

The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize



The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize is awarded each year by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in partnership with the Czech Government, the Václav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation to reward outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond.

■ Candidates should have made a real difference to the human rights situation of a given group, been instrumental in uncovering systemic violations on a large scale, or have successfully mobilised public opinion or the international community for a given cause. The Prize consists of a sum of €60,000, a trophy and a diploma.

■ Launched on 25 March 2013 in Prague, the Prize is awarded in memory of Václav Havel, playwright, opponent of totalitarianism, architect of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, President of

Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic and an enduring symbol of opposition to despotism.

The award ceremony

■ The Prize is awarded at a ceremony which takes place in Strasbourg on the Monday of the Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, usually in late September or early October. The name of the Prizewinner is announced by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Conference in honour of the Prizewinner

■ The Václav Havel Library organises, at a later date, an international conference in Prague in honour of the Prizewinner.

<http://assembly.coe.int>

THE PRIZEWINNERS



**Ales
Bialiatski**
2013 Prizewinner

On 30 September 2013, the Prize was awarded to human rights activist Ales Bialiatski (Belarus).

For many years Mr Bialiatski has fought in Belarus to assist victims of political repression and to spread information worldwide on human rights violations in the country. He is Chairman of the Human Rights Centre Viasna, which he set up in 1996, and – since 2007 – Vice-President of the International Federation on Human Rights. Mr Bialiatski was imprisoned in 2011 following a trial unanimously condemned by the international community and was released in June 2014.

As Mr Bialiatski was in detention at the time of the ceremony, the prize was presented to his wife, Natalia Pinchuk.

Presenting the Prize, PACE President Jean-Claude Mignon, chair of the selection

panel, said: “In his daily struggle against violations of human rights, injustice, arbitrariness and authoritarianism, Ales Bialiatski has worked ceaselessly so that the citizens of Belarus may one day aspire to our European standards.”



Anar Mammadli

2014 Prizewinner



On September 2014, the Prize was awarded to human rights defender Anar Mammadli (Azerbaijan).

■ Mr Mammadli is the founder and chairperson of an influential and experienced organisation in Azerbaijan dedicated to observing elections. Since 2001, his Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre (EMDS) has been carrying out independent election monitoring in Azerbaijan. He was arrested in December 2013 on charges of “abuse of power” and other matters, and sentenced to five and a half years in prison in May 2014. He was released from prison in March 2016.

■ As Mr Mammadli was in detention in September 2014, the Prize was presented to his father, Asaf Mammadov.

■ Presenting the Prize, PACE President Anne Brasseur, chair of the selection panel,

said: “Mr Mammadli’s commitment lies in the area of promoting democratic institutions and civil and political rights. Annar Mammadli is our long-standing partner who shared with our Assembly, but also with other bodies of the Council of Europe, including its Commissioner for Human Rights, his valuable expertise on the situation in his country.”





Ludmilla Alexeeva

2015 Prizewinner

On 28 September 2015, the Prize was awarded to human rights defender Ludmilla Alexeeva (Russia).

Ms Alexeeva is an eminent human rights defender in Russia. In her youth, she gave up a promising academic career to join the Soviet dissident movement, going on to become a founding member of the Moscow Helsinki Group. Forced to emigrate to the US in 1977, she returned to Russia in 1989 to continue her work, becoming President of the International Helsinki Foundation and later joining the Russian President's Commission on Human Rights. She has worked relentlessly for the protection and promotion of the rule of law.

Presenting the Prize, PACE President Anne Brasseur, chair of the selection panel, said: "Ludmilla Alexeeva has inspired many generations of activists in Russia, but also abroad, to commit themselves to the struggle for justice. During the decades of her work, Ms Alexeeva was persecuted

and threatened, she lost her employment and she had to leave her country in order to continue to speak out about human rights violations in the Soviet Union. Today she chairs the Moscow Helsinki Group, an organisation that often faces a hostile environment as a free-thinking NGO, but nonetheless continues to denounce human rights violations and offers help to victims. I am honoured to see Ms Alexeeva in this hemicycle today, and I applaud her life-long commitment."



Nadia Murad

2016 Prizewinner



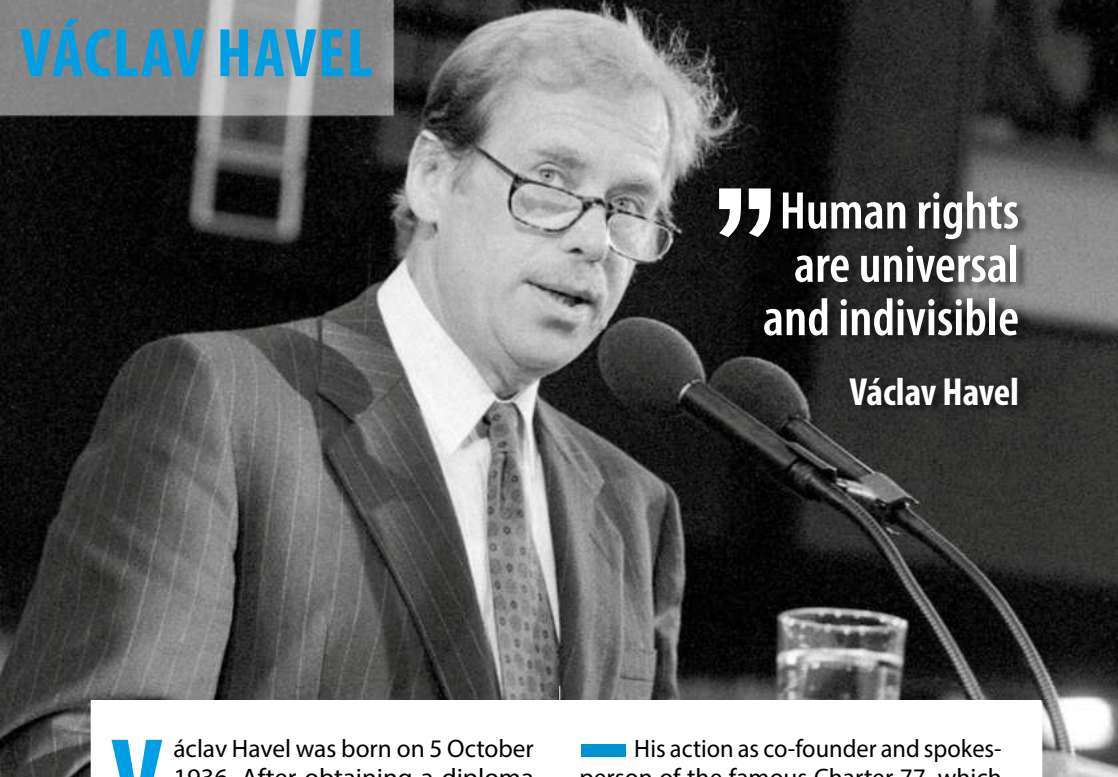
On 10 October 2016, the Prize was awarded to Nadia Murad, a Yazidi human rights activist (Iraq).

At the age of 21, Nadia Murad was kidnapped by ISIS in northern Iraq together with thousands of other women and children. She was kept in slavery and abused for three months until she managed to escape and flee to Germany. Since then, she has become a human rights activist, bringing the plight of the Yazidi community, in particular the forced sexual enslavement and human trafficking of women and children captured by ISIS, to the forefront of international attention. She was a candidate for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize. That same year, she was appointed as the first United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking and received the Sakharov Prize awarded by the European Parliament.

Presenting the Prize, PACE President Pedro Agramunt, chair of the selection

panel, said: "This year would have marked the 80th anniversary of Václav Havel. He is not with us any more, but his legacy is more relevant than ever". "In times when we are facing renewed challenges to the unity of Europe, when diversity is becoming a dividing element, and people are starting to look at each other with suspicion and mistrust, we must turn back to his message".





” Human rights
are universal
and indivisible

Václav Havel

Václav Havel was born on 5 October 1936. After obtaining a diploma from the Higher Technical College in Prague thanks to evening classes, his passion for the theatre caught up with him towards the end of the 1950s. Theatre was for him a means of expressing and furthering his democratic ideals.

Opposition following the repression of the Prague Spring

■ In 1971 his works were officially banned. But it was at the time of the repression of the Prague Spring in 1968, following the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops, that his action took on another dimension. The international community was struck by this dissident, in particular after the open letter he addressed to President Gustav Husák in 1975 in which he denounced the situation of society and the responsibility of the political regime.

■ His action as co-founder and spokesperson of the famous Charter 77, which called for the respect of human rights, resulted in multiple stints in prison.

Velvet Revolution and a country in transition

■ The fall of the communist regime brought an end to the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia after the events of the Velvet Revolution, from 16 November to 29 December 1989. Unanimously supported by the tide of opinion, Václav Havel was invested as President of the Czechoslovak Republic. He is therefore one of the very rare heads of State to have come to power without having sought the office. He implemented the necessary reforms in the administration of his country to ensure its transition to a market economy.

■ Václav Havel stood down as President in July 1992, as he was opposed to the prospect of separation of Czechs and Slovaks. However, in September of the same year, an agreement was reached with the government, which led to his re-election in January 1993 as President of the independent Czech Republic. He held this office until 2003.

■ The Czech Republic became a member State of the Council of Europe on 30 June 1993. The same year, Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, participated in the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of Member States of the Council of Europe, held on 8 October in Vienna. In his address, with reference to the Council of Europe, he said that it "exists to cultivate the values from which the spirit and ethos of European integration might grow, and to ensure that these values are embodied in international legal standards. If, as I contend, the main task of Europe today is to grasp the spirit of its own unification, to understand the moral obligations that flow from that, to assume genuinely, and not just superficially a new type of responsibility for itself, then the Council of Europe can play a unique and indispensable role in carrying out this complex task."

■ In 1995, at the inauguration of the new headquarters of the European Court of Human Rights, Václav Havel voiced the hope that "human reason, decency, solidarity and preparedness to seek understanding and to live together in fairness will triumph over everything which threatens them. I have no doubt that the Council of Europe and its various institutions, including those to reside in this building, will make a major contribution towards achieving this not by using instruments of power, which it does not



have, but by pursuing further the great endeavour which it undertook several decades ago, that is, by continuing to promote, intensify and spread a good spirit of cooperation among nations."

■ After having played a vital role in the reunification of Europe, divided by the Cold War, Václav Havel was in favour of his country's rapid accession to the European Union, which took place in 2004.

■ Despite failing health, Václav Havel pursued his fight for human rights in Cuba, Belarus, Burma and Russia. He also returned to his first love with the publication of his political memoirs in 2006 and a further play "Leaving" in 2008.

■ Václav Havel died on 18 December 2011.

Sources :

<http://www.touteleurope.eu>

http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/apce/vaclav-havel-human-rights-prize

TIMELINE AND PROCEDURE

January

1
Call
for nominations



At least
5 sponsors

April

2
Deadline
for nominations

August

3
First meeting of the
Selection Panel in Prague



3 nominees
shortlisted

October

4
Second meeting of
the Selection Panel in
Strasbourg



Decision on
the Prizewinner

5
Plenary Session
of the Assembly



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This brochure presents Václav Havel, his life and his achievements, and the winners of the prize created in his memory.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of representatives from the 47 national parliaments, provides a forum for debate and proposals on Europe's social and political issues. Many Council of Europe conventions originate from the Assembly, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

