



# Three candidates shortlisted for the 2019 Václav Havel Prize

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**The selection panel of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, which rewards outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond, has today announced the shortlist for the 2019 Prize.**

Meeting in Prague today, the panel – made up of independent figures from the world of human rights and chaired by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Liliane Maury Pasquier – decided to shortlist the following three nominees, in alphabetical order:

- Mr Ilham TOHTI (China)

The nominee is a renowned Uyghur public intellectual in China. He has worked for over 20 years to foster dialogue and understanding between Uyghurs and Chinese. In September 2014, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

- Mr Buzurgmehr YOROV (Tajikistan)

The nominee is a human rights lawyer in Tajikistan who has represented, for nearly 20 years, individuals persecuted for their political beliefs and activism. He has been a vocal opponent of the Government and has publicly condemned the Government and law enforcement bodies for their human rights abuses on countless occasions. Mr Yorov is in prison since 2015 (sentenced to 28 years).

- Youth Initiative for Human Rights

YIHR was established in 2003. It works on promoting reconciliation through building connections between young people across the Balkans, from different ethnic groups, regions and countries, to enhance the participation of young people in the transitional justice process, work together for human rights and to build links that will prevent the re-emergence of the ethnic conflict that devastated the region for so many years.

The overall winner of the 60,000-euro annual Prize is due to be announced at the opening of PACE's autumn plenary session in Strasbourg on 30 September 2019.

"The women and men who defend our human rights are the very best of us," said Liliane Maury Pasquier. "Their courage and determination in standing up for basic principles of justice and fairness – often at great personal cost, risking their liberty and sometimes even their lives – deserve our profound respect and gratitude. They are on the front line of human rights. I would like to thank all those who put forward nominations for this year's Prize. Today's selection was not easy, but we have chosen three outstanding candidates whose work is in the highest traditions of Václav Havel himself. Selecting the final winner of the 2019 Prize will be harder still."

The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize is awarded each year by PACE, in partnership with the Václav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation. It consists of a sum of 60,000 euros, a trophy and a diploma.

Since 2013, the Prize has been awarded in turn to Ales Bialiatski (Belarus), Anar Mammadli (Azerbaijan), Ludmilla Alexeeva (Russian Federation), Nadia Murad (Iraq) and Murat Arslan (Turkey). Last year's winner was Oyub Titiev (Russian Federation), head of the Grozny office of the Memorial Human Rights Center in Chechnya.

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