



Sakharov Prize 2010: three finalists

[DICO] Général

Israeli NGO Breaking the Silence, Cuban dissident Guillermo Fariñas and Ethiopian opposition leader Birtukan Mideksa are the three shortlisted finalists for the 2010 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. The winner will be announced on Thursday, 21 October, by the President of the European Parliament, following a decision of the Conference of political group leaders. The winner will receive €50,000 and will be invited to participate in the award ceremony on 15 December, in Strasbourg.

The three finalists are presented below in alphabetical order.

Breaking the Silence is an Israeli NGO, established in 2004, by Israeli 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. The NGO 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 the Palestinian population and on Israeli society. "If we vote for Breaking the Silence we are voting for peace, we are voting for the honour of Israeli democracy and we are saying we are in favour of two states: the Palestinian State and the Israeli State (...) Awarding the prize, we want to give peace a chance", declared Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Greens/EFA, FR).

Nominated by Rebecca Harms and Daniel Cohn-Bendit on behalf of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and by Lothar Bisky on behalf of the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)

Guillermo Fariñas, aged 48, was nominated in the name of all those who fight in Cuba for freedom and human rights. He is a doctor of psychology, independent journalist and political dissident in Cuba. He has conducted 23 hunger strikes over the years "not in his own favour but in order to defend his compatriots" said José Ignacio Salafranca (EPP, ES). A supporter of non-violence who dares to denounce the Castro regime, "Guillermo Fariñas is a symbol in the struggle against the imprisonment of political opponents (). Because he is defending dignity and democracy in his country, he is the ideal candidate for the Sakharov Prize" say the MEPs who nominated him.

Nominated by Joseph Daul, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Jaime Mayor Oreja, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa and Francisco José Millán Mon on the behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (EPP), by Edvard Kožušník for the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), and by 91 other MEPs.

Birtukan Mideksa, an Ethiopian politician and former judge, is the leader of the opposition Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party. On December 28 2008, Birtukan Mideska was re-arrested and imprisoned to serve a life sentence, after having spoken in Sweden with journalists about the way opposition leaders were released in her country. She was released from prison at the beginning of October, after almost two years' incarceration.

"The Saharov prize should be given to those who need international visibility and protection. Birtukan Mideksa needs both. By awarding the Saharov prize to Birtukan Mideksa, representing all Ethiopian political prisoners, the European Parliament would bring hope and would call attention to this young mother, one of the few female party leaders in Africa. It

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would also guarantee visibility of the struggle of thousands of forgotten political prisoners who fight for justice, the rule of law and democracy in Ethiopia", declared Adrian Severin (S&D, RO).

Nominated by Martin Schulz on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)

In the Chair: Eva JOLY (Greens/EFA, FR)

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