Press release | 16.12.2009

Sakharov Prize

Sakharov Prize recognises all human rights defenders in Russia

Commenting on today's award of the EU Parliament Sakharov prize for Freedom of Thought, Greens/EFA Co-Presidents **Rebecca Harms** and **Daniel Cohn-Bendit** said:

"The award of this year's Sakharov prize to Russian human rights organisation Memorial and to activists Ludmila Alexeyeva, Oleg Orlov und Sergey Kovalev sends a strong and much needed message on human rights in Russia, while recognising the exceptional people who defend them.

We are also delighted that the Greens/EFA initiative to nominate Memorial has led to this award. The deteriorating human rights situation in Russia gives cause for grave concern. Our thoughts go towards Anna Politkovskaya, Natalia Estemirova and all who have paid a terrible price for their engagement and defence of human rights in Russia."

Finnish Green MEP **Heidi Hautala**, who is chair of the EP human rights subcommittee and EP rapporteur on the protection of human rights activists, commented:

"As we celebrate the legacy of Andrei Sakharov and this year's courageous laureates of the prize that bears his name, the EU is in dire need of re-evaluating its principles. The EU has gradually allowed its human rights policy to be replaced with cold pragmatism, an approach that has little by little abandoned human rights defenders in Russia. Today the EU can take a first step back towards truly upholding Sakharov's values. If we do not live by our values, we have none."

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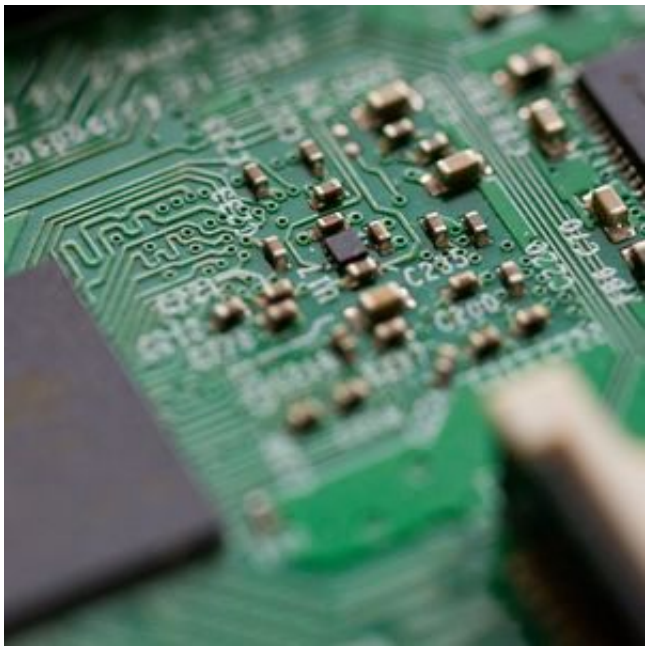


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