

Honourable President Sassoli,

The fight for democracy in Belarus has reached a turning point, where we have to raise our voices even further and increase hundredfold our actions. In recent Parliament resolutions on Belarus, we have made many important points, but now, after more than 120 days of continuous protests have passed, the time has come to implement our policy. The Parliament has the authority and historic responsibility to act in cooperation with the European Commission and European External Action Service.

We must do everything in our power to support the new institutions of Democratic Belarus and actively engage with them.

The European Parliament for many years is active and determined to defend human rights and promote the legitimate interests of the ones, who are fighting for democracy. Now we have this fight at our doorstep. Our support for those, who fight for democracy, human rights, free elections is the first priority for our House. The European Parliament, in this context, has a powerful instrument, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which, since 1988, has been awarded to human rights activists and opposition movements from different regions of the world. The Prize throughout these years has become a tangible and recognizable tool in promoting the idea of human rights and freedom all around the world and helped to increase the European Parliament's role in this process. The prize has also become more and more important from one year to another by presenting to the world the example of its laureates and helping them being heard in many regions of the globe. It's enough to mention names like Nelson Mandela, Adem Demaçi, Nurit Peled-Elhanan or Dr Denis Mukwege to present the great variety and significance of awarded individuals.

In 2013 our House has decided to create the Sakharov Prize Community in order to support Sakharov laureates, develop contacts between them and encourage joint activities. With the same objective we have created a fellowship programme for young human rights defenders.

Now, it is time for the European Parliament to make a next, bold step and to equip the Sakharov Prize Community with an office and administrative means in order to help them conduct a real coordination in promoting human rights and values of democracy. Such a Sakharov Prize Community Office of the European Parliament, for a year, until the next award cycle, would provide all necessary assistance for the Prize Laureates to have a proper capacity to act internationally. The Office will be offering a platform to unite the efforts of many of Sakharov Prize Laureates in our joint fight for democracy and against all authoritarian regimes.

Therefore, we, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, truly believe and with this letter, are asking you, Mr President, to make a brave step in this process and to create a Sakharov Prize Community Office, which would follow-up with the award of 2020 and till the end of 2021, would be titled and serve as Democratic Belarus Representation Office (DBRO), a symbol of freedom and unity against dictatorships, and will be the main gateway with the necessary EU credentials to represent the new Belarus.

By such a place, all Sakharov Prize winners will actually be able to carry out bold projects on the defence of human rights in Europe and around the world, the Sakharov Prize Community will be able to work more effectively and closely with MEPs and EU institutions in the field of freedom of thought and human rights promotion.

In view of the rising dictatorships and deepening crisis of democratic and humanistic values in the world, in particular, in Belarus and Russia, it is of utmost importance that efforts and work to overcome these difficulties be carried out with a united strategy, regularly and on a daily basis, as now we see in the streets and courtyards of Belarus. The EU and the EP especially have to be a leading force in the Europe's efforts to deliver real change and defending the values of the Sakharov Prize.

We believe that the upcoming Sakharov Prize ceremony of 2020, which will be devoted to representatives of Democratic Belarus, is a great opportunity to make and announce this decision. With the new Belarus, we will open a new wave of democracy, which will be sweeping the remaining authoritarian regimes of our century. We will win, if we will act together!

Kind regards,

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