

SAKHAROV PRIZE COMMUNITY
NEWSLETTER
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MEPs call for free and fair elections in Venezuela

10-07-2020: In a resolution adopted on July 9, the European Parliament expressed its deep concern at the severity of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Parliament strongly rejected all attacks on democratically elected representatives and opposition parties and insisted that a peaceful political solution can only be reached in Venezuela if its National Assembly's constitutional prerogatives are fully respected. Finally, the EP called for free, transparent, and credible presidential and legislative elections. The National Assembly was collectively awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2017. [Press release](#)

DROI holds debate with 2017 Sakharov Prize finalist Aura Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic

03-07-2020: The Subcommittee on Human Rights had an exchange of view on "The effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter" in the presence of 2017 Sakharov Prize finalist **Aura Lolita Chávez Ixcaquic**, Member of the Council of K'iche Peoples for the Defense of Life, Mother Nature, Land and Territory (CPK) of the Quiché people. She pointed out that indigenous people are discriminated against in Guatemala, and particularly suffer the effects of climate change and pollution. Those who try to protest face threats and acts of violence, she warned. [DROI tweet](#)

Reporters Without Borders publishes a list of ten Chinese press-freedom defenders whose lives are in grave danger if not immediately released

10-07-2020: According to 2005 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Reporters Without Borders**, at least 114 journalists and press freedom defenders are currently locked away in Chinese jails, some under a life sentence. RWB published a list of ten prisoners sentenced to heavy prison terms who are in danger of losing their lives if not immediately released. Among these ten prisoners is 2019 Sakharov Prize **Ilham Tohti**, whose state of health has been unknown since 2018.

[RWB statement](#)

Leyla Yunus denounce repressions in Azerbaijan within COVID-19 measures

27-07-2020: In an urgent statement released on Monday, July 27, 2014, Sakharov Prize Finalist **Dr. Leyla Yunus** along with the Institute for Peace and Democracy denounce the systematic repressive measures imposed in Azerbaijan by Ilham Aliyev, the current head of state, as well as the brutal arrests of citizens with dissenting opinions. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe tensions among the population within an unstable economic and social climate, leading to a series of civilian protests. In the statement, Lelya Yunus highlights the recent detentions of several activists and opposition leaders from the Popular Front party and mentions the arrests of 150 people who, according to the document, dissidents were "brutally beaten, tortured, and asked to testify about the forthcoming coup. Dozens of citizens were brought to administrative charges and received between 15 and 60 days of detention." Detainees are not being brought to trial in order to hide the "signs of torture" or cover up the presumable death of those who perished under torture, concludes the document.

BAJ calls again on the authorities to stop persecutions of journalists

21-07-2020: The Belarussian Association of Journalists, which was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2004, co-signed an appeal with hundreds of representatives of Belarus' media to denounce the persecution of journalists. The statement points out that dozens of media organizations and 43 reporters have been targeted by the authorities, in the context of the presidential campaign. This includes reporter Anton Trafimovich (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty), who was assaulted by the police while streaming a gathering of supporters of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's rivals. The statement expresses "support for and solidarity with all those wrongfully detained, beaten up and humiliated." This follows another BAJ statement protesting the arrest of at least 15 reporters, including foreign ones, covering mass protests in Belarus, on July 14 and 15.

[Source](#)

[BAJ statement](#)

Malala Yousafzai joins Greta Thunberg in demanding a new crime of "ecocide"

16-07-2020: 2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate and Nobel Prize winner **Malala Yousafzai** has joined Greta Thunberg and 150 celebrities and scientists calling on world leaders to make ecocide a criminal offence. The open letter also calls for the establishment annual, binding carbon budgets and the inclusion of total emissions in all figures and targets, including consumption index, international aviation, and shipping. [Letter](#)

US Secretary of State Pompeo praises Wei Jingsheng at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia

16-07-2020: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo invited the 1996 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Wei Jingsheng** for the presentation of the Commission on Unalienable Rights' report. The Commission was established in 2019 to study violations of fundamental freedoms across the world in light of US constitutional principles and international human rights standards. "On December 5, 1978, the young electrician from Beijing Zoo shook the world by bravely posting an eloquent essay on Beijing's short-lived Democracy Wall. Mr. Wei boldly insisted that the CCP's Four Modernizations in industry, agriculture, defense, and science weren't enough to make China a modern and civilized nation truly. Harkening back to the May 4 Movement, generations earlier, he said China needed a fifth modernization: democracy", said Mike Pompeo. [Mike Pompeo's speech](#)

Human Rights Defenders in Latin America - Challenges of political polarisation

17-07-2020: In a web-streamed event chaired from Buenos Aires, **Lorent Saleh**, **MEP Soraya Rodriguez Ramos**, journalist **Salud Hernandez Mora** and professor **Juan Méndez** discussed the effects of political polarisation on Latin American before an audience of Latin American human rights defenders. The debate included different perspectives of the problem: personal experience of cyberbullying, the global nature of the phenomenon, the problematic role of traditional media in light of social media, and the use of polarization as a tool to discredit human rights defenders and grant impunity for human rights abusers.

New research center on sexual violence and women's rights now under construction

19-07-2020: The *Centre d'excellence Denis Mukwege*, named after 2014 Sakharov Prize Laureate **Denis Mukwege**, is currently under construction in Bukavu, DRC. It will host researchers from various fields, including law, medicine, and economy, specializing in women's rights. The Center will operate as a component of the *Université Evangélique d'Afrique*, with the support of external actors, including the Panzi Foundation. [Source](#)

Sakharov Fellows denounce the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran, seek support for a statement urging Iran to stop it

07-07-2020: Sakharov Fellows drew attention to a surge in the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran and seek the support of the international community to counter it. Recently, Bahá'ís are being called to court in far higher numbers than have been seen previously, while others have been summoned back to prison after being released due to the coronavirus. Two signed statements have been released asking to put an end to such practices, one by the European Parliament's Vice President Heidi Hautala together with a group of MEPs, and another by the Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iran, Cornelia Ernst, both statements can be found [here](#) and [here](#). In case you are willing to support the Baha'is struggle, you can sign the [petition here](#). Additional information in the [recent press release](#) and the short [video](#).

Sakharov Fellow urges the United States to recognise repressions in Xinjiang as genocide

15-07-2020: **Yonah Diamond**, who took part in the 2019 Sakharov Fellowship programme, co-signed an opinion piece in the *Foreign Policy* magazine, urging the United States to denounce the treatment of Uyghurs in China as a genocide. This would "strengthen legal remedies for sanctioning companies that profit from modern slavery in their supply chains sourced in China," he argues. [Source](#)

Head of a branch of Memorial sentenced to three and a half years in jail

24-07-2020: Yuri Dmitriev, head of the Karelia branch of Memorial, was sentenced to three years and six months of imprisonment. Memorial is the **2009 Sakharov Prize laureate**. Charges against Dmitriev were related to his human rights work. He focused on identifying sites of mass graves of victims killed during the Stalin era. An EU [statement](#) noted the verdict is part of a worsening trend of the discredit of human rights defenders in Russia. It called for his immediate release on humanitarian grounds, taking into account his age, bad health, and the pandemic. Dmitriev has spent in detention over three years already.