

TEXT ONE

Activity Report 2014 - 2019
of the European Parliament's
Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI)

TEXT TWO

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CARTOONING FOR PEACE

Created in 2006 at the initiative of Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize and former General Secretary of the United Nations, and press cartoonist Plantu, CARTOONING FOR PEACE is an international network of cartoonists committed to the promotion of freedom of expression, Human Rights and mutual respect among people upholding different cultures and beliefs, using the universal language of press cartoons.

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Foreword

Driven by our ambition of placing human rights at the very forefront of the EU agenda, we endeavoured to strengthen the role of the European Parliament in speaking up for human rights, including situations of great concern and individual cases, enhancing the strategic importance of human rights in all sectors of EU external actions and ensuring the advancement of human rights on the global agenda.

The international human rights situation throughout the period of our mandates from 2014-2019 has been defined both by steps forward as well as major setbacks. The abolition of the death penalty has contributed to the transitional process in Burkina Faso and the Gambia, while considerable headway has been made in the fight against discrimination in a number of countries, including Tunisia's adoption of a landmark law on violence against women and the recent decision of India's Supreme Court to decriminalise same sex-relations. Yet positive developments have been undermined by persistent political conflicts with an increase in human rights violations in more than 40 countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Yemen, Ukraine, Venezuela and Syria.

Likewise, as we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we continued to witness a rising tide of populist and authoritarian voices worldwide attacking the very concept of universal human rights recognised in the Universal Declaration. Serious challenges that weaken human rights and threaten the very fabric of multilateralism have emerged such as international terrorism to global security, climate change, migration and the explosion of new technologies, giving reason for a new strategic approach based on the universal promotion and protection of human rights.

Over the past five years, the European Parliament has endeavoured to address these challenges, contributing to EU actions to advance human rights at local, regional and multilateral level, engaging actively with a broad range of actors, including UN stakeholders and independent civil society. Members of Parliament have pledged their support to effective democratic institutions and accountability mechanisms, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies around the world and tackling the inequality challenge, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Encouraging international cooperation on migration and refugee situations, Parliament adopted a resolution on the UN Global Compact for Migration and actively participated in the Intergovernmental Conference of Marrakesh on the matter.

As former Chairs of DROI, we wish to emphasise the importance of nurturing partnerships with the relevant stakeholders as an essential instrument for the protection and promotion of human rights. We have championed the cause of local human rights defenders and those individuals on the front lines of human rights protection, through Parliament's annual Sakharov Prize and urgency resolutions.

We encourage the Subcommittee to continue to advance human rights on the global stage during the 9th legislature and to demonstrate its faith in the universal values of human rights by their promotion and protection.

Elena Valenciano
Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights 2014-2017

Pier Antonio Panzeri
Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights 2017-2019

DROI Chair 2014 - 2017, Elena Valenciano (S&D)

DROI Chair 2017 - 2019, Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D)

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The work of the EP's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) during the 8th parliamentary term: summary of activities

The Subcommittee's role and means of action

Throughout the 2014-2019 legislature, the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) consolidated its role in keeping human rights at the heart of the EU's agenda in external relations and parliamentary diplomacy.

The European Parliament has an elaborate set of instruments to shape EU policy debate and to make its voice heard on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This also makes the Parliament a unique actor in parliamentary diplomacy.

Acting in close coordination with the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee was heavily engaged in shedding a critical light on human rights violations worldwide and shaping the agenda for EU policy.

In line with its role and competences as defined under Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Subcommittee also ensured coherence between all the Union's external policies and its human rights policy.

Under Rule 144 Parliament adopts up to three resolutions on breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law at each of its plenary sessions. These so-called "urgency resolutions" offer Parliament a consistent and effective tool to react to international events and crisis situations and to keep political attention focussed on human rights concerns.

Overseeing EU decision-making remained a key focal point for the European Parliament during the 2014 - 2019 legislature. The Subcommittee pursued its scrutiny activities using all available means, including its strategic annual report, as well as meetings of the informal "Contact Group" on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. Dedicated question time and regular follow-up sessions to Parliament's urgency resolutions provided ample opportunities to enhance the Subcommittee's dialogue and engagement with the EEAS and the European Commission.

The Subcommittee's delegations to third countries reflected central human rights concerns and priorities. The annual DROI delegation to the spring session of the UN Human Rights Council and to the UN General Assembly in December allowed regular insight for Members into EU priorities and action at multilateral level.

The first ever EP Human Rights Week in November 2018 and hosting the opening session of the 2019 World Congress Against the Death Penalty were major events, showcasing Parliament's unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of universal human rights, in partnership with international organisations and civil society.

Main achievements 2014 - 2019

How do we support human rights defenders?

The European Parliament values the important role **human rights defenders** play in the construction of the rule of law and democracy, as outlined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In light of continuing attacks against human rights defenders worldwide, Parliament has sought to bolster its role as a champion for those who stand on the front lines in the global fight against injustice and attacks against universal human rights. Furthermore, support to human rights defenders has become a key component of the EU's external human rights policy.

During the 2014 - 2019 legislature, the European Parliament's urgency resolutions often focused on challenges faced by individual human rights defenders and the shrinking space for civil society.

The Parliament's annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought continues to be one of the EU's most visible actions in promoting human rights defenders and has had a significant impact on laureates, providing them with recognition and, in many cases, indirect protection.

In its 2017 annual report, the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) emphasised the need to use all available means to raise individual cases of human rights defenders at risk and to identify ways to create an enabling environment for independent civil society.

DROI utilised the many diplomatic tools in its armoury to advocate on behalf of human rights defenders. Public statements, hearings and exchanges of views have been complemented by visits to human rights defenders and by quiet diplomacy during EU diplomatic missions to support human rights defenders who are particularly at risk. From the Parliament's point of view, it is critical to publicly call for the immediate and unconditional release of individuals deprived of their liberty as a consequence of their human rights activism.

The Subcommittee welcomed the establishment in 2016 of the EU HRD mechanism - ProtectDefenders.eu - which has been implemented by civil society and has provided critical support to a large number of human rights defenders. Such initiatives are essential tools in ensuring continued support of human rights defenders around the globe and must remain a key priority for the next Parliament so that threats to human rights defenders, such as abuses of Interpol's Red Notices to persecute human rights defenders in certain countries, do not become the new norm.

How do we promote fundamental human rights?

The death penalty and torture

Abolition of the **death penalty** and the fight against **torture** have long been central pillars of EU external human rights policy. Parliament's hosting of the opening session of the Seventh World Congress Against the Death Penalty on 26 February 2019 reflects its strong commitment to developing a global strategy aimed at abolition.

The European Parliament repeatedly requested the EU to further seek to reinforce cross-regional support for those UN General Assembly resolutions on a moratorium on the death penalty, which received the backing of a growing number of countries at the Assembly. Parliament also lent its support to specific EU efforts such as the abolition of capital punishment for drug-related offences in Iran, a significant achievement, or the execution of minors, in line with the EU Guidelines on the death penalty.

Prohibiting trade of substances that may be used for **torture or execution** is another way the Parliament has worked towards the abolition of the death penalty and the fight against torture. DROI has consistently stressed the importance of abolishing the death penalty and eradicating torture and held a number of exchanges of views, in particular, on the occasions of: the World Day against the Death Penalty (2014 and 2017); the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention against Torture (2014); and the International Day in support of Victims of Torture.

Freedom of expression and media freedom

In the global context of increasing attacks against **freedom of expression and media freedom**, the European Parliament has intensified its vocal support for these foundational pillars of democracy, while condemning hate speech and incitements to violence. In public statements and visits abroad, the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) championed the cause of journalists receiving threats to their personal safety and facing harassment for publicly expressing their opinions.

In its activities, DROI sought to emphasise that the enjoyment of these freedoms nourishes a culture of pluralism that empowers civil society and citizens to hold their governments to account. For instance, in spring 2016, a DROI delegation to Cambodia expressed serious concerns over laws passed by the Cambodian National Assembly putting in place restrictions on freedom of expression and called on their Cambodian counterparts to repeal them.

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

Concerns have increased in light of a dramatic rise in the number of violations of **freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief** around the world and persecution of believers and non-believers, over the last few years. Many minorities such as Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Tibetans and Christians, are facing an increasingly repressive regime in China due to their ethnic and religious identities.

The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) has been actively engaged in this matter, holding hearings in February 2015 and November 2017 on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and the situation of persecuted minorities, notably Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East. To further its engagement in this field the Subcommittee also met on a number of occasions with Mr **Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief** and Mr **Ján Figel, Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU**.

In its 2018 report on EU Guidelines and the mandate of the EU Special Envoy on the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, DROI condemned the use of religious issues as an instrument for political ends and violence, harassment or social pressures against any individual or group of people.

How do we promote equality for all?

During the 2014 - 2019 legislature, the European Parliament has continued to play a leading role in ensuring that all human beings can live with dignity and equality in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) has strongly supported the external actions through which the EU fights against discrimination and intolerance.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Numerous reports and public debates highlighted the Subcommittee's firm commitment to advancing **gender equality**, protecting **girls' and women's rights**, promoting **their empowerment** and eliminating **all forms of discrimination** and **gender-based violence** across the globe.

For instance, a 2018 *report towards an EU external strategy against early and forced marriages - next steps* emphasized serious violations of human rights perpetrated against women and girls in particular. The report also highlighted the EU's important role as a leading protagonist in the protection of women's rights and the necessity to form strong bonds of cooperation with regional organisations and local communities to tackle forced marriages.

This subject was covered in a number of hearings and exchanges of views organised by DROI throughout the 8th parliamentary term (2014 - 2019), including debates related to cross-cutting issues such as violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey and gender-based violence in Ethiopia (2017).

Children

The European Parliament continues to actively promote the **rights of the child**, in line with 1989 UN Convention. Guaranteeing the rights of the child in times of armed conflict remains a serious problem requiring constant monitoring and attention. As a follow up to the hearing held in December 2014, the DROI Chair issued a statement in February 2015 on the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers, making a strong call in favour of ending the recruitment of child soldiers by armed forces and ensuring full accountability for crimes committed against children.

Tackling child labour in global supply chains continues to underpin the work of DROI on the issue of the rights of the child. A joint hearing of the Subcommittee and the Committee on Development (DEVE) in July 2018 provided the opportunity for a constructive debate on the situation of child labour in the cocoa and coffee producing sectors.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI)

The European Parliament has been actively engaged in combating all forms of violence and discrimination against **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI)** while promoting and protecting their rights.

In April 2019, following the announcement by the Brunei government of a new criminal code, the Chair of the Subcommittee stressed that sexual orientation and gender identity are in essence individual choices, which should, under no circumstances, be subject to punishment, legal codification or discriminatory practices. The Brunei government has since announced that it would extend a moratorium on the death penalty for offences under the new penal code. Small victories such as this one represent the importance that DROI has attached to implementing EU guidelines on protecting and promoting the rights of LGBTI persons. Moreover, it illustrates the headway in the fight against discriminatory legislation and the implementation of effective human rights diplomacy at a global level.

Persons with disabilities

The European Parliament is a promoter of the UN Convention on the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CPRD). In its 2016 opinion to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs' (EMPL) report *on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities with Special Regard to the concluding observations of the UN CPRD Committee*, DROI highlighted the importance of the integration of disability-inclusive disaster management across the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and throughout the Member States.

Indigenous peoples

The European Parliament has highlighted the plight of **indigenous peoples** around the globe in light of growing threats to their rights as a result of the impacts of climate change and increasing competition for land and natural resources. In a 2018 report *on violations of the rights of indigenous people in the world, including land grabbing*, the Subcommittee called on the EU and Member States to adopt measures for the full recognition, protection and promotion of their rights. It also called on the EU to ensure that all EU policies respect the rights of indigenous peoples in line with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention n°169¹.

DROI has tackled the issue of land grabbing by requesting the disclosure of land acquisitions involving EU-based corporations in order to increase transparency and accountability. An exchange of views on the rights of indigenous peoples in November 2017 highlighted in particular threats faced by indigenous peoples in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Brazil and Chile while a study on the situation of indigenous children with disabilities aimed at providing recommendations on how the EU can improve its action in this area.

Minorities

¹ ILO Convention of 27 June 1989 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries

The Subcommittee also addressed the situation of **minorities** in various parts of the world through public hearings and statements. A hearing on the situation of minorities in Ukraine, with a special focus on Crimea (2014), led to a study that provided recommendations on EU policy measures. The situation of the Roma in third countries (2015), minorities affected by the Syrian civil war in Iraq and Syria (2016) and in the Balkans region (2017) were also actively addressed during this legislature.

How do we address the human rights of migrants and refugees?

In the context of the increasing human rights crises faced by migrants and refugees across the globe, the European Parliament sought to develop a humane, coherent and comprehensive strategy for protecting **migrant and refugee rights**. As a staunch supporter of the UN Global compacts on both Migration and Refugees, the European Parliament has taken a leading role in addressing these urgent human rights issues.

The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) has consistently placed migrant and refugee rights high on its agenda and held many public hearings on this matter during the 8th parliamentary term (2014 - 2019). In October 2015, a hearing on the human rights situation in countries of origin included the presentation of a DROI study on “Migrants in the Mediterranean: Protecting human rights”.

In a 2016 report *on human rights and migration in third countries*, DROI stressed the need for the EU and its Member States to lead by example in promoting and protecting the human rights of migrants in order to maintain credibility when discussing migration and human rights in non-EU countries.

A number of country visits further indicated the Subcommittee’s firm commitment to addressing the human rights of migrants and refugees. In March 2019, the visit of a DROI delegation to Rome, including to the International Coordination Centre (ICC) and migrants’ associations, focussed on the enhanced functioning of Frontex and its operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

Following the mass exodus of Rohingya people from Myanmar in 2017 due to the perpetration of serious violations of human rights on a massive scale, a DROI delegation visited Myanmar and the Bangladesh borders in February 2018.

The delegation emphasised the need for effective monitoring of the human rights situation in the country as well as unhindered humanitarian access to Rakhine State, and an independent international investigation into the mass atrocities. In addition, in a 2017 report on *Statelessness in South and South East Asia*, DROI highlighted the situation of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar, which is the world’s largest population of stateless peoples. Recalling the right to a nationality and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one’s nationality, DROI called on the EU to develop a comprehensive strategy on statelessness that would aim to address urgent situations while pursuing the long-term goal of ending statelessness.

How do we put human rights at the heart of EU external policies?

Business and human rights / corporate responsibility

The business community has an important role to play in offering positive incentives in terms of promoting human rights, democracy and corporate responsibility. Addressing the positive and adverse impact of **business on human rights** and exploring ways of preventing human rights violations in relation to activities conducted by EU based companies has been a DROI strategic priority throughout the 2014 - 2019 legislature.

In a 2016 report *on corporate liability for serious human rights abuses in third countries*, the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) sets an ambitious agenda supported by a study on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (a set of guidelines to prevent, address and remedy human rights violations committed in business operations).

DROI also supported EU engagement in the UN negotiations on a binding international treaty on business and human rights. Parliament's resolution of 4 October 2018 on *The EU's input on a UN binding instrument on transnational corporations with respect to human rights* strongly backed a binding treaty to create a level playing field for business operations globally.

Trade

Parliament has sought to incorporate a human rights approach in all its activities on **trade** over the past few years. In a resolution adopted in 2015 to which the Subcommittee gave an opinion, Parliament recommended that the EU's trade strategy be a tool for the promotion of democratic values in non-EU countries. It welcomed the enhancement of trade agreements and trade preference programmes as levers to promote human rights and eliminate forced and child labour. Emphasis was also placed on the implementation of the human rights clauses in trade agreements as a precondition for promoting greater compliance with human rights obligations.

In 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution bringing recommendations on the implementation of the Generalised Scheme Preferences (GSP) EU regulation. The GSP scheme allows industrialised countries to grant generalised, non-reciprocal and non-discriminatory trade preferences to developing countries, thereby assisting them to generate additional revenue through international trade in an effort to reduce poverty, promote good governance and foster sustainable development.

The Subcommittee plays an important role in promoting human rights and international labour law in the beneficiary countries. DROI contributed by emphasising the use of conditionality to preserve the credibility of the GSP scheme and ensure that action is taken in the event of severe and systematic violations of human rights and international conventions.

New technologies

During the 2014 - 2019 legislature the Subcommittee has identified the development of **new technologies** as tools in advancing human rights but also as potential threats. Debates have centred on the human rights impact of surveillance and tracking technologies, internet shutdowns and artificial intelligence in particular. In a 2015 report on *human rights and*

technology: the impact of intrusion and surveillance systems on human rights in third countries, DROI noted that certain states have increasingly used new technologies to officially enhance security and fight terrorism, but in reality have abused such technologies to repress human rights defenders, journalists and political activists.

DROI has consequently backed EU efforts in supporting individuals and organisations working on strengthening privacy protection standards in information and communication technologies at all levels. The Subcommittee has also actively defended the open internet, net neutrality, digital freedoms and data protection safeguards in non-EU countries.

In June 2016, DROI discussed the use of military drones and its impact on human rights for civilians. This example also illustrates DROI's participation in the definition of a new legal framework protecting human rights, concerning the use of new technologies.

How do we contribute to enhancing conflict prevention, accountability and democracy building?

Upholding respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in countries hit by **conflicts and crises** is key to protecting millions of civilians in the world. The European Parliament contributes to this goal by supporting the EU efforts for early warning and preventive action ahead of crises. The Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) has also attached great importance to ensuring **justice** for war crimes and crimes against humanity. To consolidate existing or emerging **democracies** across the world, the European Parliament has assisted parliaments of a number of partner countries, by peer-to-peer exchanges, study visits, seminars and conferences.

During the 8th parliamentary term, the Subcommittee extensively addressed the situation of human rights in regions and countries torn up by armed conflicts such as the Central African Republic, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gaza Strip, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, or engaged in a path towards conflict resolution, such as Colombia.

In a report on *addressing human rights violations in the context of war crimes, and crimes against humanity, including genocide*, DROI called on the international community to establish instruments that can minimise the warning response gap in order to prevent the emergence or re-emergence of violent conflict. The Subcommittee emphasised that accountability and reconciliation are key elements in preventing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Furthermore, it lent its support to international efforts to bring to justice those responsible for severe violations of human rights, highlighting in particular the investigations and prosecutions led by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

On the 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security, in October 2015, DROI together with the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) discussed the situation of women in armed conflicts. DROI emphasised the need to ensure the safety of women and girls in conflict situations through all available means, such as access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including legal and safe abortion, for victims of rape in a war context.

The Subcommittee has contributed to EU efforts to promote democracy, by working on strategies to fight against authoritarian practices and enhancing Parliament's contribution to election observation missions and their follow-up. It has closely monitored and evaluated the EU programmes and initiatives aimed at providing non-EU countries with democracy support, such as assistance to electoral bodies and civil society organisations, and the activities of the European Endowment for Democracy.

TEXT SIX

The European Parliament's Human Rights Week 2018

In November 2018, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Parliament hosted its first ever Human Rights Week.

During 19 - 22 November many of the European Parliament's delegations and committees held hearings, exchanges of views and meetings on human rights related topics, such as the role of governments, institutions and civil society in strengthening respect for fundamental rights, including children's rights, in the EU.

The United Nations together with Amnesty International, the World Congress Against the Death Penalty, the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights, ProtectDefenders, and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions participated in the Human Rights Week with interactive stands. The European Parliament hosted an exhibition by French artist Yacine Aït-Kaci" (YAK) with 30 illustrations of the UN's Digital Ambassador Elyx - one for each article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Concerts and debates were also organised.

High-level conference to celebrate the UDHR

On the 20 November, the European Parliament held a high-level conference to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The high-level conference was opened by European Parliament President Antonio Tajani, EU Vice President / High Representative Federica Mogherini, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michele Bachelet. Two topics were discussed during the conference: the universality and indivisibility of human rights in today's global and digital world and the synergies in strengthening the global human rights architecture and mechanisms.

More than 800 people attended the European Parliament's high-level conference to celebrate the universal declaration of human rights in November 2018.

Inter-parliamentary committee meeting

On the 20 November, the Members of the Subcommittee on Human Rights met with members of national parliaments of the EU member states, to discuss three main topics: mainstreaming human rights into external action, business and human rights, and sustainable development and human rights.

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei gave the key note speech during the inter-parliamentary conference in November 2018 and addressed the issue of sustainable development and human rights.

TEXT SEVEN

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought

The European Parliament's annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was established in 1988. It is awarded to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe. The Sakharov Prize is a way for the European Parliament to draw attention to human rights violations and to support the laureates and their cause.

In the 30 years of the existence of the Sakharov Prize, five laureates were later awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize, including Dr. Mukwege and Nadia Murad in 2018.

Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought laureates, 8th parliamentary term

2018

Oleg Sentsov

2017

The democratic opposition in Venezuela

2016

Nadia Murad Basee Taha and Lamya Haji Bashar

2015

Raif Badawi

2014

Denis Mukwege

Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov, who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for "plotting terrorist acts" against the Russian "de facto" rule in Crimea, could not travel to Strasbourg. His cousin Natalia Kaplan received the prize on his behalf.

Julio Borges, the president of Venezuela's opposition majority National Assembly, received the prize together with Antonio Ledezma, Mayor of Caracas, and Leopoldo López, Daniel Ceballos, Yon Goicoechea, Lorent Saleh, Alfredo Ramos and Andrea González, on behalf of all political prisoners in Venezuela and the country's democratic opposition.

Yazidi survivors and public advocates Nadia Murad Basee Taha and Lamya Haji Bashar from the village of Kocho in Iraq, received the prize at an award ceremony in Strasbourg on 13 December 2016.

Raif Badawi, who had been sentenced to ten years in prison and 1000 lashes for breaching Saudi Arabia's technology laws and insulting Islam, could not travel to Strasbourg. His wife, En-Saf Haidar, received the prize on his behalf.

Dr Denis Mukwege, who founded the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998, received the prize for helping thousands of victims of brutal sexual violence.

The Sakharov Prize Network

In 2008, when the Sakharov Prize celebrated its 20th anniversary, the Sakharov Prize Network was launched as an extension of the Sakharov Prize. The network includes Sakharov Prize laureates and Members of the European Parliament.

The Sakharov Prize Network connects MEPs and Sakharov Prize laureates with civil society. Its members regularly give Sakharov lectures around the EU to raise awareness of human rights issues and spark public debate in the European capitals. The Sakharov Prize Network has also established a programme for human rights defenders across the world: the Sakharov Fellowship.

On 4 and 5 June 2018, the Sakharov Prize Network gathered in Brussels together with human rights defenders who had been selected under the Sakharov Fellowship, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and to take stock of past achievements and identify challenges ahead.

In June 2018, the Sakharov Prize Network and EP President Antonio Tajani gathered Sakharov Prize laureates in Brussels to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize.

