[Article – Ilham Tohti wins 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought](#)

Ilham Tohti
2019 Sakharov Prize laureate

The winner was chosen by Parliament's political leaders on 24 October 2019.

Announcing the laureate, Parliament President David Sassoli said: "I am very pleased to announce that the European Parliament has chosen Ilham Tohti as the winner of the 2019 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Tohti has dedicated his life to advocating for the rights of the Uyghur minority in China. Despite being a voice of moderation and reconciliation, he was sentenced to life in prison following a show trial in 2014.

"By awarding this prize, we strongly urge the Chinese government to release Tohti and we call for the respect of minority rights in China."

About the winner

Tohti is a proponent of dialogue and advocate for the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China. In 2014, he was sentenced to life imprisonment on separatism-related charges. Despite this, he remains a voice of moderation and reconciliation. Since 2017, more than one million Uyghurs have been detained in a network of internment camps.

Award ceremony

The prize, consisting of a certificate and €50,000, will be awarded during a

ceremony in the Parliament in Strasbourg on 18 December 2019.

The finalists

Brazilian human rights defenders and Kenyan students were also among the finalists for this year's Sakharov Prize. They will be invited to December's award ceremony tpp/

[Find out more about the other finalists.](#)

More on the Sakharov Prize

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named in honour of the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, has been awarded annually since 1988 to individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Last year the prize was awarded to the Ukrainian filmmaker [Oleg Sentsov](#).

Find out how the Sakharov Prize laureate is chosen in our [infographic](#).