

BRAZIL / EU: Marielle Franco is the first-ever LGBTI person to be on the Sakharov Prize shortlist

EP LGBTI Intergroup (10.10.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2IUs0Y1> – The European Parliament announced the finalists for the Sakharov Prize on 9 October 2019. And for the first time in its 30 years of existence, a person from the LGBTI community is on the list: Marielle Franco.

Marielle Franco was a Brazilian politician, feminist and human rights defender. A black bisexual activist, she fought for the rights of women, young black people, favela residents and LGBTI people in Brazil until she was brutally murdered in March 2018, aged 38.

Marielle Franco and Jean Wyllys, openly gay Brazilian politician and LGBTI rights defender, now in exile in Europe, were together the first-ever nominees for the Sakharov Prize to come from the LGBTI community. Jean Wyllys' nomination was withdrawn at his request so other human rights defenders from Brazil, Chief Raoni and Claudelice Silva dos Santos, could be on the shortlist.

“With this nomination, the European Parliament takes a strong stand against rampant and unacceptable violence against LGBTI people, in Brazil and around the world. But it is also sending a strong message to public figures – such as President

Bolsonaro – who are condoning violence against LGBTI people: we will not accept this any longer,” said Terry Reintke, Co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup.

72 countries worldwide still criminalise homosexuality, yet none of them kills as many LGBTI people yearly as Brazil. Same-sex couples may have the right to marry and adopt children in Brazil, but this is not enough to protect the whole community against increasing violence, sometimes encouraged by public figures such as President Bolsonaro himself.

Brazil holds a sad record: the world highest LGBT murder rate. In 2017, more than 380 murders against LGBT people were registered – a 30% increase compared to 2016 (according to the Gay Grupo de Bahia). That’s more than one person killed per day simply because of who they are. And this doesn’t even take into account the high numbers of suicides in the LGBTI community.

Marielle Franco was dedicated to the defence of human rights and for this, she paid the price of her life. Like too many LGBTI people worldwide who are killed for simply wanting to be themselves.

“We can only celebrate her historic nomination, for the visibility it brings to those fighting LGBTI-phobia but also sexism, racism, poverty and police violence. The European Parliament is showing its commitment to defend the human rights of everyone, regardless of who they are and wherever they live – because human rights are universal,” said Tanja

Fajon, Vice-President of the LGBTI Intergroup.

Since 1988, the Sakharov Prize is awarded every year by the European Parliament to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe, drawing attention to human rights violations as well as supporting the laureates and their cause.

The 2019 laureate will be announced in December 2019.