



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

*Committee on Foreign Affairs
Committee on Development
Subcommittee on Human Rights*

28.9.2010

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: SAKHAROV PRIZE FOR FREEDOM OF THOUGHT 2010

Members will find attached the list of candidates in alphabetical order, as well as the justifications and biographies received by the secretariat, for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2010, which have been nominated pursuant to the Sakharov Prize statute by at least 40 Members of the European Parliament or by a political group.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL
FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES

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United in diversity

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SAKHAROV PRIZE FOR FREEDOM OF THOUGHT 2010

Candidates proposed by political groups and individual members in alphabetical order

Candidate	Activity	Nominated by
ACCESS	Citizen movement that helps human rights defenders protect themselves and their communications online. It also provides technological help to allow for access to information despite censorship from repressive regimes.	Nominated by the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
Mr Haytham AL-MALEH	Prominent Syrian human rights lawyer and activist who was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on 4 July 2010. Trial monitoring missions organised by international civil society organisations clearly reported that Al-Maleh's trial failed to meet with international standards of fair trial.	Nominated by Heidi Hautala and 44 others
BREAKING THE SILENCE	An Israeli Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and veterans who collect and provide testimonies about their military service in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem during the Second Intifada, giving serving and discharged Israeli personnel and reservists a platform to confidentially describe their experience in the Israeli-occupied territories.	Nominated by the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and Nominated by the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
Mr Guillermo FARIÑAS	Cuban doctor of psychology, independent journalist and political dissident in Cuba. He has conducted 23 hunger strikes over the years to protest various elements of the Cuban regime. He has stated that he is ready to die in the struggle against censorship in Cuba.	Nominated by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group and Nominated by Edvard Kožušník and 91 others
Ms Aminetu HAIDAR	Sahrawi human rights defender and political activist. She is a leading activist for the independence of Western Sahara. She is sometimes called the "Sahrawi Gandhi" for her nonviolent protests, including hunger strikes, in the support of the independence of Western Sahara.	Nominated by Norbert Neuser, Willy Meyer, Raül Romeva i Rueda and 40 others

Mr Dawit ISAAK	Eritrean journalist, a writer and a playwright, political prisoner since 2001. Kept in prison under very harsh conditions. European Parliament has demanded his immediate release for several times.	Nominated by Olle Schmidt, Cecilia Wikström, Marit Paulsen and Lena Ek and 37 others
Ms Birtukan MIDEKSA	An Ethiopian politician and former judge. She is the leader of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party. On December 28 2008, Birtukan was re-arrested and imprisoned to serve a life sentence. She openly admitted to continue her "peaceful struggle for more democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law" in Ethiopia.	Nominated by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
Father Thadeus, NGUYÊN VAN LY	Vietnamese priest and leading human rights activist, who uses only non-violent struggle as means to achieve his goal of universal human rights promotion.	Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group
OPEN DOORS	Non-denominational Christian mission supporting persecuted Christians, which are the religious minority, suffering most from persecution. Currently the organization is active in more than 45 countries with a wide range of activities.	Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group

Nominated by the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe



Internet access is swiftly becoming one of the most critical modern day human rights issues – both as an emerging right unto itself, and as the gateway to the enjoyment of many other rights. Access is a citizen movement that helps human rights defenders protect themselves and their communications online. It also provides technological help to allow for access to information despite censorship from repressive regimes.

Founded in the wake of the 2009 Iranian post-election crackdown, Access provided critical technical support that helped keep the internet open for the Iranian democracy movement. As millions challenged the election results, an online network of digital activists began a series of interventions to keep Facebook, Twitter, independent blogs, and mail clients accessible and unmonitored. This network of digital activists across the world has since coalesced into Access. Through its work, Access has helped liberate thousands of protest videos and records of human rights abuses (collecting over 5 million views); assisted hundreds of thousands of human rights defenders and ordinary citizens to securely jump the firewall to reach vital blocked websites; and enabled rights-based organizations to remain defiantly online despite the continual attack of regimes and their hackers. Access works to ensure open global internet access and the protection and promotion of human rights.

<http://www.accessnow.org/>

Nominated by Heidi Hautala and 44 others

**Haytham Al-Maleh, Syrian Human Rights lawyer
For the 2010 Sakharov Prize**

One year after adopting a resolution on the case of Muhammad Al-Hassani, a Syrian lawyer, who was arbitrarily arrested and held incommunicado, the European Parliament adopted on 9 September 2010, a resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria with special regard to the case of Haytham Al-Maleh, an 80 year-old human rights lawyer.

Haytham Al-Maleh has been arbitrarily arrested by officers of the General Intelligence Service on 14 October 2009, held incommunicado until his interrogation by the Military Prosecutor on 20 October 2009 and tried before the Second Military Court of Damascus despite the fact that military tribunals should not have competence to try civilians. His arrest took place at the time proposed by EU Member States for signing the Association agreement with Syria, in which respect for human rights constitutes an essential part of that agreement.

On 4 July 2010 Haytham Al-Maleh was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on the grounds of "transferring false and exaggerated news that weaken national sentiment", under Articles 285 and 286 of the Syrian Criminal Code. The charges arise from Mr Al-Maleh's interviews with the media in which he criticized the continued use of emergency laws in Syria and the ongoing control of Syrian authorities over the judicial system. Trial monitoring missions organised by international civil society organisations clearly reported that Al-Maleh's trial failed to meet with international standards of fair trial.

Mr Al-Maleh's health seriously deteriorated during the summer. He suffers from arthritis, diabetes and thyroid problems and is deprived of any regular access to medication.

The conviction of Haytham Al-Maleh who is considered a prominent human rights lawyer in Syria signals continuing persecution of lawyers and human rights defenders. It even sends a strong warning to lawyers who promote the rule of law and challenge daily the restrictions imposed by the state of emergency in place since 1963.

The signature of the EU-Syria Association Agreement has been delayed at the request of the Syrian part. Since October 2009, the Commission is mandated by the Council to clarify the situation and find a way to sign this agreement. In its resolution of September 2010, the Parliament underlined the deteriorating human rights situation, including the systematic repression towards lawyers and human rights defenders in Syria and requested a clear mechanism for starting discussions between the Syrian and European counterparts on the specific human rights and democracy improvements the EU expects from the Syrian authorities.

Awarding the 2010 Sakharov Prize to Mr Al-Maleh could be seen as a major support for all those who defend human rights and promote democratic reforms in Syria and would launch a significant signal to the EU which has to guarantee coherence and efficiency of its external action in terms of respect and promotion of human rights.

Nominated by Rebecca Harms and Daniel Cohn-Bendit on behalf of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

Breaking the Silence



Who they are and what they do

Breaking the Silence is an Israeli NGO established in 2004 by Israeli army soldiers and veterans who collect and publish testimonies about their military service in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem during the second Intifada.

In a society tending to ignore the injustice and oppression inherent in the occupation, the work of Breaking the Silence is of critical importance. Breaking the Silence emphasizes how the Israeli society "continues to turn a blind eye, and to deny that which happens in its name". Breaking the Silence is dedicated to exposing the Israeli public to the realities of the Israeli occupation as seen through the eyes of Israeli soldiers and to stirring debate about the impact of the prolonged occupation on both the Palestinian population and on Israeli society.

Since 2004, Breaking the Silence has collected testimonies from over 650 soldiers who have served in the territories since the beginning of the second Intifada. Breaking the Silence also arranges tours to the villages of South Mount Hebron for Israeli youth, students, politicians, journalists, foreign diplomats, and the general public in order to provide a unique first-hand encounter of the dire situation in the region.

The organization is very concerned about the credibility of the stories that they publish.. For every story, they demand two eyewitnesses, conduct an investigation by speaking with other soldiers, record conversations and verify with B'Tselem and other organizations. There are lots of stories that are not being publicized because there does not exist enough verification.

Threats and challenges to the work of Breaking the Silence

Whilst the work of Breaking the Silence has many supporters in Israel and abroad, there also remains many who are not in support of their work and are using increasingly threatening means in attempt to close down the organization and keep it quit. That includes arrests of the members of BtS, attacks and military prevention of the tours arranged by BtS, public defamation and attempts to cut off funding.

Detention and Arrests: Members of Breaking the Silence are frequently held in detention by the Israeli police in the settlement of Kiryat Araba adjacent to Hebron. There are various reasons given for the detentions, ranging from disturbances of the peace to fear of settler attacks to false complaints by the settlers. None of these complaints have ever been proven true and no charges against Breaking the Silence have ever been made¹.

Settler attacks and military prevention of tours: The arranged tours to Hebron are repeatedly attacked by Hebron settlers and these attacks are getting more and more violent. Despite dozens of complaints to the Israeli police, very little has been done about these attacks. Instead, the Israeli Defense Forces have several times prevented the tours from taking place in order to prevent the settler violence. To make matters worse, the military commanders publicly have stated in the media that members of human rights organizations, and specifically members of Breaking the Silence, are the ones responsible for the violence in the region. These statements effectively gave the settlers legitimacy to harm and threaten activists. Today, one-third of the tours that Breaking the Silence request to hold, are refused and during the tours that do take place, there is harassment and physical abuse by the settlers as well as numerous false complaints filed against Breaking the Silence to the police. There is currently a military order in effect that bars members of Breaking the Silence from entering the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

Public defamation and attempts to cut off funding: Ever since Breaking the Silence was established, various attempts to undermine its credibility and smear its name, have been taking place. Public vilification reached its peak in the wake of the soldiers' testimonies that were published concerning Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publically condemned Breaking the Silence² and the Israeli Foreign Ministry pressured foreign governments to stop funding the organization³. At the same time, Breaking the Silence was the target of incitement from many public figures, including two prominent talk show hosts on Israeli public army radio who encouraged their listeners to "break the bones" of Breaking the Silence⁴.

¹ <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/1570>

² <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/pm-slams-breaking-the-silence-1.282675>

³ http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2009/07/israel_wants_clarity_on_human.php

⁴ <http://www.nif.org/issue-areas/stories/nif-protests-public-army.html>

Nominated by Lothar Bisky on behalf of the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left

Breaking the Silence

Breaking The Silence (BTS) is an Israeli Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and veterans who collect and provide testimonies about their military service in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem during the Second Intifada, giving serving and discharged Israeli personnel and reservists a platform to confidentially describe their experience in the Israeli-occupied territories.

The organization's stated mission is to 'break the silence' of IDF soldiers who return to civilian life in Israel and "discover the gap between the reality which they encountered in the occupied territories, and the silence which they encounter at home."

Created in 2004, Breaking the Silence are collecting testimonies from and publishing soldiers' accounts, to try to "force Israeli society to address the reality which it created" and face the truth about "abuse towards Palestinians, looting, and destruction of property" that is familiar to soldiers.

The organisation publishes written and videotaped reports on its website. On the 15 of July 2009 'Breaking the Silence' published a new booklet "Soldiers' Testimonies from Operation Cast Lead, Gaza 2009, and it also recently published a booklet of testimonies of women soldiers. Members of the group have carried out speaking tours throughout Israel, Western Europe and the United States. BTS is conducting tours to Hebron for the Israeli public.

The Israel government has protested against the international government funding of Breaking the Silence. It made clear that it objected to the funding by Britain, the Netherlands and Spain of NGOs "with a clear anti-government agenda".

The Israeli Ambassador to the Netherlands said that Israel was a democracy and that such funds should go to places without democracy. Breaking the Silence was a "legal and legitimate organization", he said, but its funding by the Dutch government was unreasonable "in light of the political sensitivities."

Nominated by Joseph Daul, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jaime Mayor Oreja, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa and Francisco José Millán Mon on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)

‘Guillermo Fariñas, on behalf of all those fighting for freedom and human rights in Cuba’

Guillermo Fariñas, 48, is a former soldier and now a dissident in Cuba. He joined the opposition in 1989, giving up his membership of the Young Communist League. A qualified psychologist and journalist, he set up the ‘Cubanacán Press’, an independent press agency, with a view to raising awareness in the rest of the world about the fate of political prisoners in Cuba. This was to no avail, however, as the agency has now been closed down and is no longer publishing. As demonstrations are banned, he went on hunger strike in 2006 to protest against internet censorship, calling for freedom of access to the internet for all. In the light of this he was awarded the Reporters Without Borders Cyber-Freedom Prize in 2006.

A proponent of non-violence who dares to speak out against the Castro regime, Guillermo Fariñas is a leading light in the movement against the taking of political prisoners. He has spent 11-and-a-half years in prison himself, but despite its increasingly tough stance, the Cuban regime cannot get the better of his determination and humanism. Like others before him, he has chosen the hunger strike as a way of raising awareness about the situation with regard to freedom in his country, and he is therefore a beacon of hope for dozens of journalists and activists who are currently in prison.

On 24 February 2010, Guillermo Fariñas began his 23rd hunger strike, the day after the controversial death – condemned at the time by the European Parliament – of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a prisoner of conscience, following a hunger strike that had lasted almost three months. Mr Fariñas was calling for the release of 26 political prisoners who were ill, and condemning the Cuban regime’s denial of its human rights violations. His hunger strike ended 135 days later, on 8 July 2010 – at a time when the state of his health had become an increasing cause for concern – following the announcement by the Catholic Church of Cuba that 52 prisoners had been released over the four months.

Guillermo Fariñas’ struggle has been – and still is – a shining example for all defenders of freedom and democracy.

**Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group
and
Nominated by Edvard Kožušník and 91 others**



Guillermo FARIÑAS

Guillermo Fariñas is a Cuban doctor of psychology, independent journalist, and political dissident in Cuba. He has conducted 23 hunger strikes over the years to protest various elements of the Cuban regime. He has stated that he is ready to die in the struggle against censorship in Cuba.

He has recently ended a 4-month hunger strike in protest to demand the release of 52 imprisoned opposition activists in poor health. Doctors said Fariñas had been near death.

Why the EP should support him:

- Fariñas is a genuine symbol of fight for the freedom of expression and democracy.
- He is ready to die for these moral principles.
- It is the opportunity for the EU to send a clear signal to the Cuban regime that the EU Common Position* will not be revised without real steps towards liberalisation of the totalitarian regime (contrary to the current political line of Socialist government in Spain).

* The 1996 EU policy calls for advances in human rights and democracy before relations with Cuba can be normalised.

Nominated by Norbert Neuser, Willy Meyer, Raúl Romeva i Rueda and 40 others



AMINETU HAIDAR

Aminetu Haidar (Laayoune, 1967) is a leading Sahrawi human rights defender and activist for the independence of Western Sahara. She is President of the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) and a shining example of non-violent struggle and peaceful resistance, which has led to her being referred to as the ‘Sahrawi Gandhi’.

Her commitment to upholding the human rights of the Sahrawi people has resulted in her being oppressed and persecuted on numerous occasions. In 1987 she took part in a peaceful demonstration calling for Morocco to hold a referendum on independence for Western Sahara, echoing several UN Resolutions. Following that demonstration she was imprisoned without trial and ‘disappeared’ for four years, being held in secret prisons in Morocco, where she was tortured alongside dozens of other Sahrawi political prisoners.

In 2005 Morocco sentenced her to seven years in prison, this time at the ‘Black prison’ in Laayoune, a city in Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. In April 2010 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for Morocco to free Aminetu Haidar immediately, along with 36 other Sahrawi prisoners of conscience. She was released upon completion of her sentence.

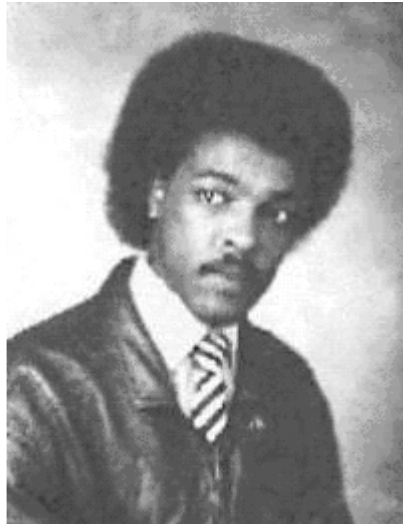
In November 2009, on her return from a trip to the US to collect the Civil Courage Prize, Aminetu Haidar was illegally expelled from Laayoune airport in Western Sahara by the Moroccan authorities, who confiscated her passport. She was forcibly deported to Spain, where she began a hunger strike in Lanzarote airport in the Canary Islands. This went on for 32 days, after which she was finally allowed to travel back to her home in the occupied territories.

The prizes she has been awarded include the Juan María Brandés Human Rights Prize and Freedom Award (2006), the Silver Rose Award (2007), the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award (2008), the Train Foundation’s Civil Courage Prize for Steadfast Resistance to Evil at Great Personal Risk (2009), and the Jovellanos International Prize for Resistance and Freedom (2010). Amnesty International has nominated her for the Ginetta Sagan Award, and

she has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Nominated by Olle Schmidt, Cecilia Wikström, Marit Paulsen and Lena Ek and 37 others

Mr Dawit ISAAK



Dawit Isaak is a journalist, a writer and a playwright. He was born October 27th 1964. Twenty nine years later, his country would be declared the state of Eritrea after a long and bloody war for liberation. He came to Sweden as a refugee from the war in 1987. He became a Swedish citizen in 1992.

When Eritrea gained independence, Dawit Isaak returned to his native country. He got married and had children. Eventually he became a part-owner of the country's first independent newspaper, Setit, where he came to work as a reporter. But the country's independence proved fragile: in 1998, the conflict with Ethiopia unexpectedly flared up again, leading to a devastating border war. Dawit Isaak returned to Sweden, preparing to bring his family to safety. His wife and three children followed in April 2000. They settled down in Gothenburg.

One year later, Dawit Isaak again travelled to Eritrea. That spring, Asmara was boiling with political activity. The border war had caused an intense political debate. A group of fifteen cabinet members demanded, among other things, democratic reforms and a thorough, objective evaluation of the events leading to the war. In May, when the demands of the fifteen dissidents had not gained a hearing, they put their critique on the internet in an open letter. The letter was published by the free press, along with analyses, comments and interviews with several of the fifteen politicians. Within a few days, eleven of the fifteen politicians were arrested, as were ten of the leading journalists from the free press. Including Dawit Isaak, who was taken into custody an early Sunday morning, on 23 September 2001.

As yet, none of them has been either charged formally or given a fair trial. The journalists, as

well as the politicians, have been branded as traitors; the journalists have also been accused of receiving financial aid from abroad - a crime according to the Eritrean press laws.

There have been few signs of life from Dawit Isaak since his arrest. In November 2001, Sweden's then honorary consul in Asmara, Lis Truelsen, caught a glimpse of him through the bars and had time to exchange a few words with him. In April 2002 he was taken to hospital - for treatment of torture injuries, according to the American press organization Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). And in the summer of 2004, Eritrea's ambassador in Stockholm, Araya Desta, told the Swedish national radio that Dawit Isaak was doing fine. But so far, neither his family nor Swedish authorities nor international human rights organizations have been allowed to visit him. The Eritrean authorities claim that Dawit Isaak is an Eritrean citizen only - not a Swedish citizen - and his case thus an internal affair.

In the spring of 2010 a former prison guard at the notorious Eiraeiro facility, where Dawit Isaak as well as other journalists and people from the opposition are imprisoned, fled from Eritrea to Ethiopia. His testimony states that the prison is situated in the desert (approximately 100 kilometres from the capital Asmera) and is to a high extent self-catering in order to further isolate the prisoners from the rest of society. The cells are three times four meters and consist of a toilet, a shower and three blankets. The prisoners are fed only once a day and they only get six slices of bread and a (far from nutritional) soup. The prison guards are not allowed to communicate with the interns. To ensure that no relations are established between guards and prisoners they always work in teams of three to four guards together. The interns are forced to wear handcuffs at all times and psychological torture is common. Also, the prisoners' names are not used and they are continuously referred to only by the number given to them.

In the summer of 2010 a representative for the Eritrean government told a Swedish newspaper that the case of Dawit Isaak will never be dealt with in court since it was considered a risk to the national security of Eritrea.

In January 2009 the European Parliament demanded the immediate release of Dawit Isaak and other imprisoned journalists, in the resolution on the Horn of Africa B6/033 2009. On the 20th of February 2009, the then President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering sent a letter to the President of Eritrea, expressing deep concerns about Dawit Isaak's deterioration health, and repeating the call for his and other journalists immediate release. He also called on the Eritrean authorities to agree to a visit to Dawit Isaak in detention by an official of the European Commission accompanied by a medical doctor. In 2009 Dawit Isaak was one of the three final candidates to the European Parliament Sakharov Prize. In June 2010 the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek sent an official letter to the President of Eritrea, to once again express the European Parliament's deep concerns about Dawit Isaak.

Nominated by Martin Schulz on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament



Birtukan Mideksa

Birtukan Mideksa is an Ethiopian politician and former judge. She is the leader of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party. She was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. After graduating from high school she joined Addis Ababa University where she graduated from Law School with a Bachelors Degree in Law. She practiced law at the 3rd district of the federal judiciary.

While she was working for the federal judiciary, Birtukan was appointed to be a judge at the 3rd district court of the federal first instant court. During that time, she presided over a high profile case of the former defense minister and top ranking official of TPLF, Siye Abraha who was accused of corruption. She set the defendant free on bail, and was surprised minutes later when government authorities arrested Siye while he was walking out of the court accompanied by his family and friends. It has been reported that subsequently she received several warnings and threats from government security agents.

Later, Birtukan decided to join a political party to bring about a fast change in the country, including superiority of the rule of law, and a full respect and implementation of the constitution which proved first hand not in place while serving as a judge. She joined the Rainbow Ethiopia: Movement for Democracy and Social Justice party and later Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) after a coalition of four parties. After election or 2005, her party won over a third of the seats and believed they would have won more if not for voting and counting irregularities, and the governing party started to round up opposition party leaders (including Birtukan). Birtukan was convicted of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order and sentenced to life in prison. She was pardoned in 2007 after lengthy negotiations and after she, as well as other leaders of the opposition spent 18 months in prison. She later founded UDJ (Unity for Democracy and Justice) with the same principles followed by CUD. The need for having the new party name came from the fact that the ruling party's election commission awarded to a splinter group from CUD (aka Kinijit). Birtukan was elected to be a chairperson of the UDJ, which has the goal of bringing about change in Ethiopia by peaceful means.

On December 28 2008, Birtukan was re-arrested and imprisoned to serve a life sentence, after the pardon granted to her in 2007 was revoked. Birtukan Medeksa was among more than 100 people jailed for offences after controversial polls in 2005. A dispute over the terms caused her re-arrest. The Ethiopian government claimed that her pardon was conditional on "an apology for her crimes". It said it ordered her re-arrest over reports that she had publicly denied having apologized for her actions or asking for a pardon, and that she would now be imprisoned for life. Birtukan openly admitted to continue her "peaceful struggle for more democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law" in Ethiopia. Her problems started when she spoke to journalists abroad about the way opposition leaders were released. She mentioned negotiations which had taken place between the opposition and government, with the help of "a panel of elders", before their pardon was finally granted. The government laid emphasis on a document signed by the prisoners to be released, "regretting" any "mistakes" they had "committed", implying that the release was part of a normal judicial process, rather than part of a negotiated political deal.

Merera Gudina, leader of the opposition coalition Forum for Democratic Dialogue (FDD – Medrek), stated to an audience during a visit to the United States in November 2009, "Birtukan Medeksa is going to be the Mandela of Ethiopia". Many of her supporters refer to her as Ethiopia's Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese prisoner of conscience.

In December 2009 Amnesty International categorized Birtukan Mideksa's imprisonment as "*unjust and politically motivated*". It launched an international campaign demanding her release, challenging Ethiopian Government's claim that her incarceration was a legal matter¹. When asked about her release at a December 2009 news conference, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who rarely refers to her by name, replied, "There will never be an agreement with anybody to release Birtukan," he said. "Ever. Full stop. That's a dead issue"².

¹ <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/11916>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birtukan_mideksa

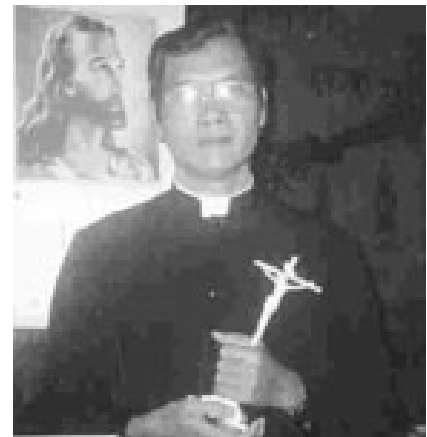
Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group

Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly

Father Nguyễn Van Ly is a Vietnamese priest and leading human rights activist, who uses only non-violent struggle as means to achieve his goal of universal human rights promotion. His guiding principles are:

- Freedom of movement and residence, assembly, information, thought and religion;
- Equality and justice for the people of Vietnam;
- The institution of a true democracy in Vietnam.

Father Nguyễn Van Ly was arrested for the first time in September 1977 for distributing two essays by Archbishop Nguyen Kim Dien criticizing the government's oppression of religious minorities. The priest has since then collectively spent a total of over 20 years in prison or under house arrest for his advocacy of human dignity and democracy. Upon his temporary release to undergo medical treatment in March 2010, Father Nguyen Van Ly was immediately placed under close surveillance by the authorities and as a "threat to national security" has been threatened with arrest "at any moment" for his calling on the international community to sit up and take notice of the situation of human rights inside Vietnam.



Father Nguyễn Van Ly summarizes his work in support of human rights and dignity as follows: "A civilized society should never allow any government, whatever its ideology or political principle to derogate from universal human rights and isolate its own people behind an iron curtain on the grounds of 'non-interference' in internal state affairs".

Nominated by European Conservatives and Reformists Group

OPEN DOORS

OPEN DOORS is a non-denominational Christian mission supporting persecuted Christians, which are the religious minority suffering most from persecution. Worldwide, four out of every five persons persecuted for their religious beliefs are Christians. Varying degrees of persecution, from individual acts to structural oppression by the authorities, take place in many countries around the world.

OPEN DOORS was founded in 1955 by Anne van der Bijl, a Dutch citizen, after visiting persecuted Christians in communist Poland. OPEN DOORS initially aimed at reaching Christians in communist Central and Eastern Europe and China. In the 1970s the field of operation expanded to the Middle East, and parts of Africa and Southeast Asia. Currently the organization is active in more than 45 countries with a wide range of activities. These include:

- Lobbying in both western countries and in countries with oppressive regimes for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief.
- Providing legal aid and support to prisoners and their families;
- Sponsoring restoration centres for Christian refugees, widows and orphans, reconciliation ministries and Bible colleges;
- Delivering Bibles and other Christian literature;

OPEN DOORS publishes annually the *World Watch List*, which ranks countries by the intensity of persecution that Christians face for actively pursuing their faith around the world.

OPEN DOORS recently launched a massive aid operation to reach Pakistani flood victims belonging to religious minorities, which were discriminated against by the official Pakistani relief efforts.

For more info:

<http://sb.od.org/> (OPEN DOORS International web portal)

<http://www.opendoorsuk.org/> (OPEN DOORS UK)

<http://www.opendoors.nl> (OPEN DOORS NL)