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## **Well deserved prize for human rights defender Ilham Tohti**

### **Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**

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On Ilham Tohti, this year's winner of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, **Reinhard Bütikofer** Coordinator of the Greens/EFA Group in the Committee on Foreign Affairs) comments:

"Sakharov Prize recipient Ilham Tohti is turning 50 today. We hope that the dedication of the Sakharov Prize will lighten up Ilham's 50th birthday at least for his family. As his family has not been able to contact him since 2017, nobody knows when or if at all he will learn that he was been chosen for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought yesterday.

"Greens/EFA have supported and do welcome this choice. Ilham Tohti is the paradigmatic non-violent prisoner of conscience who has been jailed for life just for speaking up on behalf of Uyghur minority in China, even after being sentenced he has held on to his consistent approach of trying to build bridges between Han Chinese and the Uyghur minority.

"With its decision for Ilham Tohti the European Parliament has also shown a light on the terrible situation in which China's Uyghur minority finds itself. Xinjiang has been turned into the worst police state we find on earth today. The European Parliament has at the same time signalled that thirty years after the Tiananmen massacre we are not forgetting about all the Chinese citizens that continue standing up for their civic and human rights. The European Parliament will always show solidarity with them."

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