

Malala Yousafzai - winner of the Sakharov Prize 2013

Plenary Session Press release - Human rights – 10-10-2013 - 12:21



2013 winner of the Sakharov Prize ©ISOPIX

Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani campaigner for girls' education, is the

Pakistani campaigner for girls' education Malala Yousafzai is the laureate of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2013, following today's decision of the Conference of Presidents (EP President and political group leaders). She will be invited to receive the award at a ceremony in Strasbourg on 20 November.

"By awarding the Sakharov Prize to Malala Yousafzai, the European Parliament acknowledges the incredible strength of this young woman. Malala bravely stands for the right of all children to be granted a fair education. This right for girls is far too commonly neglected", said EP President Martin Schulz, announcing the laureate. "As tomorrow 11 October is the International Day of the Girl Child, I would like to recall that some 250 million young girls around the world cannot freely go to school. Malala's example reminds us of our duty and responsibility to the right to education for children. This is the best investment for the future", he added.

Ms Yousafzai, 16, is a student from the town of Mingora in Swat District, Pakistan, known for her women's rights activism in the Swat Valley, where the Taliban regime has banned girls from attending school.

She gave her first public speech in September 2008, entitled "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to an education?". When all girls' schools under Taliban control were closed in January 2009, she started a blog for BBC Urdu under the pseudonym of Gul Makai, a folklore heroine. The blog brought fame to Malala and her fight. Threats to her family followed as soon as her identity was revealed, leading up to an assassination attempt in October 2012, when she was shot in the head and neck by Taliban gunmen while returning home on a school bus.

"Malala has gained global recognition as a human rights fighter", say the MEPs who nominated her, militating "for the right to female education, freedom and self-determination".

Malala Yousafzai was nominated jointly by the EPP, the S&D, ALDE; Jean LAMBERT (Greens, UK), and the ECR.

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named after Soviet scientist and dissident Andrei Sakharov, was established in December 1988 by the European Parliament to honour individuals or organizations who dedicate their lives to the defence of human rights and freedoms, particularly the right to free expression.

REF.: 20131009IPR21810
Updated: (10-10-2013 - 12:28)