



Sakharov Prize 2007 for Freedom of Thought awarded to Sudanese lawyer Salih Mahmoud Osman

Sudanese human rights lawyer Salih Mahmoud Osman is the winner of this year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Thursday's unanimous decision by the European Parliament's political group leaders was announced to Parliament's plenary sitting in Strasbourg by President Hans-Gert Pöttering. Mr Osman, who works with the Sudan Organisation Against Torture, has for over two decades provided free legal aid to victims of human rights abuses in his country.

The prize will be formally awarded to Mr Osman in Strasbourg on 11 December, the day after the 59th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The prize comes with a certificate and a cheque for €50 000.

Since 1988 the European Parliament has awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to exceptional individuals or organisations fighting injustice and oppression throughout the globe, from South Africa to Belarus, from Cuba to Bangladesh.

Addressing the plenary in Strasbourg, President Pöttering said: "In the face of violence and arbitrary power, Mr Osman stands up for dialogue and justice. And there can be no democracy without justice. By granting the Sakharov Prize to Salih Mahmoud Osman, the European Parliament shows its support for the action of this courageous man who has become the voice of Darfur, and through him, for the establishment of the rule of law in Sudan".

Salih Mahmoud Osman

Over two decades during Sudan's various civil wars Salih Mahmoud Osman (b.1957) has risked his own life to provide legal and medical aid to the countless victims of the conflict. Working with the Sudan Organisation Against Torture ("SOAT") he has given legal protection and representation to the victims of human rights abuses.

In its work SOAT has been successful in overturning judgements of death or amputation and they are engaged in a campaign to have rape established as a war crime.

As well as dealing with the victims of abuses, Mr Osman and SOAT have also been active in cataloguing crimes that have taken place - particularly in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Persecuted for his actions

Mr Osman's fight against injustice in Sudan has had a personal cost. Members of his own family have been killed, tortured, or burned out of their homes by the militias. He himself was imprisoned by the Sudanese government for over seven months in 2004

without charge or trial. On 8 November 2005, he was awarded Human Rights Watch's highest honour for his work in Sudan.

Mr Osman currently serves as a Member of the Sudanese National Parliament. In that new role, he is focused on promoting the rule of law through the implementation of the provisions of the interim constitution.

Anna Politkovskaya

The group leaders also decided to find an appropriate way to honour Anna **Politkovskaya**, the Russian journalist who was killed last year and was also on this year's Sakharov shortlist. They will decide at their next meeting how this should be done.

Previous winners of the Sakharov prize

1988 Nelson Mandela and Anatoli Marchenko (posthumously)
1989 Alexander Dubcek
1990 Aung San Suu Kyi
1991 Adem Demaçi
1992 Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo
1993 Oslobodjenje
1994 Taslima Nasreen
1995 Leyla Zana
1996 Wei Jinsheng
1997 Salima Ghezali
1998 Ibrahim Rugova
1999 Xanana Gusmão
2000 ¡Basta Ya!
2001 Izzat Ghazzawi, Nurit Peled-Elhanan and Dom Zacarias Kamwenho
2002 Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas
2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and all the UN staff
2004 Belarusian Association of Journalists
2005 Ladies in White, Hauwa Ibrahim, Reporters without Frontiers
2006 Alexander Milinkevich

Contact :

Jack BLACKWELL

E-mail: jack.blackwell@europarl.europa.eu

BXL: (32-2) 28 42929

Richard FREEDMAN

E-mail: press-EN@europarl.europa.eu

BXL: (32-2) 28 41448

STR: (33-3) 881 73785

PORT: (+32) 498 98 32 39