Press release | 15.10.2015

Saudi Arabia/human rights

Raif Badawi chosen on shortlist for Sakharov Prize 2015

The shortlist for the 2015 Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought was today selected by the European Parliament's foreign affairs, development and human rights committees (1). The shortlist includes Saudi Arabian online activist Raif Badawi, who was nominated by the Greens/EFA group for this year's prize. Commenting after the vote, Green human rights spokesperson **Barbara Lochbihler** stated:

"The selection of Raif Badawi for the shortlist of this year's Sakharov Prize is deserved recognition of his role in pushing greater human rights in Saudi Arabia and a support for freedom of expression in the country. In addition to recognising his role, our nomination of Raif Badawi and his selection, aims to put the spotlight on the appalling human rights record of Saudi Arabia and to put pressure on the regime to release Raif Badawi and all other imprisoned activists, as called for by the European Parliament in a resolution in February of this year.

"The nomination is also a signal to the EU and its member states to stop turning a blind eye to rights abuses in Saudi Arabia. It is important that the EU looks to strengthen civil society in Saudi Arabia, as well as pushing for prison visits and the observation of trials. The EU is founded on the promotion of human rights, also in its engagement with third countries; geopolitical interests and trade policy cannot be an excuse for the EU to ignore abuses in countries with which it engages."

(1) The other nominees are Russian activist Boris Nemtsov and the democratic opposition in Venezuela. The laureate will be announced on 29 October. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sakharovprize/en/home/the-prize.html

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Barbara Lochbihler

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