

Families of Political Prisoners: Women fighting for their loved ones

Wednesday, 26 April 2023

Side event, 12.45-13.45, Room 6

Keynote Speakers:

Evgenia Kara-Murza – wife of Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza jailed for having opposed Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Tatsiana Khomich – sister of Belarusian opposition activist Maria Kalesnikava, one of the leaders of the 2020 protests against the Lukashenko regime

Sanaa Seif – sister of British-Egyptian democracy activist and blogger Alaa Abd El-Fattah who has spent most of the past decade behind bars in Egypt

Moderator:

Petra Stienen – ALDE group Vice-President and chair of the Dutch delegation to PACE

With the participation of:

Bjørn Berge – Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Authoritarian regimes on the European continent and in the neighbouring region have increased repression against political activists and those who dare to speak out. While this problem receives attention at the highest level of the Council of Europe, we rarely discuss what happens to the families of political prisoners. This problem also has a clear gender dimension. A large majority of the persecuted activists are men. When they are put behind bars, often for very long prison terms, women are left alone to take care of their families, children, and elderly persons. Sometimes they become political activists themselves or have to leave their country. We have invited three women who are fighting for the release of their relatives to raise awareness of this problem and to discuss what it is to be a family member of a political prisoner and how our help can be organised in a more efficient way.

This event is open to members of PACE, permanent representatives, staff of the Council of Europe, NGOs and journalists.