Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought-UCD students debate and vote

Friday, October 5, 2012

Students from the MSc/LLM programmes in Human Rights at University College Dublin took part in an event on 5 October 2012 at EU House Dublin to publicise the 2012 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, and to promote the debate on the individual human rights issues to which the prize relates. This was the second time that UCD students had taken part in such a debate.

The overall winners of the student debate was Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, Déogratias Mushayidi and Bernard Ntaganda, three Rwandan opposition representatives.

As part of the event, each of the initial list of 5 nominees who had been submitted to the Parliament by political groups or 40 MEPS was represented by UCD human rights students. Each group of students gave a short presentation and argued the case for the award to be given to "their" nominee. Following the presentations, the floor was opened for a short debate among the attending students and academics. At the end of this debate the audience was asked to take part in two rounds of voting on the nominees, firstly to draw up a short-list of three nominees, and then to vote on who they thought should be the overall winner. At the end of the second round there was a tie between two of the nominees, and a third and decisive round of voting was then held.

The results of these votes were as follows:

- **Ales Bialiatski**, a human rights defender from Belarus.
- **Joseph Francis** (Pakistan), founder of the Center for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement.
- **Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, Déogratias Mushayidi and Bernard Ntaganda**, three Rwandan opposition representatives.
- **Pussy Riot**, a Russian punk group (represented by Nadezhda Andreyevna Tolokonnikova, Yekaterina Samutsevich and Maria Alyokhina).
- **Nasrin Sotoudeh** and Jafar Panahi, two Iranian human rights campaigners.

Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, Déogratias Mushayidi and Bernard Ntaganda, three Rwandan opposition representatives, were thus chosen as the overall winners of the vote by the UCD students, who were informed that the outcome of the meeting would be transmitted to Irish MEPs and to Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament.

The organiser of the event was Dr Graham Finlay of the School of Politics and International Relations at UCD.