



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on October 31, 2011

## EU Parliament Gives Arab Spring Human Rights Prize

This week the European Parliament awarded the annual Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to key participants in the Arab Spring. The five recipients were chosen “in recognition and support of their drive for freedom and human rights.” The five are described in a press release announcing the award as “representatives of the Arab people.”



The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named for the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, has been awarded by the European Parliament every year since 1988 to individuals or organizations that that multinational body believes “have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy.” The prize is accompanied by an award of €50,000.

The named winners of the €50,000 prize are: Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt), Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi (Libya), Razan Zaitouneh (Syria), Ali Farzat (Syria), and posthumously to Mohamed Bouazizi (Tunisia).

The first [prize](#) was awarded jointly to South African Nelson Mandela and Russian Anatoly Marchenko. The prize has also been awarded to various individuals and organizations throughout its history, the first being the Argentine Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (1992).

The Conference of Presidents (Parliament President and political group leaders) made its decision on Thursday morning accompanied by a statement by European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek explaining that “these individuals contributed to historic changes in the Arab world and this award reaffirms Parliament’s solidarity and firm support for their struggle for freedom, democracy and the end of authoritarian regimes.” He added that their award was “a symbol for all those working for dignity, democracy and fundamental rights in the Arab world and beyond.”

The prize itself will be awarded at a ceremony to be held on or around December 10. That specific day was chosen by the European Parliament as it was the date on which the UN General Assembly ratified the Universal Declaration of Rights in 1948.

Nominations for the award on behalf of those believed to have played vital roles in the “Arab Spring” movement were supported jointly by the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), and the European Green Party.

Brief biographies of the five recipients were published on the website announcing the award:

### **Asmaa Mahfouz**



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Ms Mahfouz (pictured above) joined the Egyptian April 6th Youth Movement in 2008, helping to organise strikes for fundamental rights. Sustained harassment of journalists and activists by the Mubarak regime as well as the Tunisian example prompted Ms Mahfouz to organise her own protests. Her Youtube videos, Facebook and Twitter posts helped motivate Egyptians to demand their rights in the Tahrir Square. After being detained by the Supreme Council of Armed forces, she was released on bail due to pressure from prominent activists.

### **Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi**

Mr Ahmed al-Sanusi, also known as the longest-serving “prisoner of conscience”, spent 31 years in Libyan prisons as a result of an attempted coup against Colonel Gaddafi. A member of the National Transitional Council, he is now working to “achieve freedom and race to catch up with humanity” and establish democratic values in post-Gaddafi Libya.

### **Razan Zaitouneh**

Ms Zaitouneh, a human rights lawyer, created the Syrian Human Rights Information Link blog (SHRIL) which reports on current atrocities in Syria. She publicly revealed murders and human rights abuses committed by the Syrian army and police. Her posts have become an important source of information for international media. She is now hiding from the authorities who accuse her of being a foreign agent and have arrested her husband and younger brother.

### **Ali Farzat**

Mr Farzat, a political satirist, is a well-known critic of the Syrian regime and its leader President Bashar al-Assad. Mr Farzat became more straightforward in his cartoons when the March 2011 uprisings began. His caricatures ridiculing Bashar al-Assad’s rule helped to inspire revolt in Syria. In August 2011, the Syrian security forces beat him badly, breaking both his hands as “a warning”, and confiscated his drawings.

### **Mohamed Bouazizi**

Mr Bouazizi, a Tunisian market trader set himself on fire in protest at incessant humiliation and badgering by the Tunisian authorities. Public sympathy and anger inspired by this gesture led to the ousting of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Mr Bouazizi’s self-immolation also sparked uprisings and vital changes in other Arab countries such as Egypt and Libya, collectively known as the “Arab Spring”.

The promotion of “democracy” and the suffering for it seems to be the primary criterion upon which the European Parliament based its decision. Each of the seemingly disparate groups which voted in favor of the Arab Spring award rigidly hew to a vision of self-government that includes the surrender of individual liberties in favor of the more corporatist, statist, multicultural rights of “the people” that result in expansion of government and diminution of freedom.

While the promotion of “democracy” and “human rights” sounds like a worthwhile and laudable goal, those two topics are as two heads of a beast which will lull good men and women into a false placidity all the while preparing to bare fangs and claws that will devastate and devour republican self-rule and the rights of the individuals as given to them by “their Creator.”

Never has the United Nations or the European Parliament furthered the rights of man in a way consistent with the understanding of that concept as embodied by the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution of the United States. With that in mind, it is interesting to note that the Sakharov Prize



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has never been awarded to an American.

An interesting point to ponder: If the influential players in the drama called the Arab Spring merited the Sakharov Prize, then surely the star of the show — President Barack Obama — deserves at least [honorable mention](#). After all, it was President Obama's (and his recent predecessors') disregard for constitutional separation of powers, enumerated powers, and federalism that provided the money and military might necessary to nourish the Middle Eastern soil from which sprang all this highly touted "freedom."



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