



November - December 2015

Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2015

Exchange of views with Ensaf Haidar and Stavros Lambrinidis



**CENSORED, JAILED, FLOGGED,
BUT NOT SILENCED.**
2015 SAKHAROV PRIZE LAUREATE
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Jointly with the Committee on Development, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and in association with the Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula

On Monday evening 14 December, in Strasbourg, members of DROI, AFET and DEVE held an exchange of views with Ensaf Haidar, wife of Raif Badawi and Stavros Lambrinidis, EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

During her opening remarks, the DROI Chair, Elena Valenciano, said that "Raif's only crime was simply to express his thoughts. His only weapon: his words. And they replied to his words with lashes, prison, harassment and isolation."

Ensaf Haidar made a brief statement thanking Members for the Sakharov Prize on behalf of her husband and noted that this prize gives hope for Raif's possible release.

Also in this issue

Exchange of views with

- Mary McGowan Davis, Chair of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict
- Fabrice Leggeri, Executive Director of FRONTEX

DROI Missions

- UN General Assembly, New York

Debates on

- Burundi
- Eastern Ukraine and Crimea
- Mauritania

Work In Progress

Urgency resolutions



Members conveyed their support for Raif Badawi and their hope that he will be pardoned and charges against him dropped. They also voiced their concern about the dire situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia and insisted on the need to align the EU's foreign and commercial policy to its human rights guiding principles. They also highlighted the high number of human rights defenders in Saudi jails, including Raif Badawi's lawyer, and the fact that over 150 persons have been

executed since the beginning of the year, including juveniles. EUSR Lambrinidis stressed that the Sakharov Prize is the most prestigious EU award for Human Rights, signalling within the EU and abroad the EU's commitment to supporting fundamental freedoms and human rights.

[Extracts from the debate with Ensaf Haidar and Stavros Lambrinidis](#)

November - December 2015

An empty chair for Raif Badawi



"Raif Badawi was brave enough to raise his voice and say no to their barbarity. That is why they flogged him," said Ensaf Haidar, the wife of jailed Saudi human rights activist Raif Badawi, accepting the 2015 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought on his behalf in Strasbourg on Wednesday 16 December. Badawi was honoured by the European Parliament for his fight for freedom of speech and thought in Saudi Arabia.

[Press Release](#)
[Extracts from the ceremony](#)

DROI Meeting of 12 November

Exchange of views with Mary McGowan Davis, Chair of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict



In association with the Delegation for relations with Palestine

DROI members held an exchange of views with the Chair of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry, Ms. Mary McGowan Davis, who presented the final report of the Commission on the 2014 Gaza conflict. As well as giving a comprehensive description of the process behind the report and its key conclusions, Ms Davis also reported on a number of moving testimonies the Commission had reviewed. Ms Davis welcomed the resolution adopted by the European Parliament in September 2015 in which the Parliament called for the report's implementation and the need to prioritize this matter in the EU's foreign policy.

Discussion among MEPs reflected the complexity of the issue and strong differences when addressing this issue. Some Members showed clear support for the report and its recommendations while others pointed to its weaknesses since the Commission of Inquiry was neither able to physically enter Gaza nor establish in-depth cooperation with Israel. The Embassies of Israel and Palestine participated in the exchange by briefly stating their positions.

[Press statement](#)

Feedback from the ad hoc delegation to the UN General Assembly, New York, 1-3 November

Five members from DROI, including the Chair, Elena Valenciano, travelled to New York in a joint delegation with the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the beginning of November.

Members met with high level figures including the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and New York head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ivan Simonovic. The discussions focused on torture, human rights of migrants, children and armed conflict, and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. Migration and the issue of humanitarian aid permeated virtually all discussions as did the question of reforming the UN, Syria, Ukraine and the potential impact of climate change on migration flows.



The DROI Chair stressed that finding ways of cooperating more closely with the UN would be very productive for DROI's work, and repeated the DROI delegation's intention to invite many of the high-level figures they met, such as Mr Simonovic, to further discussions in Brussels or Strasbourg.

[Press statement](#)

Current human rights situation in Burundi

The exchange of views was organised as the human rights situation in Burundi has taken a worrying turn. Invited by DROI, the International Crisis Group (ICG) briefed Members on the political situation in Burundi, where massive violations of human rights, arbitrary detentions, and selective assassinations of opponents are occurring. Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, the leading Burundian human rights defender, was unable to attend the meeting due to his state of health - he is currently receiving medical treatment in Belgium after surviving an assassination attempt- and also due to the fact that, on 6 November, his 26 year old son was found dead in Bujumbura a few hours after having been arbitrarily detained.

Also present was the first Counsellor of the Burundian Embassy who presented his Government's view.

[Press statement](#)

November - December 2015

DROI Meeting of 1 December

Human rights situation in the occupied territories of Eastern Ukraine and in Crimea

In association with the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee

Two civil society representatives from the region provided a very useful insight into the human rights violations in the Donbass region and Crimea, presenting the findings of recent research on impunity in Eastern Ukraine and a project to document and monitor human rights violations in Crimea.

They also provided some specific recommendations to the Ukrainian authorities and the EU. The presentations emphasised that the nature and scale of violations amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity in the East, while in Crimea they are also systematic and targeted at Tatars and the pro-Ukrainian population, including by non-official law enforcement personnel. Impunity in both regions remains widespread and there are no credible investigations. The ensuing discussion covered ICC jurisdiction, the use of minority languages, education and cultural rights and the situation of Crimean Tatars and other minorities in Crimea, the role of Turkey, and the impact on human rights of the blockade and the electricity blackout on the Crimean peninsula.

Human rights and humanitarian law violations in the context of the Yemeni conflict

DROI held an exchange of views with the EU Ambassador to Yemen, Bettina Muscheidt, and, via Skype, with Human Rights Watch expert Belkis Wille. Ambassador Muscheidt pointed out that the human rights and humanitarian situation in Yemen had been very challenging in several respects even before the start of the current conflict, which has compounded old problems and added new ones. She highlighted the weakness of Yemen's state institutions as one crucial problem. She also reviewed the active role of the EU in searching for solutions to the Yemeni conflict and called on all sides to engage in serious and inclusive talks in order to end the armed conflict and return to the political process.

From her side, Ms. Wille described the dire humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground, with a particular focus on the impact of the armed conflict. She emphasised the importance of enforcing the principles of international humanitarian law on all parties to the conflict, notably pointing to the issue of arms deliveries, from both EU Member States and the United States. The Embassy of Saudi Arabia attended the meeting but did not take the floor.

Exchange of views with Fabrice Leggeri, Executive Director of FRONTEX

DROI members held an exchange of views within the context of the current migration and refugee crisis and the DROI opinion drafted to the joint LIBE/PETI report on the Special Report of the European Ombudsman concerning FRONTEX.



Fabrice Leggeri, Executive Director of Frontex (participating by video conference) gave a general overview of the current situation and the work of Frontex to support Member States in managing the EU's external borders and improving registration procedures. The Fundamental Rights Office of FRONTEX also intervened, explaining the measures and mechanisms adopted concerning the human rights protection of migrants/refugees/asylum seekers. Members raised their concerns about the need to set up mechanisms to deal with individual complaints in cases of human rights violations. The European Commission representative confirmed there will be such a mechanism under the revised FRONTEX Regulation which will be adopted by the Commission on 15 December 2015 and presented to the two co-legislators.

Combatting slavery in Mauritania

Representatives of the anti-slavery movement and of the opposition from Mauritania set out their views on the political and human rights situation in the country, putting an emphasis on the continuation of slavery despite several pieces of legislation criminalising it. Anti-slavery activists have denounced flawed law enforcement by the Government and stated that they have long been subjected to repression, intimidation and arbitrary arrest. One example is Biram Ould Abeid, the leader of Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement in Mauritania (IRA), and other campaigners, who were arrested in October 2014 and sentenced to 2 years in prison.

The European Parliament condemned his arrest in an urgency resolution adopted in December 2014. Also present during this exchange of views were a representative from the EEAS and the Ambassador of Mauritania, who shared his views with the Members by highlighting the improvements that have been made by the authorities and by contesting some of the criticisms put forward by the political and civil society representatives.

November - December 2015

Work in Progress**Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union's policy on the matter**

- Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda
- Consideration of draft report in DROI: 1 October
- Deadline for amendments : 12 October at 16.00
- Consideration of amendments in DROI: 12 November
- Vote in AFET: 16 November
- Report : [A8-0344/2015](#)
- Vote in Plenary: 16 December

Preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance (2015/2051 (INI))

- Rapporteur: Elena Valenciano
- Vote in AFET on 19 October 2015
- Opinion: PE 565.200v02-00
- Report: [A8-0332/2015](#)
- Vote in Plenary : 15 December

Implementation of the 2010 recommendations of Parliament on social and environmental standards, human rights and corporate responsibility (2015/2038)

- Rapporteur: Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl
- Consideration of draft opinion (PE 571.491V01-00): 1 December
- Deadline for amendments: 19 January

Human rights and migration in third countries (2015/2316 (INI))

- Rapporteur: Marie-Christine Vergiat
- Timetable to be confirmed

The fight against trafficking in human beings in the EU's external relations

- Rapporteur: Barbara Lochbihler
- Timetable to be confirmed

Urgency Resolutions**December 2015**

The case of Ibrahim Halawa in Egypt; Maldives; Malaysia

November 2015

Afghanistan, in particular the killings in the province of Zabul; Cambodia; Freedom of expression in Bangladesh

[Link](#) to all resolutions

Calendar of DROI meetings

The next DROI meetings will take place on the following days:

Monday, 25 January, pm
 Wednesday, 17 February, am + pm
 Thursday, 18 February, am
 Thursday, 3 March, am
 Wednesday, 16 March, am + pm
 Thursday, 17 March, am

- Link to [DROI Calendar 2016](#)

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