

EU's human rights Sakharov Prize granted to Ilham Tohti, a Chinese Uyghur intellectual

– Human Rights Without Frontiers welcomes the decision of the European Parliament and wishes Happy Birthday to Ilham Tohti who will be 50 tomorrow, 25 October!

– HRWF (24.10.2019) – Today, the European Parliament on Thursday awarded its Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur intellectual sentenced to life imprisonment in China for alleged “separatism”. He will turn 50 tomorrow.

Ilham is an economist fighting for the rights of China's Uighur minority and the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China. In 2014 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for separatism-related charges.

He has worked for over 20 years on the situation of the Uighur minority and on fostering inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding in China.

Before his arrest in January 2014, he was a vocal advocate for the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China. He founded and ran the Uyghur Online website in Uyghur and Chinese about social issues.

He gained prominence as a moderate voice drawing attention to ethnic tensions in the region and taught at a Beijing university.

More than a million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities are reported to have been held in camps in China's restive Xinjiang region.

Mr Tohti, seen by many as a moderate voice, has always denied being a separatist.

The EU's top human rights award will be presented on December 18 at a ceremony in the French city of Strasbourg.

A month ago, Tohti received the Council of Europe's Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize and in 2017, he won the 2017 Weimar Human Rights award.

For his work in the face of adversity he was also awarded the PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award (2014), the Martin Ennals Award (2016).

See also

HRWF Database of news about human rights violations in China

<https://hrwf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/China.pdf>

Ilham Tohti, a four-minute video:
<http://bit.do/4minute-Ilham-video>

Statement to the Uyghur Service, Radio Free Asia before his arrest in July 2013: <http://bit.do/statement-uyghur>

My Ideal and the Career Path I have Chosen by Ilham Tohti,
<http://bit.do/ideals-career>

Present-day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang by Ilham Tohti,
<http://bit.do/xinjian-analysis>

Voice of America Interview with Uyghur Professor Ilham Tohti in 2013: <http://bit.do/voa-interview>

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.

PAKISTAN: Pakistani Christian on death row among nominees for Sakharov Prize

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (02.10.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2hJU6FR> – Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have presented their nominations for this year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought – including Asia Bibi, a Christian woman sentenced to death in 2010 under Pakistan's blasphemy law.

Polish MEP Anna Fotyga of the conservative ECR group in the European Parliament said on October 2 that Bibi's "behavior in prison, the dignity she has shown during all these years is the best proof of her being able to represent the dignity of a defender of human rights in the face of the worst fate."

Fotyga spoke at a joint meeting of the foreign affairs, development, and human rights committees in Strasbourg.

Bibi has been on a death row for almost seven years and her appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court has been postponed to an undetermined date.

She was convicted and sentenced to hang after an argument with a Muslim woman over a bowl of water. Her supporters maintain her innocence and insist it was a personal dispute.

Under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, anyone found guilty of insulting Islam can be sentenced to death. Rights groups say blasphemy laws are often abused to carry out personal vendettas, mainly against minority Christians.

Bibi is among six nominees for the European Parliament's prestigious Sakharov Prize, which honors individuals and organizations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The others nominees are Guatemalan human rights defender Aura Lolita Chavez Ixcaquic; Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog, co-chairs of a pro-Kurdish party in Turkey; a group of people representing the Venezuelan opposition; the Swedish-Eritrean prisoner of conscience Dawit Isaak; and Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a human rights defender from Burundi.

On October 10, the European Parliament's foreign affairs and development committees are scheduled to vote on a shortlist of three finalists and the laureate is to be announced on October 26. The award ceremony will take place at the parliament in Strasbourg in December.

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NORTH KOREA: Sakharov Prize: 48 members of the European Parliament supported Bandi's candidacy, however...

HRWF (14.09.2017) – Since 1988, the European Parliament supports human rights through the annual **Sakharov Prize** for Freedom of Thought. The prize is awarded to individuals who have made exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe. This year EPP Members of the European Parliament **László Tőkés** and **Cristian Preda**, Vice-presidents of the EP's Human Rights Committee (DROI), with the support of Human Rights Without Frontiers, jointly nominated **Bandi** from North Korea, member of the Korean Writers' Alliance.

Bandi lives in North Korea. His manuscript of seven short stories was smuggled out of the country and published under the title 'The Accusation: Forbidden Stories From Inside North Korea', translated into 21 languages and published in 20 countries. To date Bandi remains the first known writer of a book, critical of North Korea, who still lives inside the country.

Bandi in Korean means 'firefly'. The writer wanted his stories

'to shine only in a world of darkness'. Through the Sakharov campaign – widely supported by 48 EPP Members across different national delegations – Bandi's work helped shed light on the dark side of the Korean Peninsula. By nominating him, the EP has provided an internationally influential platform not only to Bandi, but to the ongoing suffering of his people under a totalitarian dictatorship. This is all the more important as the nomination has come in the midst of increasing nuclear provocations of the secretive regime, threatening world peace.

In line with their continuous and tireless support for human rights and fundamental freedoms, with the nomination of Bandi Tőkés and Preda have set a moral example for the world. While Bandi has not finally made it to the short list of nominations for the Sakharov Prize this year, the campaign sets a valuable precedent for future efforts focusing on human rights in North Korea. The campaign itself, and the wide support it received, has revealed, again, the commitment of the European Parliament to human rights and in particular to the people of North Korea. This will without a doubt contribute to further similar international initiatives. HRWF will continue to lead in this respect, as the NGO that has established the contact between the Mr. Do Hee-youn, the South Korean activist campaigning for human rights in North Korea who got hold of Bandi's manuscript, and the MEPs.

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E.U.: Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar winners of 2016 Sakharov Prize



Nadia Murad (left) and Lamiya Aji Bashar
©AP Images/ European Union-EP & ©Enric Vives-Rubio/Público, via:
<http://bit.ly/2ePrE0a>

Yazidi survivors and public advocates Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar are this year's joint laureates of the European Parliament Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, following a

decision by Parliament President Martin Schulz and the political group leaders on 27 October. The Sakharov award ceremony will be held in Strasbourg on 14 December.

European Parliament News (27.10.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2ePrE0a>
– By awarding the prize to Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar “we are demonstrating that their fight has not been in vain and that we are prepared to step up to the plate to help them in their fight against the hardship and brutality perpetrated by this so-called Islamic state to which so many people are still exposed to,” Schulz said speaking in plenary. “They were able to flee, to escape to Europe and find sanctuary here,” he added.

Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar

Nadia Murad Basee Taha and Lamiya Aji Bashar are survivors of sexual enslavement by Islamic State (IS) and have become spokespersons for women afflicted by the terrorist group’s campaign of sexual violence. They are also public advocates for the Yazidi community in Iraq, a religious minority that has been the subject of a genocidal campaign by IS militants.

They are both from Kocho, one of the villages near Sinjar, Iraq. On 3 August 2014, Islamic State militants slaughtered all the males in the village. Young women, including Aji Bashar, Murad and their sisters, were abducted by Islamic State militants and forced into sex slavery.

In November 2014, Murad managed to escape with the help of a neighbouring family who smuggled her out of the IS-controlled area, allowing her to make her way to a refugee camp in

Northern Iraq and then to Germany. A year later in December 2015, Murad addressed the UN Security Council's first-ever session on human trafficking with a powerful speech about her experience. In September 2016, she became the first UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, participating in global and local advocacy initiatives to raise awareness around the plight of the countless victims of trafficking.

Aji Bashar tried to flee several times before finally escaping in April with the help of her family, who paid local smugglers. While fleeing, a landmine exploded, killing two of her acquaintances while leaving her injured and almost blind. She managed to escape and was eventually sent for medical treatment in Germany, where she was reunited with her surviving siblings. Since her recovery Aji Bashar has been active in raising awareness of the plight of the Yazidi community and continues to help women and children who were victims of IS enslavement and atrocities.

Murad and Aji Bashar were nominated by S&D and ALDE.

The finalists

Murad and Aji Bashar were among the three finalists for the 2016 Sakharov Prize. Find out more about the other finalists Can Dündar and the defenders of freedom of thought and expression in Turkey as well as Mustafa Dzhemilev [here](#).

More on the Sakharov Prize

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is awarded each year by the European Parliament. It was set up in 1988 to honour individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms. The prize is accompanied by an award of €50,000. Last year the prize was awarded to Raif Badawi.

Nominations for the Sakharov Prize can be made by political groups or by at least 40 MEPs. Based on the nominations, the foreign affairs committee, chaired by Elmar Brok, and the development committee, chaired by Linda McAvan, vote on a shortlist of three finalists. After that the Conference of Presidents, made up of the Parliament President and the leaders of the political groups, select the winner.