

Article – Sakharov Prize 2020: the nominees



Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is a teacher, human rights activist and politician who after her husband's arrest participated in the 2020 Belarusian presidential election as the main opposition candidate. Alexander Lukashenko was officially declared the winner in a contest marred by allegations of widespread electoral fraud and Tsikhanouskaya, after asking for a recount of the votes had to flee to Lithuania in fear of imprisonment. In response to the allegations of electoral fraud, large peaceful protests have erupted across the country and were pushed back by the regime with unprecedented violence. Meanwhile, a **Coordination Council** was established to represent the civic nation of Belarus and to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power.

When the Islamic State arrived in Mosul in August 2014, **Mgr Najeeb Moussa Michael, Archbishop of Mosul**, ensured the evacuation of Christians, Syrians and Chaldeans to Iraqi Kurdistan and safeguarded more than 800 historic manuscripts dating from the 13th to the 19th century. These manuscripts were later digitised and exhibited in France and Italy. Since 1990 he has contributed to safeguarding 8,000 more manuscripts and 35,000 documents from the Eastern Church.

The **Guapinol environmental activists** – Porfirio Sorto Cedillo, José Avelino Cedillo, Orbin Naún Hernández, Kevin Alejandro Romero, Arnold Javier Aleman, Ever Alexander Cedillo, Daniel Marquez and Jeremías Martínez Díaz – are

members of the Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods of Tocoa. They are imprisoned for their participation in a peaceful protest camp against a mining company, whose activities had led to contamination of the rivers Guapinol and San Pedro. While other inmates were set free, the Guapinol defenders are still detained and the prosecution has not presented any solid evidence to justify this prolonged detention.

Berta Cáceres, assassinated on March 2016, was a courageous ecologist and prominent land rights activist from the indigenous Lenka community in Honduras. She was co-founder of the Council of Indigenous People of Honduras (COPINH). Over more than two decades, she was fighting against land grabbing, illegal logging and mega-projects. She was awarded the Goldman Environmental Award in 2015.

Polish LGBTI activists **Jakub Gawron**, **Paulina Pajak** and **Paweł Preneta**, **Kamil Maczuga** founded in 2019 the website Atlas of Hate, mapping and monitoring the many local Polish municipalities that had adopted, rejected or had pending “anti-LGBTI resolutions” while spreading information to activists, media and politicians. Today, more than 100 municipalities or local authorities in Poland have declared themselves either “LGBTI-free zones” or adopted so-called Regional Charters of Family Values. In 2020, Gawron, Pajak and Preneta were sued by five of those local municipalities, for damaging their reputation and demanding a public apology and economic compensation to “family-friendly organisations” in the five regions.