Press release | 29.10.2015

Saudi Arabia/human rights

Raif Badawi awarded Sakharov Prize

The 2015 Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought has been awarded to Saudi Arabian online activist Raif Badawi, who was nominated by the Greens/EFA group for this year's prize. The decision was taken in today's Conference of Presidents of the political groups in the European Parliament, based on a shortlist of 3 nominations (1). Welcoming the decision, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** stated:

"In awarding Raif Badawi this year's Sakharov Prize, the European Parliament is giving deserved recognition to his bravery in pushing for greater public debate in Saudi Arabia. We would urge the Saudi authorities to take heed of the vote. The Greens/EFA group nominated Raif Badawi for this year's prize both to recognise his important role as an advocate of freedom of expression but also to put the spotlight on the appalling human rights record of Saudi Arabia and put pressure on the regime to release Raif Badawi and all other imprisoned activists. With reports that Badawi is set to endure renewed public flogging, this signal of support from Europe must force a rethink on this barbaric punishment. The world is watching."

Greens/EFA co-president **Philippe Lamberts** added:

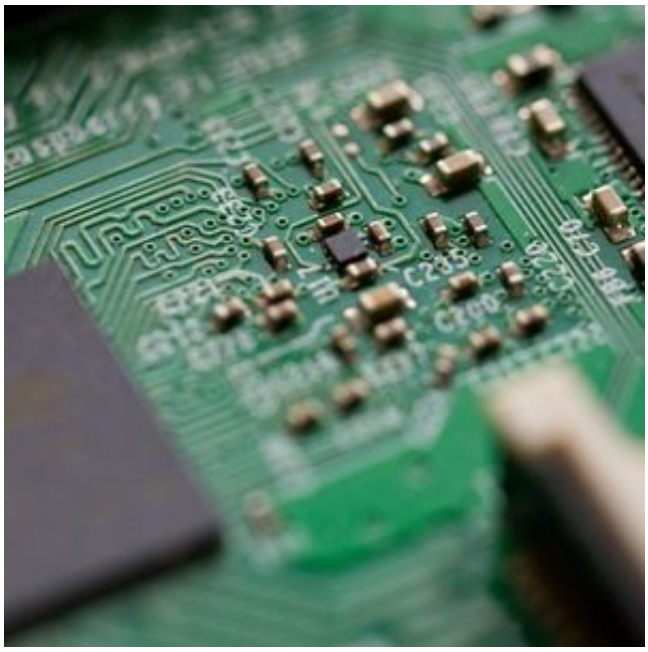
"The decision to award the Sakharov Prize to Raif Badawi is not only recognition of his role in promoting political and social debate in Saudi Arabia, it is also a signal of support for freedom of expression in the country. This decision should also be a signal to the EU and its member states to stop turning a blind eye to rights abuses in Saudi Arabia. It is important that the EU looks to strengthen civil society there, 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) More on the 2015 Sakharov Prize
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sakharovprize/en/home/the-prize.html

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Rebecca Harms

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Philippe Lamberts

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