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Greens congratulate Sotoudeh and Panahi for Sakharov Prize

EP stands beside the Iranian people

Representataives of Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate Nasrin Sotoudeh and Iranian film director, screenwriter and film editor Jafar Panahi accepted the "Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought" in the European parliament today. Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi are an example for all those concerned with human rights around the world. They have put the freedom of others before their own, and have refused to shy away from even the harshest repression against them.

- Find out more about the winners here

Iranian Human Rights activists Ms Shirin Ebadi and Mr Karim Lahidji, and daughter of Jafar Panahi , Ms Solmaz Panahi met with the Greens/EFA group last night before accepting the prize today. We hope that the Sakharov prize sends an encouraging signal to the entire civil society in Iran, that the European Union is watching and is close by your side.





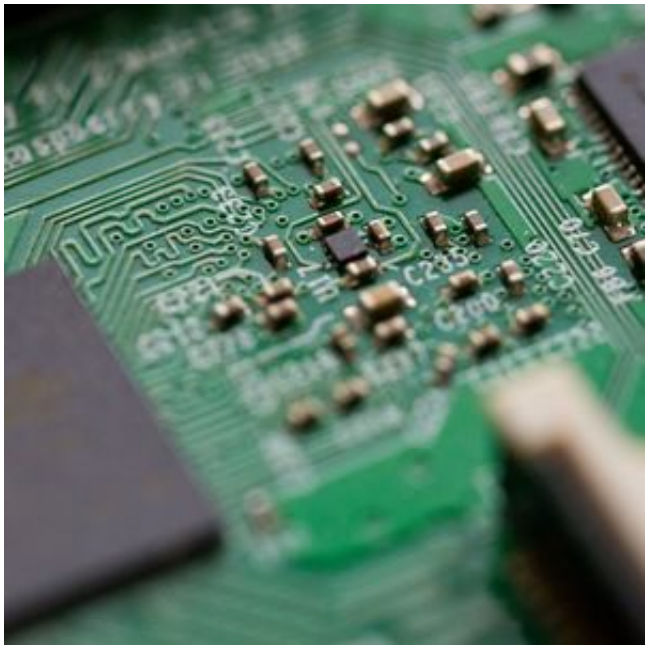
The award is a symbol of Europe's commitment to freedom of thought which is underlined by the memory of the Soviet scientist and public intellectual, Andrey Sakharov. Sakharov himself saw a direct link between freedom of thought and dialogue between countries. Building on this, Green MEP and chairwoman of the EP's Iran delegation, Tarja Cronberg commented: *"I salute Sotoudeh and Panahi for their courage and their desire to have freedom of thought in Iran. I think with this symbolic prize, the European Parliment should build a strong, frank, and open dialogue with Iran and its people"* It is regrettable that these inspiring laureates were unable to accept the prize in person. Looking to the future, Green MEP and chairwoman of the EP's Human Rights committee Barbara Lochbihler is convinced that change will happen in Iran: *"It was in Tehran that the "Arab Spring" actually started, when thousands of courageous citizens took to the streets after the controversial 2009 elections. I am optimistic, therefore, and looking forward to personally congratulating Ms Sotoudeh and Mr Panahi at a later moment in time."* The next presidential and city council elections will be held in Iran in June 2013. Cronberg and Lochbihler believe it is now crucial to get international election observers in the country. This could be an important opportunity towards fair elections. Find out more about Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate Nasrin Sotoudeh and Iranian film director, screenwriter and film editor Jafar Panahi here

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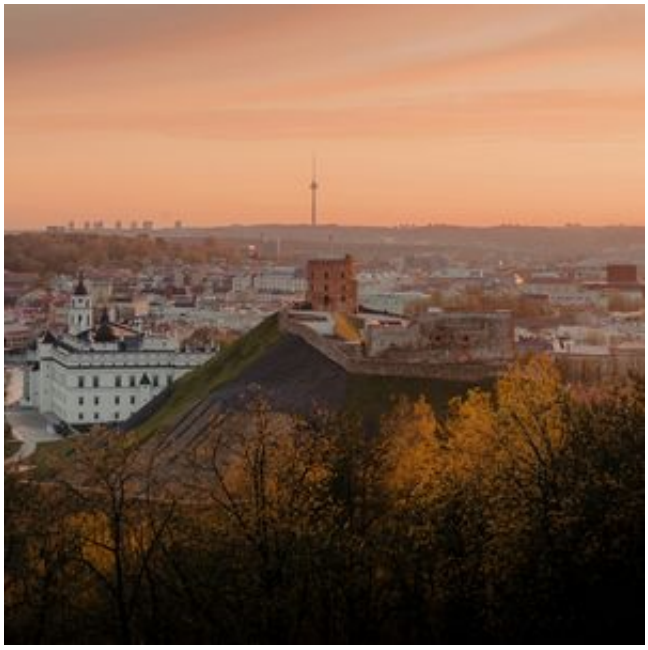
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