

Ilham Tohti is turning 50 tomorrow: EU's gift is the 2019 Sakharov Prize

Human Rights Without Frontiers welcomes the decision of the European Parliament and wishes him Happy Birthday!

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, 25 October.

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 Winjiang by Ilham Tohti, <http://bit.do/xinjian-analysis>

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