

Beat: Politics

European Parliament honors Jina Mahsa Amini and Iranian women protesters

As a tribute to all defiant women

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USPA NEWS - The European Parliament 2023 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought has been awarded to Jina Mahsa Amini and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran, in a ceremony on December 12, 2023. The laureates were represented by Saleh Nikbakht, academic and lawyer representing Jina Mahsa Amini's family; and Afsoon Najafi and Mersedeh Shahinkar, Iranian women's rights defenders who left Iran in 2023.

Opening the award ceremony, President Metsola declared that "this years' Sakharov prize for Freedom of Thought, awarded to Jina Masha Amini and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, serves as a tribute to all the brave and defiant women, men and young people in Iran, who despite coming under increasing pressure, are continuing the fight for their rights and push for change. The European Parliament hears you and supports you. You are not alone.?"

Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman, was arrested by police in Tehran on September 13, 2022, for allegedly ignoring Iran's strict veiling laws. She died in hospital three days later after physical abuse suffered while in custody. Her death sparked massive women-led protests across the country. Under the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom", women have been protesting since her death against the hijab rules and other discriminatory laws.

On their way to France to receive the EP 2023 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, on December 8, 2023, Jina Mahsa Amini's parents and brother were stopped at Tehran airport by the Iranian authorities, and their passports confiscated. They are now subject to a travel ban. On Saturday, Roberta Metsola, called on "the Iranian regime to reverse its decision."

The family was represented in Strasbourg by their lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, who read a message from Jina Mahsa Amini's mother, Mozghan Eftekhari, during the ceremony: "Jina's grief is eternal to me, and she is undying for people all over the world. I firmly believe that her name, beside that of Joan of Arc, will remain a symbol of freedom. From the birthplace of eternal Jina, I convey to you my and my family's endless gratitude and I hope that you will stand firm and proud by your choice. Let us hope that no voice will fear the pronouncement of liberty."

Following the Iranian regime's brutal crackdown on these protests, the European Parliament has repeatedly condemned the dire human rights situation in the country. In October 2022, MEPs called for sanctions against Iranian officials involved in both Jina Mahsa Amini's death and the regime's repression. In January 2023, MEPs demanded more sanctions against the Iranian regime and for the EU to place the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on its terrorist list. In November 2023, Parliament adopted a resolution on the latest attacks against women and women's rights defenders, and the arbitrary detention of EU nationals, and calling for the creation of an EU task force to support the Sakharov and Nobel Prize laureates.

Established in 1988, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named in honor of Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, is awarded each year by the European Parliament to honor individuals and organizations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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