The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

European Parliament Awards Sakharov Prize to Jailed Ukrainian Filmmaker Sentsov

October 25, 2018

Oleg Sentsov / AP / TASS

The European Parliament has awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, jailed in Russia on terrorism charges.

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, commonly known as the Sakharov Prize, honors individuals and groups of people who "have dedicated their lives to the defense of human rights and freedom of thought." It is named after Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, a nuclear physicist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975 for his efforts to stand up for civil rights.

Related article: Why Oleg Sentsov's Hunger Strike Ended (Op-ed)

A native Crimean, Sentsov, 42, is currently in the third year of a 20-year sentence at a Russian penal colony north of the Arctic Circle.

He was arrested alongside left-wing activist Alexander Kolchenko less than two months after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and accused of setting fires to the unofficial offices of the ruling United Russia party and plotting to detonate a Lenin statue.

Sentsov has denied any wrongdoing and has said the charges against him are politically motivated.

In October, Sentsov ended a 145-day hunger strike after releasing a statement saying that Russian doctors planned to feed him against his will. He launched the hunger strike to demand the release of 64 Ukrainians who he considers to be political prisoners detained in Russia.

European Parliament President Antonio Tajani told the legislature in Strasbourg that the award recognized Sentsov's courage. Saying he was in poor health after his hunger strike, Tajani added: "We call upon the authorities to release him immediately."

Reuters contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/10/25/european-parliament-awards-sakharov-prize-to-jailed-ukrainian-filmmaker-sentsov-a63302