International Criminal Court and its officials win the European Parliament's 2026 Sakharov Prize

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News

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola announced at Strasbourg on 22 Oct 2026 that the 2026 'Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought' goes to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its officials, recognising its work to uphold international law and justice. The other finalists were Tanzanian opposition leader Tundu Lissu and Iranian sisters Taraneh and Romina Rahimi. The award ceremony will be held at Strasbourg on 16 Dec 2026. The award comes as the US has imposed sanctions on ICC officials. (The prize is given by the European Parliament, an institution of the EU.)

Key facts

Announced	22 Oct 2026 – EP President Roberta Metsola, Strasbourg
Finalists	ICC; Tundu Lissu (Tanzania); Taraneh & Romina Rahimi (Iran)
Ceremony	16 Dec 2026 – Strasbourg; prize money €50,000
Sakharov Prize	Since 1988; named after Soviet physicist and rights activist Andrei Sakharov; first – Nelson Mandela & Anatoly Marchenko
ICC	Rome Statute (1998), working since 2002; The Hague (Netherlands); genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, aggression

India	India is not a party to the Rome Statute; no Indian has won the Sakharov Prize

Background

- ICC vs ICJ: The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a permanent court that tries individuals; it is not a UN organ; the Rome Statute was adopted on 17 July 1998 and entered into force on 1 July 2002. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the UN's principal judicial organ, set up under the UN Charter (1945); it settles disputes between States; 15 judges. Both sit in The Hague.
- India's position: India has not signed the Rome Statute; the USA, China and Russia are also not parties. Indian judges at the ICJ include Nagendra Singh (President, 1985–88) and Dalveer Bhandari.
- Sakharov Prize: set up by the European Parliament in December 1988; Andrei Sakharov – nuclear physicist who worked on the Soviet hydrogen bomb, later a human-rights campaigner; Nobel Peace Prize 1975. From South Asia, Taslima Nasrin (Bangladesh, 1994) and Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan, 2013) have won it. 2025 – Andrzej Poczobut (Belarus) and Mzia Amaglobeli (Georgia).

Tamil Nadu link: Navanethem (Navi) Pillay, winner of the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize (announced 9 Oct), is of Tamil origin – born in Durban, South Africa, in 1941 into a Tamil family that had settled there. She served as an ICC judge (2003–2008), President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008–2014). CM C. Joseph Vijay congratulated her. In Tamil Nadu, the 'Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission' (HQ Chennai) is set up under Section 21 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

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