



HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE PODIUM

Care about what you wear, consume and buy

28.03.2023: As the European Parliament starts legislative work on banning forced labour products from the EU market, two of its Sakharov fellows raise awareness on human rights violations inherent to forced labour. In the limelight: the fashion industry. MEPs, civil society, and experts, including **Jewher Ilham**, Sakharov fellow and daughter of **2019 Sakharov Prize laureate Ilham Tohti**, came together in Brussels to discuss how to end forced labour and its impact on human rights and the environment. The scene-setter: an artistic performance travelling the audience in an imaginary journey from the traumatising experiences of forced labour workers to the glittering world of fashion. **2022 Sakharov fellow Louise Xin** made a strong case for ethical and sustainable clothing combining a catwalk of her colourful fashion designs with the testimonies of a forced labour survivor from Nepal and a camp survivor from the Uyghur community. [Watch](#) the recording.

Zooming in on the plight of the Uyghur people

29.03.2023: While in Brussels, **Jewher Ilham** [presented](#) her second book "Because I have to – the path to survival, the Uyghur Struggle" in the Parliament's Library. The author shared her heart-breaking story of having to leave China and her father behind, in order to get to safety. This sparked a discussion on human rights violations, the persecution of Uyghurs in China, and the ban on products tainted with forced labour. The Chair of Parliament's Delegation for relations with China Reinhard Bütikofer [moderated](#) the exchange.

Spotlight on Sakharov Prize laureates at the Oscars

12.03.2023: This year's Oscars had a more political tone, with the "[Navalny](#)" film winning the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. You can watch it [here](#). The film had already won the Documentary Audience Award and the Festival Favourite Award at the Sundance Film Festival. **2013 Sakharov Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai** was in attendance, as an executive producer of "Stranger at the Gate," nominated for Best Short Documentary. The film tells the redemption story of a former US marine planning an attack on a mosque in Indiana.

KEEPING UP WITH THE SAKHAROV COMMUNITY ELSEWHERE

All is not well on the Eastern front

01.03.2023: **2022 Sakharov Prize and Nobel laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk** addressed on 1 March the EP Sub-committee on Human Rights, focussing on illegally imprisoned Ukrainian civilians. Matviichuk also took part in a public discussion organised by Parliament's Office in Malta. She highlighted again Putin regime's disregard for human life and human rights. The [Sustainable Peace Manifesto](#) she has co-authored, brings her message to the point: "We cannot achieve peace at the expense of justice or justice at the expense of peace."

Human Rights Centre Memorial in Russia: targeted, raided, persecuted

21.03.2023: Early in the morning, Russian authorities brutally [raided](#) the homes of [nine employees](#) of **2009 Sakharov Prize laureate Memorial** and the organisation's Moscow office, alleging they engage in "[rehabilitating Nazism](#)". Memorial's co-chair, **Oleg Orlov**, was [charged](#) with repeatedly violating Russia's law against "discrediting the army". **Vice-President Heidi Hautala**, responsible for the Sakharov Community, [called](#) the charges absurd and insisted Russia must start respecting international law. **2022 Sakharov Prize laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk** similarly expressed her support on [Twitter](#).

China clears its streets for "stability" purposes: Hu Jia under house arrest

01.03.2023: In Beijing, it's that time of the year again. Ahead of the meeting of the National People's Congress in mid-March, Chinese authorities intensified 'stability maintenance' measures to stamp out the smallest of inklings of political discontent. If not imprisoned already, dissidents who may stir trouble are put under house arrest or escorted on out-of-town "trips" by plain-clothed police officers. Among them is **2008 Sakharov Prize laureate Hu Jia**. He has been [cut off from communication with the outside world](#) and is unable to leave his house. This also happened to him in the run-up to the [2022 Beijing Winter Olympics](#).

The junta in Myanmar prepares the "playing field" ahead of elections

28.03.2023: Democracy in Myanmar suffered another blow. The military-appointed election commission [dissolved](#) 40 political parties, including the popular National League for Democracy led by **Aung San Suu Kyi**. **EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell** [condemned](#) the anti-democratic move. General elections were scheduled for August of this year, but the junta postponed them for six months. **UN Special Rapporteur** on human rights in Myanmar **Tom Andrews**, called on election monitoring groups not to offer technical support for these elections, so as not to legitimise the regime.

BELARUS: OVERACHIEVING ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Civil society in the crosshairs

28.02.2023: Nationwide crackdowns on civil society restrict accurate information on the state of human rights in the country, for its citizens and the global community. Recently, the Belarussian authorities qualified the **2004 Sakharov Prize laureate Belarusian Association of Journalists** as an [extremist formation](#).

Latest persecutions of human rights defenders

03.03.2023: The Belarussian regime once again showed flagrant disregard for human rights when a court [sentenced](#) to ten years in prison and a hefty fine the **2020 Sakharov Prize and Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski**. The head of "Viasna" was found guilty of "smuggling" and "grossly violating public order." Viasna activists **Valiantsin Stefanovic**, **Uladzimir Labkovich**, and **Mitser Salauyou** also received long prison terms. President **Roberta Metsola** [called](#) for their immediate release.

Celebrating International Women's Day in its own style

06.03.2023: Just in time for Women's day, a Belarussian Court [sentenced in absentia](#) **2020 Sakharov Prize laureate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya** to 15 years in prison, on charges of high treason and forming an "extremist" group. The European Parliament [condemns](#) in the strongest terms these politically motivated trials. Tsikhanouskaya continues to oppose the

Minsk regime. On the 1 March, she [attended](#) a meeting of the EP Delegation for Belarus and outlined how the EP could support further the cause of democratic Belarus. After their October 2022 [meeting](#), Tsikhanouskaya [met](#) again President Metsola on 24 March.

Seven and counting... EP adopts a new resolution on Belarus

15.03.2023: The [European Parliament remains supportive](#) of the Belarussian democratic opposition and human rights defenders, adopting its 7th [resolution](#) on Belarus since the 2020 fraudulent presidential elections. Parliament reiterates its solidarity with the people of Belarus and calls for the unconditional release of all political prisoners.

EP urgency resolution

16.03.2023: The EP expressed strong concern about the mistreatment of women, especially the poisoning of schoolgirls in [Iran](#), and requested an independent inquiry into the matter. It also urged the Commission and Member States to offer more support to Iranian civil society and simplify the process of granting visas and asylum to people leaving Iran, with a special focus on women and girls. Regarding the recent assaults on freedom of expression and association in [Tunisia](#), the EP criticized the widespread persecution of journalists, judges, lawyers, political activists, and trade unionists, and demanded the immediate release of all those held without charge. Concerning the case of the [Cambodian](#) opposition leader Kem Sokha, the EP condemned the government's persecution of opposition figures, calling for Sokha's immediate and unconditional release. It also called on the Commission to aid local civil society and human rights defenders.