

Russian Lawyer Wins Norwegian Human Rights Prize

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Pavel Chikov

OSLO — A Norwegian human rights foundation gave its annual prize on Thursday to a Russian lawyer and the legal aid group he heads, for their work defending the right to fair trial.

Pavel Chikov, 36, and the Agora group were selected for helping activists, bloggers, journalists and nongovernmental organizations against the unlawful actions of Russian government agencies, Norway's Rafto Foundation said.

Agora also documents abuses of power, compiles reports detailing human rights abuses and focuses its attention on regions that seldom receive media coverage, the foundation said.

Four past Rafto laureates — Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, East Timor's Jose Ramos-Horta, South Korea's Kim Dae-jung and Iran's Shirin Ebadi — later went on to win Nobel Peace Prizes.

"The award is a recognition of [Agora's] relentless and professional work to defend the right to fair trial and other human rights in a Russia where organizations and individuals are subjected to increasing pressure from the country's authorities," Rafto said in its citation.

"The situation of human rights organizations is so precarious in Russia today that Agora is unable to accept the prize money awarded along with the Rafto Prize."

The 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner will be announced on Oct. 10 in Oslo.

The Rafto Prize, awarded yearly since 1987, comes with \$20,000 and is presented in November in the western Norwegian city of Bergen.

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