

Sakharov Award 2014

Azerbaijani human rights defenders – Stage II

22 September 2014

"On the moral plane the persecution of persons who have defended other victims of unjust treatment, who have worked to publish and in particular to distribute information regarding the persecution and trials of persons with deviant opinions, and of conditions in places of internment, is particularly important."

Andrei Sakharov, accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975



Imprisoned human rights defenders: Leyla Yunus, Intiqam Aliyev and Rasul Jafarov

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Introduction

In September 2014, the European Parliament started the process of choosing this year's recipient of its annual Sakharov Prize for Human Rights.

This process involves several stages until a final winner is chosen on 23 October 2014.

The [Sakharov Prize](#) honours “exceptional individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression.” Previous winners include Nelson Mandela and Anatoli Marchenko, a Soviet dissident and human rights defender who spent 20 years of his life in prison or Soviet internal exile.

An informal coalition of NGOs, including ESI, as well as members of the European Parliament have been working towards a nomination of Leyla Yunus, Rasul Jafarov and Intiqam Aliyev for the Sakharov Prize 2014.

These three Azerbaijani human rights defenders were arrested by the authorities in July and August of this year, immediately after producing a [list](#) of political prisoners in their country. This was part of a wider wave of repression (see ESI briefing: [The jails of Azerbaijan. A chronology of recent repression - 14 May to 25 August 2014](#)).

By noon on Thursday, 18 September 2014 27 MEPs signed for a nomination of the three Azerbaijanis (see Annex B). In addition the political group of Greens/European Free Alliance put forward Leyla Yunus as their nomination, on behalf of all other human rights defenders in Azerbaijan. The co-presidents of the group, Rebecca Harms and Philippe Lamberts, [stated](#):

“Leyla Yunus' tireless human rights work in Azerbaijan over a long period is the epitome of that which the Sakharov Prize aims to recognize. We have nominated Leyla Yunus to draw attention to her outstanding work but also to the deteriorating human rights situation in Azerbaijan ... The EU cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the rights situation in Azerbaijan, which is a member of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU's Neighbourhood Policy.”

There are six other nominees for 2014:

- Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born women's rights activist and Islam critic;
- CHREDO, Open Doors, Oeuvre d'Orient and Aid to the Church in Need; organisations helping Christians in Syria and ISIS-controlled Iraq;
- Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynaecologist treating rape victims and an expert on restoring the internal physical damage caused by gang rape;
- EuroMaiden, the Ukrainian pro-democracy movement,
- Mahmoud Al 'Asali (post mortem) and Louis Raphael Sako, a Muslim and the Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate of Babylon, respectively, who helped and defended Christians in Iraq; Al 'Asali was killed this year by ISIS;
- Mouad Belghouate, Ala Yaacoubi and Alaa Abdel Fattah, Moroccan rappers imprisoned after criticising the government and police in a music video.

(Annex C has more information on the nominees.)

Stage II of the process: the short-list

Our goal for the next step of this process is to make the case that Leyla Yunus deserves to be among the **three finalists**.

This will be decided in a joint vote by the European Parliament's Committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET, 71 members) and Development (DEVE, 28 members).

They will meet on 23 September to review and discuss the seven nominations.

On 7 October they will cast their votes and select the three finalists.

Each MEP on the committees has one vote, and the seven nominations will be ranked from 1 to 7 depending the number of votes they receive. The top three will go through to the next round.

All those who would like to make the case for Leyla Yunus might want to contact members of the AFET and DEVE committees with arguments why they should consider voting for her.

We also have the list of MEPs who signed for the three Azerbaijanis in the first round, in case you want to express your appreciation (Annex B).

Stage III: choosing the winner

The shortlist of three candidates decided by AFET and DEVE will then be forwarded to the European Parliament's "Conference of Presidents".

This body is made up of the President of the Parliament Martin Schulz (a German Social-Democrat); the chairpersons of each of the seven political groups; and a representative of the "non-attached" MEPs, those that belong to no political group.

On 16 October 2014, they will choose the winner of the Sakharov Award 2014. Unless they reach a consensus, this will be done by secret ballot.

The votes of the chairpersons of the political groups are weighted proportionally to the size of the political group they represent. The President and the representative of the non-attached MEPs do not vote.

The winner will be introduced to AFET and DEVE on 24 November 2014 and will receive the prize during an award ceremony on 26 November 2014.

The current Conference of Presidents is composed of the following men and women, with the chairpersons of the political groups on order of the size of the group, which reflects the weight of their vote:

- **President of the European Parliament:** Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany)
- **European People’s Party (EPP, 221 members):**
Chairperson: Manfred Weber (Germany) - manfred.weber@europarl.europa.eu
- **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D, 191 members):**
Chairperson: Gianni Pittella (Italy) - gianni.pittella@europarl.europa.eu
- **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, 70 members):**
Chairperson: Syed Kamall (UK) - syed.kamall@europarl.europa.eu
- **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE, 67 members):**
Chairperson: Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium) - guy.verhofstadt@europarl.europa.eu
- **Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE, 52 members):**
Chairperson: Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) - gabriele.zimmer@europarl.europa.eu
- **Greens/European Free Alliance (50 members):**
Chairpersons: Rebecca Harms (Germany) and Philippe Lamberts (Belgium)¹
rebecca.harms@ep.europa.eu - philippe.lamberts@ep.europa.eu
- **Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD, 48 members):**
Chairpersons: Nigel Farage (UK) and David Borrelli (Italy)¹
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- **Non-attached Members (no voting right):**
Representative: Diane Dodds (UK - Democratic Unionist Party from Northern Ireland)
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¹ Although there are two chairpersons, they still have only one vote.

ANNEX:

A. The European Parliament's political groups

Within the European Parliament there are 7 political groups. These groups are coalitions of like-minded political parties from throughout Europe. 25 MEPs are required to form a group.

- **European People's Party** ([EPP](#), 221 members)
Centre-right leaning, conservative. Parties include e.g.: Christian Democrats (Germany) and UMP (France).
- **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats** ([S&D](#), 191 members):
Centre-left leaning. Parties include e.g.: Labour Party (UK) and Social Democrats (Germany).
- **European Conservatives and Reformists** ([ECR](#), 70 members):
Right-leaning, conservative – favouring EU reformist policies, conservative and liberal economic policies. Parties include e.g.: Conservative Party (UK), New Flemish Alliance (Belgium) and Alternative for Germany (Germany).
- **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe** ([ALDE](#), 67 members):
Liberal – favouring pro-EU, pro-civil liberties, pro-liberal economic policies. Parties include e.g.: Liberal Democrats (UK) and Free Democratic Party (Germany).
- **Greens/European Free Alliance** ([Green/EFA](#), 50 members):
Left leaning – favouring pro-EU, pro-environment and pro-civil liberties policies. Parties include e.g.: the Green Party (UK) and the Scottish National Party (UK).
- **Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy** ([EFDD](#), 48 members):
Largely extreme-right leaning – favouring anti-EU, pro-liberal economic and national interest policies. Parties include e.g.: UKIP (UK) and the Five Star Movement (Italy).
- **Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left** ([GUE](#), 52 members):
Extreme left leaning, but also other parties – favouring EU reformist, socialist and anti-market economy policies. Parties include e.g.: Sinn Fein (Ireland) and The Left (Germany).

B. List of MEPs who supported the nomination of the three Azerbaijanis

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C. Background on the nominees

Source: European Parliament, Notice to Members on the Sakharov Award 2014, with the biographies of the nominees and justifications, 18 September 2014

<p>Ayaan Hirsi Ali</p>	<p>Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somali-born activist, writer and politician who now lives in the US but used to be a Dutch citizen. She is best known for her work to stop female genital mutilation (FGM) and to promote equal treatment of women in societies where FGM is a practice.</p> <p>In 2005, Hirsi Ali was named by Time Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. In the USA, she founded a women's rights organisation called <i>AHA Foundation</i>.</p>	<p>Europe of Freedom & Direct Democracy Group</p>
<p>CHREDO, Open Doors, Oeuvre d'Orient and Aid to the Church in Need</p>	<p><i>Eastern Christians in Danger Coordination (CHREDO)</i> is fighting for the survival of Christians in Islamic states. In September 2014 it requested an investigation by the International Criminal Court into atrocities committed against the Christian minority in Iraq.</p> <p>As a founding member of CHREDO, Open Doors started a relief effort to International Displaced Persons and the local population in Syria. It also set up a relief operation for thousands of refugees fleeing the Islamic State in Iraq.</p> <p>L'Œuvre d'Orient currently funds over 800 projects dedicated to education and health. Since the beginning of the war in Syria it has supported actions to the benefit of thousands of people, in particular children and refugees.</p> <p><i>Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)</i> is a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church. Represented in 140 countries, ACN is currently providing support to the Catholic Church in Syria to take care of both Christian and Muslim refugees and families.</p>	<p>Philippe Juvin & 60 other MEPs</p>
<p>Denis Mukwege</p>	<p>Denis Mukwege is a 59-year old Congolese gynaecologist. He founded and works in Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where he specialises in the treatment of women who have been gang-raped by rebel forces. Mukwege has reportedly become the world's leading expert on restoring the internal physical damage caused by gang rape.</p> <p>He not only medically treats victims and children who have been subject to violent rape, but also teaches other surgeons this type of operation.</p>	<p>Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament; Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe & Barbara Lochbihler</p>
<p>EuroMaidan represented by Mustafa Nayem, Ruslana Lyzhychko, Yelyzaveta Schepetylnykova and Tetiana Chornovol</p>	<p>The Euromaidan movement started in November 2013 as a protest against the decision of the Ukrainian government to postpone the signature of the Association Agreement with the EU. The protests spread to over 40 cities and towns around Ukraine and became an expression of the pro-democratic will of the Ukrainian people.</p> <p>The prize would be awarded to four representatives of Euromaidan civil society grassroots: Mustafa Nayem, an independent blogger and journalist, Ruslana Lyzhychko, Eurovision Song Contest winning artist, Yelyzaveta Schepetylnykova, a student representative in the Euromaidan Council Presidium, and Tetiana Chornovol, who, severely beaten, was one of the first and symbolic victims of</p>	<p>Jacek Saryusz-Wolski & 52 other MEPs</p>

	Euromaidan.	
Leyla Yunus	<p>Leyla Yunus has been at the forefront of the struggle for human rights in Azerbaijan for many years. She has worked on numerous projects relating to political persecution, corruption, human trafficking, gender rights, violations of property rights, monitoring of court proceedings, and peace initiatives. She is the author of many reports on political prisoners.</p> <p>She has been subject to relentless harassment from the authorities, who most recently arrested her, together with her husband, Arif Yunus, on politically motivated charges. She is currently in pre-trial custody. Both are in fragile health condition and have been denied adequate treatment.</p>	The Greens/European Free Alliance & Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Mareijte Schaake and Ramon Tremosa
Mahmoud Al 'Asali (post mortem) and Louis Raphael Sako	<p>The Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate of Babylon, Louis Raphael Sako, represents the highest ranking religious authority of Iraq's Christian communities. He raised awareness of the persecution of minority communities in the Arab world. Sako lives with the persecuted fleeing people of the religious minorities.</p> <p>Mahmoud Al 'Asali - "the Muslim who gave up his life for Mosul's Christians" - refused to stay silent about the violence against Mosul's Christians. He paid with his life when he was killed by ISIS militants in Mosul on July 20, 2014.</p> <p>The Patriarch has given his consent to his nomination and strongly welcomes the inclusion of the memory of Prof. Mahmoud Al 'Asali.</p>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group and Anna Záborská and 66 other MEPs
Mouad Belghouate, Ala Yaacoubi and Alaa Abdel Fattah	<p>Artists and activists Mouad Belghouate (Morocco), Ala Yaacoubi (Tunisia) and Alaa Abdel Fattah (Egypt) have been harassed in their respective countries for having expressed their opinions in the aftermath of the "Arab springs".</p> <p>Mouad Belghouate, 26 years old, is a musician and an active member of the February 20th Movement. He has been sentenced to jail three times in less than three years.</p> <p>Ala Yaacoubi, 26 years old, also musician, has suffered harassment and police violence and has been convicted several times due to songs deemed outrageous by the Tunisian police.</p> <p>Alaa Abdel Fattah, 33 years old, is a blogger and an activist. He was jailed three times for having protested in favor of civil liberties in Egypt.</p>	European United Left/Nordic Green Left

D. List of AFET members

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