

## SAKHAROV PRIZE COMMUNITY

### NEWSLETTER

No. 01/2023

#### Keeping up with our 2023 Sakharov Prize laureates

**09.02.2023:** One year after the beginning of the war, **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy** visited Brussels amid a tour to different European capitals. Addressing the [European Parliament](#), he called for the EU to unite with Ukraine “to define a common [European future](#)” in peace and security. As a gesture of [solidarity](#), a squad of the **State Emergency Service of Ukraine** went to Antakya in Turkey to support the rescue efforts following the earthquake. Human rights lawyer **Oleksandra Matviichuk** is relentlessly [advocating](#) for a special tribunal to break the cycle of impunity, especially when it comes to the crime of aggressors. Her tour brought her to the Belgian University of Louvain-la-Neuve, where she picked up a Doctor Honoris Causa title. The EP Liaison Office in Barcelona welcomed **Yellow Ribbon Movement’s Yaroslav Bozhko** to a [meeting](#) with journalists. Follow on [telegram](#) how Melitopol mayor **Ivan Fedorov** continues to stand by the Ukrainian citizens living under Russian occupation.

#### How come we missed when Russia turned totalitarian?

**31.01.2023:** The [Sakharov Community](#) kicked off 2023 with a film screening putting the spotlight on the dire reality of human rights in present-day Russia. [The New Greatness Case](#) documentary exposes with hidden camera the story of Russian youngsters charged in a bogus trial and a mother's fight for her daughter's innocence. **EP Vice-President Heidi Hautala** hosted Alexander Pomazuev from **Alexei Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation**, filmmaker Anna Shishova, and Human Rights Watch’s Tanya Lokshina for a public debate at Brussels cinema Vendôme, delving into the perversity and manipulation of state repression in Russia.

#### Another nail in the coffin: Sakharov Centre in Moscow shuts down

**03.02.2023:** Russian authorities keep on dismantling Andrei Sakharov’s legacy. Under the law on “foreign agents”, the City of Moscow has ordered [the closure](#) of the renowned **Sakharov Centre**, a beacon of freedom of expression. The Centre served as a place for the annual conferences of **2009 Sakharov Prize laureate Memorial** until the latter was dissolved in December 2021.

#### #FreeAlexeiNavalny!

**02.02.2023:** With a [video](#) released on the 2nd anniversary of **2021 Sakharov Prize laureate Alexei Navalny’s** unlawful imprisonment, his daughter Daria launched the [#FreeNavalny](#) campaign. It also calls to end the war of aggression against Ukraine. Strongly concerned for Navalny’s life and health, over 200 doctors signed an [open letter](#) urging to stop the abuses against the opposition leader and ensuring access

to proper medical care. Joining the two years' mark of his arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, the [EU](#) stands in solidarity with political prisoners in Russia and has reiterated the call for Navalny's release.

### **Morale booster of the day: Jafar Panahi is free again**

**03.02.2023:** 2012 Sakharov Prize laureate Jafar Panahi has been [released](#) on bail from Tehran's Evin prison after almost seven months of detention. As a reminder, he was imprisoned in July after the Iranian authorities reactivated a 2010 sentence, despite the Supreme Court of Iran declaring it void. Panahi protested his detention conditions by going on a hunger strike on 1 February, refusing food, drinks, and medication until his release. He was released 48 hours later. Shortly afterwards, the Iranian regime [announced](#) amnesty and reduced sentences for "tens of thousands accused and convicted in the recent incidents." A wind of change in Tehran? Reality check [here](#).

### **¡Basta Ya!: a look back in history, a lesson for the present**

**31.01.2023:** 2000 Sakharov Prize laureates ¡Basta Ya! stood up against ETA violence in the Basque Country's darkest years of terror. Now, ¡Basta Ya! founding member and MEP Maite Pagazaurtundua brought an [immersive experience](#) to the European Parliament recreating the climate of oppression experienced by ETA opponents. Inside a black box, voices trigger unsettling feelings and transport you to a time when democracy was under threat. EP President Roberta Metsola was the first to immerse in the experience after [addressing](#) an audience including philosopher and writer Fernando Savater who received the Sakharov Prize award back in 2000 and other members of ¡Basta Ya! who made it to Brussels for the occasion. Completing the commemoration, two panels shed light on the crucial role of bodyguards to the lives of those threatened by ETA, and the ethics and aesthetics of ¡Basta Ya!.

### **The fight for justice continues: Belarusian activists face unjust trials**

**17.01.2023:** The machinery of trials against Belarusian opposition figures continues unabated. After almost 2 years of arbitrary detention, proceedings against **2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Alès Bialiatski** [have begun](#). Lukashenko's regime is also commencing a [trial in absentia](#) against exiled **2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, leader of the Democratic Movement in Belarus. In an *in camera* session, Belarusian Supreme Court confirmed the 8 years [prison sentence](#) of journalist and member of **2004 Sakharov Prize laureate Belarusian Association of Journalists Siarhei Satsuk**.

### **The Arab Spring's unfinished business**

**14.01.2023:** Remember 12 years ago when the self-immolation of **Mohamed Bouazizi**, posthumous recipient of the **2011 Sakharov Prize**, sparked the [Arab Spring](#)? The Tunisians used to keep the spirit of the Jasmine Revolution alive in annual mobilisations. Not this year. While their demands for "work, freedom, and national dignity" remain unfulfilled, disenchantment with politics has taken over, as Tunisian citizens massively abstained from voting in recent parliamentary elections.

### **Myanmar's downwards spiral of repression**

**30.12.2022:** A military-controlled court in Myanmar has handed down the final verdict against State Counsellor and **1990 Sakharov Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi**. She faces 33 years of imprisonment,

including three years of hard labour, representing a blatant violation of human rights in Myanmar. The EU [condemns](#) these trials, verdicts and dismantlement of democracy and the rule of law and takes the stance that only a genuine dialogue can help the country out of this deep crisis. Deeply concerned about the large number of [political prisoners in Myanmar](#), the EU reiterates an urgent call for their “immediate and unconditional release”.

### **EP urgency resolutions**

Deeply shocked by the assassination of human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko, MEPs called for an investigation into the harassment, violence and pressure against other pro-democracy and human rights activists in [Eswatini](#), as well as the alleged recruitment of mercenaries to help the country’s security forces repress opposition. The EP strongly condemned the death in custody of Spanish citizen Julio Obama Mefuman in [Equatorial Guinea](#), holding the dictatorial Obiang regime accountable. MEPs expressed grave concerns for the country’s barbaric repression of human rights defenders and its lack of democratic space for government critics. In the light of the ill-treatment and deteriorating, brutal and inhuman imprisonment conditions of **2021 Sakharov Prize laureate Alexei Navalny** and other political prisoners in [Russia](#), MEPs asked for their immediate release and that their detention conditions comply with Russia’s international obligations. They also called for sanctions against those responsible for arbitrary prosecutions and torture against anti-war protesters in Russia.