
Sakharov Prize: the nominations for 2015 presented

The nominations for Parliament's 2015 Sakharov Prize were formally presented this Monday 28 September at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development committees and the Human Rights subcommittee. The Sakharov prize is awarded every year to honour exceptional individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression. The winner will be selected in late October.

"Candidates this year are linked to a number of sensitive questions: corruption, the abuse of power, freedom of thought and expression, female emancipation. These are all causes which we consider to be extremely important", said Romanian EPP member, Mr **Cristian Dan Preda** Human Rights sub-committee vice-chair said when opening the session.

The nominees for 2015 Sakharov Prize

Raif Badawi, a Saudi Arabian blogger and author of the website Free Saudi Liberals, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison, 1000 lashes and a hefty fine for insulting Islamic values on his website. Badawi was nominated by S&D, ECR and Greens/EFA.

"I can't imagine that someone here today could be bound in public and lashed just for being brave and expressing their own opinion. By nominating Raif Badawi we want to honour all of those who are fighting for freedom of expression in the world", Italian MEP *Pier Antonio Panzeri* (S&D) said.

Anna Fotyga, Polish member for the ECR explained that "the ECR group supports the candidacy" while Tamás Meszerics (Greens, Hungary) said that as a blogger in one of the most repressive systems in the world, Badawi is a symbol for the fight for freedom of speech. "Europe cannot stay silence anymore when individuals face torture or death merely for expressing their ideas in Saudi Arabia."

Political prisoners in Venezuela as well as the democratic opposition in Venezuela, embodied by the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, an election coalition formed in 2008 to unify the opposition to president Hugo Chávez's political party. Nominated by the EPP and

ALDE MEPs Dita Charanzová and Fernando Maura Barandiarán.

On behalf of the EPP group in Parliament, Spanish MEP *Luis de Grandes Pascual* said “while the government (in Venezuela) was democratically elected, at the moment it is exercising a totalitarian control on the population. This collective group is part of the democratic opposition in Venezuela; they are struggling and fighting to exercise their rights”

Fernando Maura Barandiarán (Spain) said that awarding the Sakharov Prize to the democratic opposition would be a way of supporting and providing some protection to the movement.

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Edna Adan Ismail, a Somali activist for the abolition of female genital mutilation and a former government minister

. She is the director and founder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeisa in Somaliland (Somalia). Nominated by EFDD.

James Carver (EFDD, UK) said “Alongside many of her kinsmen, Edna literally rolled up her sleeves (...) transforming her homeland into a rare success story on the horn of Africa. (...) Her persistence and determination has led to outstanding improvements in the role of women in modern Somaliland society.”

Boris Nemtsov a Russian physicist, former deputy prime minister and opposition politician who was assassinated in Moscow in February 2015. Nominated by ALDE.

Urmas Paet (ALDE, Estonia) described Nemtsov as “A leading personality of the Russian civil society who worked for a democratic, prosperous and peaceful Russia. (...) As an opposition leader and civil society activist he worked to expose corruption and abuse of political power in Russia. (...)And he paid for it with his life.”

Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian military pilot and a member of the Verkhovna Rada and of Ukraine’s delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, who was captured on 18 June 2014 and illegally transferred to Russia. Nominated by ECR.

Anna Fotyga called her “an outstanding woman” and a “symbol” of the more than 150 other prisoners taken by Russia following the annexation of Crimea.

Three whistle-blowers: **Edward Snowden**, a computer expert who worked as a contractor for the US National Security Agency and leaked details of its mass surveillance programmes to the press; **Antoine Deltour**, a former Price Waterhouse Coopers auditor who revealed secret tax rulings with multinational companies in Luxembourg to journalists; and **Stéphanie Gibaud** who

uncovered tax evasion and money laundering by UBS AG. Nominated by GUE/NGL.

German GUE/NGL member *Fabio de Masi* said that “they lifted the veil and is not right for them to be denied their rights, or face prison sentences”.

The Sakharov Prize

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is awarded each year by the European Parliament. It was set up in 1988 to honour individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms. Last year the prize was awarded to [Denis Mukwege](#).

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

Timetable

- 28 September 2015: nominations are formally presented during a meeting of the foreign affairs and development committees and the human rights subcommittee in Brussels
- 15 October 2015: vote on three finalists in meeting of the foreign affairs and development committees
- 29 October 2015: the EP President and the political group leaders decide who should win the 2015 Sakharov Prize
- 16 December 2015: award ceremony in Strasbourg during the plenary session

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