THE BOOK OF
SAKHAROV
PRIZE
LAUREATES
2013 was a particularly eventful year in the history of the Sakharov Prize - an exceptional year. No fewer than four winners were welcomed to Strasbourg to receive their awards. The first to come were the Ladies in White in April, followed by Guillermo Farinas in July and, lastly, Aung San Suu Kyi in October. All of them had been awarded the prize some years earlier - over 20 years earlier in Ms Suu Kyi’s case. The long wait was not of their choosing; the authorities in their respective countries had prevented each of them from travelling to accept their accolade, out of fear of their unwavering courage, the idea of freedom of thought that they embody and their ability to make the flame of hope burn more strongly in all those who believe in democracy.

2013 also saw the youngest ever winner. On 20 November, Malala Yousafzai, aged 16, gave a moving speech in defence of children’s rights and, in particular, access to education for girls. Just like the other prize winners, she has paid dearly for standing up to modern-day obscurantists. Her struggle very nearly ended in her death, and it has condemned her to exile. Malala received her award on the 25th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize, while surrounded by previous winners, a powerful image which symbolised the fact that the Sakharov network is as vital and relevant today as it was when it was founded.

2013 was thus a very encouraging year. But we have to face the facts. In 2014 conflicts continue to rage in which victims are targeted primarily because of their ideas, because of their beliefs, because of their gender or simply because they belong to a minority. Not all the winners have been able to collect their awards. Razan Zaitouneh, one of the 2011 winners, was kidnapped in Syria, and we still have no news of her. Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi are still under house arrest in Iran. The Chinese regime is doing everything it can to stop Hu Jia from speaking out. Even in 2014, those who defend freedom of thought are still being silenced.

By awarding this year’s prize to Dr Denis Mukwege, a unanimous choice, the European Parliament is honouring not only a dedicated doctor, but, above all, a man of peace. Not only someone who cares for the sick, but, above all, someone who fights for women’s dignity. In a region where rape is used as a weapon of war and terror, and in a world where women’s freedoms are coming under attack from all sides, Dr Mukwege’s commitment and courage are exemplary.
THE SAKHAROV PRIZE. Awarded for the first time in 1988 to Nelson Mandela and Anatoli Marchenko, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is the highest tribute to human rights endeavours the European Union accords. It recognizes individuals, groups and organisations who have given an outstanding contribution to freedom of thought. Through it and its associated Network, the EU supports Laureates, who are strengthened and empowered in their fight for their causes.

The Prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, a long-serving prisoner of conscience, a film maker, a child fighting for the right to education and even the UN as a body. It rewards in particular freedom of expression, safeguarding the rights of minorities, respect for international law, development of democracy and implementation of the rule of law.

The European Parliament confers the Sakharov Prize with its €50000 endowment at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Parliament’s political groups may each nominate candidates as may individual Members with the support of at least 40 Members for each candidate. The nominees are presented at a joint sitting of the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees and the Human Rights Sub-committee and the Members of the full Committees vote on a short-list of three. The final winner or winners of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents, an EP body led by the President and encompassing the leaders of all the different political groups represented in Parliament, making the choice of Laureates a truly European choice.
ANDREI SAKHAROV (1921-1989), the renowned USSR physicist, human rights activist, dissident and advocate of reform, accepted the idea of a prize for freedom of thought being named after him 'as an important act of appreciation of my work in defence of human rights' as he wrote in a letter to the European Parliament.1 He deemed the award of such prizes 'useful' as it would 'attract attention to the human rights problem and will encourage people who have made a contribution to this end.' The European Parliament declared its intention of creating this Prize with a resolution adopted in December 1985.

A pioneer in nuclear physics and the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, Andrei Sakharov was 32 years old when he became a full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and accorded the privileges of the Nomenklatura, or elite members of the Soviet Union.

By the late 1950s though, he became increasingly concerned about the atmospheric consequences of nuclear testing and the political and moral implications of his work, that could lead to mass deaths.

The turning point in his political evolution came in 1967, when he urged Soviet authorities to accept a US proposal for a bilateral rejection of the development of anti-ballistic missile defence, which he described as a major threat of a global nuclear war in his 1968 essay Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom. The Soviet authorities rejected his urging, and after the publication of his essay, banned Andrei Sakharov from all top-secret military work and stripped him of his privileges. In 1970 he became one of the co-founders of the Committee on Human Rights in the USSR and the defence of human rights and of the victims of political trials became his all-important concern. In 1972 he married fellow human rights activist Elena Bonner. Despite increasing pressure from the government, Sakharov not only sought the release of dissidents in his country but became one of the Soviet regime's most courageous critics, embodying the crusade against the denial of fundamental rights. He was, in the words of the Nobel Committee which awarded him the Peace Prize in 1975, 'a spokesman for the conscience of mankind'. He was not allowed to go to receive his prize, but neither repression nor exile could break his resistance.

Andrei Sakharov was exiled to the closed city of Gorky in 1980, after he publicly protested the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan of 1979. Whilst in exile, he lived under tight Soviet police surveillance and went on hunger strike twice to demand permission for his wife to have heart surgery in the United States. Elena Bonner, also sentenced to exile in Gorky in 1984, was finally allowed to go to the US for treatment in October 1985. The European Parliament supported the Sakharovs and even debated leaving an empty seat in its chamber for Andrei Sakharov. The alternative idea, the establishment of a Prize named after Andrei Sakharov was adopted instead. Sakharov was chosen because he was 'a European citizen who was the personification of freedom of thought and expression and who had decided, because of his convictions and his conscience, to renounce all the material advantages and all the honours which were open to him,' as expressed by Jean-François Deniau, rapporteur on the initiative, to the EP Plenary.

The Prize was created by a resolution of the European Parliament approved in December 1985. A year later, Mikhail Gorbachev, who launched perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union, allowed Andrei Sakharov and Elena Bonner to return to Moscow. He died there in December 1989.

In 2013, the Prize that bears his name marked a quarter of a century of support to human rights going far beyond borders, even those of oppressive regimes, to reward human rights activists and dissidents all over the world. The human rights defenders recognised by it have paid dearly for their commitment to defending human dignity: many have faced persecution, death, loss of liberty, beatings or exile. In a number of cases the winners have not been free to receive their prize in person.

One such winner is 2012 Laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh, who, from Evin prison in Iran, where she was being held at the time, wrote letters addressed to the late Andrei Sakharov, exploring philosophically the meaning of dissidence and comparing her cause to his.

'Your daily renewal of life and resistance was amazing. What you managed to achieve was a great victory for all freedom fighters all over the world. May those who come in future realise your unrealised dreams'
THE SAKHAROV PRIZE NETWORK (SPN) comprises Laureates of the Sakharov Prize and Members of the European Parliament. It was created in 2008, when the Sakharov Prize celebrated its 20th anniversary. Its creation recognised ‘the special role of Sakharov Prize winners as Ambassadors for Freedom of Thought’; and its members ‘agreed to enhance joint efforts in support of human rights defenders around the world through common actions by the Sakharov Prize winners jointly and under the aegis of the European Parliament’.

On the 25th Anniversary of the Prize in 2013, the Network met in a Conference to discuss the development of its goals. Twenty Laureates and representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, came together with the President and Members of the European Parliament, other representatives of European institutions, services and agencies, NGOs, international organisations, journalists and students over an intensive three days that featured also the award of the 2013 Sakharov Prize, on universal children’s day, to the first child Laureate, Malala Yousafzai.

The Conference culminated in a Declaration in which Members of the Network pledge their support jointly and individually to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide through a number of actions, in cooperation with civil society and international organisations, including the campaign to end violence against children and promote child education. The Declaration emphasises the need for solidarity and coordination among the defenders of human rights, calling on all members of the Network to act as a global human rights violations alert system. The EU is urged to make a substantial diplomatic commitment to human rights defenders through its representations worldwide in particular for the protection of Sakharov Prize Laureates and human rights defenders at risk.

The SPN now aims to follow-up on its commitments through action on the ground aimed at raising awareness of human rights issues and violations. Its Members also give Sakharov Lectures around EU Member States and participate in international human rights campaigns and awareness-raising events, lending their strength to civil society activists and human rights defenders.

2014 Denis Mukwege
2013 Malala Yousafzai
2012 Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi
2011 Arab Spring (Mohamed Bouazizi, Asmaa Mahfouz, Ahmed El Senussi, Razan Zaitouneh and Ali Ferzat)
2010 Guillermo Farías
2009 Memorial (Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev and Lyudmila Alexeyeva on behalf of Memorial and all other human rights defenders in Russia)
2008 Hu Jia
2007 Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman
2006 Aliaksandr Milinkevich
2005 Ladies in White, Hauva Ibrahim, Reporters Without Borders
2004 Belarusian Association of Journalists
2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and all the staff of the United Nations
2002 Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas
2001 Izzat Ghazzawi, Nurit Peled-Elhanan, Dom Zacarias Kamwenho
2000 ¡Basta Ya!
1999 Xanana Gusmão
1998 Ibrahim Rugova
1997 Salima Ghezali
1996 Wei Jingsheng
1995 Leyla Zana
1994 Taslima Nasreen
1993 Oslobodjenje
1992 Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo
1991 Adem Demaçi
1990 Aung San Suu Kyi
1989 Alexander Dubček
1988 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Anatoli Marchenko (posthumously)
DENIS MUKWEGE is a Congolese doctor who is dedicating his life to rebuilding the bodies and lives of tens of thousands of Congolese women and girls who are victims of gang rape and brutal sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s ongoing war.

Born in Bukavu in 1955, he studied medicine and founded the gynaecology service at the Lemera hospital in eastern DR Congo, which was destroyed when war broke out in 1996. Mukwege fled to Bukavu and started a hospital from tents, building a new maternity ward and operating theatre, but everything was destroyed in 1998 in the second Congo war.

Undeterred, Mukwege rebuilt his hospital in Panzi, working long hours and training staff to treat women victimised by the combatants who had ‘declared women their common enemy’. He has treated over 40,000 women since the hospital reopened in 1999 and accepted the first rape victim with bullets wounds in her genitals and thighs. Within weeks, dozens of women went to the hospital saying they had been raped and tortured.

‘I started to ask myself what was going on’, Mukwege told the BBC. ‘These weren’t just violent acts of war, but part of a strategy... multiple people were raped at the same time, publicly, a whole village might be raped during the night. In doing this, they hurt not just the victims but the whole community, which they force to watch. The result of this strategy is that people are forced to flee their villages, abandon their fields, their resources, everything’.

Mukwege is an internationally-recognised expert in the repair of pathological and psycho-social damages caused by sexual violence. The Panzi hospital offers psychological and physical care and the women are then helped to develop new skills to live and the girls to go back to school. Legal aid is also offered to take their assailants to court.

Mukwege tirelessly campaigns for women’s rights and an end to the violence raging over Congo’s natural resources. He became a victim himself in 2011 when armed men invaded his home and held his daughters at gun point. His bodyguard was killed, but he escaped, fleeing with his family to Sweden and Belgium. He returned to DR Congo in 2013 when a group of women, who live on less than a dollar a day, banded together to buy his ticket home.

He now lives at the Panzi hospital which he directs.
MALALA YOUSAFZAI is a 17-year old Pakistani girl who was shot in the face by the Taliban in 2012, to stop her and other girls from getting an education. She survived her severe injuries and in 2013 became the youngest ever Laureate of the Sakharov Prize.

She dedicated her Prize to the ‘unsung heroes of Pakistan’ in a powerful defence of every child’s right to an education.

‘Many children have no food to eat, no water to drink and children are starving for education. It is alarming that 57 million children are deprived of education… this must shake our conscience,’ Malala told the representatives of 28 nations in a packed Parliament and in the exceptional presence of almost all living Sakharov Prize Laureates, gathered for the Prize’s 25th Anniversary Conference. ‘One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world’.

Malala’s fight for education began at age 11 when she wrote an anonymous online diary about a schoolgirl’s life under the Taliban in Pakistan’s Swat Valley. In 2009, the Taliban decreed all girls’ schools closed whilst the Pakistani army fought them for control. Malala and her family had to flee their besieged hometown and her school was devastated.

Returning home after the security situation improved, Malala and her father Ziauddin, who ran a girls’ school, continued advocating girls’ education despite threats. Malala used a donation to buy a school bus, the same bus on which she was shot, and two other girls injured, in the attack claimed by the Taliban.

Malala lived and is a committed campaigner for girls’ education, a co-founder of the Malala Fund and a member of the Youth Education Crisis Committee, set up by the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, who estimates that at current rates the last girl will be in school in 2086, not 2015 as promised in the Millennium Development Goals.

‘In Islam girls are allowed to get education. It’s the duty and responsibility of every person, whether a boy or a girl, to get education and knowledge,’ Malala says.

The UN chose her 12 July birthday as Malala Day. In 2014 she spent it in Nigeria, meeting schoolgirls who escaped the Boko Haram kidnapping in Chibok, the families of the 219 still kidnapped girls and urging more action from President Jonathan. She also expressed solidarity with children in conflict in Syria and Gaza.
NASRIN SOTOUDÉH is an Iranian human rights lawyer who was among the few who defended dissenters arrested in the 2009 mass protests and other high-profile human rights and political cases before her own arrest in 2010.

When she was awarded the Prize in 2012, she was serving a six-year jail sentence and on a seven-week hunger strike in solitary confinement in Iran’s notorious Evin prison, protesting judicial pressure on her family.

In a very weak and frail state, she found the strength to write a memorable message to Parliament, read for her at the award ceremony by her friend and colleague Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi.

‘The story of human rights, and the mechanisms for guaranteeing them, has come a long way, yet its realization still largely depends on the intentions of governments, the biggest violators of human rights’. Sotoudeh identified human rights violations as the basic cause of the wave of revolutions sweeping the Middle East. To human rights defenders and political prisoners she said ‘just like you, I also know that democracy has a long and difficult road ahead’.

She was unexpectedly released in September 2013, in a move welcomed by President Schulz as ‘an important positive signal by the Iranian authorities’ particularly newly-elected President Rouhani.

In December 2013 she met the first European Parliament Delegation to visit Iran in six years. Sotoudeh focused on political prisoners and denounced trials held in revolutionary, rather than criminal, courts as non-transparent. She asked the Delegation to question the Iranian authorities on this issue. The Delegation was told that revolutionary courts were established to judge crimes against the state and therefore no change was possible. The meeting caused furore among Iranian hardliners who accused Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi of being seditionists.

She continues her advocacy for human rights, women’s rights and basic freedoms. She is fighting debarment from practising law in 2014, a career which she fought for several years to practice, starting out with defending minors from the death penalty, a cause she continues to defend.

In July 2014, as war broke in Gaza, Sotoudeh launched the Stop Killing Your Fellow Beings social media campaign. She is not able to visit Parliament to receive her Sakharov Prize or attend SPN events as she is still banned from leaving Iran, but Ebadi represented her at the 2013 Conference.

Sotoudeh intends to stay in Iran and fight for reform from within.
JAFAR PANahi is an award-winning film-maker who is banned from making films for 20 years.

An outspoken supporter of the Iranian opposition Green movement and a critic of former President Ahmedinajad, he was sentenced to six years jail for “propaganda against the Islamic Republic” but his sentence is still awaiting execution of verdict: he is not in jail, but could be imprisoned at any time.

He was arrested in 2010 as he was making a clandestine film about the 2009 failed Green movement uprising in Iran. Though released after three months, following international protests and a hunger strike, he was then sentenced to jail, banned from making films, travelling and talking to the media.

He told the European Parliament Delegation that visited Iran in 2013 that his testimony and that of his lawyer were ignored during his trial, and the verdict had been decided in advance. He warned the Delegation that human rights issues are being forgotten as the world concentrates on the nuclear agreement with Iran, and opined that once sanctions are lifted, the repression in Iran will increase. The new Iranian leadership’s flexibility was only being applied to foreign affairs not domestic ones, he said, with the pressure on the press, on prisoners and on cultural life continuing.

In a media interview in July 2014, in defiance of his ban, he said that he feels that he has been released from a small jail only to be thrown a bigger one when he was banned from working.

He has nevertheless broken the prohibition on film-making twice. In 2011 he shot *This is not a Film* in his own home in Tehran, sitting at his kitchen table, talking to his lawyer, waiting to be jailed. In 2014 he returned with *Closed Curtain* featuring a screenwriter living alone with his dog in his house by the sea, with curtains shut.

Panahi does not regard himself as a political person, but one who is willing to expose injustice. He has spoken out against censorship in Iran and criticised President Rouhani for not accomplishing his electoral promises in this regard and has launched the *Step by Step* campaign aiming to end the death penalty in Iran.

He is not able to visit Parliament but was represented by daughter Solmaz and film directors Costa Gavras and Serge Toubiana at the award ceremony, and by FIDH President Karim Lahidji at the 2013 SPN Conference.
MOHAMED BOUAZIZI (1984-2011) was the catalyst of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and an inspiration for the pro-democracy movement that swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, known as the Arab Spring.

A hard-working man from a poor background, Bouazizi was the main provider for his family since he was 10 years old, selling fruit at the market. He left school at 19 so he could support his younger siblings’ education.

He died on 4 January 2011, at the age of 26, after setting himself on fire in protest against a system that kept him from making a decent living. Bouazizi had often been a victim of the Tunisian law enforcement agents who would fine him, confiscate his produce and his scales, and on the last occasion even wrestled him to the ground. His family believe it was the humiliation not the poverty which led him to self-immolation after he went looking for justice, but was refused. Bouazizi doused himself in fuel and lit a flame outside the gates of the governorate building in the small town of Sidi Bouzid. A popular man known for giving away produce for free to poorer families, and whose plight struck a chord with many others, his act prompted protests that quickly spread, with Tunisians from all walks of life taking to the streets against a corrupt government, high unemployment, and restrictions on their freedom.

He was still alive, in agony and wrapped in bandages from head to toe, as the authoritarian regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, in power since 1987, began to fall.

Ten days after Bouazizi’s death, Ben Ali was forced to resign and leave the country as demonstrators marched in Tunis, many of them carrying Bouazizi’s image.

His family take solace in that his death was not in vain, as his action spurred the so-called people’s revolution and shook despotic governments in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Arab world. It spread awareness amongst Arab youths that they could voice their frustrations and fight for their dignity when faced with injustice, corruption and autocratic rule.

The Arab Spring and its early optimism have stalled and some its gains have been reversed, but in its birthplace, Bouazizi’s Tunisia, a democratic constitution was approved in 2014 and legislative and presidential elections are due to be held by the end of the year.
ALI FERZAT is Syria’s best-known political satirist and cartoonist, and one of the Arab world’s most famous cultural figures. Born in Hama in 1941, he has published more than 15,000 cartoons in Syrian and international newspapers and won awards for satirising dictators like Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi when they ruled Iraq and Libya respectively. His work pushed the boundaries of freedom of expression in Syria, targeting its feared security forces, and as the Arab Spring reached Syria in 2011, becoming more direct in attacking government figures, particularly President Bashar al-Assad. Syrians protesting the regime waved his cartoons in the streets. After he published a cartoon of al-Assad trying to hitchhike with Libyan dictator Muammar Ghaddafi, shown driving a getaway car at great speed, he was attacked in Damascus’ Umayyad Square and badly beaten by masked men who deliberately broke his hands as they shouted at him to respect President al-Assad and obey his masters. Rendered unconscious by the beating, he was dragged along the road by the car into which he had been thrown, then pushed out and left on a street as dead.

Ali Ferzat not only recovered the use of hands, but broke the barrier of fear to become one of the regime’s most outspoken critics through his words and his art.

Unable to attend the Sakharov Prize ceremony in 2011 as he underwent treatment in Kuwait for his injuries, he received the award at the Sakharov Prize Network public debate held at the European Parliament in 2012, where he discussed with the EP President and other Arab Spring Laureates the revolution in Syria and the future of democracy following the Arab awakenings. As a Sakharov Laureate, he addressed the first edition of the Council of Europe’s World Democracy Forum in 2012, in which year he was also voted as one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people in the world. He has won various human rights awards and is the head of the Arab Cartoonists’ Association.

In 2014, Ferzat was the keynote speaker for the Sakharov Prize Network at the One World Human Rights Film Festival in Prague, where he met with government representatives, media and NGOs, bringing debate of the Syrian conflict back to the core of the tragedy: amidst the on-going conflict which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions of people are the forgotten human hopes for dignity and freedom.
ASMAA MAHFOUZ is an Egyptian human rights activist and one of the co-founders of the April 6 youth movement. As Egypt took up the Arab Spring in 2011, she braved President Hosni Mubarak regime’s crackdown on activists and posted calls on social media for Egyptians to claim their freedom, dignity and human rights by protesting peacefully in Tahrir Square on 25 January 2011. Her video went viral with some 80 million views, and inspired a wave of similar videos, resulting in hundreds of thousands occupying Tahrir Square clamouring for Hosni Mubarak to end his 30-year rule of Egypt, which he did on 11 February 2012.

Accepting her Sakharov Prize, Asmaa Mahfouz described the award as paying ‘homage to the heroes of the revolution. This is a prize that goes out to all young Egyptians, people that have sacrificed their lives’, adding that ‘we will not betray them, we will continue along the road that they have entered into and we want to make sure that this dream is fulfilled’.

She was a main speaker at the Sakharov Prize Network debate held in Brussels at the European Parliament, and at the Council of Europe’s first World Democracy Forum, in October 2012, discussing the post-revolution evolution of the situation in Egypt.

In 2014, as Egypt voted a former army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to the country’s presidency, after the ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Mursi in 2013 and a period of military-backed interim government, Mahfouz reported that she was subject to increasing violence, threats and surveillance. A heavy crackdown by the authorities, initially targeted at the Muslim Brotherhood, was broadened to attack critical voices and renowned icons of the January 25 revolution, particularly the April 6 activists. Mahfouz said she and fellow activists were being attacked in the media as foreign agents and threats to national security, prompting people to verbally abuse her in the streets.

In April 2014, an Egyptian court banned the April 6 youth movement. Three of the left-wing movement’s leaders, Ahmed Maher, Mohammed Adel and Ahmed Douma, are serving three-year jail sentences on charges including protesting illegally under Egypt’s new restrictive protest law, whilst a fourth, Alaa Abdel Fattah was condemned to 15 years, prompting alarm from EP President Schulz and Asmaa Mahfouz herself, who tweeted: ‘Fifteen years for protesting? What about those who killed? There will never be a state as long as this goes on’.
AHMED EL SENUSSI, born in 1934, was Libya’s longest-serving prisoner of conscience. He is a relative of Idris, the only king of Libya, who was deposed by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in 1969.

El Senussi was accused of conspiracy in an attempted coup against Gaddafi in 1970 and spent 31 years in prison, nine of them in solitary confinement and in a cell so small he could not stand up straight in it. He was released in August 2001, alongside dozens of other political prisoners.

As a popular uprising backed by NATO toppled the Libyan dictator in 2011, the National Transitional Council (NTC) took over the country’s government and El Senussi became a member, responsible for political prisoners. However, despite elections, lawlessness and instability remained the overriding theme of politics in Libya, with factions vying for control with arms.

El Senussi’s home base of Benghazi, that had been sidelined under Gaddafi, strongly supports federalism, which was observed in Libya for most of the reign of King Idris. In 2012, 3,000 delegates from the region, met in Benghazi to establish the Cyrenaica Transitional Council (CTC). El Senussi was named its leader. The CTC declared itself in favour of a high degree of autonomy for the region, but said it accepted the NTC as the country’s symbol of unity and its legitimate representative in international arenas. The CTC’s declaration carries no legal force, nor is the CTC backed by militias as is the other main federalist Benghazi-based group, the Political Bureau of Cyrenaica headed by Ibrahim Jadhran, who wants to establish a parallel government, and from whom El Senussi has distanced himself.

El Senussi and the established tribal leaders he leads advocate federalism through the new constitution.

At the Sakharov Prize Network debate held at Parliament in 2012, El Senussi discussed with President Schulz, Asmaa Mahfouz and Ali Ferzat the aftermath of the revolution and armed conflict in Libya and the future of democracy in Arab countries following the Arab Spring. At the first edition of the World Democracy Forum at the Council of Europe, El Senussi denounced the lack of an effective government in Libya and countered the accusations of treason levelled at him after his call for a federal system, saying these were a clear operation to misread his proposal and tarnish the reputation of those who want to improve the situation. El Senussi participated in the 2013 SPN Conference.
RAZAN ZAITOUNEH is a Syrian journalist and human rights lawyer who was kidnapped in a rebel-held area in the suburbs of Damascus, on 9 December 2013. She is still missing, believed to be well, but her whereabouts and captors are yet unknown. Zaitouneh bravely denounced human rights violations by the Damascus regime and rebel fighters alike, despite being threatened. She was kidnapped together with her husband and fellow activist Wael Hamada and two colleagues, poet and lawyer Nazem Hamadi and former political prisoner Samira Khalil, from the office of two groups she founded, the Violations Documentation Centre (VDC) and the Local Development and Small Projects Support Office (LDSPS), in Douma.

Zaitouneh is one of the most prominent and credible civilian activists in the Syrian revolution. Her kidnapping is seen by Syrian commentators as a defining episode in the division taking place in Syria between the civilian forces and the extremists, and an event which has dealt a fatal blow to the Syrian revolution.

Her family have appealed for international help to find her and her colleagues.

'Ve, the family of Razan Zeitouneh, the human rights activist, the lawyer, the writer and, above all, the human being, issue this statement more than three months after the deliberate kidnapping which no party declared responsible for, or issued any statement or request about, in a clear attempt to buy time and suppress the free voice of our daughter along with her colleagues to force them to stop writing and prevent them their right of freedom of expression,' the family said in a statement issued in April 2014 and published by the VDC.

Activists and politicians from all over the world have appealed for their release, including President Schulz. 'On behalf of the European Parliament I call for their immediate release...Her life was threatened by the regime and by the rebel groups for what she was, a courageous young woman who refuses to compromise and continues to fight peacefully for democracy and a free Syria'.

45 NGOs including Sakharov Prize Laureates Reporters Without Borders issued a joint appeal for her release and that of the activists kidnapped with her.

At the time of her award in 2011, she was living in hiding having fled a raid by state security agents on her house. Her share of the Sakharov Prize purse was dedicated to saving the life of a fellow activist hit by tank fire.
GUILLERMO FARIÑAS

A Cuban doctor of psychology, independent journalist, political dissident and currently the spokesperson for the opposition Unión Patriótica de Cuba, Guillermo Fariñas has over the years conducted 23 hunger strikes with the aim of achieving peaceful political change, freedom of speech and freedom of expression in Cuba.

As a journalist, he founded the independent press agency Cubanacán Press with the aim of informing the rest of the world of the destiny of political prisoners in Cuba, but was eventually forced by the authorities to close it down.

In February 2010, after the controversial death of prisoner Orlando Zapata, he began a hunger and thirst strike that lasted 130 days, calling for the liberation of political prisoners taken ill after many years of imprisonment. He only ended his strike in July 2010, after the Cuban government announced it was in the process of freeing 52 political prisoners.

Guillermo Fariñas could not participate in the 2010 Sakharov Prize award ceremony at the EP because he was not allowed to leave Cuba. In July 2012, he was arrested at the funeral of another Sakharov Prize Laureate and Cuban dissident, Oswaldo Payá, and briefly detained.

After the Cuban government eased travel restrictions on Cubans, and upon the return of the Damas de Blanco to Cuba after visiting Parliament, Guillermo Fariñas also addressed the European Parliament in a July 2013 belated Sakharov Prize Award ceremony in his honour.

‘Today, I am here not because the situation has essentially changed, but because of the realities of the modern world, and above all, because of the growing civic defiance of Cubans, which has forced the regime to – like the legendary prince Don Fabrizio from Il Gattopardo said – “change something so that nothing changes”; Fariñas stated in his acceptance speech.

Fariñas participated actively in the 2013 SPN Conference and in the World Democracy Forum debate on Solution Journalism in Action, where he stressed that journalists ‘will carry on so that people in Cuba know what’s going on’. In 2014 he was repeatedly arrested and briefly detained, threatened with death and confinement in a psychiatric hospital, beaten and hospitalised.
MEMORIAL

OLEG ORLOV, SERGEI KOVALEV and LYUDMILA ALEXEYEVA were awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2009 on behalf of Memorial and all other human rights defenders in Russia.

Memorial was established in 1988 with the aim of monitoring and making public violations of human rights in former USSR states. Amongst its founders was Andrei Sakharov, who also co-founded the Moscow Helsinki Group with Lyudmila Alexeyeva.

Born in 1927, Alexeyeva heads the Group and is one of the few Soviet-era dissidents still active in modern Russia, renowned for campaigning for fair trials for dissidents.

Oleg Orlov is one of Memorial's leaders since 1994 and a member of the Board of Memorial. In 2014, he collected evidence of abductions in eastern Ukraine, as pro-Russian separatists warred with Ukrainian forces, finding the practice there comparable to the abductions that Memorial documented for decades during two wars in Chechnya, where he himself had been kidnapped.

Sergei Kovalev, the current chair of the Russian Memorial, is well-known for negotiating in 1995 the release of around 2,000 people held hostage in the Budennovsk hospital by Chechen rebels, the only time that a terrorist attack in Russia did not result in mass hostage deaths. He accuses Russia interfering in Ukrainian internal affairs and provoking civil war and is glad to see ‘civilized countries quit their usual indifference’ which he says Putin has learnt to exploit.

Memorial’s members and close associates have been threatened, abducted and assassinated during the years. In 2014, Memorial was registered as a “foreign agent” by Russian authorities, after amendments were introduced to a 2012 law allowing authorities to register NGOs receiving funds from outside Russia as “foreign agents” without their consent.

Hundreds of NGOs were hit by this law and no independent NGO applied to register voluntarily as a “foreign agent” which in Russia means ‘spy’ as Kirill Koroteev, senior lawyer for Memorial, told Parliament’s Sub-Committee on Human Rights. Orlov missed the 2013 SPN Conference in order to fight this law in court, but Memorial lost the case and its appeal.

Memorial and other NGOs now continue this fight before the European Court of Human Rights. The Moscow Helsinki Group also refused to register as a “foreign agent” with Alexeyeva saying it would continue working for human rights without foreign grants.

Orlov discussed torture in Russia during the SPN-One World Film Festival public debates in 2014, whilst Koroteev represented Memorial at the European Youth Event.
Chinese dissident HU JIA has been imprisoned and released since the EP awarded him the Sakharov Prize on its 20th Anniversary for his calls for an official inquiry into the Tiananmen Square massacre and for compensation to the victims’ families, his environmental activism and his work against Aids. Hu Jia has once again been subjected to periods of house arrest in 2014. In fact, he has been under house arrest every year around the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square killings on June 4 since he took flowers to the square in 2004. Since the 2nd July, 2004, his house in Beijing is under surveillance twenty-four hours a day, every day. At times he is not allowed out to buy food or medicine.

In 2007, he bravely testified via a conference call before Parliament’s Sub-Committee on Human Rights, calling attention to one million people persecuted by the Chinese national security department for fighting for human rights, with many detained in prison, in labour camps or mental hospitals.

As a direct result of this, Hu Jia was arrested on 27 December 2007, charged with “inciting subversion of state power”, and sentenced on 3 April 2008 to three-and-a-half years’ in jail and denied his political rights for a year.

When he was awarded the Sakharov Prize, he was pressured by state security police to refuse it.

Hu Jia bravely accepted it, calling it ‘an important prize for China’. In a letter to the EP President in July 2012, Hu Jia said he considered the Prize a ‘truly a great honour’ which ‘provided me with encouragement and greatly improved the way I was treated in prison’.

He was released in June 2011, and tried to form a human rights NGO on leaving prison, but its members were arrested. He now runs a network of citizens who meet in a political assembly. Hu Jia is also a coordinator of the "barefoot lawyers", an informal group of legal advisers who defend human rights activists in China.

The Sakharov Prize Network declaration issued in 2013 on the 25th Anniversary of the Prize, called on ‘the Chinese authorities to stop the frequent restrictions imposed on Sakharov Prize Laureate Hu Jia’. He was unable to attend because of the curbs on his freedom by the Chinese authorities, and was represented by his wife and Sakharov Prize nominee Zeng Jinyan, who emphasised the plights of political prisoners and their families. In 2014 threats and harassment to Hu Jia escalated to the point that he feels his life is at risk.
SALIH MAHMOUD MOHAMED OSMAN had been providing free legal representation to people arbitrarily detained, tortured, and subjected to serious human rights abuses in Sudan for over two decades when the EP unanimously awarded him the Sakharov Prize in 2007.

'I am a native of Darfur, born in Jebel Marra. I have worked as a lawyer in Darfur in Sudan for many years. I have been a victim of detention and torture because of my work. Members of my own family have been tortured and displaced by the militia in Darfur. For many years, in my work, I have represented thousands of people who needed my help in front of the Courts. I have seen thousands of people who have been tortured, I have seen hundreds of women and young girls who have been victims of sexual abuse', Salih Osman told the European Parliament in accepting the Prize.

Osman has catalogued crimes that have taken place and is actively involved in the protection of the 3.2 million Sudanese displaced from their homes by the ongoing fighting in Sudan.

He continues to call attention to a conflict that has spanned over a decade since it broke out in Jebel Marra in 2003, and was described by the UN as one of the worst humanitarian situations in the world. Despite intense international pressure and attempts at mediation, a comprehensive peace agreement with all the warring parties is still to be signed, whilst insurgent groups are now uniting with an increasingly national agenda.

Osman emphasises that the causes that ignited the war, including land dispossession and political marginalisation, are not only still unresolved, but have been compounded by further unmet demands to bring national laws in conformity with international standards and ensure the independence of the judiciary.

Osman, who served as a Member of the Sudanese Parliament for the opposition between 2005 and 2010, is a staunch supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as ‘Africans have nowhere to turn for justice and redress due to the lack of adequate judicial systems in Africa’ as he told representatives of EU institutions, the ICC and over 200 civil society organisations present at the 2013 EU-NGO Forum, which he addressed as a Sakharov Prize Laureate.

At the SPN Conference in 2013 he advocated the denunciation of impunity and torture in the final Declaration.
ALIAKSANDR MILINKEVICH is a leader of the democratic opposition Movement for Freedom in Belarus who had ‘the courage to challenge the last dictatorship in Europe’ as Parliament’s then President Borrell Fontelles put it when awarding him the Sakharov Prize.

Milinkevich, a scientist, was chosen to be the joint presidential candidate of the United Democratic Opposition in October 2005, calling for a truly democratic future and presenting himself as a real alternative to the authoritarianism of President Lukashenko, whose victory was heavily criticised by the opposition in Belarus and abroad for vote-rigging. After contesting, Milinkevich was arrested under various pretexts, but no charges were brought against him.

Milinkevich did not stand in the Presidential elections in 2010 as he considered that no changes had been made to national electoral regulations to ensure fair, free and open elections. Lukashenko remains in power and the human rights situation in Belarus has further deteriorated after the 2010 elections, with the enactment of a law criminalizing behaviour deemed critical to the state and the silencing and imprisonment of journalists, activists, and other critics of current regime continues. Civil society activists fear that a “foreign agents” law similar to Russia’s might be enacted, though Lukashenko appears to be trying to distance himself from the Kremlin after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

Milinkevich welcomed the unusual use of Belarusian by Lukashenko, who usually speaks in Russian, in a July 2014 speech, but told the BBC that ‘so far it’s just a trend, not a strategy’.

As a Sakharov Prize Laureate, Milinkevich is regularly consulted by Parliamentary bodies concerned with Belarus and has participated in Sakharov Prize Network events, including the Network Conference in 2013.

In an SPN debate in Lithuania with Berta Soler, national authorities, and Members of the European and Lithuanian parliaments, Milinkevich denounced continual intimidation and humiliation perpetrated by the authorities against human rights defenders in Belarus. He declared his support for greater European integration for Belarus, and a critical and constructive dialogue with the Belarusian authorities. Dialogue was also a key element also Milinkevich’s interventions during the public SPN-One World Film Festival debates at the European Parliament. He argued that the EU needs to engage to a greater extent with Belarus to bring about more freedom. Belarus needs economic assistance and this could be used as leverage to force Belarus into dialogue with the EU, including on human rights, in Milinkevich’s view.
The LADIES IN WHITE, or DAMAS DE BLANCO, formed spontaneously in Cuba in 2003 in reaction to the imprisonment of 75 of their husbands and relatives during Cuba’s Black Spring, a harsh crackdown by the Cuban regime on democracy activists. They marched in the streets and wrote many letters to the Cuban authorities, asking for the prisoners’ release, but did not get a single reply.

The Damas did not give up, and their persistent protests got results: the last two of the Black Spring prisoners were released in March 2011. Most accepted exile to Spain, but a small number remain in Cuba, continuing their fight in difficult conditions at great personal cost and hand in hand with the indomitable Damas de Blanco.

The Damas continue to walk down Havana’s streets every Sunday after mass, carrying flowers and fighting for social justice in communist Cuba. More and more women have joined them despite the difficulties in communication and the beatings, detentions and psychological harassment inflicted on the Damas. Around 100 Damas were temporarily detained in July 2014, an unusually large scale arrest that led other dissidents to conclude that their growing numbers are now a threat to the Cuban regime.

In 2013, the Damas were finally able to accept in person the Sakharov Prize they had been awarded in 2005. President Berta Soler, and movement representatives Belkis Cantillo Ramirez and Laura Maria Labrada Pollán, daughter of the beloved Damas co-founder Laura Pollán who died in 2011, were allowed to exit Cuba after the easing of travel restrictions on citizens, and address Parliament, which recognised them for their courage and commitment to the cause of human rights.

Berta Soler compared the Sakharov Prize to ‘a shield’ which would protect the Damas on their return to Cuba.

Shortly after the Sakharov Award ceremony, the Damas and other dissidents, including 2010 Laureate Guillermo Fariñas, set up the International Platform for Human Rights in Cuba.

Berta Soler represented the Damas at the 2013 SPN Conference where together with Guillermo Fariñas and the daughter of Oswaldo Payá, she prompted the Network to call ‘for the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Cuba and elsewhere around the world’. She has also participated in an SPN debate in Lithuania together with Aliaksandr Milinkevich, and constantly called on the EU to make human rights a condition in any agreements with Cuba.
A Sharia lawyer, **HAUWA IBRAHIM** was born in 1967 to a Muslim family in a small, impoverished village in Gombe state in northern Nigeria.

She was given away in marriage at age 10, but being a headstrong child inspired by her mother’s conviction that education was the only way out of poverty, Ibrahim ran away from home to a boarding school for girls to continue her education. She went on to become the first female lawyer in her State.

When Sharia law was introduced in 12 northern states of Nigeria from 1999, Hauwa Ibrahim began to build up what can only be described as an extraordinary practice, representing women condemned to death by stoning for adultery and children to limb amputation for theft, amongst others. She defended, sometimes free of charge, over 150 cases, saving the lives of Amina Lawal, Safiya Hussaini, Hafsatu Abubakar and many others. Initially, as a woman, she could not speak in a Sharia court or address a judge directly but would have to pass notes to male colleagues. She is now called to court only when cases are difficult or require a ‘heavyweight’ as her fame has grown and attitudes to the application of Sharia, initially unquestioned, have changed with state governors refusing to sign the now unpopular death sentences.

As a result of her experience, in 2014 she was named by President Jonathan to serve on the Presidential Committee charged with fact-finding to help locate 219 girls kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram from Chibok in northern Nigeria.

Ibrahim has urged international support for the ‘unresolved tragedy’ of the kidnapped girls, including with the European Parliament and the US Congress, and for stronger action to tackle the violence against women, the abject poverty, the high unemployment and lack of opportunities where ‘religion and religious extremism become dangerous opium to the hopeless’.

Ibrahim feels strongly that the education of all children begins in the home, with the mother, and thus educating girls will better society as a whole. She invested her Sakharov Prize money into an endowment, and uses its interest for the education of poor children in northern Nigeria, paying fees and buying materials directly to ensure that the children have the means to stay in school.

She participated actively in the 2013 SPN Conference, discussed child rights in the SPN-One World Film Festival debates and delivered a Sakharov Lecture in Ireland.
REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS is an international NGO based in France that fights for freedom of information worldwide.

For Reporters Without Borders (RWB), freedom of expression and of information will always be the world’s most important freedom and the foundation for any democracy. The organisation argues that ‘if journalists were not free to report the facts, denounce abuses and alert the public, how would we resist the problem of child-soldiers, defend women’s rights, or preserve our environment?’

RWB continuously monitors and denounces attacks on freedom of information worldwide, fights censorship and laws aimed at restricting freedom of information, assists morally and financially persecuted journalists and their families and offers material assistance to war correspondents in order to enhance their safety. To circumvent censorship, it occasionally publishes articles which have been banned in their country of origin, hosts newspapers that have been closed down in their homeland and serves as a forum for journalists who have been “silenced” by the authorities of their country. In order to ensure that the murderers and torturers of journalists are brought to trial, since 2002 its Network provides victims with legal services and represents them in court.

It awards annually two prizes, the Reporters Without Borders’ Prize and the Netizen Prize, recognizing and honouring the bloggers, journalists and media from all around the world.

RWB publishes annually a World Press Freedom Index. The 2014 index covers 180 countries and ‘spotlights the negative impact of conflicts on freedom of information and its protagonists’. Syria is mentioned as an extreme example of this, impacting negatively on media freedom also in neighbouring countries, and conflict is also to blame for the big falls in press freedom registered by Mali and the Central African Republic. In Iran, RWB says, there has yet been no implementation of the promises made by new president Hassan Rouhani to improve freedom of information.

As a Sakharov Prize Laureate, RWB has brought together other Laureates and coordinated activities. In 2013 its RWB representatives participated actively in the Network Conference. In 2014 RWB EU Representative Olivier Basille discussed turmoil and press freedom in Ukraine during the SPN-One World Film Festival debates, and engaged with young students at the European Youth Event, urging them to ‘not be afraid to adopt non-anonymity when tackling issues that require courage’.
The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) represents over 1000 professionals, who work under extremely difficult conditions to protect the rights of journalists and often fall victim to intimidation, harassment, criminal prosecution and expatriation.

The commitment of BAJ to the cause of freedom of speech and the promotion of independent and professional journalism in Belarus is inspirational. BAJ works to increase public awareness of the constitutional right to freedom of information and of how people can exercise their rights. It defends journalists’ rights, especially in times of crisis, such as the violent aftermath of the contested presidential elections in 2010.

BAJ aims to liberalize media legal regulations and encourages high quality and ethical journalism. Since it was set up, BAJ has been the major association for the independent press in Belarus with the main aim of providing the public with the most objective, truthful, comprehensive and timely information.

In spite of big efforts to improve the media situation in Belarus, it is still far from favourable. The 2009 Belarusian media law leaves room for the authorities to shut down media they consider too critical. Foreign media must obtain a licence to operate in Belarus and working for them without accreditation is an obstacle for local journalists, who get warnings from the KGB and the Prosecutors’ Office when caught. The penal code still contains articles penalising defamation of higher-level officials. Independent media suffer economic discrimination as the biggest distribution, postal and typography businesses are state-run, and may refuse to cater services to some sharp-tongued media.

BAJ and its members continue undeterred, with President Zanna Litvina thanked publicly by Ales Bialiatski, Sakharov Prize nominee, founder of the Viasna Human Rights Centre and one of Belarus’ best-known political prisoners. He was released early from prison in June 2014 and credited national and international support and journalists’ constant attention to his case for this. The journalists, he said, weren’t so much writing about him as they were about what is happening with the civil and political rights of an entire nation.

Zanna Litvina represented BAJ at the Network Conference marking the Sakharov Prize’s 25th Anniversary in 2013.

BAJ, as turmoil broke out in neighbouring Ukraine in 2014 and one of its members was detained, denounced the violence against journalists in Crimea, stating that those who use violence against journalists demonstrate their genuine intention, which is to ‘to stop information undesirabler for certain political circles’.
In awarding the 2003 Sakharov Prize to the United Nations, the European Parliament gave recognition to the UN’s endeavours for peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Sakharov Prize honoured particularly the United Nations’ members of staff who work tirelessly for world peace, often under difficult conditions. The Prize was awarded in special memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and one of the worthiest representatives of the UN who, whilst serving as Kofi Annan’s special representative in Iraq, was amongst those killed in 2003 in an attack on the UN Headquarters in Baghdad.

Kofi Annan was the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. He served from 1997 to 2006 and was the first to emerge from the ranks of United Nations staff. He was a constant advocate for human rights, the rule of law, the Millennium Development Goals and Africa, and sought to bring the UN closer to the global public by forging ties with civil society, the private sector and other partners.

In 2005, Kofi Annan presented to the UN General Assembly the report entitled *In larger freedom* where he outlined his vision for a comprehensive and extensive reform of the UN. Among other things, this resulted in the creation, in March 2006, of a new Human Rights Council, to replace the old Commission on Human Rights, with the aim of strengthening the world body’s machinery to promote and protect fundamental rights, and deal with major human rights offenders.

After completing two terms as the UN Secretary General in 2007, Annan became involved in several organizations focusing on global and African issues, including his own Kofi Annan Foundation. Since 2013 he is chairing The Elders, a group of world leaders convened by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

In 2012, he served as Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League to Syria with the goal of finding a solution to the conflict, but resigned calling it ‘mission impossible’. He feels the international community has no stomach for boots on the ground, but he called for a core group of countries to work together to help Iraq and Syria resolve the current conflicts in their countries.
OSWALDO JOSÉ PAYÁ SARDIÑAS (1952-2012) is best known as the founder of the Varela Project, a campaign in support of a referendum on laws guaranteeing civil rights, free pluralist elections, the release of all political prisoners, and economic and social reforms in Cuba.

An active reformer since youth, he was persecuted and condemned on several occasions for his criticism of Fidel Castro’s policies and injustices, but that did not stop him from founding, in 1988, the Christian Liberation Movement, now one of the largest opposition movements in Cuba. In 1990, Oswaldo Payá launched a call for national dialogue and started to gather 10,000 signatures in order to convert a civic proposal into law.

In 1997 he drew up the ambitious Varela Project, supported by thousands of Cubans but blocked by a counter initiative from the Cuban authorities making permanent the socialist nature of the Cuban state, an initiative they claimed was approved by a plebiscite.

Many of the Varela project campaigners were imprisoned during the Black Spring of 2003, but Payá did not give up. In 2008, he presented a draft law on amnesty for political prisoners to the National Assembly, and in 2010, he launched the Foro Todos Cubanos.

He was never imprisoned, but his family say he received various death threats. On 22 July 2012, he lost his life in a controversial car crash in Cuba. EP President Martin Schulz, in homage, stated his belief that ‘Oswaldo Payá’s ideas will survive as his work and commitment have inspired a generation of Cuban activists who were following his example in promoting political freedom and human rights’.

The Christian Liberation Movement continues to call for a clarification of the circumstances of his death. His family have rejected the official version of a car accident. His daughter, Rosa Maria, has pled for an impartial international inquiry into her father’s death before the UN Human Rights Council and other international organisations and denounced the persecution and threats inflicted on the family by State Security agents. In June 2013, Payá’s family moved temporarily to the USA.

His daughter Rosa Maria Payá attended the Sakharov Prize 25th Anniversary Conference at the European Parliament, the outcome declaration of which called for ‘an inquiry into the death of Sakharov Prize Laureate 2002 Oswaldo Payá’.

In 2014, the family met Pope Francis, whom they hope will support a referendum on free elections in Cuba.
IZZAT GHAZZAWI (1952-2003) was Palestinian writer and professor whose writings focused on the troubles and sufferings brought about by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and his own personal suffering. His life was marked by the killing of his 16-year-old son Ramy, by the Israeli Army in 1993. Ramy was killed in the courtyard of his school as he went to help a wounded friend. Despite this tragedy, Izzat Ghazzawi always continued to seek cultural and political dialogue with the Israeli people.

Born of refugee parents, into a large family that had fled to the west Bank in 1948, Izzat Ghazzawi wrote his first play at the age of 13. He gained an MA in American-British literature and worked as a professor at Birzeit University. He chaired the Union of Palestinian Writers, wrote novels and short stories, was a literary critic and organised and chaired the first International Writers’ Conference in Palestine (1997).

He was also a member of the Executive Bureau of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. He was imprisoned and punished on a number of occasions by the Israeli authorities for his political activities. The hardest to endure during these times was the separation from his family, particularly his six children, whom he could only see two at a time for 30 minutes a fortnight.

A meeting with Israeli writers in Jerusalem in 1992, which he was initially apprehensive about, proved to be a turning point for him. It was when he began to see his Israeli colleagues as partners for building the future, in which Palestinians and Israelis would be equals in all walks of life.

On presenting his Sakharov Prize award in 2001, then EP President Nicole Fontaine paid him homage for having ‘untiringly promoted the cause of peace and dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Your ardour has never slackened, despite imprisonment and censorship and, worse than all else, the irreplaceable loss of your sixteen-year-old son Ramy’.

At the European Parliament, Ghazzawi called for the healing that we can achieve when we are ‘able to understand each other’s needs’.1

Shortly after his son’s death, together with the Israeli writer Abraham B. Yehoshua and the photographer Oliviero Toscani, he published Enemies, a book on relations between Palestinians and Israelis which became hugely successful.

Izzat Ghazzawi died on 4 April 2003.

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1 25 years of the Sakha Journals, N° 14, November 2013, p.12.
An Israeli born in 1949, NURIT PELED-ELHANAN is a university lecturer and author. In 1997 her 13-year-old daughter Smadar was killed in a suicide attack carried out by a Palestinian in West Jerusalem.

‘My little girl was killed just because she was an Israeli by a young man who was oppressed and exasperated to the point of suicide and murder just because he was a Palestinian. Both are the victims of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Now their bloods are mixed on the stones of Jerusalem that have always been indifferent to blood’. She did not allow Israeli authorities, including the prime minister, to attend the funeral ceremony.

The daughter of the famous General Matti Peled, renowned for his pacifist and progressive campaigning, Nurit Peled has become a symbol of those in Israel who fight against the occupation and for the freedom of Palestine.

She is also very committed to changing the mentality of the Israeli society, in particular the young generation. Her latest publication, entitled *Palestine in Israeli school books: Ideology and propaganda in education*, draws attention to an education in Israeli schools that appears to lean towards racism rather than tolerance and diversity. She has been strong in her criticism of world leaders including George Bush, Tony Blair and Ariel Sharon for ‘infecting their respective citizens with blind fear of the Muslims’.

Nurit Peled Elhanan is a co-initiator of the Russell tribunal, an International People’s Tribunal established in 2009 to examine the role and complicity of third parties in the violations of international law committed by Israel against the Palestinian people.

In 2013 she participated actively in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference, repeatedly calling attention to the suffering of children in conflict and under occupation. As war broke out in Gaza again in July 2014, Nurit Peled-Elhanan took the media and online: ‘I am writing to you from the mouth of hell. Genocide in Gaza, pogroms and massacres in the West Bank and shell-panic in Israel... I call on the EU to use all the diplomatic and economic tools at its disposal to help save my country from this abyss of death and despair in which we live...and restore life to Jews and Palestinians alike’.
DOM ZACHARIAS KAMWENHO was president of the Inter-Church Committee for Peace in Angola (COIEPA), an ecumenical body that brought together the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Angola and Sao Tome, of which he was also president, the Evangelical Alliance of Angola and the Council of Christian Churches of Angola when he was nominated for the Prize. The European Parliament recognised his firm, unbiased and persisting voice for peace, democracy and human rights for Angola as Dom Kamwenho fearlessly criticised both sides, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the rebel group Unita, in the 27-year civil war Angola suffered after independence from Portugal in 1975.

By the late 1990s, renewed awareness of the need to fight for peace and human rights had begun to increase among the Angolan people, encouraged by the efforts of church leaders and various civil society bodies to foster ‘inclusive national reconciliation’. Archbishop Zacarias Kamwenho was in the vanguard of this peace movement.

Born in Chimbundo in 1934, and ordained in 1961, he was made Archbishop of Lubango in 1995. Dom Zacarias Kamwenho expressed his firm, impartial and determined views to all parties of the conflict in an effort to achieve lasting peace through political dialogue.

The ceasefire which came about in 2002 after the killing of Unita leader Jonas Savimbi, the peace talks and the general climate of support for democratisation can largely be attributed to the campaign conducted by Kamwenho and other religious and civil leaders. In 2003 Archbishop Kamwenho resigned as chair of the Bishops’ Conference of Angola and Sao Tome but continued to work actively through his diocese and the Ecumenical Committee for Peace in Angola for the realisation of democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, the implementation of the rule of law and lasting national reconciliation. In 2007, he declared that, ‘over the last two years in particular, a new awareness of the need to fight for peace and human rights has been growing among the Angolan people, encouraged and represented by the efforts of Church leaders and various civil society bodies, the ultimate aim being inclusive national reconciliation’.

In 2013, he participated in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference.
The members of **BASTA YA** risked their lives while fighting terrorism. The only “weapon” they had was the peaceful mobilisation of the people to protect their basic freedoms. During many years, fundamental freedoms and human rights had been under threat in the Basque country from terrorism by ETA and related groups. Thousands of people had been victims of intimidation, extortion, blackmail and attacks, with families and property also targeted. They were unable to express themselves freely or exercise their rights without taking great risks.

**Basta Ya** was created because basic civil liberties and human rights were under threat in the Basque Country, especially for “non-nationalist” citizens, due to ETA’s terrorism and the activities of groups related to it. Its creation was also due to the increase of ethnic and xenophobic nationalism among the more moderate nationalist parties, and groups who sought to come to an agreement with ETA.

The civic initiative whose name translates to Enough is Enough, and which was granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2004, consisted of people who worked for basic human rights, democracy and tolerance in the Basque country.

The organisation carried out several activities amongst which stand out the two large demonstrations in San Sebastian, in February and October of 2000. They demanded the dissolution of ETA, supported the victims of terrorism and defended the Constitution and the Statute as the basis for the dignified coexistence of all Basque citizens.

**Basta Ya** dissolved itself in 2007. Its leaders, Carlos Martínez Gorriarán, Juan Luis Fabo, Rosa Díez and Fernando Savater created the political party **Unión Progreso y Democracia** (**UPyD**), which is fighting to maintain the unity of Spain as a country.

Fernando Savater was the intellectual leader of the movement and represented Basta Ya at the Sakharov Prize award at the EP in 2000. In 2013 he also represented Basta Ya at the Sakharov Prize Network Conference marking the 25th Anniversary of the Sakharov Prize.
XANANA GUSMÃO is known as the ‘Mandela of Timor’. Recognised as a leader and symbol of the Timorese resistance who aimed to bring an end to the armed conflict for independence from Indonesia, he had just been released from prison, where he had served seven years of a 20-year jail term on charges of separatism, when the EP awarded him the Sakharov Prize in December 1999.

When the Portuguese withdrew from East Timor, Indonesia began a policy of destabilising its neighbour. On 7 December 1975, Indonesia invaded. Gusmão went underground and in 1978 became leader of the military wing of the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor (FRETILIN).

The violence which accompanied the invasion cost an estimated 200,000 lives, but failed to break the people’s determination to resist. Xanana Gusmão sought to secure a peaceful solution to the conflict by proposing a peace plan and talks under UN supervision to the Indonesian Government. In 1986 he managed to bring together the various political and social groupings to form the Timorese National Resistance Council (TNRC).

However, on 20 November 1992 Xanana Gusmão was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, subsequently reduced to 20 years. But the Timorese resistance held and massive international pressure was brought to bear on Indonesia for his release. When freed in September 1999 – shortly after the referendum of 30 August, in which 80% of the population of East Timor had voted for independence – Gusmão promised ‘to do everything in my power to bring peace to East Timor and my people’.

In April 2002, in the first free presidential elections held in East Timor, Gusmão was elected with almost 83% of the votes. On 20 May 2002 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan officially declared the Democratic Republic of East Timor an independent state and Gusmão served as President until May 2007. In 2008 he survived an assassination attempt. He currently serves as Prime Minister, and in August 2014 declared his intention to continue in office, though he had previously announced his intention to step down in 2014.

In 2013, he participated in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference. On the Ebola outbreak in 2014, to the fight against which East Timor contributed a million dollars, Gusmao warned at the UN that ‘this emergency serves as a stark reminder that all development shocks are amplified by existing vulnerabilities and weak institutions’.

1 Xanana Gusmão legally changed his name from José Alexandre Gusmão to Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. Kay Rala was his nom de guerre during the struggle for Timor Leste’s freedom and self-determination and Xanana was a name he was known by in his youth.
IBRAHIM RUGOVA (1944-2006). In 1998, as the armed conflict between Serbian units and the Kosovo Liberation Army escalated, the European Parliament honoured Ibrahim Rugova, a man committed to the principle of peaceful resistance to violence.

Accepting the award Rugova said ‘this prize represents for me and for all the people of Kosovo, recognition of our peaceful struggle and our sacrifices’.

Ibrahim Rugova, who was born on 2 December 1944 in Cërcka (Istog), Kosovo, taught literature at the University of Pristina before being elected leader of the Kosovo Democratic Alliance (LDK) in 1989. That year, Belgrade abolished the autonomous status of the province of Kosovo and the Albanians found themselves subject to oppression, with opposition leaders arrested. In 1990 the two million Kosovo Albanians adopted their own constitution. In a 1991 referendum, 97% of them voted for an independent Kosovo, and in 1998 they confirmed Rugova as President of their self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo.

Rugova stuck to his approach based on non-violent opposition to the Serbian regime, constantly reiterating his willingness to enter into dialogue with Belgrade. His position in negotiations was criticised by Adem Demaçi, who was favouring a more nationalistic approach. At the same time, he endeavoured to win over world opinion to his people’s cause. He never faltered in urging the international community to step up its pressure and offer Kosovo protection. Convinced that his people could achieve self-determination only through peace, on 18 March 1999 Rugova signed the Rambouillet peace agreement as the chief negotiator for the Kosovo Albanians. Belgrade’s refusal to endorse the agreement led on 24 March to the launch of NATO attacks on Yugoslavia and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. Rugova was forced to go underground. In March 2002 Ibrahim Rugova was elected as the first President of Kosovo. He died of cancer on 21 January 2006.
**SALIMA GHEZALI** is an Algerian journalist, writer and women’s rights activist. In the 1980s she became involved in the Algerian women’s movement, amongst other things as a founder member of Women of Europe and the Maghreb and as editor-in-chief of NYSSA, the women’s publication she herself founded.

A teacher turned journalist, she edited the French-language Algerian weekly *La Nation* from 1994, the most widely-read weekly in Algeria. As the 11-year civil war between the government and Islamist rebel groups, which began in 1991 raged, *La Nation* advocated political dialogue for all sides in the war, human rights and freedom of expression for all, and criticized both government and Islamic groups – the only paper to do so. For this, the paper was seized and suspended many times, and finally banned in 1996, after the appearance in *Le Monde Diplomatique* of Ghezali’s report on the human rights situation in Algeria.

The publication of *La Nation* resumed in 2011 on the Internet. In a Letter from the editor, Ghezali explained the reasons motivating her: ‘we cannot be indifferent to the dynamics of the young people in the Arab world who are fighting for their dignity and freedom. We cannot be indifferent to what is happening in our country. We want the Algerian people to be happy, because they deserve it. We want strong institutions, better human resources in a real democracy and the rule of law.’ She concluded with a wish ‘for a better Algeria, where good governance is the rule’.

Salima Ghezali has won a range of human rights awards and continues her activism on women’s rights, human rights and democracy in Algeria.

In 2013 she participated actively in Sakharov Prize Network events including a Sakharov Lecture in Marseille and the 25th Anniversary Conference.
WEI JINGSHENG The “father of the Chinese democracy movement” lives in exile but remains an active leader of the opposition to the Communist dictatorship in China.

He is the author of *The Courage to Stand Alone: letters from Prison and Other Writings*, articles he initially wrote on toilet paper in jail, and now published in more than a dozen languages.

He was sentenced to jail twice for 29 years in total and served more than 18 years for his activities and writings in support of democracy, including his groundbreaking 1978 essay *The Fifth Modernization: Democracy*. This began as a signed wall poster on the Democracy Wall in Beijing, on which workers, artists and intellectuals exercised their freedom of expression. It caused a sensation, not only because it openly assaulted the ‘people’s democratic dictatorship’ of the Communists, but also because he dared to sign it with both his real name and contact information.

In the *Exploration*, an underground magazine Wei founded and edited, he wrote *Democracy or a New Dictatorship?* in which he identified Deng Xiaoping, then Communist leader, as the new dictator. Arrested three days later, Wei was convicted of “counter-revolution” and jailed for 15 years in 1979. He was on death row, then in solitary confinement, then in forced labour camps under strict supervision till 1993, when he was released due to China’s decision to apply for the 2000 Olympic Games. Within six months he was arrested a second time, tried again, convicted of “counter-revolution” and sentenced to another 14 years.

At the time of his Sakharov Prize award in 1996 he was still in prison. In 1997, after overwhelming international pressure, Wei was taken from his cell and put on a plane to the United States. He maintains that he was not freed, but that his exile is further punishment.

From Washington, Wei leads the Wei Jinsheng Foundation, the Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition and the Asia Democracy Alliance.

In 2013, he participated in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference which called on Chinese authorities to free all jailed human rights defenders.

He asserted his belief in eventual democracy for China in an article commemorating the 25th anniversary of Tiananmen Square in 2014, stating that ‘what is without doubt is that the Chinese people – standing on the shoulders of the heroes of 1989 – will find their way to democracy’.
LEYLA ZANA in 1991 became the first Kurdish woman to win a seat in the Turkish parliament. She was also in prison for 10 years for her political activism, deemed to be against the unity of the country by Turkish courts.

At 15 she married the former mayor of Diyarbakir, Mehdi Zana, who was jailed during military rule in the 1980s for “separatism”. Starting school at age 23, she earned primary and secondary diplomas in three years, and eventually took on an unsolicited leadership role as her personal development was seen as virtually synonymous with the realisation of fundamental rights for the Kurdish population. Overwhelmingly elected to Parliament, she caused scandal in her swearing-in ceremony by saying in Kurdish ‘I take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people’. Speaking Kurdish in the public arena was then a criminal offense.

In 1994 she was stripped of her parliamentary immunity and sentenced to 15 years’ incarceration for “treason and membership in the armed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)”, a charge which she denied.

The EP awarded her the Sakharov Prize in 1995 for her courageous defence of human rights and commitment to forging a peaceful, democratic resolution to conflicts between the Turkish Government and its Kurdish population.

In 2004 after the European Court of Human Rights ruled that she had not received a fair and independent trial, Zana was finally able to address the EP in person at her Prize-award ceremony.

In 2012, she was sentenced to another 10 years jail for “spreading terrorist propaganda”. As an MP, re-elected in 2011, she has parliamentary immunity until 2015.

In 2012, Zana met Prime Minister Erdoğan after saying publicly that she hoped he would solve the Kurdish issue. Her initiative served as the groundwork of the negotiation process between the PKK and the Turkish government thanks to which PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, in March 2013, made his historic call for the PKK to move from armed resistance to democratic political struggle. She remains active in the ongoing peace process.

In 2013 she participated in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference, prompting the Network to welcome the ‘ongoing peace talks between Turkish Government and imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan to find a lasting solution to the decades-old Kurdish conflict’ in its final declaration.
Born in Bangladesh in 1962, TASLIMA NASREEN started writing when she was 13, and is known for her powerful writings on the oppression of women and her unflinching criticism of religion, despite her forced exile and multiple fatwas calling for her death. She is an award-winning writer and her works have been translated into thirty different languages.

Also a physician, secular humanist and human rights activist, Nasreen feels her Bengali identity strongly. However, because of her thoughts and ideas some of her books are banned in Bangladesh, and she has been banned from Bengal, both from Bangladesh and the West Bengal part of India.

When she won the 1994 Sakharov Prize, she had already sought refuge in Europe, living in exile in France and Sweden. In her acceptance speech, she said she came from a part of the world where social tensions and human difficulties were unbearable: as a writer, she could not close her eyes to the daily suffering and starvation.

A few years later, in September 1998, Taslima Nasreen returned to Bangladesh to her dying mother. As soon as this news came out, religious fundamentalists once again called for the writer to be put to death. A court issued a warrant for her arrest and threatened to confiscate her assets. The EP answered Taslima Nasreen’s appeal for help and called on the government of Bangladesh to protect her life and ensure her safety. In January 1999, in the face of continuing threats, Nasreen had to leave her homeland once again. She is now living in New Delhi as she was also forced out of Bengal, which she regards as her second home, in 2011 by a fatwa issued by Kolkata clerics. The National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh in 2014 supported her right to return home.

A campaigner against religious extremism in all religions, Nasreen urged support for the secular movements in Bangladesh to counteract the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, in a visit to the European Parliament in June 2013.

In November 2013, she participated in the Sakharov Prize Network Conference.
Oslobodjenje is a Bosnian daily newspaper. Its name means Liberation, and it represented a lifeline to people caught in the siege of Sarajevo between 1992 and 1996, during the war in the former Yugoslavia, managing to print every single day except one.

Oslobodjenje (Liberation) employed Bosnians, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. None left the newspaper when war began, though given the chance. They stayed and fought to maintain the unity and ethnic diversity of their city and their country, giving the lie to the Greater Serbian propaganda that it was impossible for Serbs, Croats, and Muslims to live together in peace.

By the end of the war of the 75 courageous journalists who risked their lives daily, 5 were killed, 25 wounded. All suffered personal tragedies, including the deaths of their loved ones, and were traumatised by the killing they saw on a daily basis.

Oslobodjenje's offices, located in one of the Sarajevo's most dangerous combat zones, were reduced to rubble. The staff moved into a bomb shelter, improvising power generators from old Lada engines and crossing Sniper's Alley to work every day, with gunners so close that they could hear them chat and sing.

"Our efforts were directed against death and against the partition or even complete eradication of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the map," said Zlatko Disdarević, one of the editors at the time.

Oslobodjenje's staff made of their daily work a symbol of their resistance. Journalists delivered newspapers when the drivers found it too dangerous, and when the Oslobodjenje's network of 700 kiosks throughout Bosnia was burned down, the news pages were cut and faxed, then glued together so citizens in other battered cities like Mostar could read them.

In 2006, the paper was acquired by two of the city's largest businesses, and its website now proclaims that though the organization has changed a great deal, its 'commitment to liberty and justice remains strong'.

Editor Vildana Selimbegovic represented Oslobodjenje at the 2013 Sakharov Prize Network conference. She was one of the wartime staff and though marked by the experience, she still continues in her job with dedication.
For many years, the MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO remained united in the struggle and sorrow of never having found their lost children. This movement, born of the mothers’ search for their disappeared children during Argentina’s “Dirty War” (1976-1983), helped bring down the country’s military regime, and prompted trials and subsequent imprisonment of some of those responsible for crimes against humanity.

Being a Madre de Plaza de Mayo meant facing fear and, enduring threats, violence and random arrests in a country where women were expected to suffer injustice in silence. They used their bodies as “walking billboards” for the pictures, the names of their disappeared children and pleas to have them back. At a time when it was forbidden even to stand together in a group, the mothers staged their first protest by walking slowly in a counter clockwise circle in the Plaza de Mayo. Fourteen women held the first protest, but hundreds joined them later and their passive resistance held even when some of them were “disappeared”.

In 2014, the Madres marked the thirtieth anniversary and 1900 marches since they started, on 30 April 1977, publicly denouncing the disappearance of their children by demonstrating every Thursday. The movement, in 1986, splintered into the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Founding Line and the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Association, though both groups have founding Madres amongst their members.

In July 2014, the Founding Line came out against a draft bill proposed by parliamentarians from President Kirchner’s party to adopt the white headscarf of the Madres as an Argentinian national symbol, along with the flag and the national anthem, saying their movement is one of active resistance and their scarf a sign of the love shared with their children. The Madres Association led by Hebe Bonafini approved the plan.

The Madres Association is working to have the Popular University the group established become a national State University Institute of Human Rights Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a move already approved by the Senate and two Committees of the Chamber of Deputies, despite political opposition. The group also works on urban projects.

As war broke out in Gaza in 2014, Bonafini expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people, in particular with the Palestinian mothers who are those who suffer the most in trying to protect their children.
A writer born in Pristina, Kosovo, in 1936, ADEM DEMAÇI spent a great part of his life, between 1958 and 1990, in prison for fighting for the fundamental rights of the Albanians in Kosovo, and making known the bitter truth about the Serbian oppression of the two million Albanians in Kosovo.

‘In our time we can confirm that freedom of speech is the first, crucial step towards democracy. Without freedom of speech there is no dialogue, without dialogue the truth cannot be established, and without the truth progress is impossible’.

After his release, Demaçi took on the leadership of the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms. In 1996, he embarked on a political career, joining the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo and becoming its chairman. He called for open protests against the Serbian regime saying that non-violence does not necessarily mean passivity, and began a visible, yet non-violent protest campaign against Serbian rule. This consisted of calling on Kosovars to turn off their lights for five minutes and to stand still in the street for one minute at precisely the same time.

From 1998 to 1999, during the Kosovo war, he was the political representative of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), remaining in Kosovo whilst other leaders left the country.

After the war, he devoted himself mainly to ethnic reconciliation and the return of refugees. He became chairman of the Committee for Mutual Understanding, Tolerance and Coexistence, representing all ethnic groups in Kosovo, ‘because Kosovo belongs to everyone’ and ‘we want a free, democratic and multi-ethnic society’.

He is still a leading political authority in Kosovo, who, in June 2014, hailed the first historic meeting of the governments of Kosovo and Albania as a step towards strengthening the two countries and Albanians in general.

‘Kosovo and Albania should have taken that step much earlier, but it’s better late than never,’ he told a Kosovo daily, commending the establishment of a fund for Albanians still living in Serbia.

He was unable to participate in the 2013 Network Conference marking the 25th Anniversary of the Sakharov Prize due to age and health reasons.
AUNG SAN SUU KYI’s leadership of Burma/Myanmar’s pro-democracy struggle was recognised by the Sakharov Prize in 1990. Twenty-three years later, on 22 October 2013, Aung San Suu Kyi was finally able to receive the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in person.

In a solemn ceremony at the European Parliament, addressing the elected representatives of 28 Member States, Aung San Suu Kyi made an impassioned case for democratic values, emphasising that Burma’s transition towards them remains far from complete. The current constitution, she said, ensures a privileged role for the military which must be reformed in order to guarantee the right of Burmese citizens to ‘live in accordance with their conscience’ and to ‘shape their own destiny’.

She called for the support of the international community to continue to aid the development of democracy and human rights in Burma, and thanked the European Parliament’s longstanding support for her cause.

Daughter of Aung San, a national hero of independent Burma, who was assassinated when she was two, and Khin Kyi, a prominent Burmese diplomat, Suu Kyi witnessed a brutal crackdown on protesters opposing U Ne Win’s military regime when she returned to Burma to nurse her dying mother in 1988. The massacres led her to begin her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.

In 1990 her National League for Democracy won an overwhelming victory in the country’s election, but the military junta not only refused to hand over power but cracked down on the League’s supporters with arrests and bloody reprisals. Suu Kyi spent most of the following two decades after 1990 in prison or under house arrest and during this time, the authorities refused her husband a visa to visit her in Myanmar, despite the fact he been diagnosed with cancer. They urged her to leave the country instead, but anticipating that she would not be allowed to return, she refused, and did not see her husband again to his death in 1999.

She was still under house arrest during Myanmar’s first elections in two decades in 2010, but was released six days later. As the country began democratic reforms, she stood for a parliamentary by-election in April 2012, in which her party won 43 out of the 45 seats available, making her the leader of the parliamentary opposition.

Aung San Suu Kyi is now fighting for a reform of the constitution that would allow her to run for the country’s presidency.
ALEXANDER DUBČEK (1921-1992) was the leading figure in the reform movement known as the Prague Spring in 1968 Czechoslovakia.

The son of a family committed to building socialism in the Soviet Union, in 1939 he secretly joined the Communist Party and the underground resistance against the pro-German Slovak state.

In 1968 Dubček, a devoted communist, became the new First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and sought to liberalize the Communist regime.

He began a series of reforms, granting the press greater freedom of expression, rehabilitating victims of the Stalin era political purges, and initiating economic reforms and a wide-ranging democratization of Czechoslovak political life. However, his reforms aroused concern in Moscow and his endeavours to give socialism a human face were shattered on 21 August 1968 by Warsaw Pact tanks seizing control of Prague. Dubček was kidnapped by the KGB, taken to the Kremlin and briefly detained.

In 1970, he was accused of treason, stripped of office and expelled from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. For fifteen years he lived as an ordinary worker and only returned to political life as a civil rights activist in 1988.

When he was awarded the Sakharov Prize on 22 November 1989, Dubček was still a citizen deprived of his human rights, but just a few days later, on 28 November, Czechoslovakia’s Communist Party relinquished its hold on power, toppled by the Velvet Revolution.

‘I am sure convinced that the “breath of freedom” which the Czechs and the Slovaks enjoyed when Dubček was their leader was a prologue to the peaceful revolutions now taking place in Eastern Europe and Czechoslovakia itself,’ Sakharov wrote in a message to Parliament on 10 December 1989, just four days before he died.

After the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia, Dubček was elected Chairman of the Federal Assembly from 1989 to 1992. Addressing Parliament in January 1990 as he received his Sakharov Prize, Dubček noted that ‘even during the most difficult moments of their history, the nations which make up my country have never ceased to feel that they are part of humanity’s great struggle for freedom’ and from Prague Spring to Velvet Revolution, ‘the ideals of freedom, sovereignty and social justice remained alive.’

1988
NELSON
ROHLALHLA
MANDELA

‘What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made in the lives of others,’ Nelson Mandela once said.

NELSON MANDELA died on 5 December 2013 at his home in Johannesburg, at the age of 95. His passing was met with a worldwide outpouring of grief but also with celebration of a life dedicated to freedom and democracy.

He was the first, along with Soviet dissident Anatoly Marchenko, to be awarded the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize in 1988. At the time he was still being kept under house arrest by South Africa’s apartheid regime, which imprisoned him for 27 years for his fight against racism.

Mandela was an active member of the African National Congress, and co-founder of South Africa’s first black law firm, who became more militant as apartheid grew more oppressive. He was condemned to life in prison in 1964 and finally released in 1990, as the apartheid regime began to buckle under international and domestic pressure.

Shortly after his release, Mandela spoke to the European Parliament of the need of a just and lasting solution to transform South Africa into a ‘united, democratic and non-racial country’. Anything less would be ‘an insult to the memory of the countless patriots in South Africa and the rest of our region, who have sacrificed their very lives, to bring us to the moment today when we can confidently say that the end of the apartheid system is in sight’.

During the 1990s Mandela led South Africa’s transition from apartheid to a racially inclusive democracy, as President from 1994-1999, championing ‘truth and reconciliation’ as the path to peace.

On his death in 2013 tributes flowed, including from the Sakharov Prize Network.

‘South Africa today loses its father, the world loses a hero. I pay tribute to one of the greatest humans of our time. Nelson Mandela dies today, but his legacy will last forever,’ EP President and co-chair of the Sakharov Prize Network Martin Schulz said.

‘He made us all understand that nobody should be penalised for the colour of his skin, for the circumstances into which he is born. He also made us understand that we can change the world, we can change the world by changing attitudes, by changing perceptions,’ said Aung San Suu Kyi.

‘Nelson Mandela led a singular life of sacrifice, dignity and political genius that brought about the peaceful end of one of the great evils of modern times,’ Kofi Annan said.
ANATOLI MARCHenko (1938-1986) was one of the former Soviet Union's best-known dissidents. He died in Chistopol prison of a three-month-long hunger strike for the release of all Soviet prisoners of conscience.

'Marchenko's heroic life and his work represent an enormous contribution to the causes of democracy, humanism and justice,' Andrei Sakharov himself wrote to Parliament, recommending him for the Prize.

Anatoly Marchenko was only 48 years old when he died, but had spent over 20 years in prison and internal exile. The international outcry following his death was a major factor in finally pushing Mikhail Gorbachev, then Secretary General of the Communist Party, to authorize the large-scale release of political prisoners in 1987.

Marchenko became widely known through My Testimony, an autobiographical book on his time in Soviet labour camps and prison, which he wrote in 1966. This book was the first in which the camps and prisons of the post-Stalin period were discussed, awakening the world to the reality that the gulags had not ended with Stalin.

Its publication landed Marchenko in prison again for anti-Soviet propaganda, but before being re-incarcerated in 1968, he became openly a dissident publicly denouncing jail conditions for political prisoners. He warned in an open letter to the media in July 1968, that the Soviet Union would not allow the Prague Spring to continue, a prediction which came true in August as Warsaw Pact tanks invaded Czechoslovakia, and Marchenko was once again sentenced to prison and then to exile.

The greater the repression though, the stronger Marchenko's will to act. He became one of the founders of the influential Moscow Helsinki Group, together with Andrei Sakharov and current leader Ludmilla Alexeyeva. This was founded in 1976 to monitor the Soviet Union's compliance with the human rights clauses of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the first act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, meant to improve relations between the Communist bloc and the West.

He was arrested and jailed for the last time in 1980 for publishing his final book, To Live like Everyone. He did not live through his 15-year sentence.

His widow, Larissa Bogoraz, herself an activist and a Sakharov Prize nominee, received his Prize in 1988.
In the plenary session, Parliament debates every month urgent cases of human rights violations in non-member states, in particular, individual cases. The European Parliament’s resolutions often serve as the basis for action by the Union’s Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European External Action Service, and sometimes have an immediate impact on the concerned governments’ actions.

Parliament’s legislative powers allow it to block the conclusion of agreements with non-member states if there are serious breaches of human rights and democratic principles. Parliament insists on strict compliance with the human rights clauses that are systematically included in such agreements. In April 2011, Parliament called for the EU to suspend negotiations for an Association Agreement between the EU and Syria. In September 2011, the EU Cooperation Agreement with Syria was partially suspended ‘until the Syrian authorities put an end to the systematic violations of human rights’. In 2014 the Syrian conflict continued and the EU reinforced restrictive measures.

Every year the EU issues an annual report on human rights and democracy in the world, which is examined by Parliament. Parliament has also strengthened its role in the defence of human rights by supporting parliamentary democracy and parliamentary political dialogue, holding hearings with civil society representatives from non-member states and sending ad hoc delegations to assess the human rights situation on the ground. The main forums for political dialogue between the European Parliament and Members of non-EU countries are: the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly called EuroLat, and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly with Eastern European partners.

The European Parliament has already used its budgetary powers to substantially increase the resources earmarked for programmes dealing with democracy and human rights and it successfully fought to keep functioning the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

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The EIDHR is a key financial and policy instrument through which the EU contributes to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, the respect of all human rights and fundamental freedoms all over the world, and the support and protection of human rights defenders worldwide.
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