

## Sakharov Prize 2016 Award Ceremony

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Ladies and gentlemen  
Dear colleagues

It is a real honour for the European Parliament to welcome Nadia Murad and Lamyia Haji Bashar, our 2016 Sakharov Prize Laureates, two incredible women who fight for their community, the Yazidis.

Before anything else I would invite you to watch a short video.

We are proud to have you here with us today and to pay tribute to the Yazidi people, to one of the most ancient human communities and religions in the history of mankind.

Let me warmly welcome your families and friends.

It is also our honour to welcome to the ceremony today Can Dündar and Mustafa Dzhemilev, who were both finalists for the 2016 Sakharov Prize.

Mr Can Dündar was editor in chief of the leading independent Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, and was detained under false accusations, including espionage, simply for exercising his journalistic freedoms.

Mustafa Dzhemilev, who is now an elected member of the Ukrainian parliament, has dedicated his life to a nonviolent struggle in support of minorities, particularly the Tatar minority in Ukraine. He is a former Chair of the Crimean Tatar Parliament and was lucky enough to be a friend of Andrei Sakharov, who himself paid the ultimate price for his belief in the freedom of expression.

This ceremony is also a moment for us to recall the situation of our last year's laureate, Raïf Badawi, and to call again on the Saudi authorities to release him.

Ladies and Gentleman,  
Dear colleagues,

Nadia (Murad) and Lamyia (Haji Bashar), we believe you are heroes.

You survived captivity, unspeakable atrocities and exile. You overcame fear and pain.

You have finally found shelter and protection in Europe, but you did not stop there.

You stood up in dignity to fight for those who are left behind, for justice and against impunity.

Nadia, you once said: "Telling my story and reliving the horrors I encountered is no easy task, but the world must know."

I cannot even put into words the courage this sentence represents.

Today, as we recognise both of you with this Prize, we celebrate core values of the EU: freedom of belief and freedom of thought.

Nadia used to live in a quiet agricultural village of Kocho in Iraq, where Christians and Muslims lived peacefully as neighbours. On 15 August 2014, Daesh slaughtered all the males in Nadia's village, while women and children were enslaved.

In November 2014, Nadia Murad managed to escape to Germany.

Lamya Haji Bashar risked her life. She escaped through the front lines of war. She was injured by a landmine explosion.

Since their recovery, Nadia and Lamya have been raising awareness about the plight of the Yazidis, defending women and minorities' rights, campaigning against human trafficking and for the recognition of the genocide against their people.

Europe has a special responsibility. After the Holocaust we decried: Never again. Never again does not only mean commemoration of the past, but also a duty for the present and future to protect persecuted people.

We see cities in shambles and children buried in the rubble of war.

We see entire villages eradicated from the face of the earth, the men killed, the children and women abducted for worse to come.

We, the democratic community, living in more prosperous parts of the world are not offering them protection.

This is a source of shame. This is unbearable.

It is your merit to remind us of our duty, by telling your story.

Nadia you said: the world must know. Yes the world must know. And allow me to add: The world must act.

The European Parliament supports your request to the United Nations Security Council. No perpetrators have been charged yet for crimes against the Yazidi. The International Criminal Court has to investigate the crimes committed by Daesh.

Nadia and Lamya, your battle is our battle and I am proud to honour you on behalf of the European Parliament with this Prize today.

**For further information:**

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