

2013 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought - seven nominations

Freedom of thought

The nominees for the 2013 Sakharov Prize were presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development committees and the Human Rights Subcommittee on **Monday**. They are: Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan), Edward Snowden (USA), Reeyot Alemu and Eskinder Nega (Ethiopia), Ales Bialatski, Eduard Lobau and Mykola Statkevich (Belarus) representing all Belarusian political prisoners, Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Russia), the "Standing Man" protesters (Turkey), and the CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern - Day Slavery (USA).

Malala Yousafzai - nominated jointly by 3 political groups: for the EPP group, by José Ignacio Salafranca (ES), Elmar Brok (AT), Michael Gahler (DE), Arnaud Danjean (FR), Joseph Daul (FR), Gay Mitchell (IE) and Mairead Mc Guinness (IE); for the S&D group, by Hannes Swoboda (AT) and Véronique de Keyser (BE); for the ALDE Group, by Guy Verhofstadt (BE), Sir Graham Watson (UK), and Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (BE); and also by Jean Lambert (Greens, UK) and the ECR group.

Ms Yousafzai was 11 years old when she began her fight for the right to female education, freedom and self-determination in Pakistan's Swat Valley, where the Taliban regime bans girls from attending school, by writing a blog under a pseudonym in 2009. She quickly became a prominent voice against such abuses, and Taliban gunmen tried to assassinate her in October 2012. She has since become symbol of the fight for women's rights and worldwide access to education.

Edward Snowden - nominated by the Greens/EFA group and GUE/NGL group

A computer expert who worked as a contractor for the US National Security Agency and released classified information about mass surveillance programmes, Mr Snowden has been charged with espionage in the USA and is now living in temporary asylum in Russia.

Reeyot Alemu and Eskinder Nega - nominated by Ana Maria Gomes (S&D, PT) and 40 other MEPs

These Ethiopian journalists are serving prison terms on terrorism charges. Ms Alemu was sentenced in January 2012 after writing columns critical of the government, and Mr Nega was sentenced six months later, after criticizing the prosecution of journalists and dissidents in Ethiopia and writing about how an Arab Spring-like democracy movement might arise there.

Ales Bialatski, Eduard Lobau and Mykola Statkevich, representing all Belarusian political prisoners - nominated by Marek Migalski (ECR, PL), Filip Kaczmarek (EPP, PL), Jacek Protasiewicz (EPP, PL) and 39 other MEPs.

Belarusian presidential candidate Mr Statkevich, "Malady Front" activist Mr Lobau, President of the "Viasna" Human Rights Centre Mr Bialatski and other protesters have been in prison since December 2010, when they protested in the streets of Minsk about the "fraudulent" presidential elections that confirmed President Alexander Lukashenko in office.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky - nominated by Werner Schulz (Greens/EFA, DE) and 40 other MEPs
Mr Khodorkovsky is a Russian political prisoner who has now served 10 years of a 14-year jail term in Russia, after calling on President Putin in 2003 to account for systemic corruption there.

"Standing Man" protesters - nominated by Marietje Schaake (ALDE, NL) and 40 other MEPs

Erdem Gündüz was the first man to stand and stare in the Taksim Square protests in Istanbul, which started on 17 June 2013. Later he was joined by others, making this form of protest a symbol of the peaceful movement for a liberal society respecting human rights and freedoms.

The CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery - nominated by Boris Zala (S&D, SK) and 40 other MEPs

This global media campaign against the slave trade, human trafficking, and forced and child labour has issued over 400 reports since 2011 highlighting the suffering of victims from Mauritania to India to the Philippines.

Next steps

The Foreign Affairs and Development Committees and Human Rights Subcommittee will hold another joint meeting on 30 September to vote (in camera) on the shortlist of the three finalists. The laureate will be chosen by Parliament's Conference of Presidents on 10 October in Strasbourg and invited to the award ceremony on 20 November, also in Strasbourg.