

Sakharov Prize 2021: Parliament honours Alexei Navalny



▶ Parliament awards Alexei Navalny the 2021 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought

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Alexei Navalny's daughter Daria Navalnaya received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize on behalf of her imprisoned father at a ceremony on 15 December.

Currently serving a prison sentence in a forced labour colony in Russia, Alexei Navalny has been the country's leading opposition figure for more than a decade, known for his fight against corruption and the Kremlin's abuses of human rights.

In his introductory words Parliament President David Sassoli praised Navalny's courage: "He has been threatened, tortured, poisoned, arrested, incarcerated, but they have not been able to actually make him stop speaking... As he himself said once, corruption prospers where there is no respect for human rights and I believe he is right. The fight against corruption is also a fight for the respect of universal human rights. It is certainly a fight for human dignity, for good governance and for the rule of law," said Sassoli, calling for Navalny's immediate and unconditional release.

Accepting the prize behalf of her father, Daria Navalnaya criticised those eager to appease dictators in the interest of pragmatism, insisting that Europe must remain true to its ideals: "When I wrote to my dad and asked, What exactly do you want me to say in the speech from your point of view?, he answered: 'Say that no one can dare to equate Russia to Putin's regime.

Russia is a part of Europe and we strive to become a part of it. But we also want Europe to strive for itself, to those amazing ideas, which are at its core. We strive for a Europe of ideas, the celebration of human rights, democracy and integrity'."

Also present at the ceremony in Strasbourg were Leonid Volkov, Navalny's political adviser, and Kira Yarmysh, Navalny's press officer.

The other [finalists for Parliament's Sakharov Prize in 2021](#) were Afghan women fighting for women's rights in their country and Bolivian politician Jeanine Áñez.



Daria Navalnaya during the ceremony in Strasbourg

About Alexei Navalny

Alexei Navalny is this year's Sakharov Prize laureate, following a [decision by Parliament President Sassoli and the political group leaders](#) on 20 October 2021. He came into international prominence for organising demonstrations against Russian President Vladimir Putin and his government, running for office and advocating anti-corruption reforms.

In August 2020, Navalny was poisoned and spent months recovering in Berlin. He was arrested on his return to Moscow in January 2021 and is now in a high-security penal colony, with more

than two years of time still to serve. Navalny went on a long hunger strike in late March 2021 to protest against his lack of access to medical care.

In June 2021, a Russian court labelled Navalny's organisation [Anti-Corruption Foundation](#) and his regional offices "extremist groups".



Sakharov Prize 2021: Alexei Navalny standing up to the Russian regime

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In a [resolution adopted in January 2021](#), MEPs demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Navalny and all other people detained while protesting for his release, and called on EU countries to significantly strengthen sanctions against Russia; a call they [reiterated in April 2021](#).

The European Parliament's Sakharov Prize

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is awarded each year by the European Parliament. It was set up in 1988 to honour individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is named after the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov and consists of a certificate and a €50,000 award.

In 2020, Parliament awarded the prize to the [democratic opposition of Belarus](#).

Find out how the Sakharov Prize laureate is chosen in our [infographic](#).

Find out more

[Watch a press conference with Parliament President David Sassoli, Alexei Navalny's daughter Daria Navalnaya and Navalny's adviser Leonid Volkov \(15 December, 12.45 CET\)](#)

[Facebook live with Alexei Navalny's political advisor, Leonid Volkov, on Wednesday 15 December at 16.00 CET](#)

Sakharov Prize

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