



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT

**THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT'S
SAKHAROV PRIZE FOR
FREEDOM OF
THOUGHT, 1988-2013 -
A QUARTER CENTURY'S
ENGAGEMENT IN
HUMAN RIGHTS**

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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION

DIRECTORATE B

POLICY DEPARTMENT

STUDY

**THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S SAKHAROV PRIZE FOR
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, 1988-2013 - A QUARTER
CENTURY'S ENGAGEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS**

Abstract

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought stands out among other initiatives as the best-known and most widely appreciated instrument of the European Parliament in the field of human rights. In some countries, it is as well-known as the Nobel Prize. Over its 25-year history, it has come to be associated with the European Union's principled commitment to freedom of thought. However, empirical research on the personal and political circumstances of Sakharov Prize laureates, as well as on the political impact of the prize in five case studies – China, Cuba, Israel and Palestine, and Russia – shows that its potential remains under-utilised.

Drawing on unique perspectives from the laureates themselves, this report offers suggestions to enhance its impact, including: the prize must be targeted more tightly at contexts where it could have tangible impact; it must be dovetailed with other policy instruments; it must guard more carefully against unintended effects; and it must serve as a platform for broader international linkages in the defence of human rights. On the occasion of its quarter-century anniversary, the European Parliament must reflect on how the prize can continue to be relevant in a world whose contours and predicaments look vastly different from those that prevailed at its inception.

This study was requested by the European Parliament's Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study evaluates the impact of the European Parliament's (EP) Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought over its 25-year history. It assesses the impact that the prize has had on laureates' personal and political circumstances, as well as on broader political trends. Crucially, this report is distinctive to previous assessments of the prize as it focuses on laureates' own perspectives regarding the award.

The report's general conclusion is that the Sakharov Prize has established an extremely strong reputation and is warmly welcomed by its recipients, yet it falls short of exerting its full potential.

The prize has had considerable impact on individual laureates and their organisations. The nature of impact, however, varies depending on the general circumstances of the laureate and his/her country. We find that the prize has had the greatest impact providing moral and psychological support to its laureates. It has also helped them attain increased visibility and recognition both domestically and internationally, although the degree varies between different cases, as well as between the international arena and the domestic public sphere. Many laureates report to have been empowered by the Sakharov Prize, even though this effect requires more follow-through. In addition, many laureates would like to be more engaged in relations between their country and the European Parliament or the European Union (EU), and are generally dissatisfied about not being able to contribute more. It is therefore recommended that the EP put more energy into raising the prize's impact in those dimensions, by improving its outreach strategy and ensuring systematic follow-up with laureates, as well as with other human rights activists.

The report finds that government reactions to the prize were never positive, with the only exception of Angola, having varied from ignoring the prize altogether to protesting against it. A number of governments tried to discredit the laureates by launching purposeful defamation campaigns against them. This latter strategy is relatively common and needs to be countered by the EP through concrete measures.

Our study shows that a good outreach strategy is crucial for enhancing the potential impact of the Sakharov Prize on a particular issue. The cases of most notable impact were those where the issues that the laureates were working on were already at the centre of public debate, such as the cases of condemnation to death by stoning in northern provinces of Nigeria. It is well within the EP's reach to make sure that the prize generates more public debate and keeps laureates' work in the spotlight.

Even though one would expect that an instrument like the Sakharov Prize would have most impact at the level of civil society, our findings point to a limited impact on broader civil and political society. With the exception of Cuba, which remains an outlier because of the number of laureates, we did not find examples of the prize setting-off snowballing effects into broader civil society. Many countries today present harsher environments for civil society activists. By way of an authoritarian backlash, many governments resort to ever more sophisticated repression techniques against freedom of expression and civic activism. The EP should be vigilant in trying to counter these trends.

In broader political terms, this report shows that the nature and degree of impact of the prize depends on a range of geostrategic, as well as domestic political factors, that go beyond any specific EP instrument, yet shape the prize's impact in both the short and medium terms. We find that a country's *geopolitics* has the greatest impact on government/diplomatic reactions to the prize. In addition, the degree and *nature of linkage* to the European Union is of direct consequence for all human rights instruments. However, it is the *domestic political opportunity structure*, including the nature of the regime, the state of civil society and media, and the overall human rights situation, which is of most direct consequence for the broader political impact that the Sakharov Prize has had

in each country. Our suggestion is therefore for the EP to think through its engagement and follow-up strategies with different laureates on the basis of a careful assessment of domestic political factors.

Underlying all the observations and concerns that emerged from our extensive series of laureate interviews is a crucial challenge: while the Sakharov Prize has earned its place amongst the international community's best-known human rights awards, the context has dramatically changed since it was introduced 25 years ago. On the occasion of its quarter-century anniversary, the EP must reflect on how the prize can continue to be relevant in an increasingly globalised world prone to new threats, yet offering new possibilities to freedom fighters across the globe.

It is not a new observation that the prize is under-utilised as a tool for improving global human rights. This report offers a more forward-looking perspective, however, by drawing on laureates' own ideas of how the prize's impact could be enhanced. These include: the prize must be targeted more tightly at the contexts where it could have tangible impact; it must be dovetailed with other policy instruments, not only by the EP but also the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS); it must guard more carefully against unintended effects of manipulation and covert repression in non-democratic regimes; and it must serve as a platform for broader international linkages in the defence of human rights. The prize remains an important initiative, but the threats to universal human rights have also become more complex.

1 INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the European Parliament celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. It is thus very timely to assess the impact that the prize has had on improving human rights and freedom in the world. This study, commissioned by the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group of the European Parliament, contributes to this ongoing reflection with an original analysis of the prize's impact on laureates' personal and political circumstances and on their causes. It also discusses concrete ways to increase the impact of the prize, and reports on laureates' ideas for strengthening the newly-launched Sakharov Prize laureate network.

The study is distinctive as it incorporates the perspectives of the laureates themselves regarding the political significance of the prize and their suggestions for further tapping its potential. While a number of studies exist that evaluate different European Parliament activities in the field of human rights, this is the first dedicated exclusively to the Sakharov Prize. It builds on an extensive series of interviews with laureates, their close associates and family members, providing ample space for their ideas and concerns.

The report's general conclusion is that the Sakharov Prize has acquired an extremely strong reputation and is warmly welcomed by its recipients, yet it falls short of exerting its full potential. It is not a new observation that the prize is under-utilised as a tool for improving global human rights. This report offers a more forward-looking perspective, however, by drawing on laureates' own ideas of how the prize's impact could be enhanced.

The first chapter of the report introduces the study's focus and methodology; the second discusses the main findings, draws conclusions, and presents a set of recommendations on how the impact of the Sakharov Prize could be improved on a number of levels, from laureates' individual circumstances to its broader political effects in their respective countries. Finally, chapter three provides detailed profiles of how the prize has influenced the life of each individual laureate.

The European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought

The Sakharov Prize was established in 1988 by the European Parliament to give recognition to individuals or organisations that defend human rights and freedom of thought worldwide. Nominees are put forward by political groups or groups of at least 40 MEPs. Subsequently, the Foreign Affairs and Development committees vote on a shortlist of three finalists and later the Conference of Presidents chooses one laureate. On several occasions, in 2001, 2005, 2011 and 2012, the prize went to more than one laureate and even to more than one country. As of 2010, the prize is accompanied by a monetary award of EUR 50 000.

The prize is named after Soviet nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov (1921-89). Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1975, Mr Sakharov was among the founders of the Moscow Helsinki Group and one of the best-known Soviet dissidents. Known also as the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, Mr Sakharov grew concerned about the moral and political implications of his work and became active and outspoken against nuclear proliferation, as well as against infringements of human rights by the Soviet state.

Throughout the Sakharov Prize's 25-year history, human rights activists all over the globe have been honoured with the award. The prize has reached out to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Africa, Asia, the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Latin America, as well as European Union member states and one international organisation. It has gone to 35 individuals and organisations from 27 different countries. Some of the laureates, while imprisoned when awarded the prize, have become prominent political figures in their countries. Some of these include Nelson Mandela (South Africa),

Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar) and Xanana Gusmão (East Timor). Others are still under arrest, such as the 2008 laureate Hu Jia (China), or continue to experience repression by their countries' authorities.

The Sakharov Prize is widely recognised as one of the EP's most visible activities in the field of human rights. The prize is held in high esteem and regard by MEPs, civil society, laureates and citizens in the EU and elsewhere. Yet, a previous study from 2012 emphasised that 'the potential of the Sakharov Prize was under-utilised'¹. It argued that the prize's visibility had to be increased and broadened, and that the newly-established Sakharov Prize laureate network needed to acquire more political weight. The EP has followed through on some of these earlier recommendations. Much has been done over the past five years, since the 20th anniversary of the prize, to boost its visibility and impact. In 2008, the European Parliament launched a network for laureates. In order to support this initiative, the EP Secretariat also established a new Directorate for Democracy Support and, within it, a Unit for Human Rights Actions in December 2011. All these steps aim at tapping into the Sakharov Prize's history and visibility, so as to boost not only the impact of the prize itself, but also the overall standing of the European Parliament in the field of human rights.

Methodological considerations

Scope

The FRIDE team conducted personal interviews with the maximum number of laureates possible. In the case of organisational recipients, members of each respective body were interviewed. FRIDE also reached out to laureates' associates and family members, especially when laureates themselves were not available for an interview.

The countries whose freedom fighters were distinguished by the prize vary on a number of counts. They are drawn from different geographical regions; they have different degrees of linkages to the European Union; and they represent different regime types and trajectories in terms of respect for human rights (some are long-term human rights violators, some are affected by conflict, and some are undergoing political transition). Given such variety, the study aimed to distil a number of differentiating factors that most affect the impact of the Sakharov Prize at a diplomatic and political level.

In order to evaluate the prize's impact in specific contexts, soft indicators of impact were used at four levels:

On the laureates and their work: how and to what extent the prize has contributed to their visibility and recognition, both at home and abroad; their access to the international community, including European institutions, member states' governments, policy-makers, civil society organisations, universities, and media; moral and psychological support; their personal security and that of their families; their empowerment and support to their activities.

On the diplomatic/political level: reactions at governmental/diplomatic/political level in their respective countries with regard to the choice of laureates and the meaning attached to the prize; and the political consequences for the relations between the EU and its member states and laureates' countries.

¹ FRIDE, 'The impact of the resolutions and other activities of the European Parliament in the field of human rights outside of the EU', Brussels: European Parliament, 2012, p. 16.

On public debate: whether and how public awareness of the laureates' work and of the issue he/she dealt with has changed; and whether the prize helped change or improve knowledge and perceptions of the human rights work of European institutions and of the Sakharov Prize in particular.

On civil society: reactions to the prize by civil society organisations in the laureates' countries; and whether and how the prize helped strengthen broader civil society networks and supported human rights activities.

We employed the following methodological tools:

Desk survey: overview of Sakharov Prize laureates and their actions, as well as of the human rights situation in laureates' countries at the time of the award, with particular emphasis on the possible long-term effects of the prize.

Media survey: analysis of media coverage and visibility of Sakharov Prize awards, as well as public reactions at the governmental/diplomatic/political level in the respective countries with regard to the choice of laureates and the meaning attached to the award.

Semi-structured interviews: most interviews were conducted by telephone or in person, using a semi-structured questionnaire. In cases where neither a telephone conversation nor a personal interview could be arranged, several email exchanges took place.

Limitations

Given its ambitious goal of tapping fully into the richness and diversity of the laureate network, this study faced several practical and methodological challenges.

The first set of challenges relates to identification and attribution of impact. Numerous studies, including the ones commissioned by the European Parliament itself, reveal challenges in measuring the impact of human rights work in general, as well as difficulties in attributing progress on a certain issue to a specific activity by the EP². When defining the impact on individual laureates, this study used a set of specific criteria that help capture whether and to what extent personal and political circumstances were improved as a result of the prize. On the diplomatic and political level, the study focused specifically on a set of indicators regarding the direct political consequences of the prize in a number of realms, such as government/diplomatic reactions, public debate and media coverage, as well as civil society reactions and mobilisation.

Secondly, reaching out to the biggest possible number of laureates also proved difficult. The personal circumstances of some laureates, including bad health, imprisonment, and their continuing fragility of circumstance or simple unavailability, rendered it impossible to establish contact with all laureates. Despite these challenges, most profiles include information obtained from direct interviews either with laureates themselves or with close associates and family members. In fact, this study stands out for giving voice to the laureates and their assessments of the significance and impact of the Sakharov Prize.

Finally, given the geographical spread of the Sakharov Prize laureate network, the award had to be analysed in very different domestic political contexts, under different geopolitical constraints, and in countries with different kinds of linkages with the European Union. Such diversity helps identify a broad spectrum of factors, yet militates against systematic comparisons of different factors explaining the prize's higher or lower degrees of impact. The report nonetheless aims at capturing variation

² Ibid.

between different contexts and identifies a set of common barriers that prevent the prize from having greater impact.

2 ASSESSING AND IMPROVING THE IMPACT OF THE SAKHAROV PRIZE

The Sakharov Prize is one of the best-known instruments of the European Parliament in the field of human rights. Its visibility varies, but in some countries it is as well-known as the Nobel Prize and is highly esteemed. Over its 25-year history, it has come to be associated with the EU's principled commitment towards freedom of thought. Three prize laureates were also recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize - Kofi Annan and the United Nations (UN) in 2001 (2003 Sakharov Prize laureates), Nelson Mandela in 1993 (1988 Sakharov Prize laureate), and Aung San Suu Kyi in 1991 (1990 Sakharov Prize laureate). Our interviews confirm that the prize is often seen as a symbol of solidarity expressed by European institutions and citizens for activists pursuing human rights causes around the world. Many laureates attribute particular value to the prize because they see it as an important element in the broader dialogue between their country and the EU. At the same time, our study shows that the full potential of the prize is yet to be realised. The study shows that the prize has and can have considerable impact not only on the personal and political circumstances of laureates, but also on their respective countries' public debate and civil society. For this broader societal impact to be achieved, however, the European Parliament has to put in place more committed mechanisms of outreach, engagement, and follow-through.

2.1 The impact of the prize on individual laureates and their organisations

We have identified several dimensions of impact on individual laureates and their organisations, namely their visibility and recognition both at home and abroad; their access to the international community, including European institutions, member states' governments, policy-makers, civil society organisations, universities, and international media; moral and psychological support; their personal security and that of their families; and their empowerment and support for their activities. The nature of the impact on each of these dimensions varies depending on the general circumstances of the laureate and his/her country. It is also clear from a general comparison of all laureate profiles that the degree of impact on each of these dimensions differs considerably. For example, while moral and psychological support seems to be high in all cases, visibility and recognition, as well as empowerment, vary considerably. It is thus recommended that the EP put more energy into raising the impact in those dimensions, by improving its outreach strategy and ensuring systematic follow-up with laureates, as well as with other human rights activists.

Visibility and recognition

The most important impact of the Sakharov Prize identified by all laureates is no doubt the visibility and recognition they received. Yet, the degree of such recognition varies and is very different in the laureates' home countries and abroad. While laureates received considerable attention from the international press at the time of the award, reactions at home at times were indifferent and coverage limited. Moreover, while the status of Sakharov Prize laureates changed their standing permanently at the international level, their domestic position can vary over time.

Differences in the degree of visibility at home can be attributed to a number of factors, such as suppression of the news by the government, lack of purposeful outreach in the media that is not controlled by the government, and internal rivalries within domestic civil society.

Reactions to the news of the award also depend on how well-known the Sakharov Prize is in a given country and how much effort is put into publicising its international significance. Sometimes high-level recognition by the international community helped many laureates claim a conspicuously elevated status at home. As Cuban Ladies in White stressed after they were awarded the prize, they could no longer be referred to as just 'a bunch of crazy women'. Indeed, a kind of 'boomerang effect' has been observed in some countries, such as Cuba, where the more educated and politically-active population makes an effort to follow the international press despite the state-imposed censorship, and invests greater trust in the news, analysis, and symbolic messages that come from abroad. Yet, this is only true for relatively-small segments of society and has not been observed in many countries.

Access to the international community

The Sakharov Prize has no doubt increased laureates' access to and presence within the international community. We find that this indicator of impact is consistently high across the board - even if it varies according to the degree of 'fame' of each laureate. We also find, however, that laureates' contacts with European and member states' institutions and policy-makers are of a lower intensity than their contacts with international media and civil society organisations.

In the words of Nigerian laureate Hauwa Ibrahim, the prize gave her a 'global stage' from which to pursue her cause. It made it easier to promote her work and to raise funds, as well as to build international coalitions around the issue of Sharia law. Many laureates report having received many more invitations to events and conferences after the award. Even when not directly related to their activities at home, these occasions represent important moments of public diplomacy for their countries. Some laureates received high-profile invitations from universities or international organisations that provided them with valuable exposure to international debates, global issues, and top intellectuals.

Renowned Chinese dissident and 1996 prize laureate Wei Jingsheng underlined that the prize helped him build contacts and pursue his pro-democracy work when he was forced into exile in the United States (US). In his own words, the reputation of the Sakharov Prize gave him access to the media, influential individuals and policy-makers both in the US and in Europe. Guillermo Fariñas, who received the Sakharov Prize in 2010 for his opposition against the Cuban regime, reports that when he was finally allowed to travel to Europe to collect his prize in person, he had a unique opportunity to interact with other activists, intellectuals, and high-level politicians. The same direct dialogue with European politicians was reported by Belarusian laureate Aliaksandr Milinkevich, who received the prize in 2006. When, after long years of house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi from Myanmar could finally travel as a newly-elected parliamentarian of her country, she received privileged treatment in a series of top-level meetings and was able to engage in direct diplomacy on issues such as economic sanctions and bilateral agreements between Myanmar and the EU and US, exerting considerable political weight and at times even overshadowing her country's president. In Aung San Suu Kyi's case, such attention, although not directly attributable to the Sakharov Prize alone, is the result of the sustained international attention to her cause that the prize, along with other international initiatives, has helped maintain over the years.

Moral support

Recognition by the EP also helped boost the confidence of many laureates working in difficult conditions and who faced continuous harassment by the authorities from their respective countries. In the words of 2009 laureate Oleg Orlov, from Russian Memorial, 'sometimes it feels like we are scooping the sea with a spoon, so recognition from abroad is important [...] It gives us hope, and optimism and extra strength'. This is particularly true for those laureates who are still under arrest like

Hu Jia from China. During her imprisonment and repeated hunger strikes, Iranian 2012 laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh felt that the prize helped channel the efforts of her supporters both at home and internationally, providing them as much as herself with invaluable moral support.

Some laureates also acknowledge that the prize helped them make difficult decisions. For example, Syrian Ali Ferzat says that the Sakharov Prize encouraged him to continue his work as a political cartoonist in exile despite being victim of physical assaults. Many laureates talk about profound feelings of joy, almost exhilaration, when learning about their award. They say it made their struggle less lonely and the fact that recognition was coming from Europe, 'the birthplace of human rights and democratic thought', in the words of Wei Jingsheng, made this particular award special to their eyes. Some laureates, like Razan Zaitouneh from Syria, have refused a number of international awards but felt that the Sakharov Prize was a special honour that had to be accepted.

Personal security

International attention has helped ensure the personal security of laureates. For example, Mr Milinkevich from Belarus says he was not put in prison because of all the international attention given to his case. Mr Orlov from Memorial in Russia admits that the prize contributed to his acquittal in 2011, when he was on trial for slander after having accused President Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, of the kidnapping and murder of fellow human rights activist Natalia Estimirova.

As this report was being finalised, good news came from Iran, where Sakharov Prize laureate Ms Sotoudeh was released from prison on the eve of Iranian President Rouhani's visit to the United Nations on 18 September 2013. It is clear that the amount of pressure that the international community was able to build around her case, as well as the issue of political prisoners more generally, helped transform her imprisonment into a symbolic case. Therefore, the moment the regime was prepared to offer at least some concessions, she was freed.

The release from prison of Turkish 1995 laureate Leyla Zana in 2004, nine years after she was unjustly convicted, is also widely attributed to the pressure that the EU has been exerting on the Turkish government over accession negotiations. Even though Ms Zana was sentenced again in May 2012, her trial is being closely monitored by a number of international organisations and pressure is high for her acquittal before her parliamentary immunity expires in 2014. Just as Ms Sotoudeh in Iran, Ms Zana remains a symbol of the lack of rule of law and of the continuous infringement of freedom of expression in Turkey. This status awards her a certain degree of personal protection.

Yet, in a number of cases, even if physical violence against the laureate stopped, more subtle forms of harassment and psychological pressure continued, or even intensified. For example, Cuban laureate Mr Fariñas continued to be pressured via his professional association, the Cuban Psychologist Association, after his release from prison. Many laureates also fear repercussions on their families. Not being able to silence its dissidents, authoritarian regimes try to hinder their political activity or force them to leave their country. Even though the Cuban government has released most political prisoners, for example, many have been forced into exile.

In Iran, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi was stripped of her properties under the pretence of 'paying tax' on the monetary award that came with the prize. Wary of this precedent, Sakharov Prize laureate Nasrin Sotoudeh was at first cautious about accepting the prize in 2012; although she did so in the end, she refused the money so as not to put her family at risk.

In the case of Chinese laureate Hu Jia, even though the prize award was meant to show the EP's solidarity with Mr Hu after he was arrested following his testimony at a European Parliament hearing

on China's human rights practices, his situation has not improved much (although the government made small concessions after the prize award, such as moving him to a prison closer to Beijing).

Empowerment and support of activities

The monetary award given with the prize has helped many individuals and organisations continue their work. In Russia, Memorial decided to renew its activity in Chechnya in 2009, despite the murder of Ms Estimirova and subsequent legal problems. Mr Orlov stressed in our interview that the Sakharov Prize helped the organisation make this decision.

Other laureate organisations, such as Reporters Without Borders, have used the money award to strengthen their operations. One of Russian Memorial's members, Lyudmila Alexeyeva, used her part of the award to buy office space for the Moscow Helsinki Group, the organisation she co-founded with Andrei Sakharov himself. In the harsh context of constant government harassment of independent non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Russia, not having to pay rent may ensure survival. Two Cuban laureates, Guillermo Fariñas and Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas, sponsored independent Cuban human rights and pro-democracy organisations that operate from abroad. For some of the laureates who were forced into exile, like Taslima Nasreen from Bangladesh and Ali Ferzat from Syria, the award helped ensure they could continue their work independently.

Several laureates have used their award to start new initiatives that build on their knowledge of the problems they work on, as well as their unique experience. Nigerian laureate Hauwa Ibrahim has started an educational project in northern Nigeria that not only reflects her personal experience of growing up poor and illiterate, but also her knowledge of communal structures in villages, which allows her to obtain impressive results with limited funds. Mr Hu, whose personal circumstances remain precarious, would like to start a foundation to assist the families of imprisoned Chinese human rights activists.

Overall, the prize has had considerable impact on individual laureates because of the international recognition and moral support it bestowed. However, the prize's impact on their domestic recognition and empowerment, as well as in terms of concrete support of their activities, varies greatly. The majority of laureates also feel that there could be more follow-up on their activities after the prize award. For example, Israeli laureate Nurit Peled says that although she feels welcomed and recognised in Europe, she has to counter prejudice in her activist work at home. Although the European Union contributes to both Israel and Palestine in a whole plethora of cooperation and assistance schemes, there has been no significant follow-up with her or Palestinian co-laureate Izzat Ghazzawi, who died in 2003.

Although empowered through recognition and the acquisition of a new status, many laureates are dissatisfied for not being able to participate more in the relations between their country and the EP or the EU. Many feel that their individual potential is being wasted. In countries where the human rights situation has gradually improved, laureates still treasure being part of the Sakharov Prize network and see great potential in its diversity and the principled commitment of its members. They reject the idea that once the initial struggle against dictatorial rule is won, the laureates and their causes become obsolete. The work is ongoing and will always continue. There is also great interest in building and expanding existing transnational links, including via the Sakharov Prize laureate network. Overall, most laureates are enthusiastic about the initiative. In the words of Olivier Basille from Reporters Without Borders, it is a unique 'network of ambassadors for freedom of thought' around the world. However, most laureates interviewed stressed that the network is still more of a promising idea and that it does not yet stand for any concrete action or initiative. They also lament that there is still virtually no contact among different laureates. Even though to be viable the

network's initiatives have to come from laureates themselves, the European Parliament should continue its efforts to engage all laureates - old and new - in order to close the gap between laureates' willingness to collaborate and contribute and their evident lack of knowledge of how the network could help them do so.

2.2 Impact at the political level

We paid particular attention to immediate government, media and civil society reactions to the award. Below are the most interesting findings in these areas. Even though it is difficult to establish direct causal links between the award and broader social and political changes in laureates' countries, a number of interviewees for this study made such links - they claimed that that the prize undoubtedly contributed to the gradual shift they observed and in which they partook. These cases represent success stories, from which valuable lessons can be drawn.

Government reactions to the prize

Most governments reacted to the Sakharov Prize in more or less three different ways. Some ignored the prize altogether, hoping that the award would not attract too much public attention. For these governments, their best weapon is silence, as paying attention to the award would imply that it matters and, most crucially, would open public debate on the issue behind the award. By not paying attention to the laureate, they seek to convey the impression that human rights abuses and violations of freedom of expression are not valid concerns for their country. This is the most common strategy we found. The second strategy that tended to be pursued by governments that are generally more assertive on the global scene was to try to pressure the EP not to award the prize. Sometimes such statements were explicitly hostile, as in the case of China in 2008. This strategy is pursued mainly by governments that are already in a confrontational mode vis-à-vis the European Union or Western powers more broadly.

Many countries, especially where an independent media manages to operate to some degree despite state pressure, launched open defamation campaigns against the laureates in order to portray them as 'traitors', mercenaries of the 'West' or simply unscrupulous and corrupt. In Cuba, the government made a video that accused the Ladies in White organisation of corruption and mismanagement of European funds for personal gain. This was broadcasted on national television and generated a bitter debate. Some governments, such as those of Egypt and Algeria, exploited existing prejudices against the West in order to undermine the value of the laureates' work by associating it with the 'enemy'. In some cases, governments tried to use the award for their own propaganda purposes by fuelling conspiracy theories. In Belarus, for example, the only coverage that the Belarus Association of Journalists had on state channels was full of Soviet-style accusations of state treason and 'enemy-friendly propaganda' that the organisation was allegedly disseminating via its radio stations.

Public debate

Our study shows that a good outreach strategy is crucial for enhancing the impact of the Sakharov Prize on any given issue. The cases of most notable impact are those where the issues were already at the centre of public debate, such as the Basque issue in Spain and the application of Sharia law in Nigeria. In these cases, the EP's recognition of their importance and proclaimed solidarity with human rights activists energised a pre-existing debate.

In the case of the Spanish organisation ¡Basta Ya!, after the Sakharov Prize their political interpretation of the situation in the Basque Country and their fight against extremist nationalism received Europe-wide recognition. The award to ¡Basta Ya! in 2000 helped change the political debate about what had been perceived as a local problem in Spain, by reframing it as a European problem of terrorism and

intolerance. It also gave the members of the movement direct access to European institutions and contributed to put pressure on Basque authorities from a new vantage point. It also helped organise moderate non-nationalist groups around a common anti-terrorist narrative. Internationally, the movement gained recognition from human rights organisations that had previously paid only limited attention to the cause.

Nigerian laureate Hauwa Ibrahim, who has defended a total of 157 cases under the Sharia law in northern Nigeria, says that international visibility as well as changes in domestic public debate led to a significant decrease in the number of convictions, especially with respect to stoning for adultery and limb amputation for stealing. In her analysis, international coverage of such emblematic cases as those of Amina Lawal and Safiya Hussaini rendered the judges more reluctant to pass such verdicts. Moreover, even when such verdicts were passed, local governors, aware of the changes in public opinion, would be less willing to sign them. Although it was not the Sakharov Prize alone that led to those changes, Ms Ibrahim stressed that the fact that the award was broadcasted in Hausa, a widely spoken local language, stimulated public discussion in Nigeria and helped change public opinion on these issues.

Yet, in places where there is no public debate on the issue, the prize seemed to sink into oblivion like water into sand. This was even more so in cases where public debate was dominated by views radically different from those of the laureates, as in the case of the joint Israeli-Palestinian award. Even though the prize was meant to send a message of dialogue and reconciliation, both societies seemed to be dominated by confrontational views, and local constituencies for peace were mostly marginalised at the time.

Civil society reactions and mobilisation

Even though one would expect an instrument like the Sakharov Prize to have most impact at the level of civil societies, our findings point to a limited impact on broader civil and political society. With the exception of Cuba – that remains an outlier because of the number of laureates – we did not find examples of the prize setting-off snowballing effects into broader civil society. Many states present today harsher environments for activists. By way of an authoritarian backlash, many governments resort to ever more sophisticated repression techniques against free expression and civic activism. The EP should be vigilant in trying to counter these restrictions.

The Sakharov Prize could increase its impact through more follow-through and linkages with broader civil society initiatives. In some cases, the prize became a source of inspiration. In Belarus, for example, it motivated the establishment of the Belarusian Prize for Freedom of Thought, named after Vasili Bykov, one of the most famous Belarusian writers and freedom fighters. Since 2008, this prize has been awarded annually to those who fight for democracy, freedom, and human rights in the country. The three Sakharov awards that went to Cuba (2002, 2005 and 2010) had a major cumulative effect on domestic political organisation. Mr Fariñas, 2010 laureate and recently released prisoner of conscience, has joined a united political opposition coalition. All Cuban laureates, with the obvious exception of late Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas, are also currently united under a common civic platform that works on human rights issues.

Yet, in most countries, the prize has not changed the conditions for broader civil society. Quite the opposite; in a number of cases such increased attention by the international community provoked government backlash. In Belarus, after the December 2010 presidential elections, the number of political prisoners increased to a record level. In Russia, only three years after the award, unprecedented legal action against independent NGOs put the country in the spotlight. The Sakharov Prize is perceived by the authorities as undue intervention in the country's internal affairs

and civic activists are seen as a growing danger to their monopoly on power. New anti-NGO legislation in a number of countries puts civic activists in danger, as funding from abroad is being reframed in terms of 'treason', and their work as the work of 'foreign agents'. In July 2013, a young Belarusian activist, Andrei Haidukau, was sentenced to one and a half years in jail for 'unlawful cooperation with foreign organisations'. In August 2013, only two years after the Sakharov Prize award, Egyptian laureate Asmaa Mahfouz was placed under investigation by the Supreme State Security Prosecutor on charges of espionage for receiving 'foreign money'.

Variation across country case studies

In broader political terms, this report shows that the nature and degree of impact of the Sakharov Prize depends on a range of geostrategic as well as domestic political factors that go beyond any specific EP instrument, yet shape the prize's impact in both the short and medium terms. For the purposes of this study, we focussed on the following three dimensions across our four country case studies: their geopolitical position, the nature of their political regime and the human rights situation and degree of linkage to the EU. The case studies – China, Cuba, Israel and Palestine, and Russia – vary greatly on these three dimensions, thus offering interesting insights.

A country's *geopolitical position* has the greatest impact on government/diplomatic reactions to the prize. With respect to increasingly assertive global or regional powers, such as China and Russia, the EU and its member states find it increasingly difficult to follow a values-based foreign policy and exert influence in the field of human rights. Yet, it is paramount that instruments such as the Sakharov Prize continue to be used and integrated into multilateral and bilateral dialogues with these states. Moreover, both the Chinese and Russian cases show that certain moments, such as those of leadership change, peaks in public debate and contention, or international changes, can be particularly auspicious for stepping up engagement with human rights activists.

In cases like Cuba and Palestine, it is also clear that other regional powers have the capacity to steer their domestic politics in ways that undermine the EU's efforts. Indeed, the EU has not been able to play a major positive role in Palestine since the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000, due to the complex international and domestic dynamics that hinder the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the same time, a partial opening in Cuba is often attributed to changes in the position of its regional allies, rather than to EU pressure.

The *degree and nature of linkage* to the European Union is of direct consequence for all human rights instruments. The EU tends to be most successful with its targeted diplomacy, as for example in Kosovo. The recent EU-facilitated dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo that led to the signing of a landmark agreement proves that the EU has the capacity to engineer major diplomatic breakthroughs whenever adequate resources and political will are invested. The agreement opens the door for possible EU integration negotiations with Serbia and the possibility of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Kosovo and the EU. Yet, future progress depends on sustained commitment by all sides. In this context, the Sakharov Prize and other EP activities could become an important channel for engagement with different actors in Kosovo.

We find that the *domestic political opportunity structure*, including the nature of the regime, the state of civil society and media, and the overall human rights situation are of most direct consequence for the broader political impact that the Sakharov Prize has had in each country.

More impact is observed in countries experiencing a certain degree of opening and political reform, as for example in Cuba over the last two years. Cuba stands out as the only country that has been three times laureate within a relatively short time span of eight years. Even though some MEPs questioned such an emphasis on one country, which arguably was turning the prize into a weapon

against Castro himself, the cumulative effects on Cuban civil and political society cannot be overlooked. Increased mobilisation and unity among pro-democratic forces could have a positive impact on incipient reforms in the country.

Both the Cuban and Belarusian cases show that the Sakharov Prize has the potential to have broader effects on strengthening coalition building among civil society actors. Yet, this can only be achieved through additional follow-up activities. The Sakharov Prize and subsequent engagement with laureates should be better dovetailed with other EP initiatives that engage civic activists in third countries, such as invitations to multiple hearings in committees (for example DROI, AFET), meetings between civil society representatives and EP official delegations, and a number of individual MEPs' initiatives. The EP should also be prepared to step up its engagement whenever potential for civic mobilisation increases. Despite mounting pressure from the government over the last two years, civic activism in Russia has demonstrated unprecedented growth, visibility, and resilience. It is crucial that the EU find ways to tap into the political potential of this recent civic revival in order to promote human rights in Russia.

Government reactions in several countries, but most notably in Russia, show that authoritarian governments around the world are growing increasingly astute in constricting political space and repressing dissent. While many instances of torture and physical repression persist, autocrats' arsenals increasingly include more subtle forms of repression, such as through legal, psychological, and political pressure. Such governments are also increasingly manipulative vis-à-vis the international community, offering concessions on high-profile cases while stepping up oppression of broader civil society, actually reducing the momentum for broader reform. While it is important to continue to focus on symbolic cases, it is crucial that the EP's pressure does not subside after their release and that its strategy includes ways of engaging broader civil society.

It is clear that in countries where the political situation failed to improve or even deteriorated, the prize's impact was limited to securing the laureates' personal safety. The broader question, therefore, is whether in its nominations for the Sakharov Prize, the European Parliament should focus on activists in countries that are experiencing political transformation in the hope of shaping imminent change, or whether it should give protection to beleaguered activists in the most repressive states, for whom it can be the only source of protection, even if in these cases the broader political impact of the prize is likely to remain negligent. While the EP can continue supporting activists in both these circumstances, it would be well advised to think through its engagement and follow-up strategies with different laureates on the basis of a careful assessment of such broader political factors.

2.3 Suggestions for improving the impact of the prize

Although this study has focused on past achievements and effects, evident success stories as well as common barriers to positive impact identified across a number of cases led us to formulate a number of suggestions to improve the impact of the Sakharov Prize in the future. A number of concrete suggestions come from the laureates themselves.

Improving the impact on laureates' personal circumstances

- The EP must be vigilant in ensuring full diplomatic backing for protecting prize winners. While most laureates felt protected by the prize, visibility also made them more vulnerable to persecution. The EP should seek fuller diplomatic commitment from the European External Action Service and member states to prioritise the protection of laureates.

- More tangible support could be given to laureates whose lives are in danger. A number of concrete instruments, such as for example Sakharov visas, could be established to ensure the safety of laureates, as well as that of other human rights activists.

Improving the impact on diplomatic/government level

- While the prize cannot in itself be expected radically to improve any particular country's human rights record, it could be far better connected to the broader range of EU foreign instruments. The EP must work to avoid the prize becoming a substitute for comprehensive EU human rights policies.
- The report finds that in most cases, the EU's diplomatic relations have not been seriously affected by the granting of a Sakharov Prize, but that the latter is often given when the Union is negotiating new commercial and trade deals with the regime in question, as in the case of China. This offers the prospect of more substantive linkages between the granting of such benefits and the prize, to avoid situations of offering generous commercial awards to regimes simultaneously persecuting recipients of the Sakharov Prize.

Improving the impact on public debate

- More outreach is needed to expand awareness of the prize beyond the professional human rights community. If it were more publicised, the prize could become one of the most high-profile elements of EU political conditionality. The Sakharov Prize should be promoted as an EU – not just an EP – contribution to human rights, to improve the feeling of ownership across the different players involved in European foreign policy.
- More media outreach in Europe is desirable. While in the immediate aftermath of the award there is considerable media attention, there is little follow-up on the destinies and causes adopted by laureates from previous years. While some laureates remain in the spotlight, others disappear from public view and little information is available about their post-award life and activism.
- In order to counter possible defamation campaigns, as well as to ensure visibility and recognition at home for its laureates, the EP should have a more proactive outreach strategy. It is important that the EP considers producing more content in local languages and builds links with local media and journalists.
- A number of laureates underline the growing importance of Internet and new media as a mobilisation tool and as an alternative public sphere in closed regimes. Overall, however, the prize's presence and visibility on the Internet remains very low. Online presence and new media should feature more prominently in the EP's strategy.

Improving the impact on civil society

- More must be done to ensure more concrete support to civil society actors in the countries concerned. Our interviews revealed that this has happened in too few cases.
- Related to this, policies are needed to harness the prize as a catalyst for local civil society alliances. Many laureates point out that the prize gave them excellent international contacts, but did not help them build bridges with other activists in their home countries.

Tapping into the potential of the Sakharov Prize network

- The Sakharov Prize laureate network could be deployed to ensure that EU governments do not downgrade their focus on human rights. It could do this by monitoring key EU declarations on specific countries; offering opinions on whether new trade deals are justified when signed with

- countries experiencing human rights problems; and issuing regular briefs to alert the EU policy-making community to human rights problems that have failed to make it to the policy agenda.
- The Sakharov Prize laureate network launched in 2008 still needs to show its concrete relevance, beyond keeping the EP in touch with former prize winners. The EP could help mobilise the network to speak out on global human rights concerns. Laureates' apparent willingness to do this at present exceeds the EP's efforts in this regard. Laureates could be encouraged to look beyond their own national challenges and use their human rights capital to help other embattled activists in other parts of the world as new problems arise. This could form the backbone of something along the lines of a Sakharov network human rights alert system.
 - Despite the diversity of countries, issues, and ideas that different laureates represent, the Sakharov Prize and its network could lead several flagship initiatives that could lend concrete help to human rights activists worldwide, especially in terms of personal protection, thus providing more practical operational support, as well as improving outreach, for example through festivals and conferences.
 - By putting more effort into connecting different laureates with each other, the EP could also help foster more targeted initiatives on issues that are of interest to several laureates.
 - Given the increasingly challenging situation of civil society organisations in many countries, Sakharov Prize laureates should be seen as an invaluable source of information about the developments and priorities on the ground and on how best to support democracy and civil society in their countries.
 - Underlying all the observations and concerns that emerged from our extensive series of laureate interviews and research is a crucial challenge: while the Sakharov Prize has earned its place amongst the international community's best-known human rights awards, the context has dramatically changed since it was introduced 25 years ago. On the occasion of its quarter-century anniversary, the European Parliament must reflect on how the prize can continue to be as relevant in a world whose contours and predicaments look vastly different from those that prevailed at its inception. Celebration is merited; but the prize cannot rest on its laurels. As we have suggested here, the prize must be targeted more tightly towards the contexts where it could have tangible impact; must be dovetailed with other policy instruments; must guard more carefully against unintended effects; and must serve as a platform for broader international linkages in the defence of human rights. The prize remains an important initiative, but the threats to universal human rights have also become more hydra-headed.

3 LAUREATES' PROFILES

Over its 25-year history, the Sakharov Prize has been awarded to 35 individuals and organisations in 27 different countries. Some were co-laureates. The prize has reached out to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Africa, Asia, Latin America, the broader Middle East and North Africa, as well as European Union member states and one international organisation (see the table below).

Asia (5 awards)	China (2008, 1996); East Timor (1999); Bangladesh (1994); Myanmar (1990)
Broader MENA (5 awards)	Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia (2011); Iran (2012); Israel and Palestine (2001); Algeria (1997); Turkey (1995)
Eastern Europe (5 awards)	Russia (2009); Belarus (2006, 2004); Czechoslovakia (1989); Soviet Union (1988)
Africa (4 awards)	Sudan (2007); Nigeria (2005); Angola (2001); South Africa (1988)
Latin America (4 awards)	Cuba (2010, 2005, 2002); Argentina (1992)
Balkans (3 awards)	Kosovo (1998, 1991); Bosnia and Herzegovina (1993)
EU member states and international organisations (3 awards)	France (2005); United Nations (2003); Spain (2000)

We have identified several dimensions of impact on individual laureates and their organisations. These include visibility and recognition at home and abroad; access to the international community, including European institutions, member states' governments, policy-makers, civil society organisations, universities, and media; moral and psychological support; personal security and that of their families; and empowerment and support to their activities. The profiles below are based on desk research, media analysis and semi-structured interviews with laureates, their associates or family members. Unless stated otherwise, the interviews were conducted by FRIDE from August to October 2013.

3.1 Iran, 2012: Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi

The 2012 Sakharov Prize was awarded to Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer known for her fearless defence of activists from the Iranian Green Movement, and award-winning film-maker Jafar Panahi, an open critic of former Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad and a spokesperson for the poor and the oppressed in his country. The prize was in recognition of their struggle for freedom of expression in Iran and as a sign of support for all those who faced imprisonment and harassment following the government's crackdown on the Green Movement in 2009.

Nasrin Sotoudeh

Ms Sotoudeh is an Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate. Born in 1963 in a religious middle-class family, she pursued her studies in International Law in Shahid Beheshti University in early 1990s. After receiving her Master's degree in International Law, she successfully passed the bar exam in 1995, although she would not receive her permit to practice law for another eight years. Ms Sotoudeh was a founding editorial board member and then the only female author in the nationalist-religious monthly publication *Daricheh Goftegoo*. Following the launch of the 'One Million Signatures Campaign' – a campaign in support of changing discriminatory laws against women in Iran, of which she was one of the first members – and the widespread growth of the women's rights movement in Iran, she represented *pro-bono* in court many female activists. Ms Sotoudeh is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Society for Defence of Children's Rights and has defended several cases of child-abuse victims and child executions, as well as political activists and many individuals who were sentenced to death after the 2009 presidential election unrest.

Ms Sotoudeh's activities were considered an 'act against national security' by the Iranian state. In September 2010, she was arrested, unfairly tried, and taken to Evin Prison to serve a six-year sentence. She was also banned from practising law for 10 years. On 18 September 2013, on the eve of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's first visit to the United Nations, she was released together with several other political prisoners. During her imprisonment, Ms Sotoudeh spent lengthy periods in solitary confinement, being denied basic rights. To protest against her unjust imprisonment, lack of fair trial, and harassment of her family, she repeatedly went on hunger strikes.

Ms Sotoudeh's imprisonment was widely condemned by the international community. In October 2010, Amnesty International, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Federation for Human Rights, the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights, the *Union Internationale des Avocats* and the World Organisation Against Torture issued a joint statement denouncing Ms Sotoudeh's arrest and calling for her immediate release³. The US government condemned the 'unjust and harsh verdict' against Ms Sotoudeh, whom it referred to as 'a strong voice for rule of law and justice in Iran'⁴. On 20 December 2010, Amnesty International held a full day protest at the Iranian embassy in London against her imprisonment. In January 2011, the Law Society of England and Wales also issued a call for her release⁵.

The Sakharov Prize came as another important recognition of Ms Sotoudeh's cause. When she was awarded the prize, she was on an unlimited hunger strike to protest against the harassment by the Iranian authorities suffered by her family. This particular strike attracted great civil society attention and support for her demands, both at the national and international levels. The Sakharov Prize helped increase pressure on the government. She became a more influential figure than many others who were free at the time. Her husband, Reza Khandan, stressed in an interview that the Sakharov Prize contributed to raising awareness about Ms Sotoudeh's case internationally, and that the prize would be seen differently in Iran among activists and officials from then on. In his opinion, Ms Sotoudeh was

³ Human Rights Watch, 'Iran: lawyers' defence work repaid with loss of freedom', 1 October 2010, available at: <http://www.webcitation.org/6BiSr3nos> [Retrieved 1 October 2013].

⁴ US Department of State, 'Conviction of human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh', 10 January 2011, available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/01/154224.htm> [Retrieved 1 October 2013].

⁵ 'Law society calls on Iran to release prominent human rights lawyer', *The Guardian*, 19 January 2011, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2011/jan/19/law-society-urges-iran-release-lawyer?guni=Article:in%20body%20link> [Retrieved 1 October 2013].

proud to be a Sakharov laureate. It helped her pursue her activities⁶. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton commented: 'I am following the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh and other human rights defenders with great concern [...] We will continue to campaign for the charges against them to be dropped. We look to Iran to respect the human rights obligations it has signed up to'⁷.

As she could not attend the ceremony herself, Ms Sotoudeh shared her acceptance speech with her representatives, fellow human rights lawyer Karim Lahidji and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi. Her speech addressed the human rights situation in Iran, especially women's rights, and the civil unrest after the 2009 disputed elections, and denounced how the government imprisoned, tortured, killed and executed opposition members and harassed their families.

Later she wished she had spoken more about the situation of Green Movement leaders and their wives, who have been under house arrest for a long time⁸. She was not sure whether to accept the prize, in light of what had happened to Shirin Ebadi, whose properties were seized by the Iranian government on 'tax charges' after being granted the Nobel Peace Prize. Although she accepted the Sakharov Prize in the end, she refused the monetary reward associated for fear of government reprisals.

The Iranian government was displeased with the award. At the time, Iran was enmeshed in nuclear negotiations with the EU, and criticisms of the country's human rights situation could have a negative impact on negotiations. Also, renewed attention to the post-2009 presidential elections unrest was unwelcome. Iran's early 2012 legislative elections were marked by a lower than usual turnout and were seen as a warning sign of domestic unrest in the run up to the 2013 presidential elections.

However, the prize was widely welcomed by Iranian civil society and civil and political activists at home and abroad. It attracted the attention of the international community and international human rights organisations, which called on the Iranian authorities to release Ms Sotoudeh⁹. The Sakharov Prize fuelled a number of campaigns worldwide asking her to end her hunger strike and calling on the Iranian authorities to meet her demands. Such increased domestic and international visibility helped put more pressure on the Iranian government finally to accede to her terms.

On the eve of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's first visit to the UN General Assembly's 68th session in New York, over 10 political prisoners were released in Iran, including Ms Sotoudeh. In an interview given an hour after her release, Ms Sotoudeh told the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran: 'When they took me out of the prison, they told me, "You are free". They told me that my furlough was approved, but when I came out of the prison door, they told me "You are free". This is why I didn't sign the furlough form in which prisoners promise to return after three to four days'¹⁰. At the time of writing, however, Ms Sotoudeh's situation remains precarious, as her legal status has not yet been clarified. The legal provision for conditional early release has not been applied to her case,

⁶ FRIDE email interview with Reza Khandan on 25 August 2013.

⁷ 'Nasrin Sotoudeh and director Jafar Panahi share top human rights prize', *The Guardian*, 26 October 2012, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/26/nasrin-sotoudeh-jafar-panahi-sakharov-prize> [Retrieved 17 September 2013].

⁸ FRIDE email interview with Reza Khandan, op. cit.

⁹ International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 'Sakharov Prize-winner Sotoudeh's detention highlights denial of basic rights', 31 October 2012, available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2012/10/sotoudeh-hr-orgs/> [Retrieved 2 October 2013].

¹⁰ International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 'Nasrin Sotoudeh, an hour after release', 18 September 2013, available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2013/09/nasrin-sotoudeh-3/> [Retrieved 2 October 2013].

and she is still prohibited from leaving the country or exercising her professional activity. Nonetheless, she expressed hope that the Iranian government would build on these first positive steps and release all political prisoners and minority groups currently behind bars.

The news of her release was widely welcomed by the international community, in particular the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her release was also positively reflected in Iranian domestic media (which is rare in Iran) and among Iranian activists. It is crucial, however, that the international community ensure consistent follow-through on her situation and sustained diplomatic pressure for the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

According to Ms Sotoudeh's husband, Mr Khandan, the Sakharov Prize could help bring about concrete change and raise awareness about the human rights situation in different countries. The Sakharov Prize network could act as a human rights watchdog in the international scene. To him, the prize has raised public awareness in Iran about the European Parliament's human rights instruments and many Iranian activists are now looking up to the EP as a potential ally in their struggle for freedom in Iran.

Noble Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi, who represented Ms Sotoudeh during the Sakharov Prize award ceremony held in December 2012, believes that the Sakharov Prize provides laureates with a platform to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the world.

Jafar Panahi

Born on 11 July 1960 in Mianeh, Iran, Mr Panahi is an Iranian film director, screenwriter, and film editor, commonly identified with the Iranian New Wave film movement. He grew up in a working class family with four sisters and two brothers. His sisters, who were not allowed to go to the cinema, would ask him to go and then re-enact scenes for them. Mr Panahi was only 10 when he wrote his first book, winning a literary competition. He later took up photography and film shooting on 8mm. At the age of 20, Mr Panahi was drafted in the military. He served in the Iran-Iraq War, working as a military cinematographer. He made a documentary about the war that was aired on TV. After completing his military service, Mr Panahi enrolled at the College of Cinema and TV in Tehran. He worked as an assistant director on feature films, including with Abbas Kiarostami on 'Through the Olive Trees' (1994). Mr Panahi made his debut as a director with 'The White Balloon' (1995). One of his most successful films, 'The Circle' (2000), got him the Freedom of Expression Award from the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

Mr Panahi is considered one of the most influential film-makers in Iran. Although his films were often banned in his own country, he has received acclaim from film critics worldwide and has won numerous awards. According to Mr Panahi himself, his films capture the 'humanitarian aspects of things', often focusing on the hardships of children, the impoverished, and women.

Following Iran's contested 2009 presidential elections, Mr Panahi was among those who sided with the population and the Green Movement. He openly backed Mir-Hossein Mousavi, reformist candidate during the 2009 presidential race and eventually leader of the opposition, in the post-election unrest. He was arrested on 30 July 2009 in Beheshte Zahra cemetery, while paying respect to those who perished during the government's clampdown on protesters. Although released several days later, he was again imprisoned on 1 March 2010 together with his wife and daughter, as well as 15 friends. He was charged with spreading propaganda against the Iranian government. He was released on bail on 25 May amidst growing international pressure, but was sentenced to a six-year jail sentence and a 20-year ban on film directing, writing screenplays and giving any form of interview for Iranian or foreign media. He was also forbidden to leave the country except for medical treatment and Hajj pilgrimage. Nonetheless, in 2011 he made the documentary 'This Is Not a Film'.

The EU Presidency, EU High Representative, EU Foreign Ministers, G8 Heads of State and Government, the European Council and the President of the European Parliament also condemned government repression of the post-electoral unrest in Iran in June 2009¹¹. The European Parliament took further steps and issued several resolutions in response to human rights violations in Iran, including resolutions of 7 May¹² and 22 October 2009¹³; 10 February¹⁴ and 8 September 2010¹⁵; 20 January¹⁶ and 17 November 2011¹⁷; 14 June¹⁸ and 22 November 2012¹⁹.

Mr Panahi's arrest was widely condemned by governments, civil society, artists and the film industry in Iran and abroad²⁰. Internationally, among others, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Minister of Culture and Communication Frédéric Mitterrand²¹, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, the Government of Canada, Finnish Green MP Rosa Meriläinen and Human Rights Watch condemned the arrest²². In late 2010 and early 2011, more voices were raised against his imprisonment, including from several human rights organisations and activists. In his March 2011 greetings to the Iranian people on the occasion of the Iranian New Year, US President Barack Obama cited Mr Panahi as an example of Iran's oppressive regime²³. In its April 2011 issue, *Time Magazine*

¹¹ European Parliament, 'Joint Motion for a Resolution pursuant to Rule 122(5) of the Rules of Procedure, replacing the motions by the following groups: S&D (B7-0104/2009), ALDE (B7-0107/2009), PPE (B7-0111/2009), GUE/NGL (B7-0115/2009), EFD (B7-0117/2009), ECR (B7-0124/2009), Verts/ALE (B7-0126/2009) on Iran', 21 October 2009, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+P7-RC-2009-0104+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> [Retrieved 2 October 2013].

¹² European Parliament, 'Resolution of 7 May 2009 on Iran: the case of Roxana Saberi', P6_TA(2009)0391, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2009-0391&language=HR&ring=B6-2009-0279>.

¹³ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 22 October 2009 on Iran', P7_TA(2009)0060, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2009-0060&language=EN>.

¹⁴ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 10 February 2010 on Iran', P7_TA(2010)0016, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2010-0016&language=EN>.

¹⁵ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 8 September 2010 on the human rights situation in Iran, in particular the cases of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani and Zahra Bahrami', P7_TA(2010)0310, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0310+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

¹⁶ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 20 January 2011 on Iran – the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh', P7_TA-PROV(2011)0028, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201101/20110124ATT12403/20110124ATT12403EN.pdf>

¹⁷ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 17 November 2011 on Iran – recent cases of human rights violations', P7_TA(2011)0517, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0517+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

¹⁸ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 14 June 2012 on the situation of ethnic minorities in Iran (2012/2682(RSP)', P7_TA-PROV(2012)0265, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2012-0265&language=HR&ring=B7-2012-0318>.

¹⁹ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 22 November 2012 on the human rights situation in Iran, particularly mass executions and the recent death of the blogger Sattar Beheshti (2012/2877(RSP)', P7_TA(2012)0463, available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ir/dv/p7_ta-prov\(2012\)04/p7_ta-prov\(2012\)0463.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-ir/dv/p7_ta-prov(2012)04/p7_ta-prov(2012)0463.pdf).

²⁰ 'Martin Scorsese, Paul Haggis & film community rallying around jailed Iranian filmmakers – The Playlist', *Blogs.indiewire.com*, 23 December 2010, available at: http://blogs.indiewire.com/theplaylist/martin_scorsese_paul_haggis_film_community_rallying_around_jailed_iranian_f [Retrieved 15 September 2013].

²¹ 'France/Iran/Jafar Panahi', *Ambafrance-us.org*, 12 May 2010, available at: <http://www.ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article1645> [Retrieved 15 September 2013].

²² Human Rights Watch, 'Iran: indict or free filmmakers', 13 March 2010, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/03/11/iran-indict-or-free-filmmakers> [Retrieved 15 September 2013].

²³ 'Simin Behbahani & Jafar Panahi in Obama greetings for Iranian new year', www.lenziran.com, 21 March 2011, available at: <http://www.lenziran.com/2011/03/simin-behbahani-jafar-panahi-in-obama-greetings-for-iranian-new-year/> [Retrieved 17 September 2013].

featured Mr Panahi in third place in the list of Top 10 Persecuted Artists who have challenged authority²⁴.

On 26 October 2012, Mr Panahi was announced co-winner (together with human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh) of the Sakharov Prize. European Parliament President Martin Schulz called the two laureates 'a woman and a man who have not been bowed by fear and intimidation and who have decided to put the fate of their country before their own'²⁵. Mr Panahi's daughter Solmaz accepted the award in his place. He feels privileged to have received such a prize and honoured to have his name next to the likes of Nelson Mandela and other important freedom fighters throughout the world²⁶.

In Mr Panahi's experience, so far the majority of the awards he has received have not contributed much to improving his personal situation or allowed him to work freely in Iran. 'Iranian authorities would like to pretend that international coverage on a certain individual means nothing to them and will not lead to any policy or attitude change', he said²⁷. He hopes that the Sakharov Prize can make a difference.

The Iranian government's first reaction to the news of two Iranian laureates was to underrate the symbolic value of the prize. 'Their justification was that those were lobbies by the Western security forces such as the CIA and Mossad that led to the nomination of an Iranian prisoner and a filmmaker for the Sakharov Prize. They basically want to manipulate the public', Mr Panahi argues. 'Obviously, domestic media close to the government also tried to portray it as a Western conspiracy. However, the Iranian public is smart. Iranians reacted differently and responded in an extremely positive manner. The prize initiated very important discussions among civil society both outside and inside Iran', he added.

In his message to the European Parliament on the day of the award ceremony, Mr Panahi emphasised that regardless of how hard the situation is he is not willing to leave his country. He criticised the oppression in Iran and referred to known and unknown victims of such suppressions. While Mr Panahi hopes that the Sakharov Prize can make a difference, he believes that it is not enough to bring about real political change in Iran. 'Advocacy is necessary but not enough and if we are looking for results, follow-up mechanisms should also be in place'²⁸.

²⁴ 'Top 10 persecuted artists', *Time Warner*, 5 April 2011, available at: http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2063218_2063273_2063240,00.html [Retrieved 17 September 2013].

²⁵ European Parliament, 'Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi - winners of the 2012 Sakharov Prize', *Press Release*, 26 October 2012, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/press_release/2012/2012-october/html/nasrin-sotoudeh-and-jafar-panahi-winners-of-the-2012-sakharov-prize [Retrieved 17 September 2013].

²⁶ Cited and translated from an interview with Jafar Panahi conducted by his daughter at FRIDE's request on 5 September 2013.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

3.2 Arab Spring, 2011: Razan Zaitouneh (Syria), Ali Farzat (Syria), Ahmed al-Zubair al-Sanusi (Libya), Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt), Mohamed Bouazizi (Tunisia, posthumously)

The 2011 Sakharov Prize went to four prominent figures of popular movements in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, as well as, posthumously, to Mohamed Bouazizi, whose desperate act of self-immolation in Tunisia started the wave of mass demonstrations for freedom across the Middle East and North Africa.

Starting in Tunisia on 17 December 2010, mass protests for dignity against autocratic regimes swept the region, from Morocco to Bahrain, opening the door for major political changes. While Tunisia's Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak were ousted from power relatively quickly, political change in Libya and Yemen took much longer, and the situation in Syria and Bahrain remains precarious. Transition countries continue to face daunting challenges. In Egypt, a military coup in July 2013 put an end to the newly-elected Islamist government. Tunisia remains deeply divided between supporters of the ruling al-Nahda party and its opponents. The Syrian civil war is increasingly more violent and the risks for the region are ever so great. In this context, the award of the Sakharov Prize to the Arab Spring, represented by courageous individuals who marked the struggle for freedom in each of these countries, acknowledges the importance of continuing to support efforts towards democracy, fundamental rights and dignity.

Razan Zaitouneh (Syria)

Razan Zaitouneh was awarded the Sakharov Prize because of her prominent role in defending human rights in Syria and promoting peaceful methods of resistance to the regime.

Ms Zaitouneh is a human rights lawyer and co-founder of the Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) that document human rights abuses in Syria. After finishing her university career in 1999, she became very active in promoting and defending the rights of political prisoners in Syria. Ms Zaitouneh became popular among both Islamists and seculars for defending activists of all ideological positions. During the 'Syrian Spring' (2000–1)²⁹ Ms Zaitouneh joined the Human Rights Association in Syria (HRAS), becoming its youngest and one of its most active members. In 2003, she left HRAS due to its lack of dynamism. In 2004, she established the Syrian Human Rights Information Link (SHRIL). This presented an opportunity for her to work with local and international human rights groups, when prominent human rights defenders such as Haytham al-Maleh and Muhannad al-Hassani were being arrested.

In March 2011, in Deraa (southern Syria), a group of young students, motivated by TV broadcasts of events in Tunisia and Egypt, tagged on social media the expression 'People want the toppling of the regime'. They were immediately arrested and their location was unknown. Many Syrians took to the streets to express their solidarity with the students' families. Although the demonstrations were brutally suppressed, the Deraa movement grew, bringing the Arab Spring to Syria. The ensuing violence has already brought about over 100 000 deaths.

In 2011, Ms Zaitouneh co-founded the Local Coordination Committees and became very outspoken, including in international media, about human rights abuses in Syria. She also used social networks and played an important role in coordinating the strategy and efforts of activists, while remaining strongly committed to peaceful resistance and non-violent struggle. Due to her activities, she became

²⁹ The 'Syrian spring' is the period following Bashar al-Assad's coming to power during which some associations enjoyed more freedom before they were banished and repressed by the regime.

a target for the Syrian regime. She currently lives in the Damascus countryside, in hiding as her life is constantly in danger³⁰.

The Sakharov Prize did not attract much attention in Syria. For the regime, addressing the news publicly would have implied recognising that there were human rights abuses in Syria. Syrian civil society did not pay much attention to it either, due to heavy fighting at the time of the award.

Even though it would have been very difficult for Ms Zaitouneh to leave the country without being arrested, she never thought of attending the award ceremony. For her, the situation in Syria requires her to remain close to those who are fighting day after day³¹. In the speech that she sent to the EP, Ms Zaitouneh talked extensively about the suffering of the Syrian people. She expressed her gratitude to 'the amazing Syrians who are building their history anew', to 'remarkable friends, without whom we would not be able to transcend and resist heartache', to 'all brave people in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and beyond', as well as to 'those who got their freedom, and those who are still struggling for it'. She also thanked 'the European Parliament and everyone who has empathised with the uprising of [Syrian] people, and who has supported it in whatsoever way, for the sake of a tomorrow free of repression, prison and bloodshed'³².

As for the monetary award, her first thought was to donate it to the family of Ghiath Matar, a Syrian activist to whom she dedicated the prize. Mr Matar died after being arrested and tortured by the regime, leaving behind a wife and a baby who was born shortly after. But she decided to use it instead to help alleviate suffering in Syria.

Ms Zaitouneh thinks that the Sakharov Prize could contribute to building bridges between Syrians and European representatives. For her, the prize should be part of a more forceful global strategy and should be better integrated with other EU programmes and activities in the region. Ms Zaitouneh has refused to accept other prizes afterwards. She believes that rewards do not help if they are not accompanied by a strong commitment really to help people in their struggle for human rights. Concrete action should come hand in hand with symbolic gestures. She believes that a strong European role could benefit Syrians and their struggle for change. The EP could work to draw European governments' attention to grave human rights abuses. It could also send delegations to monitor the situation on the ground. Even though difficult diplomatically, more direct engagement is vital.

Ali Ferzat (Syria)

Ali Ferzat was awarded the Sakharov Prize for inspiring thousands of Syrians through his work as a political cartoonist, a work that he has continued despite having suffered physical threats and attacks.

Mr Ferzat is a famous Syrian political cartoonist. His cartoons are well-known for their sarcastic and critical look at Arab world leaders. Despite his initial friendship with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, he became more and more critical of him as the Arab Spring unfolded. On 25 August 2011, Mr Ferzat was beaten and had his hands broken by men who are believed to belong to the Syrian security forces. This led to a movement of solidarity by activists and regime opponents. Mr Ferzat now lives in

³⁰ For a complete biography, see 'Who's who: Razan Zaitouneh', *The Syrian Observer*, 19 August 2013, available at: http://www.syrianobserver.com/Opposition/Opp_Who/Whos+who+Razan+Zaitouneh.

³¹ FRIDE Skype interview with Razan Zaitouneh on 15 August 2013.

³² For a transcript of the speech, see 'Message to the European Parliament from Razan Zaitouneh (Syria) on the occasion of the Sakharov Prize award ceremony', *Women in the Mediterranean*, 14 December 2011, available at: <http://womenmed.wordpress.com/2011/12/14/message-to-the-european-parliament-from-razan-zaitouneh-syria-on-the-occasion-of-the-sakharov-prize-award-ceremony/>.

Kuwait, where he continues to publish cartoons in *Al-Watan* newspaper and others. In 2002, he was awarded the Dutch Prince Claus Award for his 'achievement in culture and development'. He also participates in different projects and initiatives in the Arab world aimed at empowering cartoonists and promoting their work.

Mr Ferzat learnt about being awarded the Sakharov Prize through the international media. He is very proud³³ to be a laureate and considers the prize as a guide. Although he was already well-known before receiving the prize, the award gave him moral support and encouragement, deepened his relationship with his supporters and influenced his decision to leave Syria to continue his work from a safer location. The prize also brought him closer to human rights organisations and actors, both in Syria and abroad. The monetary reward helped him while in exile.

For Mr Ferzat the Sakharov Prize is important, but needs to be more known. He believes that the European Parliament and MEPs should follow-up more on the activities of the laureates. He also wishes that there were more interaction between the EP and other organisations such as the United Nations and human rights organisations. Their joint actions could be particularly helpful on issues such as operations to rescue refugees and medical interventions. From Mr Ferzat's point of view, political and non-political actors should work together to improve conditions worldwide.

Ahmed El Zuber El Senussi (Libya)

Ahmed El Senussi, Libya's longest-serving political prisoner, was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his unwavering commitment to human rights and the rule of law during and after Muammar Gaddafi's rule in Libya.

Mr El Senussi opposed the Gaddafi regime since 1970, when he participated in a coup to topple the dictator. A great-nephew of former King Idriss of Libya, Mr El Senussi was a political prisoner for 31 years before being released in 2001, following a pardon on the 32nd anniversary of Gaddafi's coming to power. He is known as 'the dean of Libyan prisoners'. Mr El Senussi, who turned 80 during the Arab Spring, did not join anti-Gaddafi fighters in their armed struggle. He is, however, a very influential figure, in particular in eastern Libya. In 2012, he was elected head of the Council of Cyrenaica. Despite favouring the self-determination of Cyrenaica, he insists on the need for the region to remain part of Libya³⁴. Mr El Senussi believes in Libya's ability to reconstruct itself³⁵.

He learnt³⁶ about the Sakharov Prize award through both the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Transitional Council (NTC). He felt happy and encouraged. Mr El Senussi considers the prize first and foremost a tribute to the Libyan people. Unfortunately, neither the Libyan government nor the media paid attention to the news.

Mr El Senussi did not face any difficulties to attend the award-winning ceremony. The Libyan Ambassador to Belgium, who came to greet him at the European Parliament, was the only Libyan official present. In his acceptance speech, he emphasised the importance of reconciliation, stating that Libyans 'need to rebuild [their] country, showing tolerance even towards those who committed crimes, who violated human dignity'. He also thanked Libya's European neighbours for their 'unambiguous diplomatic and military support'. For Mr El Senussi, improving the situation of women

³³ FRIDE interview with Ali Ferzat on 16 September 2013.

³⁴ See <http://www.alquds.com/news/article/view/id/441908>.

³⁵ See <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2013/08/18/426039.html>.

³⁶ FRIDE interview with Ahmed El Zuber El Senussi on 18 August 2013.

and protecting their rights are the most pressing issues in Libya. He feels that much more needs to be done politically, economically and regarding security.

In his interview with FRIDE, Mr El Senussi said that the Sakharov Prize allowed him further to develop relations with international organisations. He feels that the international community must increase its political and financial support to Libya. He would also like to see more technical assistance, such as trainings, and targeted support to Libyan civic actors who already have their projects but lack the means to implement them. Many projects aim at civil society consolidation in Libya. Most are funded by the US and European governments. But the West's commitment to strengthening Libyan democratic prospects could go much further. The EP's decision to grant the Sakharov Prize to a well-known Libyan personality must be complemented with projects to improve security, respect for human rights and infrastructure development. Such a strategy would contribute significantly to appeasing the country's tensions, and to improving Europe's image in Libya.

Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt)

Asmaa Mahfouz was awarded the Sakharov Prize for inspiring and leading the Egyptian youth movement, as well as for her contribution to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

Ms Mahfouz is one of the founders of the Egyptian April 6th youth movement. She was also a member of Egypt's Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, a coalition of youth organisations that was actively involved in the 2011 revolution, organising sit-ins and demonstrations, creating slogans and calling for change. The coalition disbanded on 7 July 2012, at the end of the initial transition period, but its former members remain actively involved in Egypt's political process.

A week before the start of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Ms Mahfouz posted a video calling on Egyptians to go to Tahrir square on 25 January 2011³⁷. The 'vlog' became very popular among bloggers and, as American-Egyptian journalist Mona El-Tahawy said, it contributed to starting a revolution³⁸. In Tunisia, President Ben Ali had just been ousted and in Egypt, there were signs of mobilisation. The social media campaign quickly led to mass demonstrations. On 25 January, Cairo's Tahrir square was crowded with protesters calling for Hosni Mubarak to step down. Less than three weeks later, on 11 February, President Mubarak resigned. Ms Mahfouz kept on urging Egyptians to mobilise for change. She became very popular, and some fans have even created a *Facebook* page asking for her to be awarded the Nobel Prize 'for sparking the Egyptian revolution'³⁹.

For Ms Mahfouz⁴⁰, the Sakharov Prize gave her important recognition, but she stresses that it is a prize for the entire Arab world. Egypt is the only Arab country where the prize provoked fierce reactions from the government. While in other Arab Spring countries governments and media paid little to no attention to the Sakharov Prize, in Egypt it was exploited to breed anti-Western sentiment and indulge in conspiracy theories. The defamation campaign followed earlier prosecutions of national and international human rights and pro-democracy organisations in 2011. Ms Mahfouz had to face accusations of 'treason' and 'Zionism' in the Egyptian parliament, as well as on some media channels.

³⁷ See the video at: <http://asmamahfouz.com/>.

³⁸ 'Women play vital role in Egypt's uprising', *NPR*, 4 February 2011, available at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/04/133497422/Women-Play-Vital-Role-In-Egypt-Uprising>.

³⁹ See 'Asmaa Mahfouz for Nobel Peace Prize (for sparking the Egyptian Revolution!)', *Facebook*, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Asmaa-Mahfouz-for-Nobel-Peace-Prize-for-sparking-the-Egyptian-Revolution/188369904529634>.

⁴⁰ FRIDE interview with Asmaa Mahfouz on 20 August 2013.

Some government representatives even tried to impede her from going to the award-winning ceremony, which she managed to attend in the end.

Ms Mahfouz comments that she received considerable support from international human rights and pro-democracy organisations after the award. She maintains contact with a number of MEPs. Yet, she feels that engagement has yet to translate into more tangible support to the increasingly dire human rights situation in Egypt. In August 2013, following the military coup in Egypt, Ms Mahfouz was investigated, together with activist Esraa Abdel Fattah, by the Supreme State Security Prosecution on charges of espionage for having received 'foreign money'⁴¹. This, together with a negative media campaign, has exposed Ms Mahfouz and other activists from different political backgrounds to threats in the streets, making them fear for their safety.

Ms Mahfouz considers that there is already enough foreign and Western involvement in Egypt, but project implementation could be improved. From her point of view, the lack of follow-up hinders effectiveness and sustainability. Egypt's active civil society needs better training by their funders and international partners. She also feels that foreign actors tend to pay more attention to the regime's claims instead of listening to civil society. In her own words, 'Sakharov and the West do help, but not enough'. At the same time, she acknowledges that the West is not necessarily the only one to blame. Egyptian society needs to deal with its difficult political transition. Overall, more should be done to strengthen the country's civil society and its various structures and organisations.

3.3 Cuba, 2010: Guillermo Fariñas

Guillermo Fariñas received the Sakharov Prize for his opposition against the Cuban regime and his political protest on behalf of all prisoners of conscience in Cuba. He was the third Cuban to receive the prize, after the Ladies in White (2005) and Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas (2002).

In a letter sent to Raúl Castro on 5 March 2010⁴², Mr Fariñas⁴³ described himself as a 'graduate in psychology, three times former political prisoner, librarian and independent journalist'. Born in Santa Clara, Cuba, three years after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, he considers himself a patriot. Mr Fariñas, whose father fought alongside Ernesto 'Che' Guevara in the Congo crisis in 1965, fought for the Soviet Union and was part of the Cuban contingent in the Angolan war⁴⁴. Those years were 'the sole period' of his life in which he was a 'mercenary'⁴⁵, he claims. His views of the Cuban regime drastically changed during the process against General Arnaldo Ochoa, who was executed in 1989 after being found guilty of treason. He has tirelessly denounced regime abuse ever since and states that he will do so 'until the end'⁴⁶. Since February 2013, he acts as spokesman for the civil organisation Patriotic Cuban Union, which advocates for the peaceful but relentless fight against any kind of repression of

⁴¹ 'Activists investigated on claims of espionage', *Daily News Egypt*, 25 August 2013, available at: <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/08/25/activists-investigated-on-claims-of-espionage/>.

⁴² 'Carta a Raúl Castro Ruz del 5 de marzo de 2010', *Superpolítico*, 7 March 2010, available at: <http://superpolitico.blogspot.com.es/2010/03/carta-de-guillermo-farinas-raul-castro.html>.

⁴³ Unless stated otherwise, Mr Fariñas' opinions cited here are based on a FRIDE telephone interview on 27 September 2013.

⁴⁴ 'Guillermo Fariñas', #OZT, undated, available at: <http://orlandozapatamayo.blogspot.com.es/p/quillermo-farinas.html>.

⁴⁵ *Superpolítico*, op. cit.

⁴⁶ In 1989 he resigned from the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* (Union of Young Communists), after the execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa – a hero of the Cuban Republic and member of the Cuban Communist Party, accused of drug trafficking (there are suspicious of hidden motivations). After this, he joined the opposition and since then has spent almost 12 years in jail.

civil liberties in Cuba⁴⁷. He has been jailed three times for political reasons, having served over 11 years in prison in total⁴⁸. He has survived more than 20 hunger strikes. In 2010 he refused asylum in Spain, when the Spanish government offered to charter an ambulance plane for him to leave the island safely⁴⁹. He chose to continue his hunger strike in Cuba, as he believes that the fight against the government must be carried out from inside the island.

Mr Fariñas was awarded the Sakharov Prize in October 2010, approximately three months after ending his 23rd (and so far last) hunger strike, with which he successfully forced the Cuban government to free over 20 political prisoners who, according to Mr Fariñas, were sick and 'would not survive in prison'⁵⁰.

'Constant calls from the European media' woke him up in the middle of the night on the day he was granted the award. He felt 'very surprised', as after the Ladies in White (2005) and Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas (2002) very few expected the award to go to Cuba again. The timing was appropriate, as those were days of 'high political tension and great expectation', Mr Fariñas recalls. He notes that 'the Cuban government had been forced to free political prisoners and make concessions to members of the internal opposition', especially after international pressure intensified following dissident Orlando Zapata's death in prison while on a hunger strike in February 2010. High-ranking members of the Catholic Church acted as intermediaries. Mr Fariñas' telephone did not stop ringing for many hours that day, as many members of the 'peaceful internal opposition' called to congratulate him. Others, including several members of the Ladies in White, also paid him a visit.

With the exception of some op-eds in state-controlled newspapers, there was little official reaction in Cuba to the Sakharov award. Moreover, the government intensified its campaign to discredit Mr Fariñas, including through pressuring the Cuban Psychologist Association, of which he is a member.

Mr Fariñas considered engaging in yet another hunger strike to claim his right to freedom of movement and attend the award ceremony in Europe. Family members and fellow activists persuaded him against it, arguing that the government stood only to lose and would not grant him a travel permit. He then resumed his 'peaceful opposition from inside Cuba'. The European Parliament left an empty seat for him covered with a Cuban flag on the day of the ceremony. Mr Fariñas was finally able to travel overseas in July 2013 to receive the prize. 'This is part of the government's image-cleansing attempt', claims Mr Fariñas, who is convinced that the new immigration reform, which allows Cubans – and thus also Cuban dissidents – to leave the island provided they meet some requirements, is only 'a strategy to act as if things were changing, but nothing really changes'.

In this sense, albeit acknowledging 'small concessions mostly in the economic area, but none in the social or political arena', Mr Fariñas believes there is no real intention to improve the situation of rights and freedoms in Cuba. He cites the issue of access to the Internet as another component of Cuba's smokescreen. He does not consider the recent creation of 'over 100 e-communication centres' a real improvement. 'Cubans can communicate with the outside world via e-mails, but access to the broader Internet is prohibited', he claims. Moreover, 'it is unaffordable to the majority of Cubans' and, most importantly, e-mails and virtually all online activity is monitored by the state. 'E-communication

⁴⁷ 'Sobre Guillermo Fariñas', *UNPACU*, undated, available at: <http://www.unpacu.org/acerca-de/el-consejo-coordinador-de-la-unpacu/sobre-guillermo-farinhas/>.

⁴⁸ #OZT, op. cit.

⁴⁹ 'Fariñas rechaza un avión ambulancia ofrecido por España para salir de Cuba', *El País*, 29 March 2010, available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/03/29/actualidad/1269813603_850215.html.

⁵⁰ 'Entrevista a Guillermo Fariñas, disidente cubano en huelga de hambre', *El País*, 2 March 2010, available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/03/02/actualidad/1267484410_850215.html.

centres are not a safe place for Cubans' to access information and communicate with the outside world, Mr Fariñas concludes. 'Despite heavily criticising other nations for their massive surveillance programmes', Cuba does the same to its own people, he adds.

Being a Sakharov Prize laureate has helped Mr Fariñas in several ways; not least, it has given him some much-needed protection. Physical aggressions by the police have subsided, even though as this study was being finalised, in October 2013 he was arrested and beaten by the police after showing solidarity with the Ladies in White in several regions in Cuba. Worryingly, however, 'indiscriminate attacks by paramilitary forces that do not always follow orders from Havana have increased during the "Raulismo"'. Also, he argues, political persecutions have become less crude and are thus more difficult to expose. Even though repression against activists in Cuba is still commonplace, there is more psychological pressure and harassment than actual physical violence.

The prize has also increased his internal visibility and has enabled Mr Fariñas significantly to widen his international ties. Intense media coverage of his European tour, combined with (illegal) channels for the distribution of foreign media in Cuba – referred to locally as 'Cables' or 'Packages'⁵¹ - and increased non-violent dissidence and dissatisfaction with the regime have made him popular amongst Cubans who were unaware of his activities before the Sakharov Prize award.

Mr Fariñas has donated the monetary reward to an institution that helps Cuba's domestic opposition from abroad. He also benefitted from many contacts, including at the highest political level. He recalls the 'emotionally charged' visit to the Berlin Wall, where members of the 26 delegations present rushed to applaud, hug and kiss him. This helped him understand the extent to which the 'cause of civil liberties in Cuba' is a matter of concern worldwide. Calling the award ceremony the 'tip of the iceberg of his visit to Strasbourg', he acknowledges the importance of his many conversations with leaders of different political ideologies represented at the European Parliament. Mr Fariñas encouraged them to 'maintain the Common Position⁵² towards Cuba', as he equates negotiating with the Cuban government to negotiating with 'terrorists'.

Unfortunately, the Sakharov Prize has not brought about real change with regard to fundamental freedoms in Cuba. According to Mr Fariñas, the EP should work to broaden the impact of the prize. He suggests that the EP consider the laureates as ambassadors for freedom, peace and democracy, and consult them individually prior to taking action in their respective countries, following a case-by-case approach. Regarding the case of Cuba in particular, Mr Fariñas lists three concrete measures the EP could undertake to ameliorate the civil rights situation. First, it should address 'the ruled and not the rulers' and not be an 'accomplice of the repression' whilst seeking economic gain. Second, the EP should become a 'sound box' of crimes against rights and freedoms, which are far too commonplace in Cuba. Third, the EP ought to 'send love through solidarity' to those Cubans peacefully fighting to bring democracy to their country. These measures would strengthen Cubans embracing democracy and weaken those who are against it.

Mr Fariñas claims that for the Sakharov *ensemble* to be successful, the network of laureates should work towards becoming a sort of 'moral conscience of the planet'. Together, the laureates should

⁵¹ A 'Package' is a trusted instrument to obtain information from abroad. Employees (often civil servants) of hotels and resorts smuggle international media available to tourists and sell it at a profit to those interested. Cables serve the same purpose, but the information is provided in electronic format.

⁵² Council of the European Union, 'Common Position of 2 December 1996 defined by the Council on the basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Cuba', 96/697/CFSP, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31996E0697:EN:NOT>.

work to make the worldwide attainment of liberty, democracy and peace a top priority in a region 'as powerful economically, politically, militarily and socially' as the European Union.

Case Study Cuba: preparing the ground

The case of Cuba provides one of the clearest links between the Sakharov Prize and changes to human rights conditions.

Cubans have been awarded three Sakharov Prizes, in 2002, 2005 and 2010. The prize has contributed to increasing the visibility, recognition and protection of human rights and political activists still living in the island. It has contributed to the release of many political prisoners and served as an external incentive for internal reforms under President Raúl Castro.

But the positive effects were not immediately apparent. The first Cuban who received the prize in 2002, Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas, died in July 2012 in a car accident under never clarified circumstances. Mr Payá was awarded the prize in recognition of his leading role in the Varela project, a campaign for constitutional reform in Cuba. This failed in February 2003, when the regime imprisoned 75 dissidents.

The so-called 'black spring' of 2003 gave birth to a new movement in Cuba, the Ladies in White, created by wives and other relatives of the 75 imprisoned dissidents. This group was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2005. The Cuban government did not change its policy after this prize, but in fact tried to devalue the work of the laureates. Among others, official media launched a video accusing the Ladies in White of unproven corruption and mismanagement.

Things began to improve under the presidency of Raúl Castro. A turning point came with the death in February 2010 of Cuban dissident Orlando Zapata in a Cuban prison. The third Cuban laureate, human rights activist Guillermo Fariñas, together with other dissidents, began a hunger strike that ended in July 2010, after 134 days. He stopped his hunger strike when the government agreed to negotiate the release of political prisoners.

In 2011, one year after Mr Fariñas was awarded the Sakharov Prize, the Cuban regime released all 75 dissidents arrested in 2003, although many were forced into exile. The number of political prisoners has reduced from 330 in 2006 (when Fidel Castro's presidency ended) to 90 in January 2013.

Although the authoritarian character of the regime has not changed since Fidel Castro's brother Raúl assumed the presidency in 2006, domestic and international pressure has pushed the government to introduce a series of economic and political reforms approved by the Cuban Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de Cuba*, PCC) at its seventh Congress in 2011 and at a political conference of the PCC held in 2012. A new migration law, in force since January 2013, lifted many travel restrictions and finally allowed Mr Fariñas and the Ladies in White to collect the Sakharov Prize in person. Today, Mr Fariñas is member of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (*Unión Patriótica de Cuba*, UnPaCu), a political platform for pluralism, democracy and human rights.

The positive impact, however, should not be overstated. In 2012, Amnesty International documented an average of 400 short-term arrests of human rights activists each month, among them Mr Fariñas and several representatives of the Ladies in White. Cuba is still a single party system. Due to repression and control, the Cuban opposition in the island remains divided into small and fragmented groups without a visible common platform or shared demands, despite the attempts of a number of dissidents, including Mr Fariñas, to forge one.

Nevertheless, in the case of Cuba the prize did register with the regime and contributed to the release of political prisoners. The significant factor here is that domestic changes in Cuba pushed in the

direction of some modest reforms; the prize had established the foundations for positive opportunities to be taken when these domestic shifts began.

3.4 Russia, 2009: Memorial

In 2009, the Sakharov Prize was awarded to the Russian non-governmental organisation Memorial, represented by its members Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev and Lyudmila Alexeyeva, as well as by all human rights defenders in Russia as a statement of solidarity and support in the face of unprecedented violence and persecution against human rights activists in Russia⁵³.

Memorial was founded in 1988 in Moscow to gather historical evidence, document and raise awareness about political repressions in the Soviet Union, and to rehabilitate and commemorate the victims. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the organisation became international. Since 1991, Memorial has also aimed at protecting human rights in Russia and other post-Soviet countries. International Memorial includes several Russian and international organisations dedicated to research, human rights protection and awareness-raising. The Russian Memorial gathers around 65 organisations from 46 regions of the Russian Federation. The Memorial Human Rights Centre works in 49 regions, including Moscow, Saint Petersburg and the North Caucasus.

Oleg Orlov, born on 4 April 1953 in Moscow, is member of Memorial since its first days and chairs the Board of the Memorial Human Rights Centre. In 1994, he worked in an observation mission established by fellow laureate Sergei Kovalev in Chechnya. Since 1999, he has headed Memorial's work in the North Caucasus. In 2007, Mr Orlov was abducted in Ingushetia, together with three journalists, and was beaten and threatened with execution. In July 2009, when Natalia Estimirova, a member of Memorial in Chechnya, was murdered, Mr Orlov blamed Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov. The President sued Memorial and Mr Orlov for defamation. On 6 October 2009, Mr Orlov and Memorial were ordered to pay 70 000 roubles in compensation to President Kadyrov and retract their public statements. Mr Orlov was also put on trial on criminal charges for slander, but was acquitted on 14 July 2011⁵⁴.

Mr Kovalev, founder and chairman of Memorial, also founded in 1969 the first Soviet human rights association, the Initiative Group for the Defence of Human Rights in the Soviet Union. He spent 10 years in labour camps and in exile in 1974-84 for his human rights activities. During 1990-3, Mr Kovalev chaired the Human Rights Committee of the Russian parliament and in 1993-6, he chaired the Human Rights Commission with the President of Russia. In 1994-5, he served as Russia's first ombudsman. Mr Kovalev has openly criticised some authoritarian tendencies of the Yeltsin and Putin administrations, and has been critical of the Russian policy in Chechnya. Together with other members of the Russian parliament, Memorial and other human rights groups, Mr Kovalev established an observation mission of the Ombudsman in the North Caucasus, which later worked as an independent mission. In 1996, Mr Kovalev resigned from the Human Rights Commission in protest. Laureate of many international human rights prizes, Mr Kovalev was among the finalists of the Sakharov Prize in 2004 (together with Ms Estimirova for their work in Chechnya) and in 2005.

⁵³ European Parliament, 'Sergei Kovalev, on behalf of Memorial, winner of the 2009 Sakharov Prize', Debates, Award of the Sakharov Prize (formal sitting), 16 September 2009, available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20091216&secondRef=ITEM-007&format=XML&language=EN>.

⁵⁴ 'Oleg Orlov', *Lenta.Ru*, undated, available at: <http://lenta.ru/lib/14199224/> [Retrieved on 26 August 2013].

Lyudmila Alexeyeva is founding member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, the oldest human rights organisation in Moscow, founded in 1976, of which she became chairwoman in 1996. In 1968-74, she worked as a typist of the first dissident bulletin *Chronicle*, informing about human rights violations in the Soviet Union. In 1977-93, Ms Alexeyeva lived in the United States, where she worked at the radio stations *Liberty* and *Voice of America*, and published widely on the Soviet dissident movement, including a book entitled *The Soviet Dissent*, which was published in Russian and English. During 1998-2004, she was President of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. Since 2009, Ms Alexeyeva is an active participant of the Strategy-31⁵⁵ civic movement that fights for the freedom of assembly in Russia.

As Mr Kovalev said in his acceptance speech on behalf of Memorial, 'Memorial views this award as being not only for our organisation: the prize is being awarded to the entire human rights community in Russia and, more broadly, to an appreciable section of Russian society'⁵⁶. In the words of Ms Alexeyeva: '[It] goes to all human rights defenders fighting for freedom and democracy in Russia. And, first of all, to those who could not come here to receive it because they have paid with their lives for this fight [...] And this prize is for those who could not come because for their fairness and patriotism they have been deprived of freedom'⁵⁷. Mr Orlov had mixed feelings⁵⁸. On the one hand, he was happy and proud. The prize was given to all human rights organisations in Russia, and Mr Orlov was 'grateful that their work had been recognised'. On the other hand, Russia had gone 'in the opposite direction' and the human rights situation had worsened during the past 10 years. The award also 'brought bitter feelings', because Natalia Estimirova, who was selected with Sergei Kovalev as finalist for the 2004 Sakharov Prize, was shot dead before she could accept it⁵⁹.

In the opinion of the laureates, the award did not result in more political pressure, but did not contribute to diminishing it either. Harassment of human rights NGOs and activists remains commonplace. Two weeks after receiving the Sakharov Prize, Ms Alexeyeva was detained by the police when she was heading to an opposition rally in the centre of Moscow⁶⁰. Mr Orlov and Memorial were forced to pay damages to President Kadyrov following the defamation lawsuit, and another criminal case was opened against him, even though he was acquitted.

Mr Orlov believes that the Sakharov Prize played a role in his acquittal. The prize brought even more publicity to Memorial and Mr Orlov's case. Russian and international human rights NGOs continuously called on the government to stop the criminal prosecution. The authorities wanted to avoid a big scandal, which would have happened if he were found guilty. 'Of course, I had to be acquitted, we presented a lot of evidence and witnesses, but there were many guilty verdicts in such cases in those times. The Sakharov Prize played a certain role'⁶¹.

On 16 December 2009, the day of the award-winning ceremony, Mr Orlov declared that Memorial was renewing its activity in Chechnya: 'Such an uneasy decision was made as a result of consultations with

⁵⁵ Its name comes from the 31st article of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of assembly – a right formally recognised but violated in practice.

⁵⁶ European Parliament, 16 September 2009, op. cit.

⁵⁷ 'Галина Аккерман. 'Вручение премии Сахарова российским правозащитникам', *RFI*, 16 December 2009, available at: http://www.rfi.fr/acturu/articles/120/article_4942.asp.

⁵⁸ Memorial Human Rights Centre, Смешанные чувства. Олег Орлов о премии Андрея Сахарова, 22 October 2009, available at: <http://www.memo.ru/2009/10/22/2210092.htm>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.; FRIDE interview with Oleg Orlov on 2 September 2013.

⁶⁰ Chronicles of Moscow Helsinki Group [Хроника МХГ], 1, 2010, available at: <http://www.mhg.ru/files/010/n012010.doc>.

⁶¹ FRIDE interview with Oleg Orlov, op. cit.

our staff in the North Caucasus, as well as with a big group of Russian and international human rights organisations⁶². The Sakharov Prize also helped to make such a decision at that very moment.

Most importantly for Mr Orlov, the award acknowledges the difficult work of human rights defenders. 'Then it seemed to us that our work did not bear any fruit and we were scooping the sea with a spoon. The prize gave us strength and incentive to continue our work⁶³.

The monetary reward allowed Mr Orlov and Mr Kovalev to help realise Natalia Estimirova's dream, by helping Ms Estimirova's daughter Lana to study to be able to attend university. Lana has now obtained a scholarship to study at a British university. 'Thanks to the award, we were able to pay our duty to Natalia', says Mr Orlov. Ms Alexeyeva donated her share to her organisation, the Moscow Helsinki Group, contributing to acquiring the organisation's offices. 'Having our own office made us more independent; we don't need to pay rent and so we are able to help other organisations that have difficulties, such as Lev Ponomarev's For Human Rights!, who doesn't have an office', says Ms Alexeyeva⁶⁴.

There were no official reactions by the Russian authorities and the mainstream media in Russia did not report the event. As Mr Orlov put it, 'their reaction was the lack of reaction, ignoring. The award was exaggeratedly not noticed and not commented upon'.

Russian and international civil society and human rights groups congratulated the laureates. In a statement published on their website, Human Rights Watch said: 'This honour is enormously well deserved and we extend our warmest congratulations⁶⁵. On a similar note, Amnesty International stated that the prize was 'a recognition of the important work human rights activists are doing in Russia in exceptionally difficult circumstances and it comes at a very difficult time for them⁶⁶. The International Federation for Human Rights also extended its congratulations.

According to Ms Alexeyeva, the Sakharov Prize laureate network can become an important instrument for the promotion of human rights abroad. For Mr Orlov, however, today the network *de facto* is not really working and it should ask the international community for support to launch initiatives in the field of human rights. Memorial, as another member of the network, can also contribute by proposing, debating and promoting initiatives within Russia.

⁶² K. Uzel, 'Правозащитный центр 'Мемориал' возобновил деятельность в Чечне', 16 December 2009, available at: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/163169/>.

⁶³ FRIDE interview with Oleg Orlov, op. cit.; European Parliament, 'Oleg Orlov of Memorial: 'The major menace to us comes from the state'', 15 December 2009, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20091215STO66433&language=EN>.

⁶⁴ FRIDE interview with Lyudmila Alexeyeva on 23 August 2013.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, 'Russia: Memorial awarded Sakharov Prize', 22 October 2009, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/10/22/russia-memorial-awarded-sakharov-prize>.

⁶⁶ Amnesty International, 'Russian activists awarded European rights prize', 22 December 2009, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/russian-activist-awarded-european-rights-prize-20091022>.

Case Study Russia: is it possible to counter the backlash?

In 2009, the Sakharov Prize was awarded to Memorial, an organisation that Andrei Sakharov co-founded shortly before his death.

2009 was a record year for political murders in Russia, a fact that influenced the EP's decision to award the prize. Thereafter, the country's human rights situation has not improved. It is well-known that authoritarian tendencies in Russia have been accompanied by an unprecedented growth in murders and prosecutions of civic activists and independent journalists, as well as a more general backlash against civil society organisations. Russia is probably the country where the backlash against international human rights support has been most ferocious.

External democracy support now faces the complex challenge of finding ways to support civic groups that work on politically-sensitive topics without exposing them or aggravating the overall backlash against civil society in countries like Russia.

In 2010, the year following the Sakharov Prize award, the Moscow Helsinki Group and Memorial were among over 40 NGOs whose offices were searched by the authorities. The government has begun to use more sophisticated methods against NGOs, for example, tax legislation. Since January 2011, taxes to be paid by NGOs have been increased and those NGOs that do not provide direct services to populations, including watchdogs and awareness-raising organisations working on human rights, are treated as for-profit organisations.

More optimistically, despite continuous repression, civil society in Russia is gaining strength. Moscow and other Russian cities witnessed a wave of mass protests against electoral fraud following the 4 December 2011 elections to the State Duma. Tens of thousands of citizens volunteered as election observers. Russian citizens are now more eager to support NGOs.

Yet, after Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency, the authorities have increased repression against civil society. Several laws were passed in 2012 to further limit freedom of expression and assembly, curtail civic activity and discredit NGOs, and enhance the state's control over the Internet. The law on foreign agents, which compels non-governmental organisations that receive foreign funding and exert 'political activity' to register as 'foreign agents', threatens the very existence of independent civil society organisations in Russia. Memorial is among those organisations that have refused to register as a 'foreign agent' and challenged the prosecutor's decision in court. As the legal battle continues, the organisation may face closure or criminal charges against its leaders.

Overall, the lessons from Russia are sobering and call for a careful reflection on how the Sakharov Prize relates to domestic political dynamics. On one level, Memorial members speak warmly of the prize and insist that it has helped protect them. Many activists hope that on a long-term trajectory civic protest is growing stronger and cannot be held at bay indefinitely by an increasingly delegitimised regime.

On a broader level, however, the international community's human rights measures in Russia have been behind the curve in terms of responding to the regime's clampdown on civil society freedoms. The Sakharov Prize cannot be singled out as especially guilty in this sense; but it is part of a general field of external measures that in the case of Russia may need more rethinking. The key factor here is to appreciate just how far the Putin project has depended on creating the 'external other' as ideological glue for its own hold on power.

3.5 China, 2008: Hu Jia

Hu Jia was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his human rights work in China, in particular his calls for an official inquiry into the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and his advocacy of HIV/AIDS and environmental issues, which are largely absent from public debate in China.

Hu Jia started his work as a human rights and democracy activist during the late 1990s, focussing on environmental and HIV/AIDS activism in China⁶⁷. Between 2005 and 2007, Mr Hu and his wife, Zeng Jinyan, faced frequent harassment from the Chinese authorities, including being placed under house arrest for 168 days and his disappearance for 41 days in 2006⁶⁸. After Mr Hu and Ms Zeng testified at a European Parliament hearing on China's human rights practices via video conference, the authorities arrested Mr Hu, confiscated all his communications equipment, and placed his wife and child under home detention. On 3 April 2008, Mr Hu was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison and a one-year deprivation of his political rights⁶⁹. Mr Hu was released on 26 June 2011, but remains under heavy surveillance at home⁷⁰.

The year 2008 was an important one for China. Chinese leaders hoped the use of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing to raise the country's prestige. However, in the months leading up to the Olympic opening ceremony, Chinese security forces continued to suppress basic civil liberties, including the right to assemble and the freedom of expression and association⁷¹. In response to ongoing rights abuses, on 10 September 2007, Hu Jia and Teng Biao, a human rights activist, lawyer, and lecturer at Beijing's University of Politics and Law, published in *The Washington Post* an article entitled 'The Real China and the Olympics', telling visitors that 'the flowers, smiles, harmony and prosperity' of the Beijing games 'are built on a base of grievances, tears, imprisonment, torture and blood'⁷². A month earlier, Mr Hu had co-signed, together with 42 Chinese activists, the open letter 'One World, One Dream: University Human Rights'. It called for greater attention to human rights in China on the occasion of the Olympics⁷³.

Mr Hu was in prison at the time of the award. His wife Zeng Jinyan, denied the right to travel herself, accepted the prize on his behalf via video conference. According to Ms Zeng, the prison authorities informed Mr Hu of the EP's decision to award him the prize. Ms Zeng said that when she saw Mr Hu on 21 November 2008, she 'could sense that he was very happy' with the news. As revealed by Ms Zeng, Mr Hu said: 'Perhaps the European Parliament was thinking of the work I did in the areas of AIDS and the environment in awarding the prize to me. Because what I did in terms of human rights was very far from sufficient and I will need to redouble my effort'⁷⁴. According to Ms Zeng, 'The European Parliament has from the outset taken an interest in Hu Jia's case and has deployed

⁶⁷ Front Line Defenders. 'China: Front Line welcomes the release of human rights defender and Sakharov Prize winner Hu Jia', 27 June 2011, available at: <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/es/node/15253> [Retrieved 15 August 2013].

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Chronology of Hu Jia's case', 26 February 2008, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/es/news/2008/02/26/chronology-hu-jia-s-case> [Retrieved 28 August 2013].

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ 'Chinese dissident Hu Jia released from jail', *BBC News*, 26 June 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13917882>.

⁷¹ A. Ramzy, 'Failed government policies sparked Tibet riots', *Time*, 26 May 2009, available at: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1900899,00.html>.

⁷² J. Hu and B. Teng, 'The real China and the Olympics', *The New York Times*, 10 September 2007, available at: http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-04-05/opinions/36799447_1_teng-biao-human-rights-watch-hu-jia.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch, 26 February 2008, op. cit.

⁷⁴ J. Zeng, 'Sakharov Prize Award 08 – Hu Jia – Message from Zeng Jinyan', *Reporters Without Borders*, 17 December 2008, available at: http://archives.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=29728 [Retrieved 4 September 2013].

considerable efforts on behalf of freedom for Hu Jia and other Chinese human rights activists, efforts that demand respect. It has never stopped drawing attention to the need for freedom to become a reality for the people of China⁷⁵.

Mr Hu's award in 2008 had special significance to other Chinese human rights activists too, especially since the year also marked the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷⁶. 'This is not only an honour for Hu Jia as an individual; it is also an expression of the international community's concern for the deteriorating human rights situation in China [...] This award will serve as a great encouragement to those working for the cause of human rights in China. The public attention generated by the award will help advance the nascent Chinese rights defence movement, promote the realisation of universal human rights norms, and bring about in China the guarantee of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷⁷. To fellow activist Teng Biao, the Sakharov Prize is a valuable tool in Europe's human rights dialogue with the Chinese government. 'The Chinese government will be upset [...] But as a responsible nation that is trying to integrate into the international community, China has to understand that its conduct should follow international protocols. It should embrace the criticism as an opportunity to improve China's human rights condition⁷⁸.

With China's international image tainted by its human rights record, French President Nicolas Sarkozy initially threatened to boycott the Olympic Games' opening ceremony. Ultimately the leaders of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering, announced that they would not attend the ceremony in Beijing⁷⁹. In turn, Chinese authorities condemned attempts to politicise the Olympics, and its media accused the West of anti-China bias⁸⁰. Given the authorities' control over information, Chinese citizens had to rely on government views as their only source of news. Fuelled by such nationalist sentiments, many Chinese expressed suspicion that the West was trying to detract from China's emergence on the world stage⁸¹.

Later in 2008, Chinese authorities heavily lobbied MEPs against awarding the Sakharov Prize to Mr Hu. In a letter dated the week before the prize was announced, the Chinese Ambassador to the EU, Song Zhe, warned that awarding Mr Hu the prize would 'inevitably hurt the Chinese people once again and bring serious damage to China-EU relations⁸². Further comments from Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao described the award as a 'gross interference in China's domestic affairs' and expressed 'strong dissatisfaction at the decision by the European Parliament to issue such an award to a jailed criminal in China⁸³.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Human Rights In China, 'HRIC congratulates Hu Jia, recipient of the 2008 Sakharov Prize', 23 October 2008, available at: <http://www.hrichina.org/content/227>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ J. Yardley, 'Chinese activist wins rights prize', *The New York Times*, 23 October 2008, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/world/24prize.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [Retrieved 5 September 2013].

⁷⁹ J. Leibenluft, 'Passing on the torch: why are world leaders boycotting the Beijing Ceremony?', *Slate*, 2008, available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2008/04/passing_on_the_torch.html.

⁸⁰ P. Bhattacharji & C. Zissis, 'Olympic pressure on China', New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2008, available at: <http://www.cfr.org/china/olympic-pressure-china/p13270>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Associated Press, 'China warns EU over rights prize nominee', *USA Today*, 22 October 2008, available at: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-10-22-china-eu_N.htm.

⁸³ 'China voices anger over EU rights prize for "criminal" Hu', *AFP*, 23 October 2008, available at: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jKAZQA3pVBQhgl1bk8anE5jJpDlq?hl=en>.

In awarding the prize to Mr Hu, EP President Pöttering remarked that 'the European Parliament firmly and resolutely acknowledges the daily struggle for freedom of all Chinese human rights defenders'⁸⁴. Graham Watson, leader of the EU liberal group, commented that 'heavy-handed Chinese state lobbying to influence the outcome of the Sakharov Prize winner only plays into the hands of critics and reinforces the case for Hu Jia'⁸⁵. As expressed by Jerzy Buzek (EP President, 2009-12), the EP felt especially strong about the 2008 prize winner 'because his imprisonment in December 2007 can partly be seen as the direct consequence of his participation [...] in a hearing of the European Parliament in November 2007 on human rights in China'⁸⁶.

However, in practice, the Sakharov Prize had little impact on the lives of Mr Hu and his family; Mr Hu remained in prison under harsh conditions until 2011 and Ms Zeng stayed under house arrest. Prison not only deprived Mr Hu of his freedom of expression and movement, his health also deteriorated from liver disease and he was twice denied medical parole by the authorities⁸⁷. Meanwhile, for Ms Zeng the mental and physical stress of living under house detention and persistent police harassment was challenging: 'I was unable to pursue job opportunities and so had no regular income [...] I lived in a constant state of anxiety. The police were unrelenting in the pressure they placed on me. I could not live a normal life. My physical and mental health deteriorated'⁸⁸. To stop police harassment, in spring 2012 Ms Zeng announced via *Twitter* her separation from Mr Hu, and obtained a travel permit to move with her daughter to Hong Kong. She continues her human rights work from there supported, in part, by the Sakharov monetary award.

After Mr Hu's release from prison on 26 June 2011, heavy surveillance, as well as instances of house arrest, continued. On the day of his release, *Radio France Internationale* reported that security forces blocked reporters from interviewing Mr Hu⁸⁹. On 18 December 2012, *New Tang Dynasty Television* reported that Chinese internal security police officers had assaulted Mr Hu and warned him to stop his online activism. Mr Hu also reported that during and after the 18th Chinese Communist Party Congress, the authorities illegally placed him under house arrest and temporarily relocated him from Beijing in order to prevent him from speaking about China's political transition and his personal situation⁹⁰. As Xi Jinping took over the Chinese presidency in March 2013, Mr Hu reported via *Twitter* that the authorities had summoned and beat him during an official inquiry about his advocacy activities⁹¹. Most recently, the Chinese authorities denied Mr Hu's petition to visit his wife and five-year old child in Hong Kong⁹². Nonetheless, Mr Hu continues with his online activism, posting daily

⁸⁴ European Parliament, 'Sakharov Prize 2008 awarded to Hu Jia', 23 October 2008.

⁸⁵ Associated Press, 22 October 2010, op. cit.

⁸⁶ European Parliament, 'EP President welcomes release of 2008 Sakharov Prize winner Hu Jia', *Press Release*, 27 June 2011, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20081020IPR39973&language=EN>.

⁸⁷ European Parliament, 'Ailing health of Chinese dissident Hu Jia worries MEPs', *Article*, 12 April 2010, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=en&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20100412STO72456>.

⁸⁸ J. Zeng, 'An interview with Zeng Jinyan 曾金燕'. By Elisa Nesossi', *The China Story*, Canberra: Australian Centre on China in the World, The Australian National University, 2013.

⁸⁹ New Tang Dynasty Television, 'Hu Jia released but monitored', *YouTube, NTDTV.com*, 3 March 2013, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8PA828oj5c> [Retrieved 28 August 2013].

⁹⁰ New Tang Dynasty Television. 'Hu Jia agressé à sa domicile', *YouTube, NTDFrench*, 18 December 2012, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK9f9X9WMeI> [Retrieved 28 August 2013].

⁹¹ New Tang Dynasty Television, 'Hu Jia summoned, beaten for criticizing Xi Jinping', *YouTube, NTDChina*, 14 March 2013, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7LR1UVT68w> [Retrieved 28 August 2013].

⁹² New Tan Dynasty Television. 'Hu Jia denied visa to Hong Kong to see family', *NTDTV.com*, 21 January 2013, available at: <http://www.ntd.tv/en/news/china/20130121/76845-hu-jia-denied-visa-to-hong-kong-to-see-family.html>.

updates on *Twitter* and maintaining a *YouTube* channel to document the travails of democracy and human rights in China⁹³.

Case study China: counterproductive?

The European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize to two Chinese laureates, Wei Jingshen (1996) and Hu Jia (2008), both of whom engaged in political protest against the Chinese authorities. Neither award was able to hold back a tide of tighter human rights restrictions in China.

In 1996, the Sakharov Prize went to Wei Jingshen, one of China's most prominent political prisoners, in jail since 1979. With Deng Xiaoping's death in 1997, US President Bill Clinton negotiated Mr Wei's release from prison and exile to the United States with Chinese President Jiang Zemin. The Sakharov Prize probably contributed to increase pressure on the Chinese authorities and helped secure Mr Wei's release. Broader political reform was absent from the Chinese agenda in this period, however.

The situation in 2008 was much more fraught, and the Sakharov Prize played into acute tensions between China and the international community.

The prize award to Hu Jia came when China sought to use the Beijing Olympics to enhance its international image. The prize was one of many expressions of international concern forthcoming at this juncture, as the human rights community sought to use the Olympics to highlight repression. Other measures included threatened and/or actual boycotts on the part of several prominent European politicians, which received more attention than the prize itself.

This international spotlight did soften some formal Chinese rhetoric. Chinese officials, including the Mayor of Beijing, promised that the games would 'benefit the further development of our human rights cause'.

However, positive improvements were not forthcoming. If anything, the Chinese regime's defensiveness led it to adopt even more repressive tactics. When protests erupted in March 2008 against Chinese policies in Tibet, the Chinese authorities were quick to use force to disperse the demonstrators. Human Rights Watch reported that Chinese security forces broke international law, including prohibitions against the disproportionate use of force, torture and arbitrary detention, as well as the right to peaceful assembly. During the Olympics, the Chinese authorities established official protest zones in Beijing but denied all applicants who petitioned to protest during the Olympics. Although the Chinese government unblocked some English-language web sites, it tightened control over Chinese-language media before, during and after the games.

According to Amnesty International, the 'Olympic Games in Beijing brought heightened repression throughout the country as authorities tightened control over human rights defenders, religious practitioners, ethnic minorities, lawyers and journalists'. Mr Hu was among those jailed prior to the Olympics for 'subverting the state'.

Significantly, experts reported that many ordinary Chinese sympathised with the regime at this time because they suspected that the West was trying to spoil China's moment of glory on the world stage.

Chinese officials protested at the award to Mr Hu and threatened reprisals. However, China and the EU soon returned to pragmatic, business-oriented relations. Beijing unilaterally cancelled the

⁹³ @hu_jia. *Twitter.com* [Retrieved 28 August 2013]; Hu, Jia, *YouTube* [Retrieved 28 August 2013].

December 2008 EU-China Summit in Lyon, but this was due to French President Sarkozy's plan to meet with the Dalai Lama, not because of the Sakharov Prize.

It is generally accepted that human rights conditions have failed significantly to improve in China. More prominent democracy activists have been detained. The attempt to use 2008 as a moment when China might be uniquely susceptible to international pressure failed to elicit tangible human rights improvements.

The only positive impact attributable to the Sakharov Prize is a very indirect one: some claim that such international measures do keep human rights on the agenda and feed into Chinese citizens' growing demands for more accountable and less corrupt governance. This may be plausible but is impossible to corroborate.

3.6 Sudan, 2007: Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman

Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his work as a human rights lawyer in difficult circumstances of armed conflict and for his work against torture.

A member of the Fur ethnic group, Mr Osman was born in 1957 in central Darfur, Sudan, where the conflict that started in 2003 is said to have caused the death of approximately 400 000 people, displaced 2 million and destroyed the livelihoods of 3.2 million⁹⁴. Over 300 000 people⁹⁵ are estimated to have been displaced in the first half of 2013 alone, as the crisis enters its 11th year. In 2004, the United Nations declared the conflict as 'the world's greatest humanitarian crisis'⁹⁶.

The Darfur conflict began in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel groups took up arms against the Government of Sudan, accusing the authorities of marginalising the non-Arab population. The government responded by arming Janjaweed militias and carrying out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Arabs in Darfur, including the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit ethnic groups. The Sudanese government and the JEM signed a ceasefire agreement in February 2010, with a view to holding peace talks. But negotiations have been disrupted by accusations that the Sudanese army violated the February agreement. According to Amnesty International: 'In the southern Sudan and now in Darfur the Government of Sudan has tried to resolve conflicts whose deep causes lie in problems of discrimination and justice by condoning or ordering actions which have violated human rights. Only when the human rights of all people in Sudan are taken into account can a durable peace develop'⁹⁷.

Having been arbitrarily detained and arrested himself, Mr Osman⁹⁸ fights to end torture, impunity and human rights abuses in Sudan. He provides free legal assistance to conflict victims. From 2005 to 2010, he was Member of the National Assembly of Sudan.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'Human Rights Watch honors Sudanese activist', 26 October 2005, available at <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2005/10/26/human-rights-watch-honors-sudanese-activist>.

⁹⁵ 'UN reports 300,000 people this year have fled fighting in Darfur', *United Nations Radio*, 8 July 2013, available at <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2013/07/un-reports-300000-people-this-year-have-fled-fighting-in-darfur/>.

⁹⁶ Amnesty International, 'Sudan: Darfur: incommunicado detention, torture and special courts - Memorandum to the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese Commission of Inquiry', 8 June 2004, p. 3, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/412a06974.html>.

⁹⁷ Amnesty International, 'Sudan: empty promises? Human rights violations in government-controlled areas', 2003, p. 40, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/es/library/info/AFR54/036/2003/en>.

⁹⁸ Unless stated otherwise, laureate's opinions were expressed during a FRIDE interview on 19 September 2013.

Mr Osman was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2007, when the Darfur conflict was resulting in 'many victims, with over 2 million people having fled their villages', and at the height of 'international awareness', as it took some time for the EU to build a 'unified position' since the eruption of the conflict in early 2003. For Mr Osman, the 'first great surprise' was learning that he 'had been nominated for this prize'. He felt 'happy and glad' for such 'an honour'. When he received the news, he was attending the Global Conference on the Prevention of Genocide at McGill University in Canada. He describes that day as 'quite an amazing moment' in his career. Mr Osman did not face difficulties to travel to accept the award. In fact, he has only been subject to travel restrictions once, when he tried to leave the country for Kampala, Uganda.

Mr Osman was very touched with the 'big party' that followed his nomination. Representatives from EU member states, from the US and Canadian Embassies, among others, attended a gathering at Mr Osman's house in Wad Madani, some 200km south of Khartoum. Together with other activists, family and friends, they celebrated 'the entire day' in the traditional Darfur tribe-style 'with drums and music'.

Given the tight government control over media in Sudan, Mr Osman was uncertain of how newspapers and other local media would react. 'Journalists managed to publish it in the end' and Mr Osman 'was mentioned in many articles'. For Mr Osman, his country also participated of his joy, as 'Sudan finally felt like they had somebody whose work had been recognised internationally'. The government, however, 'never celebrated or recognised the award, but was strictly silent'. The obvious reason is that, since this fight is 'about defending rights and freedom' and voice out 'human rights violations', it was not in the government's interest to address this, given its reluctance to 'encourage or celebrate these trends'.

Despite having received several other international awards from organisations such as Amnesty International (2004), Human Rights Watch (2005) and the American Bar Association (2006), he considers the Sakharov Prize 'special' because 'it comes from all 27 member states of the Union'⁹⁹, and because it was awarded to him individually, and not as part of a larger group of activists.

Mr Osman has been 'defending those who have been illegally detained, or those victims of abuses as a result of the conflict in Darfur', without 'even thinking that this would mean anything to other people'. He was deeply touched when after many years of hard work, often at a high risk to himself, the European Parliament gave him 'confidence and courage' to continue his fight against impunity. It reassured him that he was not 'alone' in this struggle. Most importantly, the Sakharov Prize made it easier for him to carry out his work. Mr Osman felt that the government's attitude 'improved considerably' after the award. 'The risk is still there', he assures, but he is not systematically targeted as he used to be. The prize also led to broader support from colleagues both locally and internationally, not only in Africa, but also in the US and Asia.

In Sudan, the prize helped to improve understanding of basic rights among Sudan's constituencies, which may bring about political change in the upcoming elections, scheduled for 2015.

According to Mr Osman, the Sakharov Prize gave him an opportunity to 'give a voice to so many people who agonise in Sudan', but 'the situation requires more attention and needs to be addressed by the international community and be brought to the front lines of newspapers worldwide'. The problems that ignited the conflict in 2003 – *inter alia*, land dispossession, political marginalisation and

⁹⁹ The Sakharov Prize was awarded to Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman in 2007, when the EU was composed of 27 states, prior to the adhesion of Croatia on 1 July 2013.

unfulfilled promises – are still present. These issues, together with new 'unmet demands to remove contradictions, achieve what was established in the Bill of Rights of 2005, bring national laws into conformance with international standards and ensure the independence of the judiciary', hinder Sudan's progress. According to current estimates, the number of people affected by the war in South Kordofan runs as high as 700 000, with approximately 500 000 displaced within the rebel areas¹⁰⁰. The war in the Blue Nile state has displaced around 200 000 people, with refugees amounting to approximately 150 000 in South Sudan and Ethiopia¹⁰¹. Atrocities are still being perpetrated and many of those responsible for past crimes against human rights have not yet been brought to justice.

Whilst acknowledging the great importance of the Sakharov Prize, Mr Osman believes that the prize's utility could be further increased by establishing a network that goes beyond the current 'exchange of information and material'. He would like to build a solid platform for human rights, which would more vocally advocate human rights, be more (pro)active, have 'more outreach', as well as the ability to 'directly address' a conflict situation, thus further strengthening the promotion of human rights internationally.

3.7 Belarus, 2006: Aliaxandr Milinkevich

Aliaksandr Milinkevich was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his continuous struggle for a democratic future in Belarus.

Mr Milinkevich was born in 1947 in Hrodno, western Belarus. He is a scientist as was Andrei Sakharov. PhD in Physics and Mathematics, he is author of numerous publications in the field of physics, history of culture, education and science. He began his career in academia, but in the early years of Belarus' independence in 1991, he worked in the Hrodno City Council. When President Alexander Lukashenko held a referendum in 1996 – with four questions on changing the date of the country's independence day, amending the constitution, changing laws on the sale of land and the abolition of the death penalty – which was widely criticised as unconstitutional, Mr Milinkevich resigned. Since then, he has founded and chaired several civil society initiatives. He also became more engaged in politics. In 2001, he headed the presidential campaign of an opposition candidate.

In October 2005, the United Democratic Opposition chose him as presidential candidate to run in the 19 March 2006 elections. Official results brought about the victory of incumbent President Lukashenko for a third presidential term. The opposition denounced electoral fraud and tens of thousands took to the streets in central Minsk in protest. The day after the election, a tent camp was erected on October square in an attempt to stage an electoral 'colour' revolution similar to the ones that had taken place in Georgia and Ukraine a few months earlier. Yet, only five days later, on 24-25 March, the police violently dispersed the protesters, resulting in one death. Between 500 and 1 000 were arrested, including opposition candidate Aliaksandr Kozulin. Since 2006, Mr Milinkevich is a leader of the Movement for Freedom. He did not participate in the last 2010 presidential elections, but continues to be one of the most active opposition politicians in Belarus.

Having received the Sakharov Prize just a few months after the violent suppression of protests, for Mr Milinkevich the prize is not only his merit, but goes 'for all those who were in the square in Minsk last

¹⁰⁰ International Crisis Watch Group, 'Sudan's spreading conflict (I): war in South Kordofan', *Africa Report* 198, 2013, available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/198-sudans-spreading-conflict-i-war-in-south-kordofan.aspx>.

¹⁰¹ International Crisis Watch Group, 'Sudan's spreading conflict (II): war in Blue Nile', *Africa Report* 204, 2013, available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/204-sudans-spreading-conflict-ii-war-in-blue-nile.aspx>

March, who have been thrown into prison and expelled from universities and workplaces. This prize is for all those who are carrying on with the fight'. He mentioned Mr Kozulin, who was sentenced to five and a half years in prison, as well as other opposition activists with similar fates. He also referred to the 'freedom fighters who have disappeared without trace or have been murdered'.

For Mr Milinkevich, the prize has allowed him to expand contacts among presidents and prime ministers in Europe and gain their countries' support for a democratic Belarus. The prize also gave him protection. As the media was giving him a lot of attention, the authorities seemed hesitant to use repression against him. The prize also helped consolidate and inspire the democratic movement in Belarus. As Mr Milinkevich says, 'it has shown that solidarity and responsible work has brought us support. It also gave optimism to Belarusians that 'Europe has not forgotten us, Europe is with us!' Mr Milinkevich has participated in several roundtable discussions on human rights violations in Belarus after the parliamentary elections organised at the European Parliament. He remains engaged with the human rights cause and the fight against dictatorship in Belarus.

According to Mr Milinkevich, the Sakharov Prize is as widely known in Belarus as the Nobel Prize. Independent media wrote extensively about it, especially since this was the second Sakharov Prize to go to Belarus in just two years (in 2004 the prize was awarded to the Belarus Association of Journalists). Moreover, since then, Belarusian candidates have been among Sakharov finalists three times.

'Inspired by the Sakharov Prize, we established a Belarusian award named after Vasili Bykov, the most famous Belarusian writer and freedom fighter'. Since 2008, the Bykov Award for Freedom of Thought is given annually to Belarusian who fight for freedom and democracy. The ceremony takes place in the village of Bycky, where Bykov was born, on the site of a house-museum of the writer. 'This way, the Sakharov Prize continues its life in Belarus', adds Mr Milinkevich¹⁰²

The Belarusian government and pro-government media largely ignored or criticised the award. In the words of the then KGB chief, 'Europe must be in real decline if it cannot find somebody better to give its prize'¹⁰³. The Secretary of the Central Election Committee made similar remarks, accusing the European Union of 'euro-idiocy'¹⁰⁴.

The prize did become an important symbol of solidarity and recognition of Belarusians' efforts to leave in a free, democratic and European country. However, the Sakharov Prize laureate network still lacks concrete projects. 'There is correspondence and there are declarations, but much more could be done by the laureates themselves, myself included. Our fame, our solidarity, can bring more results, especially given that we have the support of the European Parliament. There is a need for concrete activity', he says.

Pressure on civil society and opposition has not ceased in Belarus. After the December 2010 presidential election and the government crackdown on the opposition and peaceful protesters that followed, the number of political prisoners in Belarus has increased to record levels. Over 700 people were arrested, including almost all opposition candidates¹⁰⁵. In response, the EU has expanded its visa

¹⁰² FRIDE interview with Mr Milinkevich on 3 September 2013.

¹⁰³ B. Naviny, 'Сухоренко назвал ангажированным решение Европарламента дать Милинкевичу премию Сахарова', 27 October 2006, available at: http://naviny.by/rubrics/politic/2006/10/27/ic_news_112_261147/.

¹⁰⁴ Деловая Газета, 'Лозовик: К премии Милинкевичу я отнесся совершенно индифферентно', Деловая Газета, 30 October 2006, available at: <http://bdg.by/news/news.htm?95889.68>.

¹⁰⁵ Viasna Human Rights Centre, 'Evaluation of events related to the presidential election: position of the Human Rights Center "Viasna"', 20 January 2011, available at: <http://spring96.org/en/news/40799>.

ban and asset freeze to over 240 individuals responsible for electoral fraud and repression, and over 30 companies that are seen to be connected with the regime and its supporters.

Today, many human rights defenders and activists, as well as members of the opposition, including presidential candidate Mikalai Statkevich, remain in jail¹⁰⁶. Human rights defender Ales Bialiatski was sentenced to four years in prison in November 2011 on false accusations of tax evasion, despite protests from the international community and human rights organisations¹⁰⁷. In July 2013, youth activist Andrei Haidukau was sentenced to one and a half years in jail for 'unlawful cooperation with foreign organisations'. Civic activists who were released eventually had to move abroad due to fears of a new wave of prosecutions. Belarus remains the only European country where the death penalty has not been abolished and executions are still carried out.

3.8 Cuba, 2005: Ladies in White

The Cuban peaceful movement for the release of all political prisoners Ladies in White (*Damas de Blanco*) was awarded the Sakharov Prize for its peaceful struggle for freedom and dignity in Cuba.

The Ladies in White emerged in 2003 as a spontaneous and heterogeneous movement made up of the wives and relatives of 75 dissidents arrested during the so-called Cuban black spring. Although all of them had been released by 2011, similarly to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association in Argentina (albeit in different ideological contexts), the Ladies in White and their peaceful and silent manifestations every Sunday in the streets of Miramar/Havana remain a symbol of hope for political prisoners and political liberties in Cuba.

In 2011, Berta Soler, a microbiology technician at a hospital in Havana, assumed the leadership of the organisation following the death of Laura Pollán. Ms Soler was one of the five Ladies in White selected to receive the Sakharov Prize. Ms Soler became engaged with the movement because her husband was one of the 75 dissidents arrested in 2003 by the Castro regime. After his release, both rejected the offer to exile and decided to continue to fight for human rights and the freedom of thought and conscience in Cuba. According to Ms Soler, the Ladies in White are not a political group, but a movement that advocates for the freedom of political prisoners and support for their families.

The Ladies in White learned about the prize award through a phone call from the EU office in Havana. According to Ms Soler¹⁰⁸), the prize served as a 'shield' and protected them from persecution and repression by the Cuban government. Despite fears of repression, the Ladies in White saw the prize as an important recognition of their work and never considered not accepting it. According to Blanca Reyes, another member of the organisation, the Ladies in White did not expect to receive such a prestigious prize, as their organisation has no political colour and does not represent any political party.

In the words of Ms Reyes, the Cuban authorities branded them as a group of 'crazy women' and prevented them from attending the award-winning ceremony in Strasbourg. Ms Reyes, exiled in Spain, represented the Ladies in White during the ceremony but declined to accept the prize on behalf of her organisation, leaving an empty chair. This symbolic act was meant to denounce human rights abuses in Cuba and the government's denial to allow the members of the organisation to receive the prize personally. It was only in April 2013 that three members, Belkis Cantillo Ramírez,

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Centre Viasna keeps the list of political prisoners updated, see <http://spring96.org/en/news/49539>.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, his situation is well-known abroad and he was nominated by the European Parliament for the second time for the 2013 Sakharov Prize.

¹⁰⁸ FRIDE telephone interview with Berta Soler on 28 August 2013.

Laura Labrada Pollán and Berta Soler, could personally collect the prize. This was possible due to a new and less restrictive migration law approved by the Cuban regime in January 2013. In her acceptance speech, Ms Soler highlighted the day-to-day abuses the organisation suffers and that the Cuban government is 'afraid because we are prepared women and justice is on our side'. She finished her speech with the words 'Cuba yes, Castro no, freedom!'. The ceremony served to increase the organisation's visibility in other countries. During her international tour, which lasted for 78 days, Ms Soler also received the Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissidents on behalf of her organisation, and participated in several events in the United States.

During their visit to Europe, the Ladies in White reiterated their concerns about the state of human rights in their country. They stressed that recent reforms by the Cuban government were of 'cosmetic' nature and only served to improve its image internationally. Against the background of ongoing negotiations between the EU and Cuba over a cooperation agreement, the Ladies in White warned that the EU should remain principled with the regime.

Back in Cuba, the government tried to discredit the organisation by broadcasting a video that implied that the money received would be used for private gain. According to Ms Soler, the money awarded and other funds, including from the Vaclav Havel Foundation, will be used to improve the infrastructure and networking of the movement. In a personal interview, she stressed that the money will be used in the organisation's community life and to support the relatives of political prisoners in Cuba. The organisation wishes to expand and modernise its equipment and infrastructure to continue its activities on a more solid basis, even though no concrete plan has been drawn up yet.

In the opinion of Ms Soler, the Ladies in White received the prize for being a credible movement of peaceful and conscious women in Cuba fighting for the liberty of their husbands and relatives, similar to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association during the dictatorship in Argentina, although with different ideological grounds. She opines that the confidence entrusted to the Ladies in White by the international community and the EP was also due to the organisation's transparency, the clearness of their goals and its non-violent demonstrations.

Despite hopes that the prize would offer a degree of protection from harassment, intimidation and detentions, according to Ms Soler 'the Cuban government ignores that'. She comments that on the same week of the official ceremony at the European Parliament, the Cuban authorities beat and arrested 62 Ladies in White at a peaceful protest in Havana. As this study was being finalised, another round of beatings and harassment took place on 17 November 2013. Ms Reyes, who resides in Spain, was refused entry into Cuba when she tried to visit her father who is sick.

No change has taken place with respect to basic freedoms and the treatment of human rights activists by the Cuban government. According to Ms Soler, repression is the same or has even increased, particularly against the Ladies in White. Nonetheless, she feels that the Sakharov Prize has contributed to increasing international recognition of the organisation and the moral and spiritual support for the human rights cause. In the domestic context, it has helped them gain more visibility. According to Ms Soler, after the Sakharov Prize award, the number of their supporters grew from 90 to 300, and the organisation opened more branches in different provinces¹⁰⁹. The prize has also facilitated contacts among laureates inside and outside Cuba.

In this case, the prize was given to a group of women and not to an individual. The award thus acknowledges a collective effort towards freedom of thought. The prize has not altered Ms Soler's

¹⁰⁹ B. Soler, 'Remarks during the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Sakharov Prize', Strasbourg, 18 November 2013.

personal life, but as an activist, she has gained more legitimacy and visibility at the domestic and international levels. Although currently there is no direct contact with the Sakharov Prize laureate network, there is a lot of interest in being more involved in the future. In Cuba, the only country to have received it three times, the prize has had a significant impact, strengthening local human rights networks and helping bring different laureates around the same civic platform.

3.9 Nigeria, 2005: Hauwa Ibrahim

Hauwa Ibrahim was awarded the Sakharov Prize for her ongoing commitment to human rights and the rule of law that she strove to uphold as a lawyer defending the poor, powerless, and illiterate completely *pro-bono* in Sharia courts in northern Nigeria.

Ms Ibrahim was born in a small, impoverished village in northern Nigeria in 1967. Influenced by her mother's conviction that education was the only way out of poverty and determined to have a life that was different from most girls in her village, she managed to complete secondary school and subsequently receive a university degree. Her professional career started in the prosecutor's office in her state. As she developed further her professional skills and was increasingly entrusted with more difficult cases, she decided to open her own law firm. With the introduction of the Sharia law in a number of provinces in northern Nigeria in 1999, she increasingly took up cases of women sentenced to stoning or flogging for adultery and children sentenced to limb amputation for stealing. From 1999 to 2008, Ms Ibrahim defended 157 such cases in Sharia courts, including those of Amina Lawal and Safiya Hussain, which attracted a lot of international attention. In addition to her legal practice, she has carried out research on applications of Sharia law and has taught the subject in a number of academic institutions, in Nigeria and abroad. Since 2005, she was at different times, visiting professor at Saint Louis University School of Law and Stonehill College, a world fellow at Yale University, a Radcliffe fellow, and a fellow at both the Human Rights Programme and the Islamic Legal Studies Programme at Harvard University.

When the prize award was announced, Ms Ibrahim was in Yale working on her book *Practicing Sharia Law: Seven Strategies for Achieving Justice in Sharia Courts*. She was amazed at the troops of cameramen that 'landed' in Yale to interview her, and was very pleased when the President of Yale made special mention of the prize during the university's annual event. This sudden attention made her realise how important and powerful the prize could be¹¹⁰. This is when she decided, in her own words, 'to become the spokesperson of the poor, the illiterate, and the marginalised'¹¹¹. 'This award tells those millions of women and children in northern Nigeria, who are poor, powerless, voiceless, and illiterate that the European Parliament does not just hear them but that it also supports, encourages, and celebrates them'¹¹².

She also says that it was thanks to the Sakharov Prize that she received not only her next appointment at Harvard but also university funding for publishing her book. Thanks to this money, she managed to distribute around 5 000 copies in Nigeria. It remains her ambition and hope to find additional money to translate the book into Arabic, so that it could reach those judges, lawyers and *mullahs* who do not read English. The exposure she benefitted from during her stay in Harvard, as well as access to resources, made her realise that her practical and hands-on strategy of working in a Sharia court may be of broader relevance for Islamic communities around the world. She defines this

¹¹⁰ FRIDE telephone interview with Hauwa Ibrahim on 4 September 2013.

¹¹¹ European Parliament, 'Past Sakharov winners speak out', Interview with Hauwa Ibrahim, 30 January 2009, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20090106FCS45491&language=EN>.

¹¹² European Parliament, 'Acceptance speech of Hauwa Ibrahim at the European Parliament', Debates, 14 December 2005.

broader approach as that of dialogue. She is strongly convinced that the question of Sharia law should be dealt with in dialogue with Islamic authorities through improved knowledge of the meaning and the basic principles of the Sharia.

With her monetary reward, she has created an endowment that uses the annual interest (5%) to send children to school in northern Nigeria, as she strongly believes that education is the only way to combat poverty and fundamentalism. She proudly reports to have helped 160 children since 2008. Her strategy for doing that is modest but effective. She does not use intermediary organisations but works directly with *mullahs* and community leaders in the villages. She also never sends money but makes all the necessary purchases directly. Every year the budget is used to pay the so-called PTA fee of US\$ 1 for those children who cannot pay it themselves, for buying chalk and pencils, and in those villages where there are no school buildings, for buying locally-produced foldable blackboards that can be used in open air. These very simple and inexpensive steps help ensure that children do not fall out of school and have the essentials for learning how to read and write.

One of the signs of how her professional life changed after the Sakharov Prize is no doubt her fame. Even though she still goes to Nigeria at least three times a year, she only goes to court in person when other lawyers request her presence. This happens when the cases are difficult or attract so much public attention that a 'heavyweight' has to be brought in. This is in stark contrast to her early days as a lawyer. Ms Ibrahim recalls how during the first five years of her lawyer practice she could never address a judge (always a man) directly but had to pass him notes. At the time of the interview with FRIDE in September 2013, her firm was dealing with 16 cases under the Sharia law.

The news of the Sakharov Prize award was broadcasted widely in Nigeria and most importantly, it was translated in Hausa, a widely spoken local language. The importance of Ms Ibrahim's work and the debate around the issues she works on has been gradually sipping into society. Ms Ibrahim believes that her sustained work on such cases and especially the publicity she managed to attract both domestically and internationally and the public debate helped transform attitudes. The Sakharov Prize award was one of the crucial elements in this ongoing awareness raising campaign.

It is not only her own standing that changed with the prize; the issues she dealt with in court gradually acquired new meaning. According to Ms Ibrahim, there has also been an important cultural and political shift in those provinces of Nigeria that apply the Sharia law. When it was first introduced in 1999, few people questioned the interpretation of Sharia that led to certain types of convictions. This has gradually changed. She reports that currently the number of convictions to death by stoning for adultery has dropped to almost zero. Even when such verdicts are passed, the governor, who is regularly (re-)elected, would not sign them, as they are unpopular with the public. In addition to resonant cases of stoning for adultery, limb amputation for stealing is increasingly seen as a disproportionate punishment. As public awareness of corruption by government officials is growing, the hypocrisy of such a punishment that is only being applied to children from most underprivileged backgrounds is apparent to the public and widely discussed¹¹³.

On a practical side, she thinks the EP could have a fund that supports flagship initiatives by some of its laureates. In her case, that could be not only the translation of her book into Arabic, but also an international network that would promote inter-confessional dialogue. Extremist organisations that promote intolerance and interpret Sharia in ways that undermine its own founding principles of equality and justice have become more vocal in Nigeria and around the world. These organisations, she argues, have to be taken on board and become part of a broader dialogue on common principles

¹¹³ FRIDE telephone interview with Hauwa Ibrahim, op. cit.

of justice. She believes that alienating such organisations will only strengthen their more extremist positions, and suggests that her own experience in engaging the religious authorities in Nigeria could have wider relevance for establishing such dialogues¹¹⁴. Sakharov Prize laureates could act as spokespersons on different issues, while its network could become a catalyst for collaborations among different laureates on specific initiatives.

3.10 France, 2005: Reporters Without Borders

Reporters Without Borders (RWB) was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 2005, along with the Cuban protest movement Ladies in White and Nigerian human rights lawyer Hauwa Ibrahim, for the organisation's contribution to freedom of expression and information, especially in war-affected countries.

Reporters Without Borders is a France-based international non-profit NGO. It defends and promotes freedom of information and freedom of the press. It focuses on Internet censorship and the new media, as well as on providing material and aid to war correspondents and journalists working in dangerous areas.

RWB was nominated for the Sakharov Prize by the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals for Europe¹¹⁵). The organisation considered the award an important sign of recognition by the European Parliament and was proud to have been singled out¹¹⁶.

Even though RWB was already well-known, the Sakharov Prize helped it build further prestige internationally. Being a Sakharov laureate increased the visibility of its campaigns against countries that do not respect freedom of information. This was for example the case during the campaign for freedom of expression that the organisation launched during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

It also facilitated greatly the organisation's access to different European institutions, and helped it establish direct channels of communication with different MEPs. RWB feels that the prize has allowed it to put more pressure on the member states represented in the EP. The prize has given the organisation more credibility and higher standing and has helped open more doors than in the past. Against this background, RWB laments the lack of coverage of the Sakharov Prize by the French-speaking media specifically. Certain personal rivalries and disagreements within French civil society led to a debate about whether the organisation was a worthy recipient after all. The fact that its then leader Robert Ménard often took up controversial positions in public debates and was very outspoken fuelled the discords.

During his acceptance speech at the European Parliament¹¹⁷, Mr Ménard cited a number of high-profile cases that he thought represented certain bias, if not hypocrisy, given the amount of public and political support given to some cases of persecution of freedom of thought at the expense of other less high-profile or politically-controversial ones. He cited, for example, the kidnapping in 2005

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ 'ALDE nominates Reporters Without Borders for Sakharov Prize as a tribute to journalists at risk', *Graham Watson MEP blog*, available at: <http://www.grahamwatsonmep.org/news/latest-news/156-alde-nominates-reporters-without-borders-for-sakharov-prize-as-a-tribute-to-journalists-at-risk>.

¹¹⁶ FRIDE telephone interview with Olivier Basille on 16 September 2013.

¹¹⁷ European Parliament, 'Ladies, Ibrahim and Reporters joint Sakharov prize winners', *Focus*, 27 June 2006, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20051017FCS01528+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

of Florence Aubenas¹¹⁸ in Iraq, saying that her story did not help attract attention to many more other journalists facing similar challenges around the world.

In his acceptance speech, Mr Ménard thanked the European Parliament for the prize but underlined that much more needs to be done in terms of freedom of speech around the world. He cited in particular the fact that, at the time, '64 journalists (had) been killed in Iraq, twice as many that were killed in the Vietnam War'. He also referred to Lebanon with its then ongoing violence against and assassinations of prominent journalists. He also made reference to EP resolutions on Tunisia, urging the EU to follow through on the pledges made in those resolutions¹¹⁹. It is very important, he stressed, that the Sakharov Prize has grown into such high-profile instrument, yet more could be done to ensure freedom of expression worldwide¹²⁰.

The monetary award, which in this case was shared with two more laureates, was used to support some of the organisation's international operations.

In his interview with FRIDE, Mr Olivier Basille from RWB suggested that the prize remains isolated from other initiatives on freedom of expression and human rights, both those promoted by the European Union and by broader European civil society. He believes that its potential could be exerted more and that the European Parliament could be more strategic with regard to the prize. For one, the Sakharov Prize could become a landmark example of the EP's commitment to human rights. He argued that the prize remains relatively unknown among the European public, so more effort should be put into publicising the Sakharov Prize and its achievements.

Mr Basille has further shared a few practical suggestions, such as establishing an operational relationship between European institutions and Sakharov Prize laureates. The laureates could serve as unique bridges between the EU and their home countries. Furthermore, the laureates could become goodwill ambassadors to try to help the cause of other laureates or human rights activists who face persecution in their countries. In addition, the laureates could become an invaluable source of information and analysis on specific issues and countries. On its part, RWB could contribute with regular monitoring of freedom of speech around the world as well as strategic analysis on these issues.

On a more practical level, Mr Basille mentioned that freedom of mobility remains a big issue for many human rights activists. He suggested that the EP establish something like Sakharov visas to facilitate the mobility of those facing threats and persecution. More ambitiously, he also suggested the possibility of instituting a rotating 'co-presidency' between the President of the European Parliament and a Sakharov winner. This initiative could target concrete issues, such as the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), Internet neutrality, or Internet regulation.

3.11 Belarus, 2004: Belarus Association of Journalists

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) was awarded the Sakharov Prize for its commitment to freedom of expression and information in Belarus.

¹¹⁸ Florence Aubenas is a French journalist. She was kidnapped in Iraq on 5 January 2005 and freed on 11 June 2005. Her kidnapping made the headlines in France in particular and media covered it extensively.

¹¹⁹ On 10 November 2005, R. Ménard got a letter from the World Summit on the Information Society in which he learned that the Tunisian regime was denying him the right to enter the country to attend the conference. See Reporters Without Borders, 'Robert Ménard, interdit d'entrée au SMSI à Tunis', 10 November 2005, available at: <http://fr.rsf.org/tunisie-robert-menard-interdit-d-entree-au-10-11-2005,15572.html>.

¹²⁰ European Parliament, 27 June 2006, op. cit.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan association of media workers, which promotes freedom of expression and independent journalism in Belarus. It was founded in 1995, a year after Alexander Lukashenko became President of Belarus and started his campaign against independent media. BAJ works to protect the civil, social, cultural, economic and professional rights of its members and to create the necessary conditions for a free press, including journalists' right to obtain and impart information without interference. BAJ has over 1 000 members who work in several media and publishing companies, some of which are state-owned. It regularly monitors press and press freedom in Belarus. The association also organises trainings to journalists. It works to increase public awareness of the right to freedom of information and monitors how the authorities provide access to information. Zhanna Litvina is its founding president.

Before founding BAJ in 1995, Ms Litvina had worked for Belarusian radio and television for 20 years. She served as editor-in-chief of the *Belarusian Youth* radio station, which was closed down by the authorities in 1994. After that, she and her colleagues founded the independent Belarusian-language radio station *Radio 101.2*, which was also closed down by the authorities in 1996. She was for five years chief of the Minsk bureau of *Radio Liberty*. In 1997, she founded *Radio Racyja*, which broadcasted programmes to Belarus from Poland¹²¹.

According to Ms Litvina, the Sakharov Prize contributed to the recognition of the Belarus Association of Journalists internationally, though it had already cooperated with international human rights and journalists' organisations before. In 2003, it received the Golden Pen of Freedom award from the World Association of Newspapers. 'The Sakharov Prize further raised our authority', said Ms Litvina. The money was spent to support BAJ's organisational development and to establish a creative competition for journalists – 'Free word'. 'The award came very timely and helped to maintain BAJ in difficult times when we needed money to pay rent and salaries', added Ms Litvina.

Ms Litvina believes that the Sakharov Prize helped avoid threats to curb BAJ's activities or even close it down. 'The Sakharov Prize was a message to the authorities [...] At the same time, however, the authorities reacted brutally to civil society becoming more active in Belarus and the pressure on ordinary members of BAJ has grown. This has been in line with the general policy of the state towards civil activists and journalists. Criminal prosecutions of journalists have become more frequent. It is only recently that the authorities have stopped the criminal prosecution of Andrzej Poczobut, member of BAJ and correspondent of *Polish Gazeta Wyborcza*'. Mr Poczobut has been arrested several times. In 2011, he got a suspended three-year sentence for the defamation of President Lukashenko. From 2012 until very recently, he was under another investigation.

In March 2012, Ms Litvina, together with several other journalists, opposition politicians and civic activists, was banned from leaving the country. This way, Belarusian authorities responded to the extension of the EU visa ban for Belarusian officials and business entities supporting the regime.

As Ms Litvina said, the award came as a pleasant and important surprise for the association: 'The realisation of how it was important for civil society and journalists in Belarus came later. For us, it was important that Belarus had international and European support and that our struggle was in partnership and cooperation'.

¹²¹ Radio Racyja renewed its broadcasting in 2006 and today it broadcasts from Poland to Belarus, with an audience of 2.5 million.

Ms Litvina said that the award was an important recognition of the difficult and dangerous work done by Belarusian journalists, especially at such a difficult period for Belarusian journalism. In the years following the presidential campaign of 2001, 25 newspapers and journals were closed down and many journalists faced criminal charges for criticising the president. Despite the conclusions reached in the Pourgourides report¹²² adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 28 April 2004, Belarusian authorities were not interested in an impartial investigation of the disappearance of opposition politician and journalist Dmitri Zavadsky in 1999-2000, amongst others.

There were no reactions to the prize from the state authorities. As Ms Litvina commented, 'the tactic of the Belarusian authorities is to suppress this kind of information. For them, our award was not pleasant news, that's why they concealed it'. Among the official media, the first channel of Belarusian TV showed a story about the Sakharov Prize going to BAJ and added that the money from the award would be spent on establishing hostile radio stations around Belarus.

The Committee to Protect Journalists, an international press freedom organisation, ranks Belarus among the 10 most censored countries in the world. Journalists continue to be repressed and independent media are being closed down. On 19 December 2010, several BAJ members and other journalists were beaten and arrested during a rally against electoral fraud and many were sentenced for 'mass disorders'. Offices of independent media were searched and their equipment confiscated, and some outlets had to close down or move their offices abroad.

The state controls the biggest distribution, postal and typography businesses. In 2010, Belarusian authorities adopted legislative changes to increase control over the rapidly growing Internet. Not only professional journalists but also independent bloggers face criminal prosecution, even when they are not posting explicitly political content. In summer 2013, a worker of the state-run Minsk automobile factory was fired and sentenced to seven days in jail for posting on the Internet critical videos about the factory's working days and crimes happening in his neighbourhood.

Ms Litvina enlists many more problems facing free press in Belarus, including the government's policy of economic discrimination of independent media and journalists, the lack of access to information, and the illegal status of freelance journalists. She also highlights how opaque and abusive of their right to classify information public authorities are. Harmonising legislation on media with international standards remains a top priority in Belarus, if the country is to respect freedom of thought and of expression.

Regarding the Sakharov Prize network, Ms Litvina considers it important for the network to speak with a single and firm voice, to express solidarity and defend European values. BAJ could help by disseminating information about the issues raised by the network. In post-Soviet countries specifically, BAJ sees its role in advancing independent journalism and freedom of speech. BAJ hopes there can be synergies between the activities of the Sakharov Prize network and other initiatives aimed at the region such as the EU's Eastern Partnership, especially the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, of which BAJ is member.

¹²² Christos Pourgourides was a PACE special rapporteur on Belarus in 2004, who investigated the disappearances of opposition politicians.

3.12 United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and all the staff of the UN, 2003

The Sakharov Prize was awarded to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and all the staff of the UN in recognition of the organisation's contribution to peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 2003, there was a blast at the United Nations headquarters in the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, that took the lives of 22 UN staff. The prize was awarded in special memory of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy in Iraq, who died in the attack. Mr Vieira de Mello had worked for the United Nations for 34 years and was its third High Commissioner for Human Rights. He was also awarded posthumously the United Nations Award in the Field of Human Rights. The Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation was created in 2007 to honour his memory, pursue his ideals and continue his unfinished mission.

As one of the survivors of the blast put it: 'The bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad has had a huge impact on the UN and on the future of humanitarian action generally. It was a devastating and cathartic event. It was the UN's 11 September, changing forever the way it will view the world. In its wake, many in the international community feel that humanitarian action can no longer operate as it did before'¹²³. The blast brought to the fore the big dilemmas of humanitarian action: neutrality, security of staff, and the broader aim of bolstering multilateral humanitarian and human rights norms, even if this involves a restraint on the national interests of states. In this context, the EP's gesture of solidarity sent an important message.

The United Nations remains the symbol of post-Second World War commitment to multilateralism and joint effort towards peace, security, social progress, and human rights. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in particular, stood out for his commitment to human rights and the rule of law. He inspired and oversaw a number of international initiatives that not only had a huge impact on the UN's activities but also changed the nature of international cooperation. Indeed, The Sakharov Prize was presented by President Cox as a sign of solidarity between the UN and the EU and its commitment to multilateralism. 'Ours is a Union based on values of pluralist democracy, respect for the rule of law, the promotion of individual and minority rights, solidarity, sustainability, open economy and respect for cultural diversity [...] This House strongly believes in the value and worth of the United Nations and its Charter, and in multilateralism', emphasised Mr Cox during his opening remarks. On the same day, the European Parliament passed a resolution to strengthen the EU's political and financial support for the United Nations¹²⁴.

In addition to his peacebuilding work, Mr Annan pushed forward other frontiers in international cooperation. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 were inspired by his report 'We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-First Century'. Not only did he push for global cooperation towards sustainable development, but he also helped transform approaches to development by promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships between public, private, and civic actors. During his two terms as UN Secretary-General, from 1997 to 2006, he worked on a comprehensive programme of reform aimed at revitalising the UN and making the

¹²³ G. Loescher, "'I lay trapped, hanging by my ruined legs': Gil Loescher survived the suicide bomb that killed Sergio Vieira de Mello", *The Independent*, 16 February 2004.

¹²⁴ European Parliament, 'Report (A5-0480/2004) by Mr Laschet, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, on the relations between the European Union and the United Nations', [2003/2049(INI)], Debates, 29 January 2004, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20040129+ITEM-002+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

international system more effective. He also strengthened UN peacekeeping operations and pushed for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005. He played a central role in establishing the inter-governmental Human Rights Council, as well as in the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. One of his landmark initiatives, the 'Global Compact', established the principles of corporate social responsibility and had a huge impact on international business.

Since leaving the United Nations in 2006, Mr Annan has remained highly active in international politics. He established the Kofi Annan Foundation, a non-profit organisation that works to promote better global governance. It supports Mr Annan in applying his unique experience and leadership in three key areas: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights and the rule of law. The foundation provides analytical, communication, coordination and logistical resources that enable Mr Annan to strengthen the capacity of local and international actors through mediation, political mentoring, advocacy, and advice. In early 2008, Mr Annan led the African Union's Panel of Eminent African Personalities to help find a peaceful resolution to the post-election violence in Kenya. In 2012, he served as Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League to Syria. He is also the Chairman of the Africa Progress Panel and of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

In 2001, two years before being awarded the Sakharov Prize, Mr Annan and the UN were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 'their work for a better organised and more peaceful world'. Kofi Annan was particularly distinguished for 'bringing new life to the organisation and for giving priority to human rights'. The Nobel Peace Prize committee singled out, in particular, the renewed emphasis on human rights and effective response to such new challenges as HIV/AIDS and international terrorism, as well as Mr Annan's ability to employ effectively the UN's limited resources under changing and increasingly challenging global circumstances¹²⁵.

3.13 Cuba, 2002: Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas

Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his brave dissent against the Castro regime and his commitment to democratic reform in Cuba.

Mr Payá¹²⁶ was one of Cuba's most active and vocal dissidents, who dedicated his life to improve that of Cuban citizens, trying to bring democracy and freedom to Cuba. He cared little, if at all, about the personal consequences of his actions, despite receiving several death threats from the Cuban government over the course of his life. Mr Payá died at the age of 60 on 22 July 2012, in a car accident near the city of Bayamo, some 800 km east of Havana¹²⁷. Mr Payá was born seven years before Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and Fidel Castro declared the final triumph of the Cuban Revolution against Fulgencio Batista¹²⁸ on 1 January 1959. According to Nilda Jerez, a close family friend, 'Payá did not seem to take anything seriously as a child'¹²⁹. This changed radically with the seizure of power by Castro's revolutionaries and the events that followed. Because of their ties to the Catholic Church and their disapproval of the communist ideology, Mr Payá's family was stigmatised from the very beginning of

¹²⁵ 'The Nobel Peace Prize 2001, United Nations, Kofi Annan', *Nobelprize.org*, 12 October 2001, available at: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2001/press.html.

¹²⁶ Unless stated otherwise, opinions were expressed in FRIDE email interviews with Mr Payá's widow, Ofelia Acevedo Maura, on September 2013.

¹²⁷ Y. Sánchez, 'La disidencia cubana se queda huérfana', *El País*, 23 July 2012, available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2012/07/23/actualidad/1343024525_311717.html.

¹²⁸ See 'Breve Historia de Cuba', undated, available at: http://www.cubagob.cu/otras_info/historia.htm.

¹²⁹ See Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, 'Anécdotas sobre Oswaldo Payá', undated, available at: <http://www.oswaldopaya.org/es/anecdotas-sobre-oswaldo-paya/>.

the revolution. The early days of the regime were 'days of terror' for his family. These years 'would forever mark Payá and his family', claims Regis Iglesias¹³⁰.

Mr Payá stood firm to his self-appointed compromise towards freedom and democracy for the Cuban people from a very young age. Already in primary school, he refused to be a member of the Pioneer's Unit, the step prior to joining the Union of Young Communists¹³¹. Mr Payá's family has lived under surveillance ever since. He was jailed at the age of 17 and sentenced to three years of forced labour on Isla de la Juventud (at the time Isla de los Pinos). 'His openly critical behaviour towards the regime cost him his freedom', declares Mr Iglesias¹³². Far from shunning his cause, Mr Payá's imprisonment fuelled his activism. In 1988, he founded the Christian Liberation Movement (CLM) and shepherded it until his death. This civil society organisation, which peacefully opposed the Cuban government, was aggressively persecuted by the regime, and many of its members faced detention and abuse. In 1998, he initiated the Varela Project, which sought free and responsible participation of all Cubans in the economic and political life of their country. The grassroots Varela Project is considered by some observers as one of the greatest achievements of Cuban dissidence to date¹³³. Backed by the Constitution, at a time when the Cuban opposition movement was virtually inexistent¹³⁴, Mr Payá collected 25 404 signatures, more than the number needed, demanding a referendum on fundamental rights and civil freedoms in Cuba. The government ignored his petition and instead declared the socialist system irrevocable¹³⁵.

The Sakharov Prize was granted to Mr Payá, the first Cuban to receive this award, in October 2002, 10 years before his death. The circumstances of his death remain highly disputed. The official version of the Cuban government differs substantially from that of his family and other dissidents¹³⁶. Harold Cepero, a fellow Cuban accompanying him, also died in the accident. The driver, Ángel Carromero, a Spanish politician of the right-wing Popular Party, reportedly lost control of the car and hit a tree. Mr Carromero and Jens Aron Modig, President of Sweden's Young Christian Democrats, survived the accident. Controversy soon arose, as many reported having seen a car run into Mr Payá's vehicle. Some believe that the accident was orchestrated by the Government of Raúl Castro. Government officials had often threatened Mr Payá, saying that he would not live to see the fall of the regime, if it ever materialised¹³⁷. Mr Payá's family feels that the EU and EP could have done more, by reacting to the numerous death threats the laureate received and helping an independent investigation into the car crash¹³⁸.

Mr Payá was at his aunt's house when he received the news over the telephone that the European Parliament had awarded him the Sakharov Prize. 'Friends both inside and outside of Cuba called first

¹³⁰ Regis Iglesias is spokesman for the Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación and manager of the Varela Project, two flagship movements of Cuba's dissidence founded by Oswaldo Payá. He is also a former political prisoner. See 'Perfil biográfico de Oswaldo Payá' (undated), available at: http://www.solidaridadconcuba.com/oswaldo/bio/oswaldo_paya_biografia.htm.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See 'Movimiento Cristiano de Liberación', undated, available at: <http://www.oswaldopaya.org/es/movimeinto-cristiano-liberacion/>; and 'Proyecto Varela', undated, available at: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/varela.htm>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Sánchez, 2012, op. cit.

¹³⁶ D. Cave, 'Oswaldo Payá, Cuban leader of petition drive for human rights, dies at 60', *The New York Times*, 23 July 2012, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/23/world/americas/oswaldo-paya-60-cuban-human-rights-fighter-dies.html?_r=0.

¹³⁷ See 'OP: Cuban human rights defender dies under mysterious circumstances', *Notes from the Cuban Exile Quarter*, 22 July 2012, available at: <http://cubanexilequarter.blogspot.com.es/2012/07/oswaldo-paya-cuban-human-rights.html>.

¹³⁸ R. M. Payá, 'Remarks during the 25th Anniversary Conference of the Sakharov Prize', Strasbourg, 18 November 2013.

and the media soon followed', recalls Ofelia Acevedo, Mr Payá's widow, who 'did not even have time to cook that day because the phone did not stop ringing'. The European Parliament, acknowledging Mr Payá's 'enormous and unprecedented efforts' towards change on the island, had for the first time given the prize to a Cuban. The following days were filled with profound happiness and joy. 'At work; amongst neighbours; many let us feel their delight. Some were very discrete and others were more vocal in their support, depending on their social and political status within the Cuban regime', explains Ms Acevedo. A common sentiment 'spread throughout the island within days', as people started to realise they were not alone. The prize 'sent the message that the world had not forgotten Cuba and that the people were not alone [...] Finally, solidarity had arrived', says Ms Acevedo.

The Cuban government responded immediately. The prize 'offended and disturbed' Cuban officials profoundly. They 'used every possible option within their reach – threatening signatories and laying off sympathisers, etc –' to destroy Cuba's 'unified opposition project', which found its maximum expression then, as it does today, in the Varela Project, explains Ms Acevedo. She recalls the efforts undertaken by Castro to infiltrate regime loyalists disguised as dissidents, and exacerbate existing rivalries, to break the unity and thus bring down the project from within.

'Oswaldo Payá could never have dreamed to be allowed to attend the award ceremony', says Ms Acevedo. Yet, in mid-December 2002, Mr Payá addressed the European Parliament. He dedicated the prize to 'all Cubans', as he believed that, in awarding the Sakharov Prize, Europe wished to transmit that Cubans, too, 'are entitled to rights'.

'The house had been locked from the outside overnight two days before the ceremony', recalls Ms Acevedo. 'The walls were plastered with posters and stickers depicting all kinds of threats and two state security Ladas'¹³⁹ were parked nearby. 'Our kids, still quite young and scared, could not understand what was going on and why they did that to our home', cries Ms Acevedo. Mr Payá did not hesitate and publicly denounced what was happening.

'We went to bed completely exhausted that night', continues Ms Acevedo, but we soon woke up to the sound of 'strong, repeated knocks on the door'. Mr Payá rushed to open the door and found his sister, who told him he had been granted a travel permit. 'He took a plane that same night', says Ms Acevedo. 'It was his only chance to speak out for the people of Cuba', she adds. 'The Sakharov Prize was to Oswaldo, as it was to everybody who fought alongside him, and for those within Cuba who were aware of this award, the international recognition of the Cuban fight for freedom, and as such, an acknowledgement of the fact that we live under a regime that does not recognise freedoms, nor the most basic of human rights', underlines Ms Acevedo. Back in Cuba, the regime initiated an active repression, 'incarcerating the leaders of the dissidence who had worked with the Varela Project, and the entire coordinating council of the CLM, sentencing them to many years in prison'. The regime used 'all means imaginable' to destroy Mr Payá's image and his projects. 'But they never succeeded', states Ms Acevedo. 'The CLM, inspired by Oswaldo, resurfaced'.

Oswaldo Payá 'just wanted for Cubans to have their rights'. He donated the monetary reward to the branch of his movement located outside Cuba.

Mr Paya's family now lives in the US. In September 2013, his wife and daughter travelled to Europe to meet some MEPs in the name of Mr Payá's struggle for freedom and democracy in Cuba. In a FRIDE interview carried out during the same month, they stressed:

¹³⁹ The world 'Ladas' makes reference to the flagship Soviet carmaker.

We, Oswaldo's family, were and are profoundly proud of him. The Sakharov Prize filled our family with joy and has done so every day until today. It meant a lot to Oswaldo. It empowered him to tell the world about the yearning for civil rights and liberties of the Cuban people. Oswaldo Payá dedicated his entire life to the pursuit of freedom.

3.14 Israel and Palestine, 2001: Nurit Peled-Elhanan and Izzat Ghazzawi

In 2001, along with Angolan Dom Zacarias Kamwenho, the Sakharov Prize was given to Israeli peace activist Nurit Peled-Elhanan and Palestinian writer and pacifist Izzat Ghazzawi, in recognition of their contribution to dialogue and understanding between their two peoples.

Nurit Peled

Nurit Peled is an Israeli Professor of Language and Education at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. She is well-known for her struggle for the creation of a Palestinian state and for her criticism of those Western policies that foster anti-Muslim views. Her daughter Snadar was killed in the 1997 Ben Yehuda Street suicide attack in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, she continued with her peacebuilding activism, and her commitment to the promotion and defence of human rights was strengthened. Ms Peled is a member and co-founder of the Russell Tribunal¹⁴⁰ for Palestine. Founded in March 2009, it aims at promoting peace and justice in the Middle East¹⁴¹. Ms Peled was a well-known human rights activist before she was awarded the Sakharov Prize. She remains engaged in the Parent's Circle Families forum, a grassroots organisation of Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost immediate family members due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹⁴². She is not involved in any other civil society projects, as she prefers inter-personal contacts to organisational work¹⁴³.

Her co-laureate and peace advocate Izzat Ghazzawi had a similar tragic experience, having lost a child of his own in 1996. The two laureates therefore represent the struggle for reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinians. Nicole Fontaine, then President of the European Parliament, said that giving Ms Peled the Sakharov Prize was meant to express a 'deep attachment to supporting all those who, through their daily acts, despite a difficult historical conjuncture and despite the pressure of events, are ceaselessly working for better relations between people'¹⁴⁴. Attributing the Sakharov Prize to Ms Peled in 2001 was very significant. The second Intifada had started a year before, and the degree of violence between Israelis and Palestinians made it then hard to believe that there could be peace between the two peoples. Ms Peled was one of those symbols that allowed for believing that, far beyond the peace talks and the need for political leaders to resume negotiations, there were citizens who were acting in the name of peace.

Ms Peled does not feel that the Sakharov Prize received much attention in Israel. She argues that with the exception of a few media outlets (such as *Haaretz*) and human rights organisations that denounce human rights abuses and call for dialogue, most public debate is not about peacebuilding or reconciliation. In fact, she continues to feel as *persona non grata* in Israel and her freedom of

¹⁴⁰ The Russell Tribunal, inspired by the International War Crimes Tribunal, was founded in 1966 by Lord Bertrand Russell, Nobel laureate for literature, to investigate crimes committed in Vietnam. It was chaired by prominent personalities such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Lelio Basso, and Simone de Beauvoir, among others.

¹⁴¹ See Russell Tribunal on Palestine, available at: <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/>.

¹⁴² See The Parents Circle, available at: <http://www.theparentscircle.com/>.

¹⁴³ FRIDE interview with Nurit Peled on 1 October 2013.

¹⁴⁴ European Parliament, 'Speech by Mrs Nicole FONTAINE, President of the European Parliament, at the Sakharov Prize award ceremony', 12 December 2001, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/former_ep_presidents/president-fontaine/speeches/en/sp0107.htm.

expression is often curtailed. She recognises nonetheless that there is a lot of interest in her activism in Europe, and being a Sakharov Prize laureate helps her interactions with human rights organisations and media.

The government's reaction to the prize was highly confrontational. When the European Parliament shortlisted Ms Peled, an 'aggressive lobby', including the Israeli Embassy and the Foreign Ministry formed against her. The fact that the EP stood its ground convinced Ms Peled that it was important that she accept the Sakharov Prize¹⁴⁵).

Yet, Ms Peled's view is that intra-European disagreements over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are paralysing European action. In fact, when the European Commission considered the idea of boycotting Israeli products that came from Palestine in July 2012¹⁴⁶, the European Parliament did not support it and remained divided on the issue. Given the difficulties of diplomatic action, it is even more important that the EP puts more effort into promoting bottom-up driven dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives and helps improve the overall public debate on issues related to the conflict, in Europe as well as in Israel and Palestine. A change in public opinion is likely to have an impact on leadership and diplomatic relations.

Izzat Ghazzawi

Izzat Ghazzawi (1951-2003) was a prominent Palestinian writer¹⁴⁷. He specialised in literature and was a professor of the subject at Birzeit University. His son, Rami, was killed at the age of 16 in the yard of his school by the Israeli army while he was trying to help one of his wounded friends¹⁴⁸. This painful event occurred at the beginning of the Palestinian Intifada and it encouraged Mr Ghazzawi to become active in defending the rights of Palestinians. He was imprisoned several times by Israeli authorities, including in 1989-91. Many of his writings dealt with the Palestinian suffering vis-à-vis the Israeli occupation. He was also a member of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace. Before the Sakharov Prize, he was awarded the International Prize for Freedom of Expression in Stavanger (1995).

Mr Ghazzawi is remembered as a prolific and talented writer. He was well-known in Palestine as well as in the Arab world before he obtained the Sakharov Prize. Mr Ghazzawi knew how to translate people's feelings and visions in a very poetic manner. One of his most famous novels, 'Mount Nebo', transposed a well-known biblical story to the situation of contemporary Palestinian refugees. The Sakharov Prize gave him further international recognition, it helped promote his literary work and raise awareness about the suffering of Palestinians. Mr Ghazzawi was also one of those intellectuals who believed in peaceful dialogue. He co-published a book with Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani and Israeli writer Abraham Yehoshua that dealt with relations between Israelis and Palestinians and stressed the need for reconciliation.

Yet, because of his pacifist stand, he faced suspicion from Palestinians and Israelis alike. In fact, he asked not to be photographed next to Ms Peled during the award ceremony in Strasbourg¹⁴⁹. Despite his own commitment to reconciliation and dialogue between the two peoples, he was weary of the possible mediatic backlash that an appearance with an Israeli could unleash. Ms Peled points out the

¹⁴⁵ 'Unsung Heroes', *Haaretz*, 3 April 2003, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/unsung-heroes-1.14140>

¹⁴⁶ 'EU to block funding of entities in Israeli settlements', *The Financial Times*, 16 July 2013, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/96304cdc-ee01-11e2-816e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2ggHVe1nf>.

¹⁴⁷ See list of his main writings at: http://www.arabworldbooks.com/authors/izzat_ghazzawi.htm.

¹⁴⁸ See I. Ghazzawi, 'To the Martyr Rami al-Ghazzawi. Eulogy to his son Rami', *Palestine-Israel Journal*, available at: <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=881>.

¹⁴⁹ FRIDE interview with Nurit Peled, op. cit.

fact that Birzeit University in particular was very suspicious of Israelis and their possible presence on campus. Mr Ghazzawi had to be careful not to undermine his standing and credibility in Palestine. Yet, Ms Peled says that the Sakharov Prize allowed her to develop good and cordial relations with Mr Ghazzawi.

Unfortunately, Mr Ghazzawi did not live long enough to benefit fully from the Sakharov Prize. He died in 2003, two years after receiving the prize. His death brought a lot of tributes from Palestinian writers that had known him during his life¹⁵⁰. Mr Ghazzawi had been struggling for freedom of expression long before his son Ramy was killed, and he kept this commitment despite his personal tragedy.

Case Study Israel and Palestine: against the grain

The case of Palestine suggests that the domestic impact of the Sakharov Prize can be rendered negligible and almost be lost from view when violence and tension are so serious that they consume the overwhelming attention of local media and civil society. This should not be understood as a call for not giving the prize to countries captured by armed conflict. Rather, the EP should be aware of the distinct challenges that such contexts represent.

In 2001, when the Sakharov Prize was jointly awarded to an Israeli, Nurit Peled, and a Palestinian, Izzat Ghazzawi, Palestine was amidst the Second Intifada, one of the most violent moments in its history. In September 2000, following a visit by former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, Palestinians took to the streets to criticise what they considered a 'provocation'. In turn, Israel reacted by sending its police and security forces to dissuade Palestinians from continuing their demonstrations. The resulting violence opened a new cycle of war between Israelis and Palestinians.

Severe human rights abuses were committed by both sides. Israel detained more Palestinian political prisoners. In 2002, it started building the notorious wall around the West Bank. Illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine expanded. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians by the Israeli Defence Forces increased. The Palestinians own proto-state governance structures themselves became more opaque, corrupt and authoritarian.

The prize was not reported in most media. Civil society did not react in any high-profile fashion either. Israeli laureate Ms Peled speaks bitterly of a huge gap between her country and the Western world, of which Israel believes to be part, and of how peace education that has such high standing internationally remains a marginal issue in Israel.

At the time of the award, such deep mutual suspicion existed between Palestinians and Israelis that a prize celebrating rapprochement was going against the grain of local opinions. Mr Ghazzawi even asked not to be photographed next to Ms Peled during the award ceremony in Strasbourg. Yet, the two laureates agreed that he would talk on behalf of both, using first person plural in his speeches.

The Sakharov award effectively promoted the role of civil society in bottom-up conflict resolution. This is widely recognised to be important and admirable, but of somewhat limited value while the high-politics diplomacy surrounding the crisis remains so inauspicious, and the role of the EU so limited.

An impressive number of NGOs are active in Palestine. A number of organisations and youth movements are involved in reconciliation and peacebuilding on the ground. Yet the joint Israeli-Palestinian Sakharov Prize did not pave the way towards greater engagement between the EU and

¹⁵⁰ See for example Nidal Hamad's tribute at: http://www.safsaf.org/06adab_arabi/izzat_06_nidal.htm.

such bridge-building initiatives between the two communities.

The lesson from this award is that in contexts of acute violence, the EP and the EU should invest more into making sure that the positive value of the Sakharov Prize does not get drowned out.

3.15 Angola, 2001: Dom Zacarias Kamwenho

Dom Zacarias Kamwenho was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his contribution to peace and reconciliation in Angola.

Zacarias Kamwenho, born 5 September 1934 in Chimbundo (Bailundo), Huambo, Angola, is an Angolan archbishop and peace activist. In 2001, he acted as a mediator in the Angolan civil war, contributing to ending the conflict that lasted for over 25 years. He also chaired the Episcopal Conference of Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe (CEAST) and the Ecumenical Committee for Peace in Angola (COIEPA), which was established in April 2000 and brings together the Catholic CEAST, the Angolan Evangelical Alliance (AEA) and the Council of Christian Churches in Angola (CICA). He was made bishop in 1974 and in 1997, he became the Archbishop of Lubango. On 6 September 2009, after having turned 75 years old, he was awarded the title of Archbishop Emeritus of Lubango.

Dom Zacarias was the first clergyman, the second Portuguese-speaking (after Xanana Gusmão) and the second African (after Nelson Mandela) to receive the Sakharov Prize. Dom Zacarias could hardly believe it when he received a call from MEP José Ribeiro e Castro, who had put forward his candidacy, informing him that he had been awarded the 2001 EP Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. He was 'perplexed and confused'¹⁵¹. At the time, he was attending to some personal health problems in Verona, Italy, at the hospital of the *Missionários Pobres Servos da Divina Providência* (Poor Servants Missionaries of the Divine Providence). Upon hearing the news, the religious community at the missionaries' residence later that evening drank a toast on his behalf, which also 'surprised' him. An endless number of telephone calls and congratulatory messages followed, and Dom Zacarias began to realise the great importance of the prize and the responsibility it entailed. For Dom Zacarias, this prize represented an acknowledgment from the international community of the efforts of the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations that are constantly fighting to bring an end to war and promote peaceful dialogue between conflicting parties. Among these is the COIEPA, which Dom Zacarias promoted, supported and presided, whilst also chairing CEAST. For Dom Zacarias, the prize was also a question of 'national responsibility'.

On 12 December 2001, he was in Strasbourg for the award ceremony. He remembers being the laureate with the largest number of supporters present, mainly Angolans who had travelled from all over Angola and others who were based in Portugal. From Angola, in particular, the singer Raúl Indipwo, who travelled to France together with his band and his guitar, was authorised to sing in the building; one of his songs said 'I am going to take you [the prize] with me'. From Portugal, among others, Maria de Jesus Barroso Soares, the wife of former President Mário Soares and then Socialist MEP, who also supported Dom Zacarias' candidacy, attended.

At home, the Angolan government and the political elite viewed the news positively. The Angolan Ambassador to Belgium, and Fragata de Morais, from the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), were present at the ceremony. President Xanana Gusmão, the first Portuguese-

¹⁵¹ Unless stated otherwise, Dom Zacarias' opinions cited here are based on FRIDE telephone and email interviews carried out in September 2013.

speaking to have received the prize, congratulated Dom Zacarias effusively during a meeting in Brussels. He also received congratulatory messages from the Angolan President of the Republic, José Eduardo dos Santos, from the Angolan Ambassadors to Portugal, Italy, Russia, and Israel, as well as other political entities, and even from Jonas Savimbi, leader of the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), the second-largest political party in Angola and one of the main conflicting parties in the civil war. Founded in 1966, UNITA fought alongside the MPLA in the Angolan War for Independence (1961–1975) and then against the MPLA in the ensuing civil war (1975–2002). Dom Zacarias believes that the Sakharov Prize helped to increase pressure for ending the conflict peacefully. It was no longer possible (if ever) for those who wished to end war with war to justify their means.

On 4 April 2002, the Day of Peace, when MPLA and UNITA military commanders signed a Memorandum of Understanding as an addendum to the Lusaka Protocol in Luena that brought an end to the conflict, Dom Zacarias recalls with gratitude and emotion when MPLA militant André Mingas sang a peace song, which he dedicated to Dom Zacarias' vital work as a peace-builder, wishing him a rapid recovery from his health problems. The news about the prize was widely published and broadcasted in Angola and Portugal, in particular, even though few negative remarks from critics were voiced as well. On 12 December 2001, Angola woke up with the news that an Angolan, born in Bailundo, was Sakharov prize-winner. According to a local account, the whole Luanda stopped to follow the news of the award-winning ceremony. Still today, sometimes Dom Zacarias is mentioned by the Angolan press during reports about EP events. Since then, many intellectuals have taken an interest in Andrei Sakharov, his life and his cause. There is also greater interest in following the activities of the European Parliament.

The prize helped increase support for the work of Dom Zacarias by other activists and organisations, among them Open Society, as well as several MEPs, in particular from the Italian Popular Party, who invited him to their annual meeting in Rimini. The prize also helped to disseminate and expand the outreach of his cause. For example, he was able to build a primary school (named after him) in his town of Chimbundo – the main sponsors of this project wanted to disseminate the news that a 2001 Sakharov prize co-winner had originated from that region, and that human rights and freedom of thought are important values that Europe continues to protect and promote throughout the world.

Human rights and freedom in Angola have improved since the prize award, yet in Dom Zacarias' opinion, there is still a long way to go. There are still many pending challenges to address, which are deeply-rooted and stem, in part, from the legacy of war, such as corruption and the lack of ethical values. Nowadays, Dom Zacarias continues to work hard to improve the lives of those least favoured and to uphold the rights of man in Angola and abroad. His day-to-day life has not changed much. There is always work to do and someone to help. For Dom Zacarias, 'there is no retirement for those who serve the Church. The mission continues. One has to serve until the end'. He will continue his mission of 'spreading the Gospels of Peace and Freedom'.

Dom Zacarias is a firm believer that through joint efforts it is easier to make a difference in the world. Immediately after receiving the prize, during a meeting with other laureates, he expressed his wish to remain in contact and he did, for a while, with Cuban Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas and a couple of others. But with time he lost contact. He would be glad to participate in the EP Sakharov Prize network, especially now that, as Archbishop Emeritus, he can develop his own programmes in addition to those of the Archdiocese of Lubango. His message in view of the deteriorating situation of human rights in many parts of the world is that by bringing together and amplifying many different voices that ask for peace and justice, the chances of success are increased greatly.

3.16 Spain, 2000: ¡Basta Ya!

The civic movement ¡Basta Ya! (Enough is Enough) was awarded the Sakharov Prize for its advocacy against terrorism and political violence in Spain.

In 1997, Miguel Ángel Blanco, a member of Ermua's town council for the Spanish right-wing Popular Party, was kidnapped and brutally murdered by ETA¹⁵². Public unrest and civil resistance against terrorism, violence and oppression unleashed by this crime (referred to as the 'Ermua spirit') fostered the establishment of Foro Ermua (Ermua Forum). It aimed at fighting against ETA violence and promoting individual and social freedoms in the Basque Country. While earlier organisations promoted silent, passive resistance against terrorism, Foro Ermua, and subsequently ¡Basta Ya!, called for peaceful but active and visible forms of civil resistance. This was, they argued, the only way to defeat oppression and oblivion in their society that helped perpetrate the crimes.

Inspired by Foro Ermua, ¡Basta Ya! was created in 1999 by a group of intellectuals, activists and other civil society representatives who joined forces to create a broader platform, encompassing several ideologies and political parties. Their central argument was that ETA was not just an isolated phenomenon, and that it flourished in a political climate of intolerance to which the Basque Country authorities contributed with their nationalist rhetoric and policies, as Fernando Savater, co-founder of ¡Basta Ya!, underlined during his Sakharov Prize acceptance speech in 2000.

According to Carlos Martínez Gorriarán¹⁵³, co-founder and former member of Basta Yá!, the shift towards anti-nationalism helped mobilise a significant part of the non-nationalist political and intellectual circles in the Basque Country and in exile around the anti-terrorist cause. When discussing what was distinct about ¡Basta Ya!, Iñaki Ezkerra, co-founder and former president of Foro Ermua, mentions the opposition to all forms of nationalism, as well as its non-violent, active attitude and visibility. The movement reached unprecedented levels of support across the country in 1999 and 2000. ¡Basta Ya! attracted a wide range of intellectuals among its prominent founders such as Jon Juaristi, Maite Pagazaurtundua, Arcadi Espada, Carmen Iglesias, Javier Urquizu, Agustín Ibarrola, María San Gil, Rosa Díez, Fernando Savater, Iñaki Ezkerra and Carlos Martínez Gorriarán. All of them were part of the constitutionalist, non-nationalist bloc of Basque civil society.

According to Mr Martínez Gorriarán, the recognition of ¡Basta Ya!'s activities by the European Parliament through the Sakharov Prize was politically controversial. With the prize, the European Parliament and, in broader terms, the European Union acknowledged that within its own borders, European citizens suffered limitations on basic freedoms in their daily lives. The prize placed the spotlight on this oppression, and moved the Basque issue from a local debate to the European public sphere. Often misrepresented outside Spain as a minor nationalist fight of rural people seeking self-determination, the political situation in the Basque Country began to be discussed not only as a Spanish, but also as a European problem. Common comparisons of the Ulster in Ireland with the Basque Country as non-resolved conflicts in Western Europe were gradually dismissed. The Basque issue was recognised as unique.

Officially, the Basque autonomous government and the centre-right Basque Nationalist Party PNV-EA showed indifference to the prize award. Other organisations supporting ETA's armed activity, notably its own political wing, Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity) fiercely attacked the EU for taking sides in what

¹⁵² Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom).

¹⁵³ The opinions of Mr Martínez Gorriarán and Mr Ezkerra are quoted from FRIDE interviews on 26 and 27 August 2013, respectively.

they referred to as 'the conflict'. According to those organisations, all victims of the 'conflict' were equal and should be equally respected. They refused to recognise any difference between those killed by ETA, on the one hand, and ETA members, the so-called 'political prisoners', who were tortured or killed during illegal paramilitary campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, the Sakharov Prize created a divide between the constitutional and nationalist blocs. Some of the more radical nationalist politicians stated that the European Parliament's awards were a complot by the Spanish government and certain EU officials. This position was contested by the Spanish government, which repeatedly proclaimed its support of ¡Basta Ya!'s aspirations but denied influencing in any way the prize nomination process.

The Sakharov Prize not only gave international visibility to the situation in the Basque Country, but above all, it became a token of recognition and prestige. Mr Martínez Gorriarán highlights that, for the first time, a Basque organisation was recognised for its work. It was also the first time that an organisation from an EU-country was awarded the prize. Activists and members of ¡Basta Ya! perceived the award as the ultimate recognition of and support to their work in the fight against terrorism and intolerance. Other Basque organisations with similar directions of work that welcomed the prize were *Foro el Salvador* (Salvador Forum), *Gesto por la Paz* (Gesture for Peace), *Jóvenes por la Paz* (The Youth for Peace), *Denon Artean* and the Association of Victims of Terrorism. International human rights organisations that had not been particularly vocal about Basque terrorism before the prize finally called for international recognition and acknowledged the seriousness of ¡Basta Ya!'s and other organisations' work, according to Mr Ezkerra.

The prize also presented an opportunity for the movement's representatives to interact directly with European institutions and politicians. The reception in Strasbourg was 'highly emotional', says Mr Martínez Gorriarán. There, after Mr Savater's acceptance speech, ¡Basta Ya!'s delegation, formed by more than 40 people, had the possibility to meet all political groups present in the European Parliament, discuss their position and views about the Basque political situation and express their feelings of gratitude to the plenary and to the President. According to Mr Martínez Gorriarán, the funds granted along with the prize were used to foster promotion activities and conduct protests against the political situation in the Basque Country, but also for other organisational costs.

¡Basta Ya!'s nature has changed over the years, as the social and political situation in the Basque Country and Spain evolved. In 2007, the so-called 'Plataforma Pro' was conceived by some members of ¡Basta Ya!. It led to the creation, in September 2007, of *Unión, Progreso y Democracia* (UPyD, Union, Progress and Democracy), a social-liberal party represented in the national Spanish Congress. For Mr Martínez Gorriarán, these changes do not mean that ¡Basta Ya!'s spirit and ideals are no longer present; the cause for human rights is a never-ending one, and ¡Basta Ya!'s reasons to fight are still valid for others.

Members of the movement attribute high value to the Sakharov Prize network, and would like to see it strengthened. They see it as a forum for discussion and exchange on human rights. It is stressed that the EU's nature as a stronghold of democracy and human rights in the world has to be preserved, and the Sakharov Prize is one of the best ambassadors for this purpose.

3.17 East Timor, 1999: José Alexandre 'Xanana' Gusmão

José Alexandre 'Xanana' Gusmão was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his struggle for East Timor's self-determination and commitment to his country's reconstruction after it became independent from Indonesia as Timor-Leste in 2002.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão (20 June 1946, Manatulo, East Timor), born José Alexandre Gusmão, is a former guerrilla fighter, a poet and a symbol of resistance in his country. Xanana Gusmão received the

prestigious Sakharov Prize in 1999 for his role in the independence struggle of East Timor from Indonesia¹⁵⁴). He was also awarded the Sydney Peace Prize (2000), the North-South Prize, North-South Observatory (European Union) (2002), the UNESCO Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize (2002), to name just a few¹⁵⁵. On 14 April 2002, three years after he was awarded the Sakharov Prize, he became the President of Timor-Leste, with an overwhelming 83% of the votes¹⁵⁶. He served as President of the Republic until the end of his term in May 2007. He is founder of the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (*Conselho Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor*), and currently occupies the post of Prime Minister.

East Timor received independence from Portugal in 1975, yet as a result of the Indonesian invasion in December 1975, it was not until May 2002 that the country became independent as Timor-Leste. Since 1975, Mr Gusmão was active in the Marxist Revolutionary Front for East Timor's Independence (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*, FRETILIN)¹⁵⁷ and became its elected leader in 1981. In 1988, Mr Gusmão broke away from FRETILIN and created a wider resistance coalition – the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM). Ten years later, in 1998, it turned into CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) and Mr Gusmão was appointed its leader and president. Xanana Gusmão was successful in initiating formal negotiations with the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI/TNI), as well as in building broad coalitions under the Policy of National Unity. He also became a prime target for the Indonesian government, which arrested him in November 1992 and sentenced him without fair trial to life imprisonment. His sentence was later changed to 20 years, and he was put under house arrest in 1999. The Sakharov Prize came at a crucial moment when international pressure on Indonesian President Habibie to allow for East Timor's self-determination was mounting.

On 7 September 1999, Xanana Gusmão was released from house arrest in Salemba (Central Jakarta). 'As a free man, I promise to do everything in my power to bring peace to East Timor and my people'¹⁵⁸, were the first words he pronounced after having been freed¹⁵⁹. He is often identified as the 'Mandela of Timor' because, as the South African leader Nelson Mandela, he also encouraged reconciliation rather than retribution as the best way of 'healing the country's wounds'. Then EP President Nicole Fontaine called him 'a spokesman for peace, justice and freedom for his country'¹⁶⁰.

His struggle continued as he returned to East Timor, this time with the aim of rebuilding the country almost from scratch. Indonesian forces responded to the referendum for independence, held in East Timor on 30 August 1999 and in which 78.5 % of the East Timorese voted 'yes', by destroying 80% of

¹⁵⁴ 'The European Parliament awards human rights prize to Gusmao', *Japan Economic Newswire KYODO English*, 16 December 1999; 'The European Parliament honors East Timor's Gusmao', *Reuters News LBA*, 29 October 1999; European Parliament, 'Timor Oriental necesita apoyo no solo financiero', *Boletín informativo*, Diciembre 1999-Enero 2000, Año XII, número 10.

¹⁵⁵ Government of Timor-Leste, 'Prime Minister's biography', available at: <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=3&lang=en>.
<http://www.easttimorgovernment.com/government.htm>.

¹⁵⁶ J. García, 'Nace el primer país del siglo XXI', *El País*, 19 May 2002, available at: http://elpais.com/diario/2002/04/16/internacional/1018908019_850215.html.

¹⁵⁷ At the beginning FRETILIN was a resistance movement that after independence turned into a leftist political party in East Timor.

¹⁵⁸ European Parliament, 'Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought', *Brochure*, 2004, p. 16, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/compar/afet/droi/sakharov/sach2004_en.pdf.

¹⁵⁹ In fact, when Xanana Gusmão came back from house arrest, he started talks with anti-separatist militia leaders in order to unite the country.

¹⁶⁰ Speech given by Xanana Gusmão in Strasbourg on 15 December 1999. See 'Alexander Gusmao receives the prize awarded by the EP', *Agence Europe AGEU*, 16 December 1999.

the country's buildings and infrastructure and killing an estimated 1 000 civilians¹⁶¹. In this context, the Sakharov Prize not only meant recognition of East Timor's struggle for independence, but it was also a crucial sign of support for its future.

In his acceptance speech at the European Parliament, Mr Gusmão said he felt 'very happy to receive the prize awarded by those elected by European citizens', of this Europe 'that, like us, has known genocide and courage'¹⁶². He was proud of 'the rare opportunity of seeing and walking through the corridors and halls of the seat of democratic power in Europe'¹⁶³. He emphasised, 'This is a symbol of the struggle of a people that always believed in democracy and human rights. I just represent this struggle'¹⁶⁴. But first and foremost, he asked for international support to his newly independent state. Mr Gusmão highlighted, 'We are in a crucial phase, and we feel very fragile, very weak as preparing ourselves for an independence that represents a new life for our people'¹⁶⁵. There was an urgent need not only for economic and financial support from the EU but also for social, administrative, political and above all for human and psychological help. 'There will be no development without democracy', he underlined¹⁶⁶.

Mr Gusmão received particularly warm support from Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, who underlined that 'the European Union feels great solidarity with the Timorese people and all their concerns' and that a new state with new institutions as well as successful economic reconstruction 'will ensure a democratic state that will be able to contribute to peace in the region'¹⁶⁷. Mr Gusmão was the first Portuguese-speaking laureate to receive the Sakharov Prize. Timor-Leste's relations with the EU and its member states remain active. The EU has collaborated and invested (economically) in Timor-Leste to support the country on its way to achieve a stable democracy and sustainable development¹⁶⁸. As Mr Gusmão underlined in a recent interview, 'As Timor-Leste was a colony of Portugal for over 400 years, our nation's history, heritage and culture will be forever intertwined with Portugal and Europe'¹⁶⁹.

Fourteen years have passed since the East Timorese leader was released from house arrest in Indonesia and since he received the Sakharov award. In a recent interview¹⁷⁰, Mr Gusmão highlighted the importance of the prize by saying that it provided international legitimacy to the Timor-Leste cause and sent a positive message of hope to its population. The prize was given in a critical time in the history of a country that had been colonised for over 400 years and occupied for more than 20. It came at a crucial time when the people finally became 'masters of their fate'. It was very well-received by society.

¹⁶¹ Freedom House, 'East Timor 2013', *Freedom in the World 2013*, available at:

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/east-timor-0>.

¹⁶² *Agence Europe AGEU*, 16 December 1999.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; See 'Resistance leader accepts Sakharov prize in name of Timorese people', *BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific BBCFE*, 17 December 1999.

¹⁶⁵ *Agence Europe AGEU*, 16 December 1999.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ 'East Timor's Gusmao gets EU support, but no fresh aid', *AFP*, 23 March 2000.

¹⁶⁸ Since 2000, Timor-Leste has received a total of EUR 337 million in assistance from the EU. See The European Union, External Action, 'EU Relations with Timor-Leste', available at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/timor_leste/index_en.htm, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-262_en.htm; See also 'Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme (Timor-Leste/European Union), period 2008-2013', available at: http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/scanned_tl_csp10_en.pdf.

¹⁶⁹ FRIDE email interview with Xanana Gusmão on 26 September 2013.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Prime Minister Gusmão believes that an instrument like the Sakharov Prize can be particularly effective in denouncing infringements on the freedom of expression. He also believes that it is important to strengthen the communication between old and new laureates, and between the laureates and the European Parliament¹⁷¹.

3.18 Kosovo, 1998: Ibrahim Rugova

Ibrahim Rugova was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his contribution to Kosovo's struggle for self-determination and the promotion of peaceful means of resistance.

Mr Rugova, often referred to as the 'Father of the Nation' or the 'Gandhi of the Balkans', was a prominent Kosovo political leader, scholar and writer, posthumously declared a 'Hero of Kosovo'. Throughout the 1970s, Mr Rugova was active as a journalist and editor-in-chief of student magazines and academic periodicals. As a response to then President Slobodan Milošević's policies, in 1989 Mr Rugova and a number of other activists set up the Democratic League of Kosovo Party (LDK), of which he became leader. After unofficial elections on 24 May 1992, Mr Rugova became the first President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo. Even though he had to go underground as the conflict escalated, Mr Rugova remained committed to his cause of promoting Kosovo's self-determination through non-violent means. In March 2002, he was elected again as the first post-war President of Kosovo. He died of cancer on 21 January 2006.

In the early 1990s, as part of his strategy of non-violent resistance, Mr Rugova succeeded in channelling traditional forms of political and social affiliation into a non-violent state-making effort. During his first 'unofficial' presidency, Mr Rugova worked to ensure the viability of the newly-proclaimed republic, despite pressure and discrimination from Belgrade. He helped create a wide encompassing and impressively articulated educational system that, according to some sources, was organised in private houses and could reach 85% of the population. He also built administrative, medical and media structures for ethnic Albanians. A comprehensive mechanism of self-taxation was put in place. A large part of the resources for maintaining the parallel state came from the big Kosovo-Albanian diaspora: workers abroad would voluntarily contribute 3% of their income through a dense net of informal channels, despite controls by the central authorities and the international embargo on Yugoslavia. Mr Rugova expanded the parallel system, establishing structures for tax collection inside Kosovo as well.

The approach advocated by Mr Rugova was based on non-violent resistance and peaceful self-organisation. He strongly believed that sustainable self-determination for Kosovo was only achievable through dialogue. This strategy, though highly successful in the early days after the proclamation of the Republic of Kosovo, started losing broader support among Kosovars as hardship grew and little tangible assistance was delivered from the international community. While repression and human rights abuses continued, the only results achieved via the non-violent resistance and a track-two, low-profile mediation by the *Comunità Sant'Egidio* were two distinct agreements on the reintegration of Albanian language education in public schools and on university buildings. While a part of the agreement was implemented, the process sank on the cliffs of interpretation and implementation problems.

The Dayton peace talks, to which Kosovo leaders were not invited, supposed a watershed for the Kosovo conflict and a lethal blow to Mr Rugova's strategy. Not only was this seen as a demonstration that the 'peaceful way' was bringing Kosovo nowhere, but international recognition of the borders of

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

the Republica Srpska meant that '[t]he international community responded to the facts on the ground rather than high-minded principles of non-violence – not the force of argument but the argument of force'¹⁷².

As Mr Rugova's hope in great powers' willingness was frustrated and his popularity with activists waned, other political strategies were gaining ground, among which that of Adem Demaçi, a former political prisoner and 1991 Sakharov laureate, who called for general mobilisation of an Intifada-like form.

With the rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), Mr Rugova's legitimacy and approach came increasingly under attack from within Kosovo. It is around this time in December 1998 that he was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought by the European Parliament that came as an important recognition of his strategy.

According to Professor Morozzo della Rocca, who contributed to the *Comunità Sant'Egidio* mediation, and who was in contact with Mr Rugova at that time, Mr Rugova experienced the prize as other awards he would receive in those days: 'With joy but without much showiness'¹⁷³. Mr Rugova must have seen the prize as a 'positive distraction, or diversion' in a most difficult and tense moment, one in which his own legitimacy was faltering¹⁷⁴. The very moment when his strategy came under harsh criticism at home – parts of Kosovo were kept off-limits by the KLA and his political opponents were portraying him as enemy collaborator – Mr Rugova was praised and honoured by the European Parliament for choosing '[t]he path of non-violence and negotiation in the search for a political solution guaranteeing basic freedoms for the people of Kosovo'¹⁷⁵.

In his speech at the award ceremony, Mr Rugova underlined that the prize was an '[i]mportant recognition of our peaceful struggle and our sacrifices'; he recognised how, over the previous decade, the European Parliament was among those international institutions that reacted first to the situation in Kosovo and in support to its people¹⁷⁶. He pointed out how since March of the same year the situation in Kosovo had been 'extremely tragic', with many people killed and villages and towns falling to massive destruction¹⁷⁷. The best solution, he argued, would be one of independence with all 'necessary guarantees for the Serbs in Kosovo'. In Mr Rugova's view, Kosovo's independence would have been a stabilising factor guaranteeing peace in the broader region. He stressed in his speech that the best way to achieve this situation would be through an international protectorate and a period of transition¹⁷⁸.

Only a few weeks after having been awarded the prize, Mr Rugova received very different treatment at another international forum. Negotiations between Serbians and Albanians in Rambouillet, France, were an international humiliation for Mr Rugova: although he was the legitimate president elected by Kosovo-Albanians, US State Secretary Madeleine Albright wanted the young KLA leader, Hashim Thaci, to lead the Kosovo-Albanian delegation.

¹⁷² Human Rights Watch, *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001, available at:

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/10/26/under-orders-war-crimes-kosovo>.

¹⁷³ FRIDE email interview with Professor Morozzo della Rocca on 4 September 2013.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ European Parliament, 'Award of the Sakharov prize', Debates, 4-530: 201, 16 December 1998, available at:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/cardoc/11_2009/Rugova_19981216_EN.pdf.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

In the aftermath of the war, Mr Rugova's authority, political legitimacy and leadership were heavily contested by KLA leaders and his strategy of civil resistance and pacifism seemed to have alienated substantive portions of the Kosovo society. Initially guerrilla members were welcomed as heroes, but their alleged involvement in organised crime and political violence against LDK opponents and other ethnic groups in Kosovo quickly eroded their support. Mr Rugova regained public esteem and political legitimacy in the first elections held since the end of hostilities, in October 2000. In March 2002, following long political negotiations, the Kosovo parliament appointed Mr Rugova as the new President of post-war Kosovo.

During his presidency, he continued his struggle for Kosovo's independence, advocating for its achievement through peaceful means and agreement by all parties involved. He remained committed to forging close ties with the United States and the European Union.

His public support and popularity did not prevent him from being the target of a grenade attack in 2005, which he escaped unhurt. His death in January 2006 left a vacuum in the faction-ridden political scene in Kosovo in a crucial moment in which the province was embarking on the process of negotiating a political solution.

Although during the war Mr Rugova was not able to exert the full potential of his non-violent strategy, he won international respect due to his peaceful nature of opposition to Serb dominance¹⁷⁹. His undisputed achievement is the fact that he managed to promote and realise a programme of peaceful civil disobedience supported collectively by Kosovo-Albanians, in challenging circumstances and for a sustained period of time. Its potential and real contribution is even more striking if one compares it with other Balkan leaders' strategies during those years¹⁸⁰. A potential that the Sakharov Prize duly celebrated.

3.19 Algeria, 1997: Salima Ghezali

Salima Ghezali was awarded the Sakharov Prize in recognition of her contribution to promoting freedom of thought and human rights in Algeria.

Ms Ghezali is an Algerian writer and journalist. Since the beginning of the 1990s, she has been outspoken in the defence of women's rights. She is President of the Association for the Emancipation of Women. She is founding member of the Association of Women in Europe and the Maghreb, President of the Association for the Advance of Women, and founder of the review *Nyssa* (Women). She was also active in promoting democratic rule in Algeria. Her advocacy of freedom of expression attracted a lot of criticism from both the Algerian government and Islamists. In addition to the Sakharov Prize, she was awarded the Olof Palme (1997) and Theodor-Haecker (1999) prizes.

As editor-in-chief of the Algerian weekly *La Nation* in the 1990s, Ms Ghezali adopted a very courageous position in promoting a pacifist stance on the war. Her position attracted a lot of criticism from both the Algerian government and Islamists. In fact, her review was banished in 1996 on a formal excuse of its 'accumulated debts'¹⁸¹. Yet, these difficulties did not discourage Ms Ghezali from continuing with her public advocacy. In her own words: 'It is necessary to remind people of the

¹⁷⁹ 'Ibrahim Rugova Ethnic Albanian leader: the Gandhi of the Balkans', *BBC News*, 26 January 2006 [Retrieved 13 September 2013].

¹⁸⁰ M. Cereghini, 'Rugova, la forza e la debolezza', *Rovereto: Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 23 January 2006 [Retrieved 13 September 2013].

¹⁸¹ Ms Ghezali explains that financial difficulties were due to a sudden decision by a number of companies and organisations to stop advertising in her publication, leaving it without the necessary income.

principles that form the basis for the human society, and to allow vigilance to rule. This is the best way to ensure that civilisation triumphs over backwardness¹⁸².

The political situation in Algeria at the time of the award in 1997 was highly volatile, with Islamist groups spreading violence in the country. Indeed, in December 1991, Algeria's first multi-party elections since independence were cancelled after the military expressed concerns that the Islamic Salvation Front would get to power. The result was the beginning of the Algerian civil war, which officially lasted for 10 years even though violence between the regime and Islamists continues today. The Algerian regime benefitted from strong Western support in its fight against Islamists that inadvertently helped create and strengthen the 'state of exception', with dire consequences for political freedoms.

When Ms Ghezali learnt about the award through her friends at Amnesty International, she felt encouraged and hopeful. In a recent interview¹⁸³, she remembered that the human rights community in Algeria seemed so small and powerless that a lot of hope was put in principled support from other democracies. Ms Ghezali acknowledges that the Sakharov Prize provided her with more visibility domestically and internationally. As she became more known, institutions interested in the defence of human rights approached her to offer their support. She also said that the prize gave her additional physical protection because she acquired so much visibility.

At the same time, the way the prize was publicised was not very satisfactory. The news of a European delegation congratulating the Algerian government in February 1998 for its 'democratic achievements' came as a blow to Ms Ghezali and Algerian human rights defenders in general¹⁸⁴. No discussion of the government's complicity in curtailing freedom of expression followed. Neither did the delegation make an effort to meet with representatives of civil society. At the time, Ms Ghezali reacted by saying: 'It is appropriate to talk about a European defeat vis-à-vis France [...]. These European deputies have, at best, a superficial knowledge of Algeria'¹⁸⁵. Such statements reflected a popular belief that France was encouraging the European Parliament to contribute in every possible way to Islamist defeat. While Ms Ghezali never defended Islamists, she did not think opposing them justified poor human rights record and suppression of political freedoms.

Alike a number of other laureates, Ms Ghezali had to face a defamation campaign that exploited feelings of suspicion towards everything Western rooted in Algeria's colonial history. The government was quick to label anyone defending human rights as serving foreign actors with the aim of destabilising the country. The Sakharov Prize was portrayed as another proof of her 'collusion' with foreign actors¹⁸⁶. Ms Ghezali's origin in Kabylia, a region located in northern Algeria that is often portrayed by the majority of Algerians as 'non Arab', was often used as pretext for further derogatory remarks. When Ms Ghezali joined the *Front des Forces Socialistes* (FFS, Socialist Forces Front), an

¹⁸² 'Citoyenneté contre barbaries', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1996. Salima Ghazali says that because of this sentence, the then Algerian Minister of Interior, Mostefa Benmansour, criticised *Le Monde Diplomatique* for undermining the 'peacefulness of public life'.

¹⁸³ FRIDE telephone interview on 2 September 2013.

¹⁸⁴ See the delegation's report following the visit: European Parliament, 'Background Note 98.004 Algeria: Ad hoc delegation report', 2 March 1998, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/press/sdp/backg/en/1998/b980302.htm>.

¹⁸⁵ 'Interview avec Salima Ghezali', *Algeria Watch*, 14 February 1998, available at: <http://www.algeria-watch.org/farticle/Ghezali.htm>.

¹⁸⁶ While the Algerian official media tries not to promote hatred against human rights defenders, the average reaction of Algerian people to what they consider to be a 'collusion with Western actors' is generally violent. One can notice that on the Algerian social fora in general.

Algerian political party founded by a Berberian, of which Kabylis are a branch, the hostility of her detractors only grew further.

Ms Ghezali feels that although the Sakharov Prize rewards and celebrates individuals, the EP should invest more efforts into bringing the spotlight onto the countries they come from. More direct engagement with the population is necessary to build coalitions for reform. Lack of information, prejudice and heavy-handed presence of some member states in the region breeds suspicion, and the perceptions of the Arab Spring are mixed. In Ms Ghezali's analysis, many Algerians withdrew from mass protests in their country for fears of a 'Libyan scenario'. There is also resentment against all Arab countries being lumped together under one label¹⁸⁷. Some Algerians even argue that Algeria has nothing to do with regional movements that occurred following the Arab Spring, since Algerians had already started to go to the streets decades before¹⁸⁸. The Algerian regime remains the sole beneficiary of these dynamics, so more could be done to engage its population. The Sakharov Prize could become an important platform. More engagement with civil society is particularly important, as human rights defenders remain disunited and heavily persecuted. Building their capacity and helping boost mobilisation will bring positive results whenever greater political opening is created in Algeria.

In Ms Ghezali's view, the EU's engagement with governments in the region should be complemented by comprehensive and sustained engagement with civil society actors. The Sakharov Prize and its network could be an important building block in this respect, but for now they remain mainly an instrument for spreading information without any real engagement on the ground. In the case of Algeria, adopting a tougher stance vis-à-vis the Algerian regime, and referring more frequently to the importance of human rights, is crucial for the consolidation of the rule of law in the country.

3.20 China, 1996: Wei Jingsheng

Wei Jingsheng was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his courageous opposition against the Chinese Communist Party and his commitment to democratic reform and freedom of expression.

Mr Wei is one of the world's best-known Chinese human rights activists. A son of committed members of the Chinese Communist Party and a former Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Mr Wei first came to prominence in China when he authored the essay 'Fifth Modernisation,' publicised on Beijing's Democracy Wall in 1978. In Mr Wei's first public criticism of China's governance system, he argued that without democracy, China could not truly modernise¹⁸⁹. For assailing not only the Communist Party, but also specifically attacking Deng Xiaoping as a dictator, Mr Wei was arrested on 29 March 1979 and sentenced to 15 years in prison¹⁹⁰. He was released on 14 September 1993, but arrested again on 1 April 1994 and sentenced to another 14 years in prison. Mr Wei was released in November 1997 on medical parole and immediately deported to the United States. In addition to the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, Mr Wei was distinguished with the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award (1996), the National

¹⁸⁷ This is perceptible in particular in the Algerian official media. It defends the attitude of the regime, which is generally critical of the absence of unity of the Arabs when it comes to promoting their 'common interests'. FRIDE regular field missions in Algeria confirm the persistence of these sentiments. While the regime is criticised by the population for its policies, dissidents and critics of the government are automatically defended in return.

¹⁸⁸ See B. Mikail, 'Algeria's Deceptive Quiet', *FRIDE Policy Brief*, March 2012, available in English, Spanish and French at: <http://www.fride.org/publication/997/algeria's-deceptive-quiet>.

¹⁸⁹ S. Woodman, 'About Wei Jingsheng', undated, Wei Jingsheng Foundation, available at: <http://www.weiingsheng.org/wei/en.html> [Retrieved 15 August 2013].

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Endowment for Democracy Award (1997), the International Activist award by the Gleitsman Foundation (1993), and the Olof Palme Memorial Prize in 1994¹⁹¹, among others.

In 1978 China was undergoing profound social, economic, and political changes. Deng Xiaoping had emerged as the country's *de facto* leader, and by 1979, China had begun some economic liberalisation that opened it to international investment. While the Communist Party still monopolised state power, some level of public dissent was allowed when it suited the state's political calculations. Answering Deng Xiaoping's call publicly to criticise the government, 'a series of workers, intellectuals, and artists posted their thoughts and statement on a piece of wall in Beijing'¹⁹². The 1978 Democracy Wall is considered to be the first spontaneous public political discussion in communist China¹⁹³. Deng Xiaoping permitted such dissent because it helped his power struggle against rivals in the Communist Party, but he swiftly shut down the Democracy Wall movement when his rule was directly challenged by Mr Wei and other democracy activists.

As Mr Wei was in prison when EP President Klaus Hänsch awarded him the Sakharov Prize on 11 December 1996, his sister, Shanshan Wei-Blank, accepted the award on his behalf¹⁹⁴. Alike most Chinese prisoners of conscience, Mr Wei had little contact with the outside world, had no direct access to independent news sources, and was only permitted rare contacts with his family. Upon hearing the news about winning the Sakharov Prize from his sister and brother, Mr Wei responded with hope and defiance. As expressed in Ms Wei-Blank's acceptance remarks, Mr Wei 'was very surprised and pleased to hear that he was to receive this special tribute from Europe, the birthplace of human rights and democratic thought'. Because the prize came from the European Parliament, 'Wei Jingsheng sees this award as an act of encouragement and support from the European people, not just for himself but for the entire human rights movement in China'¹⁹⁵. However, due to the prohibition of political discussions while in prison, Mr Wei was unable to convey further thoughts to Ms Wei-Blank about what the prize meant to him at the time¹⁹⁶.

Life in prison was difficult. Conditions were harsh and nutrition was poor, contributing to worsening prisoners' health conditions¹⁹⁷. Given Mr Wei's high-profile status and his refusal to submit to the authorities, he was given especially harsh treatment, and his family was only permitted to visit him once per year. He was not allowed visits from friends or supporters¹⁹⁸.

Refusing the Sakharov Prize was never an option. As a human rights activist, 'I had the responsibility towards the Chinese people to continue advocating for democratic development in China. The prize was not for me to refuse'¹⁹⁹.

However, the Sakharov Prize had little immediate impact on Mr Wei's work or his life in China. He remained in prison and largely isolated from his family, his friends and his network of supporters. Indeed, the immediate effects of the Sakharov Prize are difficult to measure. With the Chinese

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Woodman op. cit.; M. Goldman, 'The Twentieth Anniversary of the Democracy Wall Movement', *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 11 April 1999.

¹⁹³ N. Yoshihara, 'Wei Jingsheng', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 June 1998, available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/jun/21/opinion/op-62120>.

¹⁹⁴ FRIDE telephone interview with Wei Jingshen on 28 August 2013.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ FRIDE telephone interview with Wei Jingsheng, op. cit.

¹⁹⁷ Wei, J., 'CIA in Tibet Wei Jingsheng Interview Excerpts', *MrPopochannel*, 11 May 2012.

¹⁹⁸ FRIDE telephone interview with Wei Jingsheng, op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ FRIDE telephone interview with Wei Jingsheng, op. cit.

authorities exercising absolute control over information within the country, the Chinese population's perception of the prize was in line with the Communist Party's propaganda. Overall, many in China continue to see the Sakharov Prize, alongside Western criticism of China, as an attempt to hinder the country's economic and political rise.

But according to Mr Wei, 'I remained stubborn regarding my pro-democracy views, despite the Chinese government's intolerance towards my advocacy work'²⁰⁰. International support, such as the Sakharov Prize, is of 'immense value', declared Ms Wei-Blank at the award-winning ceremony. 'It instils a new self-confidence in many people and motivates them to continue committing themselves to the human rights movement'²⁰¹. At a measurable level, the financial award that accompanied the prize helped Mr Wei and his family through the difficult period while he was in prison.

Once he was released and exiled to the United States, the Sakharov Prize and other similar awards proved to be an immense asset to Mr Wei and the human rights community. More than a monetary award, the prize opened doors for Mr Wei in the US and Europe as he continued his pro-democracy work; it gave Mr Wei access to the media, to influential individuals, and to US and European policy-makers²⁰².

For Mr Wei, organisation remains one of the most significant challenges for the broader human rights movement. 'The majority of Chinese people already understand why we need democracy [...] So, the most crucial task is to get all activists and demonstrators united in one common effort, because this is the only way we can succeed'²⁰³. He believes that the Sakharov network should engage more with former prize-winners. According to Mr Wei, as a strong backer of the global pro-democracy movement, the Sakharov Prize could have a profound impact if the EP further expanded its support to include a bureau, earmarked funding, and staff to help support and popularise the work of former Sakharov Prize winners.

3.21 Turkey, 1995: Leyla Zana

Leyla Zana was awarded the Sakharov Prize for her struggle for the rights of Kurdish people in Turkey.

Born in the province of Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey in 1961, Ms Zana was the first Kurdish woman to win a seat in the Turkish parliament in 1991. The 1995 Sakharov Prize laureate has since then become a renowned Kurdish spokesperson in Turkey. Ms Zana dropped out of school because she could not understand Turkish, the language of instruction. Her family married her to Mehdi Zana when she was 14 years old. Her husband was the mayor of Diyarbakir and one of the leaders of the Kurd nationalist movement. But soon charges of separatism were brought against Mr Zana during Turkey's military rule in 1980. After spending many years in jail, he articulated his opinion vis-à-vis the situation of Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin before the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights in December 1992. He was sentenced to four more years in 1994.

Ms Zana managed to get her high school diploma by studying on her own. In the 1980s, she began her activism, while following her husband from one prison to another. She started reading about Turkish politics while regularly participating in protests. She also started working with the local human rights association of her province. During a protest in 1988, she was detained for a week and brutally interrogated under torture.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ European Parliament, 11 December 1996, op. cit.

²⁰² FRIDE interview with Wei Jingsheng, op. cit.

²⁰³ Wei, 18 November 1998, op. cit.

Ms Zana continued with her peaceful fight and in 1991, she presented her candidacy to the Turkish parliament. She claims that it was not her who chose such a path, but the people who wanted her to fight for them. She felt it was her responsibility to represent them in parliament. With 84% of the votes, she became the first Turkish women representative from Kurdish origin in the Turkish parliament.

At her inauguration speech, Ms Zana swore to 'take this oath for the brotherhood between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people'²⁰⁴. This last sentence not only mentioned the Kurds, but was also pronounced in Kurdish, a language banned in Turkey at the time. Consequently, in 1994, Ms Zana and other Kurdish MPs were stripped of their parliamentary immunity and arrested, and their party was banned. She was condemned to 15 years in prison on charges of separatism and for belonging to an illegal organisation, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Even the colours of her clothes were used as evidence against her, as an expression of Kurdish identity. She would spend 10 years in a Turkish jail while her husband, son and daughter were in exile.

Internationally, there were protests against Ms Zana's arrest, especially from human rights organisations, to pressure the Turkish government to release her.

Ms Zana believes that 'the award has given international recognition to my struggle. The aim of that struggle is to establish domestic peace in Turkey and a truly pluralistic secular democracy, which respects the universal values of freedom and human rights. The legitimate rights of the Kurdish people to their own identity must also be recognised'²⁰⁵. The Sakharov Prize gave Ms Zana's fight more legitimacy, as it was recognised by European countries, which continued to pressure the Turkish government to release Ms Zana and other Kurdish deputies.

The reaction of pro-government Turkish media was rather neutral, simply reporting the event without mentioning any official reaction from the authorities. Meanwhile, Kurdish media extensively praised the award. In fact, Kurdish media covering the Sakharov Prize referred to Ms Zana as an 'ambassador of peace'. The Kurdish platform *Halkların Kardeşliği* underlined that recognition of Kurdish politicians by the EU would help pave the way to decreasing the number of military operations in eastern Turkey and increasing the chances of finding a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem²⁰⁶.

Ms Zana's case has been considered by the EU as a crucial criterion of Turkey's democratisation and reform process. Former European Commission President Romano Prodi called for her release during a hearing before the Turkish parliament. In September 1998, the European Parliament again called on the Turkish authorities for Ms Zana's immediate release. At the same time, however, the Ankara State Security Court sentenced her to another two years in jail for inciting race hatred, due to an article she published in the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) bulletin about Nevruz, the Kurdish New Year, in which she referred to the Kurds' distinctive identity, their ancestral traditions and their fight to resist oppression.

After prolonged negotiations with the Turkish authorities, some MEPs were allowed to visit Ms Zana in jail. Ms Zana and her fellow Kurdish prisoners were finally released in June 2004, although her

²⁰⁴ A. Goodman & J. González, 'Kurdish Political Prisoner Leyla Zana Released After a Decade in Jail', *Democracy Now!*, 10 June 2004, available at: http://www.democracynow.org/2004/6/10/kurdish_political_prisoner_leyla_zana_released.

²⁰⁵ S. Ludford (Liberal Democrat, Member of the European Parliament for London), 'Leyla Zana finally collects Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought after ten years in prison', 12 October 2004, available at: <http://www.sarahludfordmep.org.uk/node/1539>.

²⁰⁶ Halkların Kardeşliği, 'Zana Nereye?', 15 October 2004, available at: http://arsiv.ydicagri.net/Sayilar/083/83halklar_zana.htm.

sentence was not completely dropped. On 8 July 2004, her appeal began. Pressure from the EU during negotiations for Turkey's accession to the Union most probably contributed to her being freed.

After being released, Ms Zana was finally able to collect the Sakharov award, nine years after having received it. She went to the European Parliament and addressed the Group meeting of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe on 13 October 2004. On the following day, Ms Zana gave a speech at the EP in a 'solemn session'²⁰⁷. The newspaper *Sabah*, somewhat close to the government's views, published Ms Zana's acceptance speech without any further commentary. On the other hand, *Milliyet* columnist Güneri Civaoglu evaluated Ms Zana's award quite positively, comparing her role in Turkey to that of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. He also stated that Ms Zana's potential to bring peace in Turkey was higher than Abdullah Öcalan's, PKK founder and leader²⁰⁸.

In 2005, Ms Zana co-founded the Democratic Society Party (DTP). In 2009, the party was banned by Turkey's Constitutional Court, a ban questioned and condemned by the then EU presidency. A controversial idea put forward by her new party was to reorganise Turkey into a set of federal states, one of them being Kurdistan.

On 17-18 November 2010, the European Parliament hosted the 7th International Conference on EU, Turkey and the Kurds, where Ms Zana gave a speech in which she declared that 'the fact that politicians, civil society representatives and human rights advocates are still being detained [...] is a clear violation of rights as well as an indication of the paradoxical approach of those who claim they want a solution'²⁰⁹.

Ms Zana was re-elected to parliament in the general elections held on 12 June 2011. But in May 2012, she was again sentenced by a provincial Turkish court to 10 years in prison for allegedly violating the penal code and the anti-terror law in nine different speeches between 2007 and 2008 by spreading Kurdish propaganda in favour of the PKK. The court referred to Ms Zana stating in a speech that PKK leader Abdulla Öcalan should be regarded as one of three Kurdish leaders during the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir. The country's Supreme Court of Appeals overturned the ruling and has ordered a retrial. Ms Zana then sent the following statement to the European Union Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC):

The case against me is a violation against freedom of thought, and represents a threat to every Kurd in Turkey. The decision of the court is just another way to repress, silence and punish the Kurds. The mentality governing this country is that problems can be resolved by anti-democratic and repressive means and that unfair trial can provide political and social peace. But despite all this, our people will claim their legitimate rights, and will continue to struggle for this as long as it takes²¹⁰.

The next legislative elections in Turkey will take place in 2015 and the confirmation of Ms Zana's prison term is not applicable whilst she enjoys parliamentary immunity. On the other hand, however,

²⁰⁷ Ludford, 12 October 2004, op. cit.

²⁰⁸ G. Civaoglu, 'Zana'nın Koşusu', *Milliyet*, 15 October 2004, available at: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/zananin-kosusu/guneri-civaoglu/siyaset/yazardetayarsiv/15.10.2004/91370/default.htm>.

²⁰⁹ 'Leyla Zana speech at European Parliament Conference', *Global Rights*, 20 November 2010, available at: http://www.globalrights.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=780:leyla-zana-speech-at-european-parliament-conference&catid=32:turkish-kurdish&Itemid=72.

²¹⁰ N. J. Harbitz, 'Leyla Zana sentenced to 10 years in prison', *Human Rights House*, 5 December 2008, Available at: <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/9499.html>.

it is particularly unhelpful at a time when the EU is attempting to start delayed accession negotiations with Turkey.

Ms Zana's trial was closely monitored by the European Commission. The EUTCC declared that the trial was unfair and lacked independence. It called on the EU and the international community to take political action and strongly condemn Turkey. European Parliament President Martin Schulz called for a fair trial and appeal process for Ms Zana. Since Turkey has signed the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr Schulz argued that 'the European Parliament expects it [Turkey] to abide by it'. According to Mr Schulz, Ms Zana thanked him for 'the Parliament's unwavering support'²¹¹.

Although facing a new trial, Ms Zana continues to fight for a peaceful solution for the Kurdish minority issue in Turkey. In a famous speech in June 2012 addressed to the Turkish prime minister, she argued that:

The most powerful figure could stop this if he wants to [...] the present government and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the head of this government. The name who heads the most powerful government in the history of this country could resolve this issue if he wants to. I believe he could resolve this problem. I never lost my hope and faith in this. And I do not want to. If I did, I would be gone by now. What all of us have to do now is to encourage the prime minister to resolve this problem and let him know that we are with him²¹².

Ms Zana was then able to achieve something that was once unthinkable. She was received by the head of the Turkish government himself to begin to discuss solutions to the Kurdish conflict.

Most recently, Ms Zana has spoken about the condition of the Kurds with regards to the Arab Spring, stating that 'a new process has begun in the Middle East, proving dictatorial regimes can no longer be accepted'²¹³. She sees this as an 'overall resistance against injustice'²¹⁴, which could benefit the Kurds. While continuing to be an independent member of the Turkish parliament, she still faces the risk of imprisonment, potentially after the 2015 legislative elections.

3.22 Bangladesh, 1994: Taslima Nasreen

Taslima Nasreen was awarded the Sakharov Prize for her courageous stance in defence of freedom of thought and expression.

Ms Nasreen was born in 1962 in Mymensingh, formerly East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Following in her father's footsteps, she was trained as a doctor and practiced gynaecology in a family planning clinic in her home town. Her work gave her daily exposure to how women's bodies were subjected to most unfair treatment under the banner of cultural and religious traditions.

She became a prolific writer of poetry and prose and has published extensively since 1982. She has also written very popular columns on women's rights in newspapers and magazines. In 1993, her novel *Lajja* (Shame) on the Muslim persecution of Hindus made her famous worldwide, but at the same time also put her life in danger. After a series of physical and other attacks, as well as death

²¹¹ European Parliament, 'Opening - Schengen, Serbia's new President, Leyla Zana and Asmaa Mahfouz', *Press Release*, 11 June 2012, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20120608IPR46525/html/Opening-Schengen-Serbia-s-new-President-Leyla-Zana-and-Asmaa-Mahfouz>

²¹² M. Esayan, 'Leyla Zana's contribution to peace', *Today's Zaman*, 27 March 2013, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists/markar-esayan-310905-leyla-zanas-contribution-to-peace.html>.

²¹³ A. Sert, 'A Woman, a Kurd, and an Optimist', *The New York Times*, 19 February 2013, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/20/world/europe/20iht-letter20.html>.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

threats, from Islamist fundamentalist groups, she had to flee the country in 1994. Numerous *fatwas* were issued against her and a price was set on her head. The Sakharov Prize awarded to her in 1994 during these turbulent events expressed the solidarity of the European people with her cause and granted her some protection. She spent 10 years in exile in the West. In 2004, she was allowed to relocate to Kolkata in the Indian West Bengali state, but had to flee again in 2008. She has not been allowed to enter Bangladeshi or West Bengali soil since. She currently lives in New Delhi.

Ms Nasreen has published over 30 poetry books, essays and novels, which have been translated into more than 20 languages. Her work was recognised twice by the West Bengali literary prize Ananda Purashkar (for *Lajja/Shame* in 1993 and for the autobiographical *Amar Meyebela/My Girlhood* in 2000). She was also distinguished with the Simone de Beauvoir Prize in 2008, in recognition of her writing on women's rights. She has received more than 20 other awards and honours from human rights organisations and academic institutions. She holds honorary doctorates from the University of Ghent, the American University of Paris, Université Catholique de Louvain and Paris Diderot University. She is also an honorary citizen of the city of Paris and several other cities in Europe.

The Government of Bangladesh reacted very negatively to Ms Nasreen's nomination for the Sakharov Prize. The Bangladeshi Embassy sent an angry letter to the European Parliament requesting that the prize be given to somebody else²¹⁵. This came as no surprise as the relationship between Ms Nasreen and the Bangladeshi government was and remains highly conflictive. The government banned her book *Lajja* in 1993 and in 1994 filed a case against her on charges of hurting the religious feelings of Bangladeshi people. Initially a non-bailable arrest warrant was issued forcing her into hiding. She was later granted bail from the high court and forced to leave the country. When she re-entered Bangladesh in 1998 to be with her ailing mother, another arrest warrant was issued against her forcing her to leave once again. From 1999 to 2004, the government banned four other books by Ms Nasreen. Ironically, the ban in 2004 came together with the UNESCO Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence. In 2002, she was sentenced *in absentia* to one year in prison on a charge of writing derogatory comments about Islam. Her Bangladeshi passport was revoked and has not been re-granted since. She has not been able to return to her home country, not even to be with her dying father in 2002. Her repeated appeals to have her passport returned or at least a visa to enter the country have been either denied or ignored. During a recent visit, the European Parliament expressed readiness to help her with diplomatic pressure on this issue.

The Sakharov Prize, together with other international awards, raised Ms Nasreen's visibility and recognition abroad. She has been invited to speak at various high-profile international events. From a popular writer, she has become an ambassador and spokeswoman for the rights of women and secularism. She is an honorary member of numerous international networks working on these issues. In 1998-9, as Ms Nasreen faced new threats, the Council for Secular Humanism began a campaign in her defence collecting letters addressed to the Government of Bangladesh as well as a number of prominent political leaders. The letters were signed, among others, by Salman Rushdie and two Nobel Prize laureates, Wole Soyinka and Steven Weinberg²¹⁶. The European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh at the time greatly facilitated Ms Nasreen's safe exit from the country and her arrival in Sweden. The European Parliament voiced its active support to Ms Nasreen in a resolution urging 'the authorities to do their utmost to guarantee the life and safety of Taslima Nasreen, to stop all legal

²¹⁵ FRIDE email interview with Taslima Nasreen on 30 September 2013.

²¹⁶ All the letters can be consulted at <http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=columns&page=letters>.

proceedings against her and to allow her to travel freely²¹⁷. Symbolically, in May 2013 she received one of the first Universal Citizenship passports from the Organisation for Universal Citizenship, an international organisation that supports freedom of movement and settlement.

Given her personal experience of persecution, Ms Nasreen has also become a spokesperson for many progressive Bangladeshi bloggers who are threatened for writing about religious issues. The recent Shahbagh movement demanding the prosecution of war criminals from the 1971 War of Liberation gave rise to an active online debate about the role of the leading Islamist party and the role of religion in a modern state more broadly. As violence broke out between protesters and militant Islamist groups, and three bloggers branded as 'atheists' were brutally killed, Ms Nasreen launched a number of warnings on her blog and in the media about the need to protect freedom of expression and the lives of those who have the courage to speak against the majority²¹⁸. Unique experiences of personal struggle like hers could become a source of inspiration and knowledge about how best to help activists facing similar threats.

In a recent interview, Ms Nasreen underlined that the Sakharov Prize and its network could become more important for promoting human rights internationally. She suggested pursuing more purposeful outreach and a more active stance in public debates on human rights. This could include, for example, conferences and festivals on human rights issues, at which important human rights campaigners would be invited to talk. She also suggested a greater online presence, especially with social networks, and wider publicising of the prize and the work of its laureates.

3.23 Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1993: Oslobodjenje

The daily newspaper *Oslobodjenje* was awarded the Sakharov Prize for its commitment to freedom of expression and of information, and for the courage its staff and journalists showed throughout the Bosnian war from 1992 to 1995.

Oslobodjenje was founded in 1943 and remains one of the major dailies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its name means 'liberation' and is taken from a newspaper set up by partisans during the German occupation of Yugoslavia. Over the years, the newspaper has built a reputation for independence that it tries to maintain.

The Sakharov Prize came at the height of the Bosnian war, which started in spring 1992. Despite the heavy fighting, the newspaper kept its course and was published uninterruptedly without missing a single day. It lost three people, and over 20 other employees were injured, some of them by sniper bullets while working. The newspaper's headquarters were completely destroyed and the team had to continue the production from an atomic bomb shelter, literally working at the frontlines. Defined as 'Sarajevo's "Daily Miracle"' by *The Washington Post*²¹⁹, *Oslobodjenje* was distributed by volunteers. To reduce the danger of unnecessary trips to and from the building, journalists worked one week on, one week off, sleeping and eating inside the building. Other reporters worked out of their homes,

²¹⁷ European Parliament, 'Resolution of 3 December 1998 on Romania's application for membership of the European Union, with a view to the European Council to be held in Vienna (11-12 December 1998)', (A4-0428/98), available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/positionep/resolutions/031298b_en.htm.

²¹⁸ For her analysis see her blog entries from February and March 2013 at <http://freethoughtblogs.com/taslima/author/taslima/>, as well as her article 'Why I Support Shahbagh', *Hindustan Times*, 2 March 2013, available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/ColumnsOthers/Why-I-support-Shahbagh/Article1-1020268.aspx>.

²¹⁹ 'Sarajevo's "Daily Miracle"', *The Washington Post*, 2 September 1992.

writing on manual typewriters and dictating at night to editors in the basement bomb shelter of the ruined headquarters building²²⁰.

During the siege of Sarajevo, the newspaper was purposefully targeted by the Serbian forces, its building shelled continuously and people distributing the paper on the streets targeted with sniper fire. In an interview at the time, its Editor-in-Chief Kemal Kurspahic said: 'I think they are attempting to destroy us with a special intensity because of what we stand for. We have a staff that reflects the national composition of our society almost exactly – one-third of our reporters and editors are Serbs, about the same as the population of Bosnia as a whole. And we write about Sarajevo and Bosnia in a way that reflects something the Serbian forces deny – that Serbs and Muslims and Croats can work and live together in harmony'²²¹.

Indeed, in addition to its dedication to providing free information, the newspaper has always stood out for its independence and its commitment to pluralism and tolerance. Before the war broke out, the newspaper managed to liberate itself from the one-party control in 1989. Subsequently, in 1991, it defended itself from the nationalist takeover-attempt by the three ethnic groups to apportion senior editorial positions at the paper on the basis of communal identification by winning the Constitutional Court case for its independence. Indeed, in his acceptance speech, newspaper representative Zlatko Dizdarevic underlined: 'Everything we have done to date with the newspaper [...] has been aimed at defending and preserving a Bosnia-Herzegovina that is multiethnic, multinational, cosmopolitan, and tolerant'. The newspaper united Bosniaks, Croatians, and Serbs as well as other minorities and was – and remains today²²² – committed to 'communal life, with all its wealth of variety and diversity'²²³. The paper has often publicly disagreed with the Muslim-led Bosnian government, and has continued its long-standing practice of printing in both the Cyrillic script used by Serbs and the Latin script used by Croats and Muslims, alternating its pages between the two.

The challenges of survival during the war went beyond finding the newsprint and sufficient fuel for the printing machines. The editorial line had to manoeuvre between different political positions; as the war continued, differences of opinion within the newspaper increased and several Serbian employees left. The newspaper's survival depended on the benevolence of the state that provided rations of diesel fuel; of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), which helped with transportation; and of the local criminal gangs and war commanders, who had to be persuaded into not targeting its staff. Maintaining an independent editorial line was as much of a challenge as finding paper and ink²²⁴.

The Sakharov Prize came at a moment when the newspaper, in the words of Mr Dizdarevic, was 'inundated with prizes'²²⁵. Between 1992 and 1995, it received 10 different prizes and awards. On the first anniversary of the Bosnian war on 5 April 1993, to honour the work of its journalists, more than 40 newspapers around the world reprinted selected articles from *Oslobodjenje* in their local languages raising the circulation of the newspaper that day to more than 20 million copies²²⁶. The *Oslobodjenje*

²²⁰ 'Perils of telling the truth in a shattered land', *The Independent*, 3 August 1992.

²²¹ 'Sarajevo Paper Defies War by Staying in Print', *The New York Times*, 7 October 1992, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/07/world/sarajevo-paper-defies-war-by-staying-in-print.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

²²² FRIDE email interview with Vildana Selimbegovic, current Editor-in-Chief of *Oslobodjenje*, on 14 September 2013.

²²³ European Parliament, Formal Sitting, 14 December 1993.

²²⁴ T. Gjeltén, *Sarajevo Daily: A city and its newspaper under siege*, New York: Harper Collins, 1995.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ A similar initiative was taken on 16 September 2013; FRIDE email interview with Vildana Selimbegovic, op. cit.

delegation arrived at the European Parliament for the Sakharov Prize award-winning ceremony as world-known celebrities, yet the fact that the award was coming from the European Parliament had great significance for the newspaper. At a time when the role of the 'international community' in Bosnia remained ambivalent, recognition from the European Parliament of the newspaper that stood for peace and dialogue represented an important message.

International media reaction to the Sakharov Prize award made up for the information vacuum created by the war at home. Over 20 articles about *Oslobodjenje* were published by all major international newspapers in 1993-4, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. As the reprinting articles initiative shows, there was a lot of solidarity towards *Oslobodjenje* journalists in the world press. This solidarity helped the newspaper to start international distribution in late 1993. Published in Ljubljana and distributed by a German company, a weekly edition of the newspaper contributed to the free flow of information about the war.

The war is long over but *Oslobodjenje's* struggle for independence is not. At the end of the war, the government claimed the newspaper to be state property because it used to be state-owned during communism and its ownership was not clarified before the war. The journalists clearly saw this as a final blow to their profession. The newspaper was privatised by the Slovenian fund Kmecka Druzina instead, yet, was not managed well and ended up on the verge of bankruptcy. It was subsequently bought by a family of Sarajevo businessmen who helped repay the debts and modernise the paper. The struggle for financial independence, however, continues²²⁷.

Mehmed Halilovic, former *Oslobodjenje* editor-in-chief and ombudsman for Bosnia and Herzegovina, said that print media remained the best source of information and analysis. Yet, there were still too many examples of state authorities infringing on media freedom²²⁸. Despite many challenges, the newspaper has grown and now it also publishes a weekly news magazine, *Dani*, an online edition, and a regional web portal called *Business Plus* together with editors from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The newspaper is keen on working towards the broader goal of boosting independent journalism in the region and on cooperating with other journalist associations in Europe²²⁹. The Sakharov Prize network can be one of the channels through which such cooperation could grow.

3.24 Argentina, 1992: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association

The Argentinean *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association) was awarded the Sakharov Prize for its peaceful protest against military rule and its contribution to political change in their country.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo is an association of Argentine mothers whose children 'disappeared' during the Dirty War of the military dictatorship, between 1976 and 1983. Peaceful protests that took place on the Plaza de Mayo in front of the Presidential Palace started on 30 April 1977. In their attempt to break the silence and isolation enforced by the dictatorial rule, the Mothers organised peaceful protests in public, protected only by the visibility that the busy capital centre afforded them.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ 'News media in the Balkans feeling way with new freedoms', *Freedom Forum*, 7 September 2001, available at: <http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=14346>.

²²⁹ FRIDE email interview with Vildana Selimbegovic, op. cit.

In 1979, Hebe de Bonafini became president of the association. A seamstress with only elementary education, she became one of the most active and politically-vocal mothers after the loss of her two sons, Jorge, on 8 February 1977, and Raúl, on 6 December 1977, as well as that of her daughter-in-law, María Elena Bugnone, on 25 May 1978. She would later define herself as a political, party-less activist.

As president of the Mothers' association, Ms de Bonafini has spoken actively in defence of her conception of human rights, both in Argentina and abroad, and has gained international recognition. Her strong personality, zeal and awareness of her children's revolutionary ideals led her to embrace such aspirations and progressively to diversify the activities of the association²³⁰. After the end of dictatorial rule, the association became involved in issues such as education, founding the *Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Popular University of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo), the media and culture. A cultural centre called *Nuestros hijos* (Our children) is situated at the *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* (a former illegal detention centre during the dictatorship). The organisation also participated in a large-scale federal housing project for the poor. In 1999, the Mothers received the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.

Following the return to civilian rule in 1983 in Argentina, divisions began to appear within the organisation regarding what the Mothers believed to be President Raúl Alfonsín's overly cautious policy to prosecute Dirty War perpetrators. In 1985, Alfonsín established the Trial of the Juntas, yet in response to the threat of a military coup, he decided to limit the proceedings to nine leading military junta members, later acquitting five of them.

The Mothers' association split in 1986, establishing two groups of around 2 000 members each: Ms de Bonafini's Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Association, and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo - Founding Line. Under the leadership of Ms de Bonafini, the Mothers increasingly took a more radical political approach. At the centre of contention between the different Mothers were the question of testimonies to the *Comisión Nacional de Desaparecidos* (National Commission for Missing Persons, CONADEP), identification of the bodies of the missing in exhumations and acceptance of the financial compensation of USD 250 000 (Law 24.411, a historic monetary reparation law) per missing person offered by the government. Law 24.231, which established the figure of missing detainee, was also opposed. Ms de Bonafini's Mothers opposed these measures because they did not acknowledge the death of their children. The government could do little to appease these demands, as allegedly all detainees were dead. But the Mothers' main objective was that all members of the dictatorship and the rest of the military involved in the Dirty War be brought to justice: '*Aparición con vida y castigo a los culpables*' ('Return alive those who have disappeared and punish the guilty').

These political positions heightened disagreements between the Mothers and President Carlos Menem. They fiercely protested against the president's human rights policies, namely the Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws, as well as the presidential pardons that freed most of the human rights violators of the dictatorship.

It was during this period that the organisation received the Sakharov Prize (1992). This distinction by such a prestigious political institution in recognition of their cause was greatly appreciated by the Mothers, especially when in their countries they were considered 'crazy women'. Reports about the award in the Argentinean press, however, were scarce. Recognition from the government and from other political organisations was low, except for a few individuals but not parties²³¹. Solidarity was also scarce from other human rights organisations, which provided rhetorical but not actual support.

²³⁰ FRIDE interview with Hebe de Bonafini on 28 August 2013.

²³¹ Ibid.

According to Ms de Bonafini, this was a government crusade against the association. When they received the prize, the Mothers felt 'happy, protected, and honoured'; it was a sort of 'blow to the establishment', in spite of the little support received by the media, she said²³².

The prize gave more meaning to their struggle since it afforded recognition from men and women belonging to an institution that represents the interests of European citizens, though this perception was not shared by their country and their struggle in Argentina continued. The prize undoubtedly gave great visibility to the organisation worldwide. It also gave them confidence and renewed energy to continue their work. Ms de Bonafini travelled to Strasbourg together with two Mothers from her association, Aída Ramírez Abella and María del Rosario Cerutti. Ms de Bonafini spoke about human rights and freedom of speech, as well as world hunger, the need to continue fighting and to uphold revolutionary ideals. The money received was used to continue the work of the association, improve its offices and carry out a series of other activities²³³.

Tensions with the government disappeared under the Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner administrations. President Nestor Kirchner received Ms de Bonafini within days of his coming to office on 25 May 2003, and regularly consulted her during his tenure. In January 2006, Ms de Bonafini announced that her organisation would discontinue its annual March of Resistance in recognition of President Kirchner's successful human rights policies. The association has benefited from increased government funding during the Kirchner administrations, and has extended its influence through the newspaper *La Voz de las Madres*, their radio station, and the Popular University of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.

Meanwhile, although the other branch of the organisation (the Mothers' Founding Line) disassociated themselves from Ms de Bonafini's Mothers, they also supported Kirchner's human rights policies. Despite some past disagreements, the same applies now to the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo – a group of women looking for their grandchildren who were born in captivity to mothers who 'disappeared'. In many cases, the children were handed over to their parents' kidnappers.

Relations between Ms de Bonafini's Mothers with other human rights organisations at the national and international levels vary. The Mothers tend to be associated with other organisations with leftist and progressive ideologies rooted in similar conflict situations. Due to their ideological stance, they do not relate to movements or organisations that stand on different political grounds, such as the Cuban Ladies in White.

3.25 Kosovo, 1991: Adem Demaci

Adem Demaci was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his peaceful contribution to the self-determination of Kosovo.

Mr Demaci, often referred to as 'the Nelson Mandela of Kosovo', is a human rights activist, writer and politician. He was born and raised in Pristina, where he studied law. He also studied literature in Belgrade and education in Skopje. He has spent 28 years in prison in 1958-1961, 1964-1974 and 1975-1990 for criticising Yugoslavia's treatment of its Albanian population.

Mr Demaci was arrested for the first time in 1958, when he was sentenced to three years in prison for publishing a series of articles in the Albanian language magazine *Jeta e Re* (New Life)²³⁴. These articles denounced the oppression by Yugoslav authorities of Kosovo-Albanians, especially during the period

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ M. Paker, 'Adem Demaci. Censorship of Yugoslavian Dissidents', in *Index on Censorship* 3 (5): 42-42, 1984.

in which Aleksandar Rankovic was head of the security service²³⁵. The articles were collected in a book on blood vendettas in Kosovo published in Belgrade under the title *Gjarpijt e Gjakut* (The Serpents of Blood), which was banned in Yugoslavia. Upon his release from prison, Mr Demaci founded the clandestine Revolutionary Movement for the Unification of Albanians. This initiative cost him a second 10-year sentence for alleged crimes against the Yugoslav people and state²³⁶. After the adoption of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution that granted Kosovo the status of autonomous province, he was sent to prison for the third time for 15 years because he insisted on greater autonomy and political rights for Kosovo-Albanians²³⁷. Accounts from the trial suggest that Mr Demaci and 18 others were tried for their political activities, although he was not charged with the use or advocacy of violence²³⁸. In the 1980s, Mr Demaci was considered one of the most prominent political dissidents in Yugoslavia, and certainly Kosovo's most famous political prisoner²³⁹. During those years, Amnesty International recognised him as a prisoner of conscience²⁴⁰.

Mr Demaci was liberated on 28 April 1990 and engaged in human rights activism. Shortly before his release, he issued a statement in which he expressed support for the non-violent resistance promoted by Ibrahim Rugova. This position was reiterated in the dedication of his book *The Serpents of Blood*: '[N]ot to those who raise their hand in crime, but to those who extend their hand in reconciliation'²⁴¹. On 21 November 1991, the European Parliament awarded Mr Demaci the Sakharov Prize, recognising that he had served one of 'the longest prison sentences for political reasons ever imposed in Europe since the Second World War'²⁴². The prize came after the EP raised the issue of Kosovo in 1989 by issuing a resolution, which condemned the repressive measures undertaken in Kosovo²⁴³.

In his speech at the award ceremony, Enrico Vinci, then Secretary-General of the European Parliament, explained how the prize aimed at paying tribute to 'the integrity of a man, who for more than three decades has opposed an authoritarian and intolerant regime'²⁴⁴. The prize came at a very difficult moment for Yugoslavia. The European Parliament hoped to send the message that further violence would only exacerbate oppression and human rights violations. From Mr Vinci's speech, it emerged that the European Parliament was giving its support to the human rights campaign in Kosovo, while denouncing the 'dramatic conditions in which the people of this region of Europe are forced to live'²⁴⁵.

Mr Demaci received the news that he was awarded the prize whilst he was in Istanbul to meet with other Albanian activists committed to the freedom of Kosovo²⁴⁶. While the news was greeted with

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ H. Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London & Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2000, p. 38.

²³⁷ Paker, 1984, op. cit.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ R. Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Kosovo*, Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010, pp.73–4.

²⁴⁰ S. Erlanger, 'Champion of Free Kosovo Now Urges Moderation', *The New York Times*, 10 August 1999, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/10/world/champion-of-free-kosovo-now-urges-moderation.html> [Retrieved 20 August 2013].

²⁴¹ Quoted in Clark, 2000, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁴² European Parliament, 3-412/83, 10 December 1991.

²⁴³ Resolution of 12 July 1990, Official Journal of the European Communities C 231/175 (on human rights in Kosovo, joint resolution replacing Docs. B-3 1418 and 1447/90); Resolution of 11 October 1990, Official Journal of the European Communities C 284/129 (on Kosovo, joint resolution replacing Docs. B3-1747, 1759, 1786 1820/90)

²⁴⁴ European Parliament, 10 December 1991, op. cit.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ FRIDE email interview with Adem Demaci on 24 August 2013.

surprise and enthusiasm by his fellows, friends and relatives, he was already aware that he had been nominated for the prize²⁴⁷.

The award received little media coverage, with the exception of a newspaper in Kosovo. No Serbian outlet broadcast the news. Mr Demaci prepared his acceptance speech in Tirana, surrounded by other activists²⁴⁸. He saw it as an opportunity to address all the most salient questions for Kosovo at the time in front of the European Parliament. He proudly recalls being applauded three times and felt particularly honoured as the first Albanian to give a speech in the Palais de l'Europe²⁴⁹.

In his speech, Mr Demaci praised the prize as paying homage to the people of Kosovo, 'a peace-loving nation inspired by liberty'²⁵⁰. He highlighted how freedom of speech is the first necessary step towards democracy, and how it was precisely thanks to freedom of speech that the bitter truth about the Albanians in Yugoslavia had come to the fore. For him, 'without freedom of speech there is no dialogue, without dialogue truth cannot be found, and without truth progress is impossible'²⁵¹. He denounced the discrimination against Albanians all over Yugoslavia and the violence exerted by Serbia against Kosovo-Albanians that had transformed Kosovo into one immense prison. In his view, violence was disintegrating the functioning of the Albanian community, 'destroying from top to bottom the media, education, health, culture, banking and finance, and the economic and legal systems it had established, and finally dismantling the whole existing political system'²⁵².

In Mr Demaci's opinion, the prize represented a turning point in Europe's attitude towards Kosovo-Albanians. His hope at the time, in view of the rise of opposition parties throughout the Yugoslav space and the emergence of secession movements in Slovenia and Croatia, was that a new era of 'multipartyism' and self-determination was near.

The prize had a significant impact on his work and activities, making him at the same time more resolute and uncompromising in supporting freedom of thought and speech. Moreover, it increased the financial and logistical support he received from his fellow co-nationals, enabling the engagement of human rights activists all over Kosovo. The prize also served to boost stronger links with international organisations. At the same time, he argues, the award contributed to making the Sakharov Prize and other European Parliament activities more visible in Kosovo. Mr Demaci felt his life became busier with work and responsibilities. As Chairman of the Pristina-based Council for Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms (1991-95), he was involved in collecting and documenting human rights violations perpetrated by the Serbian police and administration, as well as providing support to the families of political prisoners. The Council helped shape international public opinion about human rights violations in Kosovo.

However, the prize had no impact on the circumstances of other human rights activists, whose persecutions became harsher, including incarceration, kidnapping and murder. The killing of activists in the cities and countryside also became more frequent.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Clark, 2000, op. cit.

²⁵⁰ European Parliament, 10 December 1991, op. cit.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

Between 1991 and 1993, he was the editor-in-chief of the Pristina magazine *Zëri* (The Voice)²⁵³. In 1993, the year in which Mr Demaci was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, following the attempt by Serbian authorities to close down *Rilindja*, an Albanian-language press and publishing house in Kosovo, Mr Demaci, together with 13 other Albanian writers and journalists, started a protest which culminated in a hunger strike²⁵⁴.

In December 1996, Mr Demaci entered politics by replacing Bajram Kosumi as the head of the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, a small party that increasingly disagreed with the strategy pursued by Ibrahim Rugova's Kosovo Democratic League. During this period, his proposal of a confederation of states consisting of Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia under the name of 'Balkania' made headlines not only in Kosovo but also in the international press.

In 1998, he was appointed political representative of the newly formed Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), thus taking a prominent role in its political wing²⁵⁵. In an interview with *The New York Times*, he refused to condemn the KLA's use of violence, stating 'the path of nonviolence has gotten us nowhere. People who live under this kind of repression have the right to resist'²⁵⁶. He resigned shortly before the NATO intervention, on 2 March 1999, during the peace negotiations in Rambouillet, which he attended as the political representative of KLA. Mr Demaci criticised and ultimately opposed the agreement for not guaranteeing Kosovo's independence²⁵⁷. During the war (1998-9), he remained in Pristina serving as KLA political representative²⁵⁸. At the end of the war, he became Director of Kosovo Radio and Television, a position that he left in 2004. Today, Mr Demaci is the leader of the League of Writers of Kosovo.

Being a Sakharov laureate is less and less an important part of Mr Demaci's identity. In an interview to the European Parliament in 2009, he shared his feeling that 'the European Parliament has not utilised the human capital that it has with the winners of the prize'²⁵⁹. He advocates for a more proactive stance on the part of the institution, one that is not limited to annual commemorations and events related to the Sakharov Prize, but which is committed to the protection of human rights whose violations occur daily in many parts of the world²⁶⁰. This can be done, in his view, by enhancing the authority and importance of the laureates, and by following their fate back home²⁶¹. Thus, Mr Demaci urges, a change in attitude from the European Parliament is needed. For those Sakharov laureates that are in prison, as was the case of Hu Jia in 2009, the European Parliament should raise awareness

²⁵³ International Crisis Group, 'ICG Kosovo Spring Report', 1 March 1998, available at:

<http://www.refworld.org/publisher/ICG,,SRB,3ae6a6ec4,0.html> [Retrieved on 20 August 2013].

²⁵⁴ T. Barber, ' "Kosovo's Mandela" on hunger strike: Adem Demaci is among 14 ethnic Albanians protesting at growing Serbian oppression', *The Independent*, 2 June 1993, available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/kosovos-mandela-on-hunger-strike-adem-demaci-is-among-14-ethnic-albanians-protesting-at-growing-serbian-oppression-tony-barber-reports-1489190.html> [Retrieved 27 August 2013].

²⁵⁵ Elsie, 2010, op. cit.

²⁵⁶ C. Hedges, 'Kosovo Leader Urges Resistance, but to Violence', *The New York Times*, 13 March 1998, available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/03/13/world/kosovo-leader-urges-resistance-but-to-violence.html?pagewanted=2> [Retrieved 20 August 2013].

²⁵⁷ 'Kosovo rebel leader quits', *BBC News*, 2 March 1999, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/289021.stm> [Retrieved 25 August 2013].

²⁵⁸ J. Rowland, 'Kosovo leader calls for NATO troops', *BBC News*, 27 May 1999, available at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/353916.stm> [Retrieved 20 August 2013].

²⁵⁹ A. Demaci, 'Dictatorships thrive under a culture of forgetting', Interview with the European Parliament, 15 December 2009, Strasbourg, France.

²⁶⁰ FRIDE email interview with Adem Demaci, op. cit.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

about their fate and their fight through weekly reports on TV, radio and newspapers. Mr Demaci adds that 'dictatorships thrive by promoting a culture of forgetting and it is important to counteract that'²⁶².

3.26 Myanmar, 1990: Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Sakharov Prize for her non-violent struggle for democratic change in Myanmar.

Aung San Suu Kyi was born in 1945 into a prominent Burmese family. Her mother was a diplomat and her father, General Aung San, was a revolutionary leader, often referred to as the father of modern Burma. Her father was assassinated two years after her birth, and only six months before Burma was proclaimed independent from the British colonial rule. Aung San Suu Kyi kept a keen interest in her father's personality and conducted research into his career, as well as on the political history of Burma at the time, resulting in a series of publications in the 1980s. She lived abroad, mostly in England, until 1988, when she went to Burma to assist her mother after a severe stroke. Four months afterwards, mass demonstrations around the country were violently suppressed by the military regime. Aung San Suu Kyi became active in the newly-founded National League for Democracy that demanded the end of military rule and called for multi-party elections. Several months later, in 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi was refused the right to stand for election and placed under house arrest. As she refused to leave the country and step down from political life, her imprisonment continued for almost 15 years, cutting her off from her husband and two sons, though not from human rights activists in Burma and around the world, for whom she remained an icon and an inspiration. As Burma started a tentative reform process, she finally re-entered politics and won in the parliamentary by-elections in April 2012. Later the same year, she officially announced her intention to run for president in 2015.

The 1990 Sakharov Prize was the first important international prize awarded to Aung San Suu Kyi, shortly after she was placed under house arrest. The announcement came as diplomats in Rangoon said Burma's military government had decided to extend her detention²⁶³. In her own words, '1990 was a year of great significance in Burmese politics'; it was the year of first democratic elections in over two decades. The fact that the European Union reacted forcefully to the crackdown of the military on Aung San Suu Kyi's party and on herself personally was highly significant. Aung San Suu Kyi underlined that, 'When the European Parliament, the European Union, and the European Commission recognised our movement, it gave us strength to go on despite great odds [... it was] solidarity, not only from our own people but the world at large' that helped her and her party persevere over more than two decades of oppression²⁶⁴.

Although the Sakharov Prize, along with increased international attention to Aung San Suu Kyi's situation, no doubt contributed to her relative safety under arrest, the overall political climate in Burma at the time grew worse. Observers attributed growing persecutions to the military's insecurity and anger with the political opposition²⁶⁵. Not only was the junta accused of killing thousands of opponents and systematically torturing political detainees, but according to a report from the United Nations Human Rights Commission²⁶⁶, it also fired and disciplined some 15 000 civil servants and

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ 'Burmese Dissident Honoured', *The Independent*, 24 January 1991.

²⁶⁴ European Parliament, Plenary Session, 22 October 2013, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/video?debate=1382436615693>.

²⁶⁵ 'Myanmar Said to Purge Civil Service: Opposition Leader's Candidacy for Nobel Focuses International Ire', *The Washington Post*, 14 October 1991.

²⁶⁶ 'UN Report Condemns Burmese Regime', *The Independent*, 27 February 1991.

conducted extensive purges in the military itself²⁶⁷. The regime also unleashed a defamatory campaign against Aung San Suu Kyi. Exploiting the fact that she was married to a British citizen, the regime tried to build up popular fears of the country being 'ruled by the CIA' or indeed by 'someone married to a foreigner'. The press published a number of offensive cartoons depicting Aung San Suu Kyi's children as ragamuffins of mixed race²⁶⁸.

Aung San Suu Kyi has always had a special relationship with Europe, not only because of her links to England, but also because she was so deeply inspired by European thinking on democracy and human rights. Authors like Czechoslovak Vaclav Havel became her source of strength and vision. In her Sakharov Prize acceptance speech, which she could finally deliver in person more than 20 years after the award, she recalled how much it had meant for her during her arrest to read the works of Andrei Sakharov that had been sent to her on that occasion. Writings by prominent dissidents had been an inspiration and the international recognition that she belonged to the same great cause a source of strength²⁶⁹. According to Zoya Phan, her representative in the 20th Sakharov Prize Anniversary ceremony and international coordinator at Burma Campaign, UK: 'The Sakharov Prize that she was given was not just recognising her and her activities and her work for democracy and human rights but it also kept her safe and gave her higher international profile and kept Burma in an international agenda²⁷⁰. Her case no doubt became a symbolic case for Burma and any attempt at political liberalisation would have been seen as incomplete if she were still under arrest.

Yet, her political position remains precarious as her party only holds a tiny portion of seats in the Burmese parliament – 43 out of 664. Moreover, her participation in the elections is prohibited by the current Constitution, as she is a widow and mother of foreigners. In her Sakharov Prize acceptance speech, she underlined that Burma, despite some progress, cannot be seen as democratising until changes are made to the Constitution²⁷¹. Though free, her political fate remains in the hands of the military regime. Aung San Suu Kyi's international fame provided her with access to top political leadership around the world. During her recent international tours to the United States and several European states, she was given a head-of-state treatment and could engage in high-level diplomacy. Yet, as her political power at home, if not popularity, remains limited, her own future as well as the future of political reform in Burma, depends on how successful Western democracies are in finding the right balance between encouragement of and political conditionality for the incumbent regime. Indeed, in her Nobel Prize lecture, she underlined that reform remains limited and there are still many political prisoners in Burma. Her vision for the future of international cooperation with her country goes beyond the simple abolition of sanctions: 'Development and humanitarian aid, bilateral agreements and investments should be coordinated and calibrated to ensure that these will promote social, political and economic growth that is balanced and sustainable²⁷². More concretely, during her state visits Aung San Suu Kyi appealed to foreign businesses not to become partners of the state-owned energy conglomerate Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise until it adopts credible measures of transparency and accountability. Yet, it is not clear how much this appeal will be taken on board.

²⁶⁷ *The Washington Post*, 14 October 1991, op. cit.

²⁶⁸ Ibid,

²⁶⁹ European Parliament, 22 October 2013, op. cit.

²⁷⁰ European Parliament, 'Past Sakharov winners speak out', *Feature*, 10 January 2009, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20090106FCS45491&language=EN>.

²⁷¹ European Parliament, 22 October 2013, op. cit.

²⁷² 'The Nobel Peace Prize 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi', *Nobelprize.org*, 16 June 2012, available at: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1991/kyi-lecture.html.

Understandably, since Aung San Suu Kyi entered politics, her stance has changed from a principled commitment to human rights to a more pragmatic approach. As a politician she is responsible for the survival of her party, for building coalitions and harnessing support for more reform within the establishment, including constitutional reform, on which her political future depends, and for a number of policy initiatives that may be bringing her closer to the establishment than her supporters would like to see her. Unlike Czechoslovaks Alexander Dubček or Vaclav Havel, who returned to politics when previous regimes were undone and used their popular support to reach the presidency and start a new political regime, Aung San Suu Kyi, endowed with little political leverage, continues to operate in a very closed and oppressive environment. During her BBC Reith lecture on 28 June 2011, she underlined that the free and uncensored communications that helped the protesters in the Arab world were not yet available in Burma²⁷³. The European Parliament, though not in a position to drive Burma's whole foreign policy, can no doubt build on the special links it has with Aung San Suu Kyi in order to address at least some of these concerns and contribute to further democratisation in Burma.

3.27 Czechoslovakia, 1989: Alexander Dubček

Alexander Dubček was awarded the Sakharov Prize for his unwavering commitment to democratisation, human rights and the rule of law in Czechoslovakia.

He was the son of US emigrants who decided to return first to their native Slovakia and later to Kirghizia, in the former Soviet Union. He spoke fluent Slovak and Russian. In 1955, Mr Dubček went to Moscow to study political science. He returned to Czechoslovakia in 1958 as a member of the Communist Party. Hardworking and charismatic, he became First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in just five years. As head of the party, he tried to appoint young progressive politicians to high-ranking positions, and launched a programme of reforms that started the so-called Prague spring. His hope was to create 'socialism with a human face'.

Czechoslovakia was the first country of the Eastern bloc where censorship was abolished and newspapers could criticise the government. Mr Dubček received widespread popular support. Yet after only a short period, Soviet leaders decided to put an end to liberalisation and Soviet troops occupied Czechoslovakia in 1968. Mr Dubček was exiled. He was first sent to Turkey as ambassador and later stayed in internal exile working in a forest near Bratislava as a clerk in a lumberyard for 18 years.

His name was erased from history books and his family members were treated as the relatives of an enemy of the state. To mention his name publicly meant to risk imprisonment²⁷⁴. He was constantly monitored by the secret police. However, this did not stop him from secretly meeting his supporters and sending letters to newspapers at home and abroad. He remained an idol for those in Czechoslovakia who were hoping for democracy. As Mr Dubček later said, he had received several letters from Andrei Sakharov, 'a person who earlier than others understood many things and wanted perestroika'²⁷⁵.

In 1989, the tsunami of democratic revolutions rolled through Central and Eastern Europe. The Velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia returned Mr Dubček to political life. The day that he had been fighting

²⁷³ 'Lecture 1: Aung San Suu Kyi on Liberty', *BBC Reith Lectures*, 28 June 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00hljtd>.

²⁷⁴ J. Holland, 'Dubcek takes his place at stage again', *The Times*, 24 November 1989.

²⁷⁵ 'Gorbachev welcomes Czechoslovakian Parliament chairman Alexander Dubcek', *The Independent*, 22 May 1990.

for had finally arrived. Very popular among students and young progressive people, Mr Dubček was elected Chairman of the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia.

The international community remembered Mr Dubček and his sacrifices in the name of human rights. At the end of his exile, he went to Italy, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate. In 1989, the Sakharov Prize recognised his contribution to democracy and human rights. At the award ceremony, Mr Dubček said that the prize symbolised for all Europeans their best hopes for peaceful reform in Eastern Europe²⁷⁶. For him, the prize was not only a recognition of his political struggle in the past but also a powerful symbol of the future for post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe. During the ceremony, then EP President Enrique Barón Crespo read a letter from Andrei Sakharov who had passed away only a few months earlier²⁷⁷. His widow and prominent human rights activist Yelena Bonner underlined that Mr Dubček played an important role in Dr Sakharov's life. It was Dr Sakharov's support of Mr Dubček and his condemnation of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia that marked the beginning of Dr Sakharov's prosecutions by the Kremlin. During his speech, Mr Dubček paid tribute to Dr Sakharov and called his ideas 'a constant source of inspiration'²⁷⁸.

Mr Dubček's speech, emotional and inspiring, was largely directed to the future of Czechs and Slovaks in united Europe. Mr Dubček hoped his country would join the EU one day: 'Everything is pointing to this. It is only a question of time. Czechoslovakia will take all necessary steps in this direction'²⁷⁹. As head of the Czechoslovakian parliament, Mr Dubček ensured that all international pacts and agreements on civil rights, from the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act to the CSCE in Vienna, are incorporated into Czechoslovakian law.

More than two decades later, Mr Barón Crespo remembers Mr Dubček as an exceptionally strong personality:

I have met many dissidents. Alexander Dubček was undoubtedly one of them. He spoke calmly and slowly. He would often smile. During lunch, he mostly spoke about the future. Although he was a communist leader 20 years ago, his political activity and programme of reforms were something new in the 1960s. He opened up his society. During the lunch meeting, everybody, including myself, had just another chance to realise how respectful and open-minded Alexander Dubček was²⁸⁰.

The Sakharov Prize award to Mr Dubček came at a time of big changes in his country. Although he was already well-known, the prize put him on a par with such iconic figures as Nelson Mandela and Anatoli Marchenko. In many countries, streets were named after Mr Dubček. For example, in Turkey, where he was once ambassador, he is very respected and known as a 'Slovakian Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'. In his native Slovakia, some people even changed their surnames to Dubček after the Velvet revolution, as a sign of esteem for their national hero²⁸¹.

After the Sakharov Prize, Mr Dubček became a sought-after guest and speaker in many countries. The Independent and Associated Press covered in great detail his trips to the Soviet Union and his first visit to the United States in 1990. Talking to Mikhail Gorbachev, Mr Dubček spoke about his

²⁷⁶ H. Neuerbourg, 'Prague Spring Leader Back in Limelight After Two Decades', *The Associated Press*, 23 November 1989.

²⁷⁷ European Parliament, Formal Sitting – Presentation of the Sakharov Prize, Annex II, The Speeches of Enrique Barón Crespo and Alexander Dubcek, 17 January 1990.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ R. J. Wielaard, 'Dubcek: Czechoslovakia Enshrining Human Rights in New Law', *The Associated Press*.

²⁸⁰ FRIDE telephone interview with Enrique Barón on 19 September 2013.

²⁸¹ 'My Grandpa Alexander Dubcek', *The Voice of Russia*, 7 November 2012, available at:

http://voiceofrussia.com/2012_11_07/My-Grandpa-Alexander-Dub-ek/.

correspondence with Andrei Sakharov during exile and supported President Gorbachev's endeavours to reform the Communist regime. In the US, Mr Dubček met with Secretary of State James A. Baker III and members of Congress. Then he attended a ceremony at the American University and was awarded an honorary degree, as 'a symbol in the face of tyranny'²⁸². Despite his past in the Communist Party²⁸³, Mr Dubček came to be recognised as the 'Humble Revolutionary', as suggested by American reporter David Davis, and a 'Modest Farrier', as he was described by Mr Barón Crespo at the ceremony.

In 1992, Mr Dubček published his autobiography *Hope Dies Last*, a story of a great man who dedicated his life to human rights and social justice. A year later, he died in a car accident in unclear circumstances.

3.28 South Africa, 1988: Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

The first Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1988 went to Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, together with Anatoli Marchenko, for his life-long struggle against racism and to promote democracy in South Africa.

After having spent a total of 27 years in prison during the apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela was elected the first black President of South Africa in its first fully inclusive multi-racial elections. He held the post from 1994 to 1999. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, together with South African President Frederik Willem de Klerk, who released Mr Mandela from prison and worked with him to end the apartheid regime and complete constitutional changes. Both were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 'their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa'²⁸⁴.

After leaving office, Mr Mandela dedicated his life to promoting dialogue, peace, and justice. He set up the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, as well as the Nelson Mandela Foundation and The Mandela-Rhodes Foundation. In addition to initiatives such as the Dialogue for Justice and Mandela Days that promote racial tolerance and dialogue, the Mandela foundations run numerous programmes and support activities aimed at improving living conditions of children throughout Africa, as well as providing educational opportunities and strengthening a new generation of leaders on the continent.

Aged 95, Mr Mandela remains one of the most inspirational political figures of the 20th century.

When Mr Mandela was awarded the Sakharov Prize in 1988, he was still under arrest but no longer in prison. He was transferred to house arrest and engaged in talks with the South African government on a possible political transition and constitutional changes that would put an end to the racial apartheid system²⁸⁵. Two years earlier, as Anatoli Marchenko was demanding the release of all political prisoners in the Soviet Union, South African President Pieter W. Botha promised he would release Mr Mandela if Soviet dissidents Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Shcharansky were released as

²⁸² *The Independent*, 22 May 1990, op. cit.

²⁸³ Holland, 1989, op. cit.

²⁸⁴ 'The Nobel Peace Prize 1993, Nelson Mandela, F.W. de Klerk', *Nobelprize.org*, 15 October 1993, available at: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1993/.

²⁸⁵ N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, London: Macdonald Purnell, 1995.

well²⁸⁶. The joint Sakharov Prize award to Mr Marchenko and Mr Mandela represented this fateful link between the two freedom fighters.

The Sakharov Prize came as the first high profile international recognition of Mr Mandela and no doubt strengthened his position in the negotiations. Shortly before his grandson came to collect the prize on his behalf, European Community members were discussing tightening economic sanctions against South Africa, thus increasing pressure on the regime²⁸⁷. Yet, as late as December 1989, Mr Mandela's position as well as that of President de Klerk, who started reforming the apartheid system, was precarious at best. President de Klerk was receiving political warnings as well as death threats, and his decisions on the fate of Mr Mandela and his party were not to be taken for granted²⁸⁸. Nonetheless, in February 1990, the ban on the African National Congress was lifted. Mr Mandela was released one week later. Although not attributable to the Sakharov Prize directly, these decisions no doubt were informed by the EP's and EU's positions at the time.

The European Parliament immediately seized this occasion to call for the lifting of the state of emergency in South Africa and for an amnesty for all political prisoners in the country. The European Council pledged increased support for the existing programme of positive measures intended to help the victims of apartheid by granting new scholarships for students to study in Europe and in multi-racial South African universities. The Council's conclusions also called for maintaining the pressure on the South African government 'to promote the profound and irreversible changes'²⁸⁹.

Mr Mandela travelled to Strasbourg to collect the Sakharov Prize in person shortly after gaining his freedom. His speech sent a strong message in favour of dialogue and reconciliation in his home country: 'We understood that we could not end the nightmare by surrendering ourselves to the passion of hatred and the spirit of vengeance and retribution [...] We came to learn that the very survival of our country demands that we proceed from a position of genuine love and respect for all our people and for all humanity'²⁹⁰.

As the negotiations with the state were ongoing, Mr Mandela used his speech to remind that despite the initial dialogue, the apartheid system was still in place and the toll of victims was growing as he spoke before the European Parliament. He insisted that only complete constitutional reform and the implementation of a new political system would ensure a peaceful future for South Africa. Before that happens, pressure from the international community should be strong and sanctions should be maintained, he argued. 'Anything less than this would condemn our country to worsening and endemic conflict. It 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', Mr Mandela underlined²⁹¹. This was indeed the stance that the European Community took at the special session of the UN General Assembly in December 1989.

The attribution of the Sakharov Prize to Mr Mandela contributed positively to his political struggle. It also had an impact on how the Sakharov Prize came to be seen and understood. By choosing Mr Mandela as its first recipient together with Soviet activist Anatoli Marchenko, the European

²⁸⁶ 'Botha May Release Mandela, if Sakharov, Shcharansky Go Free: Also Promises Major Reforms of Apartheid', *Los Angeles Times*, 31 January 1986, available at: http://articles.latimes.com/1986-01-31/news/mn-2611_1_president-pieter-w-botha.

²⁸⁷ 'ECC May Widen SA Sanctions', *The Guardian*, 16 February 1989.

²⁸⁸ *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1989.

²⁸⁹ European Council, Conclusions of the Presidency, Strasbourg, 8-9 December 1989, Reproduced from the Bulletin of the European Communities, No. 12/1989.

²⁹⁰ European Parliament, Debates, 13 June 1990.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Parliament defined the meaning and purpose of the prize better than any mission statement could do. It is no coincidence that many Sakharov Prize laureates mentioned on numerous occasions how proud and honoured they were for being distinguished as Nelson Mandela. They felt endowed with the ultimate international recognition of their struggle and their cause.

3.29 Soviet Union, 1988: Anatoli Marchenko

Anatoli Marchenko is considered one of the most outstanding human rights activists in the post-Stalin Soviet Union. He was together with Nelson Mandela the first recipient of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought of the European Parliament, awarded to him posthumously in 1988.

Mr Marchenko was born in Barabinsk, Western Siberia, in 1938 into a proletariat family. He started as a worker in a drilling gang after completing only secondary education. Having received his first conviction by mistake, he spent a number of years in Soviet labour camps meeting the best of Soviet intellectuals and becoming increasingly active among dissidents. Mr Marchenko's death in December 1986 after a three-month hunger strike in prison attracted much international attention and led to the mass release of political prisoners in the Soviet Union, pushing then Secretary-General of the Communist Party Gorbachev to introduce further reforms.

His first imprisonment in 1958 was on trumped-up charges of mass fighting and public disorder. After his escape and attempted illegal border crossing into Iran, he was convicted for six more years for state treason. It was on his second term that he found himself in an environment of political prisoners, intellectuals and activists – the true elite of the Soviet Union. During that period he published via *samizdat* one of his best-known works *My Testimony* (1967), which was a unique detailed description of post-Stalin labour camps with their rampant human rights abuses. When the memoirs were translated into several languages and published abroad, they helped raise awareness of the situation in Soviet labour camps and of the scale of persecutions against political prisoners.

After an open circulation of his letter in support of reforms in Czechoslovakia and against Soviet interference in its internal affairs²⁹², Mr Marchenko was sentenced for having failed to file a residence permit application to a year in a labour camp, which was extended for two more years for slander. While in exile in Siberia, he married Larisa Bogoraz, a prominent human rights defender.

Mr Marchenko was critical of the position that Western powers assumed versus the Soviet Union at the time, of NATO's failure to protect Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of the outcome of the Helsinki Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975. According to Mr Marchenko, by seeking to weaken the military confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Western political establishment was subsequently loosening the ideological confrontation. 'An alternative to war is not a *détente à-la-Moscow*, but a consistent opposition to the communist dictatorship in all parts of the globe [...] Such policy would relieve the Western nations of their participation in crimes against peace and against the people'²⁹³.

Although one of the founding members of the Moscow Helsinki Group, he did not take an active part in its activities primarily because he was in exile, but also due to his dissatisfaction with the Helsinki Final Act. Yet it was Mr Marchenko who initiated and formulated the appeal from February 1977 to

²⁹² The full text of the letter dated 22 July 1968 is available at: <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/books/map4ehko/>.

²⁹³ 'Memoirs of Anatoli Marchenko', *Online source Human Rights in Russia*, 26 September 2013, available at: <http://hro.org/node/15647>.

the Heads of State participating in the Helsinki Agreement, containing a proposal to establish an international commission to examine violations of the agreement in the humanitarian field²⁹⁴.

In 1975, he was sentenced to four years in prison, followed in 1981 by his sixth and last imprisonment for 10 years in labour camps and five years in internal exile. This time the verdict was explicitly political: 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'. During this last prison term, he went on a hunger strike demanding the release of all prisoners of conscience. As his fellow dissident A. Daniel said: 'He won, but never learnt about it [...] His death contributed to the inevitable elimination of the political camps – of whose existence he was the first to tell the world'²⁹⁵. After three months on hunger strike, he died at the age of 48 and was buried on 11 December 1986. Six days after the death of Mr Marchenko, the historic telephone call from Mikhail Gorbachev to Andrei Sakharov took place. At the centre of their conversation was Mr Marchenko's case, as well as the need to release all political prisoners. It also put an end to Dr Sakharov's exile; on 15 December 1986 he was announced free and could come back to Moscow.

During the same month, President Gorbachev ordered a Decree by the Supreme Council on the pardon and release of political prisoners to be prepared. On 31 December, a secret decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on amnesty was issued. Further, Article 190 of the Criminal Code (on the spread of false fabrications defaming the Soviet social and state system) was repealed. Mass release of political prisoners, which Mr Marchenko had fought for, began within less than two months of his death. Throughout 1987, about 300 prisoners were pardoned²⁹⁶.

Mr Marchenko did not gain wide fame in his country. After his death the Soviet media launched a defamation campaign against him, accusing him of fabricating tales of human rights violations 'to organise hostile campaigns against our country'²⁹⁷. To date, as human rights experts in Russia indicate, he is someone who should 'enter the pantheon of national heroes'²⁹⁸, yet remains largely unknown. Also abroad, Mr Marchenko is far less known than Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or Vladimir Bukovsky. The Sakharov Prize award two years after his death contributed greatly to the international recognition of Mr Marchenko's work.

In a message to European Parliament President Lord Plumb, Andrei Sakharov underlined: 'In My Testimony Marchenko was the first to tell the truth about the post-Stalin labour camps and the prisons. His book became one of the founding stones of the human rights movements in our country [...] The achievement of Marchenko's life and his work is an enormous contribution to the cause of democracy, of humanity and of justice'²⁹⁹.

His widow, Ms Bogoraz, commented: 'I hope that the fate of those who receive the Sakharov Prize in future will be less tragic than that of Nelson Mandela and much less tragic than that of my late husband'³⁰⁰. Despite the tragic loss of her husband, she kept on fighting for human rights in Soviet Union/Russia in his name. Unfortunately, she felt the work of human rights activists was not gaining enough ground in the post-Soviet era: 'It is true we have no influence on government policy, but I

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ See <http://www.hrights.ru/text/b22/Chapter7%205.htm>.

²⁹⁶ Memoirs of Anatoli Marchenko, 2013, op. cit.

²⁹⁷ *Trud*, April 1987.

²⁹⁸ See <http://polit.ru/article/2012/01/23/marchenko/>.

²⁹⁹ Private message from A. Sakharov to Lord Plumb, Lord Plumb's speech in the European Parliament, 15 February 1989.

³⁰⁰ L. Bogoraz, widow of Anatoli Marchenko, dissident, interview, 1989.

hope we will have some influence on society at large [...] We still have such a long way to achieve real democracy. I have to keep trying to educate people about human rights³⁰¹.

³⁰¹ L. Bogoraz, widow of Anatoli Marchenko, dissident, interview for the Associated Press, 1994.

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