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1yOVFI4>; <http://bit.ly/1vLBvHD>; <http://bit.ly/1wW2sux>

Adem Demaçi supporting broad government coalition after election in Kosovo

29-11-2014: More than five months after the legislative elections in Kosovo, political forces agreed on a government coalition. In the next legislative period, the young republic will be ruled by the two parties that got the most votes on 8 June: the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), led by incumbent Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), led by Isa Mustafa. 1991 Sakharov Prize Laureate Adem Demaçi welcomed the agreement, saying that the government coalition reflects the will of the people. Mr Demaçi did not remain silent during the last months' difficult political conciliation process, calling on political leaders to put aside their personal interests, voicing strong support for a broad-based government coalition of all major political forces including

Ramush Haradinaj, former leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army and current leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AKK), which finished third in June's election.

Links: <http://reut.rs/1GqfdP5>; <http://bit.ly/1vLqNkx>

Michal Janczuk (Belarusian Association of Journalists): "Fighting a dragon without becoming one"

05-12-2014: Michal Janczuk from the Belarusian Association of Journalists, 2004 Sakharov Prize Laureate, was one of the main speakers in the panel on "Promoting media freedom and pluralism versus the dangers of unwarranted interference with impartial/ critical reporting" at the 16th EU-NGO Human Rights Forum on 5 December 2014 in Brussels. Mr Janczuk focused on the importance of aiming for objective standards of journalism. Reporting the truth, he believes, is the only way to liberate Belarusian society from dictatorship and also to safeguard against the influence of Russian propaganda. Questioned about the use of counter-propaganda, he said "The answer is to fight a dragon but not become one: I am afraid of hearing a phrase like counter-propaganda. It is like countering cocaine with healthy-eating. Everything should be based on objective standards of journalism and using these in every day work because journalism was created on a need to seek the truth. Only the truth can beat Mr Putin".

Link: <http://bit.ly/133zkUx>

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INFORMATION OFFICE (EPIO) EVENTS FEATURING SAKHAROV PRIZE LAUREATES

12-12-2014: **2011 Laureate Ahmed El Senussi** delivered a **Sakharov Lecture** in **Valletta, Malta**, organized by the EPIO and the Human Rights Action Unit. The Lecture was open by Mrs Therese Comodini Cachia, MEP, and closed by MEP and former Prime Minister of Malta, Alfred Sant.

Link: <http://bit.ly/16o4DLN>

04/05-12-2014: The EPIO in **Bratislava** organised a conference and a ceremony of the opening of the **Sakharov Prize Laureates Exhibition** at the University of Saint Cyrilus and Methodius in the city of Trnava. The guest speaker at the events was **Boris Belenkin**, representative of 2009 Laureate, *Memorial*, Russia. Four MEPs: Anna Záborská, Eduard Kukan, Jana Žitňanská and Richard Sulík greatly contributed to the visibility of the events. On 5 December, Mr Belenkin held a press conference entitled "**Are we facing a new Cold War?**" together with the Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for the Sakharov Prize Network, Ulrike Lunacek, and Othmar Karas, Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, in the House of the European Union in **Vienna**.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1BP5ims>; <http://bit.ly/1zVVipb>

21-11-2014: In cooperation with the EPIO in **Rome**, Italy, University of Rome Tor Vergata and the UNICEF, the Sakharov Prize Network celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the debate entitled "**The future for children's rights and the rule of law**", including Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Parliament and former Commissioner, a prominent speaker and **2005 Laureate Hauwa Ibrahim** highlighted the importance of education in the fight to end poverty.

Links: <http://bit.ly/1wxrrV2>; <http://uni.cf/1zNYa5G>

21-11-2014: The EPIO in **Wrocław**, Poland, hosted the debate entitled "**The experience of the past - a lesson for the present? The exchange of inter-generational experiences in the field of human rights**". Prominent speaker **Alexander Milinkevich, 2006 Laureate**, debated on the human rights situation in Belarus with MEP Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg and former MEP Jacek Protasiewicz, among others.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1uN3rHg>

13-11-2014: In **Lyon**, France, the EPIO in Marseille, in partnership with the Institute of Human Rights of Lyon, the UNESCO Chair "Memory, Cultures and Inter-culturality" and the Centre d'Information Europe Direct Lyon - Rhône-Alpes, hosted the panel discussion "**Sudan: a forgotten conflict.**"

Although invited guest speaker and **2007 Laureate Salih Osman** unfortunately had to cancel his participation on a short notice, the debate, including MEPs Sylvie Guillaume and Marie-Christine Vergiat, was very successful.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1suSOxx>

LATEST EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTIONS

25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

27-11-2014: On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Parliament commended "the public endorsement by the Sakharov Prize Network of initiatives meant to raise awareness of violence against children" which it considers "to be clear demonstrations of the important role played by civil society and international organisations in advocacy and in the promotion and protection of the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child". The EP welcomed the award of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai for their commitment to defending children's rights, in particular the right of all children to education.

Link: <http://bit.ly/1waCdgo>

Iraq: kidnapping and mistreatment of women

27-11-2014: MEPs strongly condemn the "numerous atrocities committed by the Islamic State, targeting specifically women, which amount to crimes against humanity" and call on the Iraqi government to ratify the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court in order to allow it to prosecute the war crimes committed by the IS. They also call on the Iraqi government to provide protection for the LGBT Iraqis, who are in an "extremely vulnerable" situation and ask the European External Action Service and EU member states, in their dialogue with the Gulf countries, "to raise strong concerns about the on-going Salafi/Wahhabi indoctrination efforts in many Muslim-majority countries". (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1yLCSHv>

Pakistan: blasphemy laws

27-11-2014: MEPs express concern about Pakistan's "controversial blasphemy laws" which "make it dangerous for religious minorities to express themselves freely or engage openly in religious activities". They call on the government of Pakistan to carry out a "thorough review of the blasphemy laws and their current application" and to guarantee the independence of the courts, the rule of law and due process "in line with international standards on judicial proceedings". (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1lum2Bc>

Serbia: the case of accused war criminal Šešelj

27-11-2014: Vojislav Šešelj, a Serbian politician holding strong nationalist opinions, is currently awaiting the verdict for alleged war crimes and is suspected of being involved in crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In an urgency resolution, MEPs strongly condemn Mr Šešelj's "warmongering, incitement to hatred and encouragement of territorial claims and his attempts to derail Serbia from its European path". They deplore his "wartime rhetoric" and his public calls for the creation of "Greater Serbia" and publicly stated claims on neighbouring countries, including EU member state Croatia. (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1yA2ao2>

Human rights in Uzbekistan

23-10-2014: MEPs call on the Uzbek authorities to release all persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges, to put an immediate end to all forms of torture and abuse in prison and to investigate and hold to account all officials and penal system staff alleged to have ill-treated prisoners. (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1ugi3ib>

Closing-down of the NGO 'Memorial' (winner of the 2009 Sakharov Prize) in Russia

23-10-2014: MEPs strongly condemned the appeal by the Russian Ministry of Justice to the Supreme Court to close down the independent human rights organisation Memorial. They consider that the July 2012 law on "foreign agents" requiring NGOs that receive foreign funding and are engaged in "political activity" to apply for inclusion in a special government list is in breach of Russia's commitments to the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1D3dnWg>

Human rights violations in Bangladesh

18-09-2014: Human rights violations by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an emergency force created 10 years ago comprising both military and police officers, should stop, say MEPs. They call on the Bangladeshi authorities to put an end to RAB's impunity. MEPs also call on the government of Bangladesh to ensure that labour laws are enforced and bring them into line with International Labour Organisation standards. (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1GenuDL>

The persecution of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan

18-09-2014: MEPs call on the Azerbaijani authorities to undertake long-overdue human rights reforms without further delay and cease their harassment of civil society organisations, opposition politicians and independent journalists and lift the ban on public gatherings in Baku. They condemn the arrest and detention of Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus, Rasul Jafarov, Intigam Aliyev and Hasan Huseyni and demand their immediate and unconditional release. (Source: EP Press Service)

Link: <http://bit.ly/1vleNDo>

BRIEFS

Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 1992 Sakharov Prize Laureate, express their solidarity to the families of 43 missing Mexican students. The students had been abducted on 26 September and their exact fate is still unknown. Link: <http://bit.ly/1vHVo2L>

Pope Francis welcomes the Leader of Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo: His Holiness received Estela de Carlotto and her long-lost grandson, Ignacio Guido Montoya, on 5 November and exchanged views on Argentina's troubled history. Link: <http://bit.ly/1I05zo6>