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Sakharov Prize

Azerbaijani human rights defender Leyla Yunus makes shortlist for EU freedom of thought prize

Azerbaijani human rights defender Leyla Yunus has been included on the shortlist of three finalists for this year's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, following a vote in the European Parliament last night (1). Leyla Yunus was nominated for the prize by the Greens/EFA group. After the vote, Green foreign affairs spokespersons **Barbara Lochbihler** and **Tamas Meszerics** stated:

"Including Leyla Yunus on the shortlist for this year's Sakharov Prize is an official recognition by the European Parliament of her outstanding fight for human rights in her country. The Greens/EFA group nominated Leyla Yunus for the EU's freedom of thought award because we believe she symbolises that which the prize intends to recognise.

"Leyla Yunus was arrested in July, alongside her husband Arif Yunus, on outrageous, politically motivated charges. This vote, which comes a few weeks after a strong European Parliament resolution condemning the brutal crack-down against civil society by the repressive Azerbaijani regime (2), ensures the European Parliament is sending a clear message of support to Leyla Yunus and all other human rights activists in the country. We call for the immediate release of Leyla Yunus and all political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

"The EU institutions and Member States cannot put energy considerations before values in their engagement with Azerbaijan, especially when negotiating a Strategic Modernisation Agreement."

(1) The Sakharov Prize is an award conferred annually by the European Parliament on individuals who combat fanaticism, intolerance or oppression. Political groups of the European Parliament can make one nomination for the award. The Parliament's foreign affairs, development and human rights committees today voted to select a shortlist of 3 of the nominated candidates. The final decision will be taken by the Parliament's conference of presidents in October. More details:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00f3dd2249/Sakharov-Prize-for-Freedom-of-Thought.html>

(2) The resolution can be found at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2014-0022&language=EN&ring=P8-RC-2014-0090>

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Responsible MEPs



Barbara Lochbihler

Member



Tamás Meszerics

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