

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HUMAN RIGHTS, COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

NOTICE TO MEMBERS No 14/2001

Subject: SAKHAROV PRIZE 2001

In accordance with the Statute of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought (PE 305.309/BUR), the following have been nominated by at least 25 Members of the European Parliament:

13 September 2001
AS/db

Ms Angelina Acheng ATYAM (nominated by Emma NICHOLSON of WINTERBOURNE, Patrick COX and others)	Uganda Co-Founder of the "Concerned Parents Association" against use of child soldiers
Ms Sihem BEN SEDRINE (nominated by Harlem DÉSIR, Olivier DUPUIS, Hélène FLAUTRE, Cecilia MALMSTRÖM and Roseline VACHETTA and others)	Tunisia Journalist, Publisher and spokeswoman for the National Council for Liberties (CNLT)
Padre Francisco DE ROUX (nominated by Antonio DI PIETRO, Patrick COX and others)	Colombia Founder of the association "Laboratorio de Paz", involved in the peace process
Mr Izzat GHAZZAWI and Mrs Nurit PELED-ELHANAN (nominated by Francis WURTZ, Monica FRASSONI, Luisa MORGANTINI, Pasqualina NAPOLETANO, Emilio MENÉNDEZ del VALLE and others)	Palestine/Israel who both are involved in the peace process
Don Zacarias KAMUENHO (nominated by José RIBEIRO E CASTRO, Mário SOARES, José PACHECO PEREIRA, José Maria GIL-ROBLES GIL-DELGADO, Gerard COLLINS, François BAYROU, Nelly MAES, Ioannis KOUKIADIS, Ole KRARUP, Bernd POSSELT, Iñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO, Marie-Thérèse HERMANGE and others)	Angola Archbishop of Lubango involved in the peace process
Mr Patrick LEAHY (nominated by Mariotto SEGNI and others)	USA Senator leading the criminal justice and death penalty reforms
Mr LI HONGZHI (nominated by Nelly MAES and others)	leading member of the Falun Gong (China)
Ms Ngawang SANGDROL (nominated by Thomas MANN and others)	Tibet nun, human rights activist, imprisoned in Tibet
Mr Morgan TSVANGIRAI (nominated by Johan VAN HECKE, Geoffrey VAN ORDEN and others)	Zimbabwe opposition leader in Zimbabwe

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy will **decide which three candidates to propose at its meeting on 2 October 2001**, from amongst whom the Conference of Presidents will select the winner.

ANGELINA ACHENG ATYAM

Ugandan citizen Angelina Atyam is a forty-nine-year old nurse-midwife and a mother of six children. Her fourth child, Charlotte, was abducted in October 1996 along with 139 other girls kidnapped from St Mary's College Aboke in Northern Uganda.

After this tragedy, Angelina helped found the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) which has given voice to thousands of families whose children have been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and are used as soldiers.

The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, a religious fanatic who claims to be in communication with the Holy Spirit, is a rebel group which claims it wants to create a society based on the ten biblical commandments. The LRA is trying to overthrow the Ugandan government and is also fighting against the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Sudan's civil war: 80% of the LRA's recruits are abducted children.

Angelina (Vice-Chairperson of the CPA) and the CPA have been working tirelessly to secure the release of the estimated 10 000 abducted children and to draw international attention to the situation of the child soldiers. These children are invisible and therefore often forgotten by the international community. Nevertheless, human rights experts estimate that more than 300 000 children under the age of eighteen are currently used in armed conflicts in more than thirty countries.

UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director, Stephen Lewis, told in 1998 to the UN Human Rights Commission that: "the pattern of abductions of children pursued by the LRA amounts to a litany of disappearances and torture for which there is no equivalent anywhere on the face of the earth". "The LRA prey on children, and children alone. It is a psychosis, it is an obsession. It is a determination to destroy children at all costs". "Children forced to kill each other, forced to kill adults, children raped, children used as porters in war, children brutalised and murdered".

SIHEM BEN SEDRINE

Journalist, publisher and former Vice-President of the Tunisian League for Human Rights, Sihem Ben Sedrine is also the spokeswoman for the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT), which is not recognised by the Authorities. She manages the Aloès publishing house, the on-line newspaper *Kalima* (censored in Tunisia), and is the General Secretary of the Observatory for the Defence of the Freedom of the Press, Publishing and Creation (OLPEC), associated with the international network Reporters Without Borders.

An untiring activist for liberties and human rights, Sihem Ben Sedrine has been persecuted by the Tunisian police for years. In the 1990s, in fact, the police distributed pornographic photos of her – faked of course – and actually gave a set to her son! Not long ago, during the hunger strike undertaken by activist Jalel Zoghلامي, she and her husband Omar Mestiri were so violently attacked by the police and members of the ruling party that she was obliged to wear a neck brace.

During the programme “The Great Maghreb” broadcast on 17 June 2001 by the satellite TV channel Al Mustaquillah, she raised the issues of torture and corruption in Tunisia and cited statements made by a judge in the presence of witnesses. Not wanting to attack her with regard to the embarrassing affair of Moncef Trabelsi, the President’s brother-in-law whom Sihem Ben Sedrine had denounced, the Tunisian authorities started proceedings against her for defaming the one judge she had referred to and, consequent to her testimony on torture, a legal action for spreading false information with intent to disturb law and order. She was immediately served with a summons but, notwithstanding the persistent rumours concerning this, her husband Omar Mestiri and his lawyers have not been able to obtain any confirmation of the fact.

This did not stop her from again taking part in the “The Great Maghreb” broadcast on Sunday 24 June 2001, in the course of which she announced, despite the threats she had received and her arrest (which had taken place in the interim after she had participated in the broadcast made by Mohamed Moadda, leader of the opposition party MDS, on Al Mustaquillah satellite TV) that she had every intention of returning to Tunisia on Tuesday 26 June 2001, fully aware that she might be arrested once more, which she was, as soon as she landed in Tunis.

Sihem Ben Sedrine has been the victim of a slanderous, defamatory, sexist and racist press campaign (see *La Presse de Tunisie* and *Ach-Chourouk*), which has also targeted members of the opposition who have taken part in the above programme during the last two months, and the director of the satellite channel, Mohamed El Hachemi Hamdi.

Sihem Ben Sedrine was released on bail on 11 August after being held in prison for 47 days; she continues to be persecuted and risks a prison sentence of several years.

After leaving prison, she has denounced more than once the iniquitous proceedings and detention to which she was forced to submit and the dreadful conditions in the women’s prison La Manouba.

PADRE FRANCISCO DE ROUX

Padre Francisco de Roux is a young priest, founder of the Colombian association "Laboratorio de Paz". He leads a frontline activity to implement the peace process in the crucial region of Magdalena Medio, an area rich of oil and ravaged by fighting between guerrilla group Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional, para-military groups and the Army.

By involving in his network tens of mayors and many civic society representatives, Padre de Roux managed to obtain the province of Magdalena Medio declared a "meeting zone" between the government and the guerrilla. Today a cease-fire agreement is implemented and further developments in the negotiation are taking place.

The European Union has decided to support his activity, being an innovative pilot project in peace-building effort in the last Latin American civil war, which has already caused more than 300.000 victims. At the beginning of 2001 Jacques Chirac has invited Padre de Roux to France to congratulate him for his action.

IZZAT GHAZZAWI and NURIT PELED-ELHANAN

Mr Izzat GHAZZAWI

Mr Ghazzawi, a Palestinian, was born in 1951 and is Chairman of the Palestinian Writers' Union. A lecturer at Birzeit University, he has an MA in English Literature. He is a member of the executive board of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. Mr Ghazzawi won the International Prize for Freedom of Expression in Stavanger, in 1995. A novelist, short story writer and critic, he organised and headed the first International Conference for Writers in Palestine (1997).

Mr Ghazzawi has on several occasions been imprisoned and had his work censored by the Israeli authorities on account of his political activities: his life has also been marked by the killing of his son Ramy (age 16) by the Israeli army. Ramy was killed in his school's playground as he was assisting a wounded friend.

In spite of these tragic circumstances, Izzat Ghazzawi has continued to work for cultural and political dialogue with Israel, sharing the views and spirit embodied by the work of Israeli writer Horvitz Yaer. A few months after the killing of his son he, together with Israeli writer Abraham B. Yehoshua, presented a publication (6 500 000 copies in a variety of languages) containing photographs by Oliviero Toscani on Palestinian-Israeli relations. He continues to work for a just peace based on recognition of the rights of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples and mutual respect between them.

Mrs Nurit PELED-ELHANAN

Mrs Nurit Peled-Elhanan, an Israeli, was born in 1949 and is a university teacher. She has an MA in comparative literature. She is the daughter of the famous General Matti Peled, renowned for his pacifist and progressive campaigning.

Mrs Nurit Peled-Elhanan's daughter, Smadar (13 years of age), was one of the victims of the suicide attack carried out by a Palestinian kamikaze in West Jerusalem three years ago.

'When my daughter died, I refused to be blinded by despair - says Nurit - and I made a statement which proved controversial, in which I said that what was to blame was the short-sighted policy of not recognising the rights of others and fomenting hatred and conflict'.

Since making her views public, she has become a symbol of those in Israel who favour a negotiated settlement to the crisis and proclaim their belief in 'two peoples, two states with equal rights'.

THE REASONS FOR THESE NOMINATIONS

Through their experience and commitment, Izzat Ghazzawi e Nurit Peled have given practical expression to the hope of a negotiated and peaceful settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Their tragic experiences (loss of two children) have not turned them into enemies. Their grief has

not turned to hatred, but has given them the energy to seek ways of ensuring respect for the rights of both communities.

The award would not be merely for two people who have lost their children. Their action serves as an example well beyond the limits of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and can be seen as a universal model of how non-violence and recognition of the rights of each and every person can be promoted and made a reality.

The award of the Sakharov Prize to Izzat Ghazzawi and Nurit Peled will contribute to promoting peace and understanding within Palestinian and Israeli society.

DON ZACARIAS KAMUENHO

Don ZACARIAS KAMUENHO is 67 years old. He was born in Chimbundo (Huambo province, Angola) on the 5th September 1934. He was ordained priest on the 9th July 1961 and became bishop in 1974, having served in the dioceses of Luanda, Sumbe and Lubango. Archbishop of Lubango since the 2nd February 1997, he was later appointed also as President of the CEAST, the catholic Episcopal Conference of Angola and Sao Tome. He is the President of COIEPA, since it was created on the 13th April 2000. This Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola is an ecumenical structure joining the catholic CEAST, the Evangelical Alliance of Angola (AEA), and the Council of Christian Churches of Angola (CICA).

Mostly in these two capacities, as COIEPA and CEAST's leader, he has been a firm, unbiased and persisting voice, always inspiring and encouraging the efforts which are increasingly emerging from the heart of the Angolan civil society: a new and promising spiritual road to bring peace, along with democracy and respect of human rights, back to Angolans. Archbishop KAMUENHO is an outstanding personality, a broad and remarkable moral reference for this new general movement. He is a well-respected voice, heard (though often reluctantly) by both sides in the armed conflict, which he never fears to criticise and to put under pressure, expressing the views of ordinary people and striving for the well-being and fundamental rights of the Angolan people. Don ZACARIAS KAMUENHO is one of the most prominent symbols of the demands for peace, freedom and justice coming from the Angolan people.

Today, many signs reveal that the time has come for Angolan civil society to intervene and, bottom-up, to take the lead in this quest for peace in Angola. Since 1999, a new active conscience is dawning in the Angolan people. It is encouraged and represented by the efforts of Church leaders and lay people and of several independent organisations that have emerged within civil society, pursuing the goal of an "inclusive national reconciliation". They work hard to overcome the disastrous politics based upon hatred and made of a violent split in two, which has brought no more than destruction to Angola and tremendous sufferance for the Angolans. The strongest hopes for a lasting peace for Angola come from this independent and persistent pressure to: first of all, arrange a cease-fire and reopen dialogue between belligerents; then, an internal mediation that can be effective, whereas, in the past, the international one has always failed. Within the framework of these efforts and continuous appeals, the distinguished voice of Don ZACARIAS KAMUENHO, the President of COIEPA, has been one of the most persistent and remarkable.

After the resumption of the dreadful civil war in 1998 and in spite of continuous violent incidents, these new hopes remain. The general climate seems to be changing in Angola, slowly but steadily: moderate politicians from MPLA and UNITA, along with leaders of other political parties, human rights activists and several civic movements are working together in the context of the same peace initiatives for the first time in years. In spite of the on-going war, both the government and UNITA recently felt the need, in 2001, to present new "proposals" or "plans" for peace. The calls for an immediate cease-fire become more and more intense throughout the country. The role of Churches as possible mediators is more and more acknowledged both at national and international level. David Kramer, the leader of the US experts team that, a few weeks ago, concluded that Angola needs "peace before elections", also stressed that "*the Church has a very strong role to play in the process of achieving peace*".

The most important landmarks in this independent quest for peace by Angolan civil society, with a leading contribution from Archbishop ZACARIAS KAMUENHO include: the Episcopal message “The Torment of the Angolan people” (January 1999); GARP’s document “Peace through Dialogue” (April 1999); “The Manifesto for Peace in Angola” (June 1999); the creation of COIEPA (April 2000); the “Congress *Pro Pace*” (July 2000); the “Forum on the Multiple Consequences of the War” (March 2001); the presentation and launching of the AMC - Broad Movement of Citizens (April/July 2001); the “Workshop for Peace” and the set-up of the “Network for Peace” (July 2001); the reply to UNITA’s leader (August 2001); the “Journey for Peace” (August/September 2001), one-month long.

PATRICK LEAHY

Senator PATRICK LEAHY was elected to the United States Senate in 1974 from the Green Mountain State and is now serving his fifth term. He has been a leading force in the US Congress for human rights since his election to the Senate in 1974. During the past 27 years he has been a leader in numerous debates on controversial human rights issues and frequently has personally advocated on behalf of persons detained or otherwise persecuted for their political views.

Born in Montpelier (Vermont US), he is a graduate of Saint Michael's College in Winooski (1961) and earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center (1964). He served for eight years as State's Attorney in Chittenden County. He gained a national reputation for his law enforcement activities and was selected (1974) as one of three outstanding prosecutors in the United States. Senator Leahy chairs the US Senate Judiciary Committee and has made death penalty reform a priority for the Committee and for the Senate.

Senator Leahy is the chief sponsor of the *"Innocence Protection Act"*, which would address the growing crisis in the administration of capital punishment. Leahy's death penalty reform package would reduce the risks that innocent people are executed by providing for post-conviction DNA testing and access to competent legal counsel.

The *"Innocence Protection Act"* is a comprehensive package of criminal justice reforms aimed at reducing the risk that innocent persons may be executed. Most urgently, the bill would:

- ensure that convicted offenders are afforded an opportunity to prove their innocence through DNA testing;
- help States to provide competent legal services at every stage of a death penalty prosecution;
- enable those who can prove their innocence to recover some measure of compensation for their unjust incarceration;
- provide the public with more reliable and detailed information regarding the administration of the nations capital punishment laws.

Congressional record statement of March 5, 2001:

Mr. LEAHY:

Mr. President, a little over one year ago, I came to this floor to draw attention to the growing crisis in the administration of capital punishment..... I noted the startling number of cases – 85 – in which death row inmates had been exonerated after long stays in prison..... In some of those cases, the inmate had come within days of being executed....And those were the "lucky" ones. We simply do not know how many innocent people remain on death row, and how many may already have been executed.....It seems like every time you pick up a paper these days, there is another story about another person who was sentenced to death for a crime that he did not commit.

....People of good conscience can and will disagree on the morality of the death penalty. I have always opposed it. I did when I was a prosecutor, and I do today. But no matter what you believe about the death penalty, no one wants to see innocent people sentenced to death. It is completely unacceptable....

....A year ago, along with several of my colleagues, I introduced the Innocence Protection Act of 2000. I hoped this bill would stimulate a national debate and begin work on national reforms on what is, as I said, a national problem. A year later, the national debate is well under way, but the need for real, concrete reforms is more urgent than ever....

....Too often in this chamber, we find ourselves dividing along party or ideological lines. The Innocence Protection Act is not about that, and it is not about whether, in the abstract, you favour or disfavour the death penalty. It is about what kind of society we want America to be in the 21st Century....

...I am gratified that our bill has served as a catalyst for reforms in the States with respect to post-conviction DNA testing. In just one year, several States have passed some form of DNA legislation. Others have DNA bills under consideration. Much of this legislation is modelled on the DNA provisions proposed in the Innocence Protection Act, and we can be proud about this. But there are still many States that have not moved on this issue....

This new Congress is, as our new President has said, a time for leadership.... We can send a message about the values of fundamental justice that unite all Americans. And we can substantially reduce the risk of executing innocent people.

We have had a constructive debate, and we have made a noble commitment. It is now time to act. (7.3.2001 Senator Leahy reintroduces the Innocence Protection Act).

Leahy has been also the leading U.S. officeholder in the international campaign against the production, export and use of anti-personnel landmines. In 1992, Leahy wrote the first law by any government to ban the export of these weapons. He led efforts in Congress to aid mine victims by creating a special fund in the foreign aid budget. He was instrumental in establishing programs to support humanitarian demining, and played a key role in pushing for an international treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

LI HONGZHI

Born in 1951, Changchun of Jilin Province, China, Mr. Li Hongzhi made public Falun Dafa (or Falun Gong) in 1992, an apolitical spiritual practice with ancient roots. Since then, he promoted tirelessly the universal principles of Truth-Compassion-Forbearance by touring and lecturing around the world. Over 100 million people of all ages and walks of life in more than 40 countries have cultivated physically and spiritually from his teachings over the past 9 years. His major work *Zhuan Falun* was published in January 1995, and has been translated into 17 languages, together with a series of books.

In July 1999 the Chinese authority stopped supporting Falun Gong and began a ruthless persecution of this ancient practice because (1) the number of practitioners has reached 70 to 100 million and this outnumbers the party members, and (2) the Chinese authority fears the revival of this traditional culture would undermine the ideology based on which the regime rules the people. Mr. Li Hongzhi was denounced by the Chinese authority as the Most-Wanted criminal, but Interpol flatly rejected the request to extradite him because he has no criminal record and is wanted for political reasons. Mr. Li's character was venomously attacked in the state-run media, and assassins were sent in search of him. Falun Gong has since then been banned, and people who practice Falun Gong are being persecuted for upholding their beliefs. This is the most violent atrocity against freedom of conscience in modern history.

According to reports by human rights groups and the media,

- *tens of millions of Falun Gong books and other materials were destroyed;*
- *over 50,000 practitioners have been arbitrarily sent to labor camps without trial;*
- *over 600 have been sentenced to extended jail terms - some up to 18 years;*
- *more than 1,000 have been illegally sent to psychiatric hospitals, where they are given forced injections and subjected to inhumane treatment;*
- *at least 216 people have been tortured to death in police custody.*

In response to the ban and personal attack, Mr. Li Hongzhi has remained compassionate and committed to peaceful and nonviolent resolution by repeatedly calling for direct dialogue with the Chinese Government. He wrote in July 1999, *"We are not against the Government now, nor will we be in the future. Other people may treat us badly, but we do not treat others badly, nor do we treat people as enemies."*

Inspired by his moral courage, millions of Falun Gong practitioners have been peacefully appealing to the Chinese government for their fundamental human rights to the freedoms of conscience, association, and expression, day in and day out, in spite of the certain punishment that awaits them. Yet, the persecution is intensifying every moment to Falun Gong practitioners inside China.

This peaceful and non-violent struggle for freedom of conscience is not merely a human rights issue, but also a moral issue, to preserve the humanity and peace in China and the rest of the world.

As of April 2001, Mr. Li Hongzhi and his Falun Gong have received over 340 awards and proclamations from Australia, Canada, China (before crackdown), Japan, Russia, and the U.S. in recognition of the extraordinary contributions to people's spiritual and physical health, and to

freedom of belief in the world. According to CNN report, Mr. Li has also been nominated as a front-runner for the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

NGAWANG SANGDROL

Ngawang Sangdrol, the Tibetan nun detained since 1992 in Drapchi prison, is now serving the longest sentence of all the political prisoners in Tibet.

She was arrested for the first time when she was thirteen years old, for having defended the right of her people to freedom from the Communist occupation and oppression of her country.

Now, at the age of twenty-four, she has already experienced torture, beatings and solitary confinement in sector 3, the wing reserved for political prisoners.

She will not be released before 2013. Or later, if the Chinese Communist authorities decide to further extend her sentence, as they have done already several times.

In a cassette which she managed to smuggle out of the prison, she and her fellow inmates sing:

" We friends and prisoners
We will look for joy [the Dalai Lama]
It doesn't matter if we are beaten
/ Our arms cannot be separated
The eastern cloud is not fixed on the horizon,
The time will come for the sun to appear. "

For having sung, recorded, and smuggled out this song, she was sentenced to three extra years in prison.

In a letter of 15 August 1997, in response to her family who had asked her not to create trouble for herself, she wrote:

" I regret nothing about my present situation (...). I miss you terribly, my brothers and sisters, but it is unlikely that we will meet again until the sun rises on the Land of Snow [until Tibet is liberated]."

For her courage and determination, she has been awarded the Prize of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC).

Ngawang Sangdrol now embodies the strength and the hope of the nonviolent struggle for the freedom of the Tibetan people from the oppression of the People's Republic of China.

MORGAN TSVANGIRAI

Opposition leader in Zimbabwe
President of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)

In the last two years, Zimbabwe has seen the worst political, social and economic crisis since independence. There is widespread repression of any dissent, disrespect for the rule of law and press freedom, and state sponsored violence against its own citizens. The violence includes killings, torture, physical assault, intimidation, as well as the confiscation and destruction of property. It is perpetrated by 'war veterans' (militias), members of the State security services and other supporters of the ruling ZANU (PF). The disorder and instability has led to rapid economic decline in the whole southern African region, bringing enormous suffering to millions of people.

The primary targets are political opponents. In the run-up to the general elections in June 2000, the government of President Mugabe embarked upon a violent campaign to suppress all political opposition. Members of the main opposition party MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) have been detained, attacked, injured, killed, or have had their property destroyed. Large groups of armed militias roam the rural areas, abducting and torturing MDC supporters and attacking teachers, doctors, nurses and other professionals accused of persuading people to support the opposition. In the urban centres, army and police personnel have carried out a series of attacks as reprisals for the massive pro-MDC urban vote in the elections.

Under these repressive and often life-threatening circumstances, it takes enormous courage to stand up for democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader and founder of the MDC, has been subjected to personal harassment, attempted murder and legal prosecution on the basis of his political ideas. He has become the symbol of the struggle for democracy and peaceful change, not only in Zimbabwe but also in the rest of Africa.

Curriculum Vitae Morgan Tsvangirai

The eldest son of a bricklayer, Morgan Tsvangirai was born in the Midlands of the former Southern Rhodesia on 10 March 1952. He was educated at Silveira and Gokomere Secondary Schools. From 1972 to 1974 he was a textile factory worker in Mutuare. For the next ten years, between 1975 and 1985, he was a foreman at Bindura Nickel Mine. In 1985 he became the Vice-President of the Associated Mineworkers Union and three years later the Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). He held that position for twelve years, up to 2000. During that period, he also served as Secretary General of the Southern Africa Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (1994) and as President of the National Constitutional Assembly (1997). As trade union leader, he was twice detained without charge for condemning government actions.

At the end of the nineties, Morgan Tsvangirai emerged as a political force in Zimbabwe. He became President Mugabe's fiercest critic, exposing corruption, economic mismanagement and autocratic rule. In December 1997 and early 1998 he led a series of strikes - the so-called 'stay-aways' - against tax increases, which brought the country to a standstill and eventually forced President Mugabe to cancel two tax increases. He subsequently survived an assassination attempt

when a group of unknown assailants burst into his office and tried to throw him from a tenth-storey window.

In September 1999 he launched the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Within months, the MDC defeated the government in the referendum on constitutional reform, which included clauses allowing the seizure of white owned farms without compensation. In the general elections in June 2000, his emerging party inflicted a major electoral blow to the ruling ZANU-PF by winning 57 of the constituency-based seats, against 62 held by the ruling party.

This was a remarkable achievement, given that the elections were marred by widespread violence, intimidation and fraud, causing international observers to question the freeness and fairness of the elections. Since, Morgan Tsvangirai has been subjected to continuing harassment and prosecution. In February 2001 state prosecutors charged him with terrorism and inciting violence. If convicted, he faces life imprisonment.

Morgan Tsvangirai has wide popular appeal amongst all groups in the country and represents the younger generation of Zimbabweans who are particularly critical of Mugabe's record of economic mismanagement, autocratic rule and human rights abuses. He is expected to run against Mugabe in the Presidential Elections in 2002. He is married to Susan Nyaradzo and they have seven children.

Morgan Tsvangirai

Since the year 2000, the European Parliament has passed five resolutions on the appalling situation in Zimbabwe. The breakdown in the rule of law, the terrible human rights abuses inflicted on all sections of the population in Zimbabwe, and the catastrophic economic situation have all been well documented and are ongoing. While the land issue has attracted much attention, the real question concerns the suppression of democratic rights and the ruthless determination of the Mugabe regime to hold on to power. What happens in Zimbabwe, once a prosperous country, will be an example to all of sub-Saharan Africa and has immediate consequences for the neighbouring states of southern Africa.

The political opposition to Mugabe has been in the front-line of attacks from his ZANU-PF militants. The opposition press has been bombed and critical journalists have been routinely attacked. Opposition politicians in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and their supporters have been the particular target of harassment, violent intimidation, arbitrary imprisonment and murder. At least 35 supporters were murdered in the run-up to the last General Election and in recent weeks several MPs and party officials have narrowly escaped death after violent attacks.

It takes enormous courage to stand up for democracy, liberty and freedom of speech in such circumstances. Morgan Tsvangirai, as the leader of the MDC, personifies this courageous stance and the struggle for genuine freedom in Zimbabwe.

Morgan Tsvangirai is now 49 and was born the son of a bricklayer in the Midlands of what was then Southern Rhodesia. His background was in the trade union movement and in 1994 he became Secretary General of the Southern Africa Trade Union Co-ordinating Council. In 1997 he became President of the National Constitutional Assembly, opposing the violence of the

Mugabe regime and becoming a strong advocate of democratic norms and human rights. He founded the Movement for Democratic Change in 1999 and has stood firm in the cause of freedom of speech and of human rights. He has faced immense intimidation, surviving an assassination attempt when a group of assailants burst into his office and tried to eject him from a tenth-storey window. In February 2001 he was arrested for making a speech criticising the Mugabe regime.

Morgan Tsvangirai stands for equality of opportunity and treatment for all Zimbabweans. He wants to build a true participatory democracy with accountable and transparent government. He aims to create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. He believes that there needs to be a programme of land reform but that it should be carried out in an orderly and humane fashion and in a way that will not lead to economic destabilisation. He shares the scepticism expressed by many commentators concerning the "agreement" reached with Mugabe at Abuja on 6 September and has called for continued international pressure.

The last award to a sub-Saharan figure was in 1988 when Nelson Mandela shared the inaugural prize. Morgan Tsvangirai would be a worthy and highly appropriate follower in these footsteps and has said that he would be honoured for his candidacy to go forward. His nomination would recognise his personal courage and commitment to democracy and serve as an inspiration to those suffering for freedom of speech and human rights, not just in Zimbabwe but throughout Africa.