

December
January
2010-2011

News

BY HEIDI HAUTALA

Chairwoman of
European Parliament
Subcommittee on
Human Rights



31th January

YEMEN MUST DO BETTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA WROTE today to the Ambassador of Yemen in Belgium expressing concern over the cases of Ms Twakkol Karman, Mr Abdulaeh Haider Shaea and Mr Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum. She hopes to discuss these matters with the Ambassador soon. Yemeni authorities are to execute Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum, who is accused of committing a murder when he was a juvenile. As to the situation of Ms Twakkol Karman, a human rights defender, she was arrested on 22nd, released on 26th of January and remains targeted. Mr Abdulaelah Haider Shaea, a journalist, was sentenced to five years imprisonment on 17th of January by the state security Specialised Criminal Court (SCC). The cases testify to the poor state of human rights in Yemen.

31th January

HAUTALA AND LOCHBIHLER: STRONGLY CONDEMNING THE EXECUTION OF ZAHRA BAHRAMI IN IRAN

HEIDI HAUTALA, CHAIRWOMAN of the Human Rights Subcommittee and Barbara Lochbihler, Chair of the Delegation for relations with Iran, have strongly condemned the execution of Ms Zahra Bahrami, 46 years old mother of two, on 29th of January. Ms Bahrami, a Dutch-Iranian citizen, initially travelled from Netherlands to Iran to see her daughter and family and was arrested in January 2009. According to various reports, she was tortured during her imprisonment to extract a confession for drug related charges. The European Parliament in its resolution of 7th September 2010 called in strong terms for Ms Bahrami to be freed and that she is guaranteed access to her lawyer so long as she remains in detention.

27th January

DEATH OF DAVID KATO, LGBT ACTIVIST IN UGANDA

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA RECEIVED on 27th of January devastating news of the murder of David Kato Kisule, on 26th of January in Kampala, Uganda. David was a lifelong human rights defender; he will be remembered for his outstandingly brave defence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people's human rights in Uganda. His untimely death has shocked the whole international human rights community.

27th January

CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER CHEN GUANGCHENG

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA and László Tokés, Vice President of European Parliament, enquired on 26th of January how High Representative Ashton intends to ensure that EU support human rights lawyer Chen Guangcheng in China. Mr Chen Guangcheng is a blind self taught rights lawyer who had been released from prison having served in full sentence 4 years and 3 months in prison for revealing human rights abuses under China's one child policy.

26th January

EU FAILS TO DELIVER JUSTICE ON CIA RENDITIONS AND SECRET DETENTION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS discussed on 25th of January the EU complicity in the CIA renditions and secret detentions. Reluctance to investigate such abuses

by the EU Member States received staunch criticism and repeated calls to deliver justice. Subcommittee on Human Rights on 25th of January debated what had been learned from the original report by ex- MEP Claudio Fava and concluded that the landmark investigation by the European Parliament in 2007 on the use of European airspace for secret CIA rendition flights has not been properly followed up. This is also the finding of Amnesty International report by Julia Hall and a related report by former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak. According to the February 2007 Fava report on the findings of the Temporary Committee over one thousand CIA-operated flights used European airspace from 2001 to 2005. It went on to say that temporary secret detention facilities "may have been located at US military bases" in Europe. The flights formed part of the Bush Administrations "Global War on Terror" and concerned moving suspected terrorists out of Afghanistan or Iraq.

26th January

CONCERN OVER EU COMPLICITY IN FORCED EVICTIONS IN CAMBODIA

HEIDI HAUTALA SENT on 26th of January a letter to Commissioner for Trade, Mr de Gucht, concerning forced evictions and human rights situation in Cambodia. The Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), a preferential treatment of sugar industry within the framework of Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative, that grants sugar producers in Cambodia a granted tariff and quota free access to the European Union (EU) market, has contributed to vast land grabbing and forced evictions in Cambodia. In relation to this, she reiterated her concern about the arrest and trial of Mr Sam Chankea, a human rights defender active in land rights issues and a Coordinator of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association in Kampong Chhnang.

26th January

EU MUST SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES IN INGUSHETIA

IN RESPONSE TO A LETTER from an Ingushetian human rights advocate Mr Ibragim Lianov, requesting Subcommittee on Human Rights to discuss human rights situation in Ingushetia, Chairwoman Hautala agreed that the issue should indeed be given attention. Ms Hautala added that in particular, due attention shall be given to the persistent impunity for human rights violations and the responsibility of the authorities to protect human rights of all the people in Ingushetia.

25th January

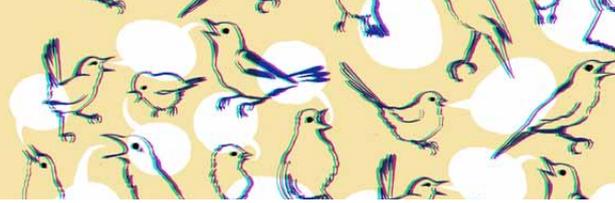
EU MIGHT LEAVE TORTURE VICTIMS WITHOUT SUPPORT

HEIDI HAUTALA PRESENTED a question to the Commission/EEAS at the meeting of the Subcommittee on Human Rights on 25th of January about the ending of EU funding to the torture victim rehabilitation centres. EU has decided to end the EIDHR-funding of European based Rehabilitation centres. Ms Hautala therefore enquired how the EEAS/Commission is planning ensure that the European based rehabilitation centres will continue to have access to sustainable funding. In the answer by the EEAS/Commission it appeared that for the moment, there is no proposal for alternative funding. The closure of the rehabilitation centres might therefore run the risk of carrying a heavy human cost.



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Leading Europe on HUMAN RIGHTS
CHAIRWOMAN OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS



24th January

HAUTALA CALLS OMBUDSMAN OF INGUSHETIA TO INVESTIGATE DISAPPEARANCES

MS HAUTALA WROTE on 24th of January to Mr Djambulat Ozdoev, Ombudsman of Ingushetia concerning several deeply worrying messages about disappearances and instances of violence in Ingushetia. She is now waiting to receive news over the measures the Ombudsman intends to take with regards the cases of Ms Zalina Elhoroeva, Mr Israil Torshkoev and Mr Adam Khamkoev.

24th January

KURD TRIAL TARNISHES THE REPUTATION OF TURKEY

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA called on 24th of January Minister of Justice of Turkey, Mr. Sadullah Ergin to address the shortcomings of the so called KCK-trial and review the pre-trial detention policy in Turkey.

19th January

CONCERN OVER ONGOING HARASSMENT OF VIASNA HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE IN MINSK

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA RECEIVED on 19th of January with great alarm the news of yet another search at the Viasna Human Rights Centre in Minsk and a brief arrest of the Centre's President, Mr Ales Bialitski, on 17th of January. The Centre was raided previously on 20th of December. On the day Ms Hautala stated that this appeared to be continuation of the crackdown and harassment of civil society that the authorities have intensified since the aftermath of the stolen elections on 19th of December. It is very difficult to consider that the brief arrest of Mr Bialitski was anything else than arbitrary and intended solely to prevent him from doing his human rights work, Hautala added.

18th January

TORTURE ALLEGATIONS OF DR SAUD AL-HASHIMI IN DHAHBAN PRISON IN SAUDI ARABIA

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA PRESSED on 18th of January the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mr Abdullah Y. Al Mouallimi, to ensure that Dr Saud al-Hashimi, who is alleged to have been subjected to torture in the Dhahban prison in Saudi Arabia, will be treated humanely and guaranteed a fair trial. She invited Ambassador Mr Abdallah Y. Al Mouallimi to inform her of the situation of Mr al-Hashimi without delay.

17th January

IRAN'S CLAMP DOWN ON LAWYERS AND JOURNALISTS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA HAS received with great disappointment the news of sentencing of Iranian human rights lawyer, Ms Nasrin Sotoudeh to 11 years of imprisonment. It seems that Ms Sotoudeh has been kept mostly in solitary confinement, since she was arrested on 4th of September 2010. Ms Sotoudeh is also prohibited from practicing law. This sentence is shameful act of curbing independent discourse in Iran. It aims at nothing else than to prevent Ms Sotoudeh from practicing law, she said.

17th January

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THE FIRST TO BENEFIT FROM FREEDOM OF RESEARCH

HEIDI HAUTALA ADDRESSED "Human Rights and Freedom of Research" seminar in

House of Science and Letters in Finland on 14th of January. In her opening remarks she emphasised the need to ensure access to information and ability to analyse data without fear of repercussions. While the issue of human rights and freedom of research might not be in the frontline of the global human rights debate of the moment, once one looks deeper into the issue, it cuts across all the major topics. Indeed, free discourse and strenuous scholarship hold the keys to progress and justice.

14th January

KARIMOV TO VISIT EU; ASHTON AND BARROSO MUST PUT HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE AGENDA

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA on 14th of January reminded High Representative, Ms Ashton and President of Commission, Mr Barroso of the importance of raising human rights issues during the visit of President Karimov of Uzbekistan to Brussels, on 24th of January. It seems that Mr Karimov was invited to Brussels without public announcement and once Ms Hautala and others raised public concern over the dictatorial friendships that EU keeps, all EU institutions denied having invited Mr Karimov and held no open meetings with him. Mr Barroso claims that he pressed Mr Karimov on human rights issues during their meeting.

14th January

HAUTALA INVITES INDONESIA TO TALK OVER RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA TODAY invited Indonesian authorities to discuss with the Subcommittee the investigation into the torture video, the safety of Mr Buchtar Tabuni in detention and the circumstances leading to the death of Mr Yusuf Sapakoly while in prison. She firstly enquired of the investigation concerning the video, presumably dated 30th of May 2010 at 1:26pm, where Indonesian soldiers can be seen to torture Papuan villagers, speaking in the Lani dialect. Secondly she raised the case of Mr Tabuni, chair of the West Papua National Committee (KNPB) who might be at risk of torture since he has reportedly been moved to an isolation cell at the Jayapura police station on 7th of January. Lastly she asked for information concerning whether the Government intends to initiate an effective and impartial inquiry into the death of Mr Yusuf Sapakoly in Nania prison in Ambon on 13th of September. The international community and the people in Indonesia are expecting to see a credible investigation into these very serious human rights violations and that those responsible will be held accountable. For this reason, I would like to invite your Excellency, on behalf of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, to provide us with information on the situation with regards the investigation and delivery of justice, she said.

12th January

PARLIAMENT DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BELARUS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA, LED discussion together with President of the European Parliament, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chair of the Delegation for relations with Belarus and Chair of the Delegation to the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly, on the situation in Belarus following the 19th of December elections. The Chairs reiterated the elections fell short of meeting international standards of free, fair and transparent elections. They expressed grave disappointment that the election night was overshadowed by disproportionate violence, massive detentions and beatings of hundreds of Belarusian activists, journalists and civil society representatives and repeated their call that all political prisoners must be freed without delay. They furthermore agreed that the events that followed the 19 December elections should prompt a rethinking of EU relations with Belarusian authorities.



11th January

DISABILITY AND EMERGENCIES IN FOCUS IN HAITI ONE YEAR AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA ADDRESSED on 11.1. the launch of the photo exhibition "Disability and Emergencies" focusing on the situation of people with disabilities in Haiti after the 12.1.2010 earthquake. While natural disasters and other emergencies have continued to disturb life of societies at a large scale also during last year, the earthquake in Haiti remains one of the most disturbing. During time of great upheaval it is most important to ensure the safety and security of all, those who can look after and protect themselves and those who need looking after and protection. It is indeed vital, that careful work is done as early on as possible to fight discrimination on grounds of sex, sexuality, religion, ethnicity or disability. Should an unsteady time come, as it did in Haiti, there will be no group of people left outside aid and care.

In the event it was noted that the EU has just taken a major step in ensuring that the rights of all groups be respected; following formal ratification on 23rd of December, for the first time in history the EU has become a party to an international human rights treaty - the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. "While we can welcome the ratification we still have a lot of work to do. Main task of the Subcommittee is now to hold the member states and EU accountable for the implementation of the Convention," she emphasised.

10th January

INDIA ASSURES THAT CASE OF MR QAYOOM WILL BE DECIDED BY DUE PROCESS OF LAW

IN HIS REPLY, Ambassador of India has assured Chairwoman Hautala that the case of Mr Mian Abdul Qayoom, President of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court Bar Association, shall be handled with due process of law. Ms Hautala wrote to the Ambassador on 10.01.2011 expressing her concern over the situation of Mr Qayoom. Mr Mian Abdul Qayoom was arrested on 30th of November and that he is being held in Hiranagar jail, Kathua district, on charges of sedition. This is not the first time Mr Qayoom has been arrested. Commenting on this Ms Hautala noted: "Recurring arrests and charges against Mr Mian Abdul Qayoom alarm me as all too often I see human rights defenders targeted for their work."

4th January

CHAIRWOMAN CONDEMNS SENTENCING OF MR NEMTSOV AND ARRESTS OF PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS IN MOSCOW AND ST PETERSBURG

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE, including Mr Borys Nemtsov, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, were arrested in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and other Russian cities for their right of freedom of assembly, guaranteed in the Article 31 of Constitution of the Russian Federation. Ms Hautala condemned this strongly stating "with the new mayor of Moscow the authorities seemed to have been finally prepared to show respect of the constitutional right of the citizens to peacefully gather and manifest their views. The arrest of hundreds of citizens on 31 December shows that this was an unfounded hope. This is a real backlash and we in the European Parliament must keep the pressure on our so-called strategic partner so it respect the internationally guaranteed rights which every citizen, Russia included, shall enjoy".

1st January

KHODORKOVSKY AND LEBEDEV VERDICTS MAKE MOCKERY OF THE RULE OF LAW

CHAIRWOMAN CONDEMNS the guilty verdict of Mikhail Khordorkovsky of embezzlement by Moscow's Khamovnichesky district court on 30th of December. Chairwoman Hautala condemned the show trials as well as the sentences strongly.

The sadly inevitable outcome of the Khordorkovsky show trial deals a further blow to the rule of law in Russia and makes a mockery of President Medvedev's modernisation agenda, she said.

To add, she emphasised that while the deaths of Anna Politkovskaya, Natalya Estemirova, Stanislav Merkelov and Sergei Magnitsky remain unaccounted for, the Russian judiciary and its kangaroo court has no such difficulty delivering a verdict in Mikhail Khordorkovsky's case. It is simply not credible to talk of modernisation in a state with such a highly politicised judiciary, which openly flouts the rule of law.

30th December

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES MUST NOT GIVE ASYLUM TO COLOMBIAN INTELLIGENCE SUSPECTS

MEPS SENT A LETTER on 17th of December 2010 to Latin American Governments calling them to not help in the cover up of the illegal activities of the Colombian Intelligence Services, DAS. In February 2009, the illegal activities of the DAS were revealed. Large number of people, including, Supreme Court judges, human rights defenders and trade unionists were shown to be threatened and persecuted by DAS. To escape justice, many leading public servants of DAS are currently fleeing Colombia and applying for asylum in neighbouring countries, for example, on the 19th of November 2010, Maria del Pilar Hurtado, ex-director of the DAS, obtained asylum in Panama. Under the Geneva Convention of 1951, asylum cannot be granted to people responsible for crimes or facts contrary to the goals and principles of the United Nations. On this ground many MEPs who signed the letter urged the governments of the Latin American countries to refuse asylum to people prosecuted in the DAS cases.

21th December

PARLIAMENT'S DELEGATION, SUBCOMMITTEE AND EURONEST CHAIRS CONDEMN ATTACKS BY POLICE IN BELARUS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA, TOGETHER with Chairman of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and the Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Belarus, strongly condemned the violent crackdown in Minsk following the Presidential elections on 19th of December.

In particular, they strongly condemned the beating and arrests by the police of some opposition leaders and candidates, journalists, human rights defenders, as well as crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in the evening of the Election Day in Minsk. These facts go in the opposite direction of what would be desirable, they stated.

"WE CALL ON THE BELARUSIAN authorities to immediately release all those detained, to investigate the circumstances of the excessive use of force on 19th December 2010 by the police and the special forces, and to take appropriate measures towards those responsible for afore mentioned violations of the human rights and basic freedoms.

It is now urgent that the Belarusian authorities listen to the demands of Belarusian society, and also to the ideas of the opposition, to resume a national public debate on the future of the country and a consistent agenda for reform. The EU Institutions have already shown their readiness to assist Belarus, provided it will embark on a genuine political democratisation.

We look forward to the outcome of such domestic political dialogue, which could result in welcoming our partners from Belarus in Euronest and in launching proper bilateral parliamentary dialogue".

20th December

CHAIRWOMAN CONDEMNS VIOLENCE IN ELECTION AFTERMATH IN BELARUS

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA SENT on 20th of December together with Mr Jacek Protasiewicz, Chair of European Parliament Delegation for Relations with Belarus, a letter to the Ambassador of Belarus concerning the aftermath of the 19th December



elections and the situation of one of the candidates, Mr Vladimir Neklyaeв in particular. According to the information they had received, Mr Neklyaeв was beaten unconscious yesterday and last night was taken from hospital by seven police men dressed in civilian clothes. "Up to the moment of our signing this letter, his family is refused any information of his whereabouts and he remains missing. It is most pressing and urgent that his whereabouts are disclosed and his family be informed. While under custody of the state forces, it is of utmost importance that his physical and mental wellbeing be ensured," they demanded.

18th December

EU MUST RAISE THE JUDICIAL HARASSMENT OF PEACE ACTIVIST MS PINAR SELEK IN TURKEY

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA TOGETHER with MEP Helen Flautre on 16th of December pressed to European Commissioner for Enlargement, Mr Stefan Fule, about the case of prominent peace activist and feminist, Ms Pinar Selek in Turkey. Ms Selek has been prosecuted over the last twelve years for an explosion in Istanbul's Egyptian Bazaar on 9 July 1998. During this period, Ms. Selek has been acquitted twice due to lack of evidence. Still her case continues to be examined by the Istanbul 12th High Criminal Court following appeals by the prosecution. Ms Hautala and Ms Flautre stated that they consider that such judicial harassment is the consequence of Ms Selek human rights activities and added that they are furthermore concerned by the regular threats to her life which she receives and the attacks that she already suffered when attending international events.

They called on the European Commission to fully respect its commitments under the EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, notably through guaranteeing that the EU Mission based in Ankara observes Ms. Selek's court hearings and to regularly consult with her family and lawyers. To add, they asked Commissioner to raise Ms. Selek's case in all appropriate consultations with Turkey, including at the highest levels.

16th December

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CALLS FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIAN OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATH OF SERGEI MAGNITSKY

DESPITE HEAVY PRESSURING by the Russian Duma and other officials, European Parliament on 16th of December called on the Council, in the absence of positive movements from the Russian authorities to cooperate and investigate the case of Sergei Magnitsky and bring those responsible to justice, to consider imposing an EU entry ban for Russian officials involved in this case and encouraged EU law enforcement agencies to cooperate in freezing bank accounts and other assets of these Russian officials in all EU Member States.

With this vote the European Parliament is calling for justice for an innocent man who died in prison. This death was one too many. There comes a point when silence is no longer an option. It is my wish that none of these sanctions will ever have to be put in place. Instead, I hope to receive the news without delay that effective investigations into the death of Sergey Magnitsky have finally commenced and commitment that those responsible will be brought to justice, Ms Hautala said.

16th December

RUSSIA NEEDS RULE OF LAW

HEIDI HAUTALA WROTE together with the MEPs Rebecca Harms, Tunne Kelam, Vytautas Landsbergis, Kristiina Ojuland, Justas Vincas Paleckis, and Graham Watson a letter concerning the rule of law in Russia that was published in the European Voice on December 16, 2010. In their writing they argued that while on 2 December, European Voice published an opinion piece on EU-Russia relations that ended with the statement that "law is Russia's bridge to Europe" ("A simpler era in EU-Russia relations?", 2-8 December), they could not agree more. "EU-Russia relations are at a critical stage and we welcome the prospect of closer

co-operation on an equal footing. But the lack of rule of law in Russia, or "legal nihilism" as President Dmitry Medvedev has called it, still poses an obstacle to meaningful and long-term economic and political co-operation. ... Ending the persecution of Khodorkovsky, Lebedev and other arrested and convicted during the Russian authorities' dismantling of the energy company Yukos, and finding justice for Magnitsky, Politkovskaya, Estemirova, Markelov and many other victims would send positive signals of change and show that Russia is indeed on the path towards modernisation."

15th December

HAUTALA PASSES EU HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ASHTON ON HUMAN RIGHTS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HELD on 15th of December the annual debate the EU human rights policy review with the EU High Representative, Ms Catherine Ashton. In her introduction, the High Representative underlined the importance of the forthcoming review of the EU human rights policy and expressed gratitude for the important input of the European Parliament, and Ms Hautala, Chair of European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, in particular. Ms Hautala in her speech pressed the High Representative repeatedly to make clear commitment to strong human rights structure at the new EEAS and put in place permanent human rights body of the EU Member States. Hautala furthermore underlined the momentous importance of the EU human rights strategy review and stressed that inclusive and transparent continuance of the process are of utmost importance. She hoped, in particular, that the High Representative would finalise the process at an official Communication to the Parliament.

11th December

HAUTALA OPENS THE SECOND GYPSY SPIRIT PROJECT CEREMONY

CHAIRWOMAN HAUTALA OPENED the second Gypsy Spirit Czech Republic Ceremonial, in Prague, on 10th of December. The Gypsy Spirit project and Award are aimed at promoting the efforts in improving the situation of Roma and seek to raise public awareness of the activities carried out by organizations and individuals to promote the social integration of the Roma minority and improve their lives. In her greeting she expressed her delight for the Prague Gypsy Spirit being held under her auspices. She underlined that Gypsy Spirit is a unique cultural initiative by Roma community. "Culture is the best language against prejudices, assumptions and mistrust, and I hope this project will be fruitful to work for equality, understanding and mutual respect."

The event coincided with the International Day of Human Rights and to commemorate this occasion she raised in particular the universal right for education. "Romani children across Europe continue to suffer discrimination in schools and in their access to education. This discrimination cannot be tolerated anymore inside the European Union. Education, culture and participation in the society are the keys to integration and inclusion," she emphasised.

10th December

SENIOR MEPS PRAISE EUROPEAN UNITY AT NOBEL PEACE PRIZE CEREMONY

SPEAKING IN OSLO, where they were attending the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony on Friday 10th of December, the European Parliament Vice-President for Democracy and Human Rights, Mr. Edward McMillan-Scott and Ms. Chairwoman Hautala praised the unity shown by the EU nations, all of whom were represented. In spite of intense Chinese pressure, the EU held together. The Beijing reaction to the award to Liu Xiaobo makes its own point. All of us should have in mind his imprisonment and that of hundreds of thousands of others in China today.

Mr McMillan-Scott and Ms Hautala also made a call for clarity for the EU High Representative Ms Ashton as she was planning to outline the structures for the new European External Action Service; "We believe that, as a starting point, a strong and effective International Law, Human Rights and Democracy Directorate



should be put in place in the EU's new External Action Service, staffed by experts. We also call for the establishment of an EU Special Representative to give expression to the new policy and the appointment of human rights focal points in EU Delegations.

The global struggle for human rights is far from over and to have an impact in this arena, more coherent and forceful EU human rights structures need to be put in place"

9th December

NOBEL GALA - EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S SOLIDARITY WITH LIU XIAOBO

DAY BEFORE the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, Chairwoman Hautala and Reinhard Bütikofer, Vice President of the Green Group, said: "We see the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony taking place in Oslo on 10 December as an important and necessary signal of support to defenders of human rights in China and throughout the world. The European Parliament has not only welcomed that Liu Xiaobo has been awarded the 2010 Nobel peace prize, it is also following through with its pledge of support. We see this presence in Oslo also as an expression of strong opposition against the unprecedented diplomatic campaign that the Chinese government has pursued to keep representatives of the international community from participating in the Oslo ceremony. We respect China's sovereignty. But that will not keep us from expressing our solidarity with human rights defenders and we also call on China to correct the course that it has pursued over the Liu Xiaobo case internally and externally. We call on the Chinese authorities to free Liu Xiaobo and to allow his relatives and friends to travel internationally in order to bring home to China the prize that he has been awarded."

8th December

RELEASE TIBETAN DOCUMENTARIST, MR DHONDUP WANGCHEN

HEIDI HAUTALA WROTE with Edward McMillan Scott and Eva Lichtenberger a letter to the Ambassador of China, His Excellency Mr. Song Zhe, to the European Union about the case of Mr. Dhondup Wangchen, a Tibetan prisoner. Among other things the signatories request to ensure that Mr. Dhondup is guaranteed urgent medical attention and that his sentence would be reviewed through a fair and transparent process. Mr Dhondup has been held on occasions in secret detention. Secret detention violates the right to personal liberty and the prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention, as foreseen by the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights that China has signed on 1998 and thereby preliminarily endorsed the Convention and committed to refraining from acts that would defeat the Convention's object and purpose. The signatories also reiterated their concerns over the poor prison conditions in China. Reports of ill-treatment and manifold abuse are widespread. Access to health care is one of such concerns. It appears that Mr. Dhondup is suffering from Hepatitis B as well as a heart condition.

6th December

"WITHOUT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THERE ARE NO HUMAN RIGHTS"

HAUTALA WAS INTERVIEWED for the EP website on human rights about her work as the Chairwoman of Subcommittee on Human Rights. In the interview she commented that it is sad that people who put themselves on the line often are placed, on a variety of excuses, to criminal liability, or are inflicted with administrative sanctions to hamper their activity. This is the pattern worldwide. I recently got a world map on my wall, and when there's an ambassador in front of me, I can tell that oh yes, that's your country there, we understand your situation, but you should stop condemning people for their opinions. She also added: "Parliament has influence, and when we appeal on behalf of an imprisoned journalist, it sometimes helps."

1st December

SUBCOMMITTEE MARKS WORLD AIDS DAY

DECEMBER 1 MARKED the 22nd World's Aids Day. Subcommittee on Human Rights discussed on 30th of November human rights violation against the 33 million people living with HIV around the world and the EU response to the global pandemic. The hearing on Human rights and Aids showed how people with HIV/AIDS face discrimination worldwide and in the EU. In the EU, for example, Slovakia refuses to allow residence permits for migrants with HIV.

In discussing the EU response to the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS and ensuring access to treatment, Chairwoman Hautala underlined that it's time to look at health from the perspective of human rights. The approach to protect and promote human rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS must be a rights based one, she stressed.