



**Three nominees for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize:
Ales Bialiatski (Belarus),
the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia)
and the Rights Defence Network (China)**

Strasbourg, Prague 26.08.2013 – Ales Bialiatski (Belarus), the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia) and the Rights Defence Network (China), are the three candidates shortlisted in Prague today for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize. The selection panel, comprising six independent figures and chaired by Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), drew up its shortlist on the basis of 27 candidatures which fulfilled the criteria for the Prize.

“A reaction is needed when human rights are under threat, and this is what we do. But it is also necessary to encourage and place the spotlight on those who commit themselves to human rights, and this is something we perhaps do a little less. This is what the Prize does,” said Jean-Claude Mignon when he announced the outcome of the voting.

The jury first made a shortlist of six candidates out of the 27 received as follows (in alphabetical order):

Lyudmila Alexeyeva (Russian Federation)
Ales Bialiatski (Belarus)
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia)
Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary)
Mental Disability Advocacy Centre – MDAC (Hungary)
Rights Defence Network (China)

The jury chose these three nominees:

Ales Bialiatski (Belarus)

From the start of the 1980s, Ales Bialiatski, a young Belarusian writer and graduate of the Gomel University Faculty of History and Philology, joined the national democratic movement. While the world was still divided by the Iron Curtain, he became a founding member of the Belarusian Popular Front. Helping to create a young writers' association that he chaired for

several years, Ales went on to join the Belarusian Writers' Union. Later, he organised the first demonstrations against totalitarianism.

This commitment led to his imprisonment in 1988, marking the start of a long series of arrests and harassment.

In 1996, in the face of the increasing repression of the Lukachenko regime, Ales Bialiatski created the Human Rights Centre Viasna. In 2007, just three years after joining International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Ales Bialiatski was elected its Vice-President, the first representative of the former Soviet countries to be elected to the FIDH International Board.

Rights Defence Network (China)

Launched in China in 2005, the Rights Defense Network (wei quan wang, WQW) has been the most active and effective human rights group to operate inside the country ever since. The group, which cannot be legally registered with the government because the government disapproves of it, is composed of activists, lawyers, journalists, writers, dissidents, and labor organizers who maintain loose association in physical space and use the Internet as their main tool for collecting, sharing, and disseminating information, organizing actions, and pursuing advocacy. The Network has played a vital role in monitoring, updating, and providing in-depth analyses of the rights situation inside China. It informs the public inside the country as well as the Chinese-language media overseas and the international community.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (Georgia)

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association has been conducting human rights protection activities since 1994. Their activities are focused on the the following strategic fields: Legal aid - Legal aid center of GYLA in Tbilisi and seven regions of Georgia provide legal assistance to tenth of thousands of citizens (consultation, preparation of legal documents and court representation in case of need). Special attention is paid to the facts, where human rights are violated by government, or administrative body. Vulnerable groups - GYLA pays special attention to protection of rights of religious, ethnic, sexual minorities, people with limited abilities, those, who live beyond the poverty line. Prisoners' rights - GYLA is actively involved in monitoring of penitentiary systems. Special attention is paid to facts of torture and mistreatment. Participation in legal drafting - GYLA conducts constant monitoring of legislative process and prepares its own legal opinions on every draft, which is important for human rights. Raising awareness - There are many people in Georgia, who have no information about their rights - GYLA's offices in the regions have been implementing campaigns for raising awareness throughout Georgia (trainings, seminars and field meetings to ensure awareness of local groups and support democratic involvement of them in the country's political and social life). Strategic litigation – first, denunciation of discriminative legal acts, or acts, which violate human rights through trial at constitutional court of Georgia, and the second, representation of Georgian citizens at European Court of Human Rights. Protection of Media Interests - on the base of GYLA has been established Media Legal Defense Center, which ensures protection of rights and interests of different media sources and journalists.

On 29 September, at a second meeting which will be held in Strasbourg, the panel will name the winner of the Prize. This will be officially announced by the PACE President at 12.30 pm on the first day of the autumn session, on 30 September 2013.

The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, which aims to reward outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond, is awarded each year by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in partnership with the [Václav Havel Library](#) and the [Charta 77 Foundation](#) and is worth €60 000.

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