

Lantos Foundation Honors Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Evgenia Kara-Murza with Lantos Human Rights Prize

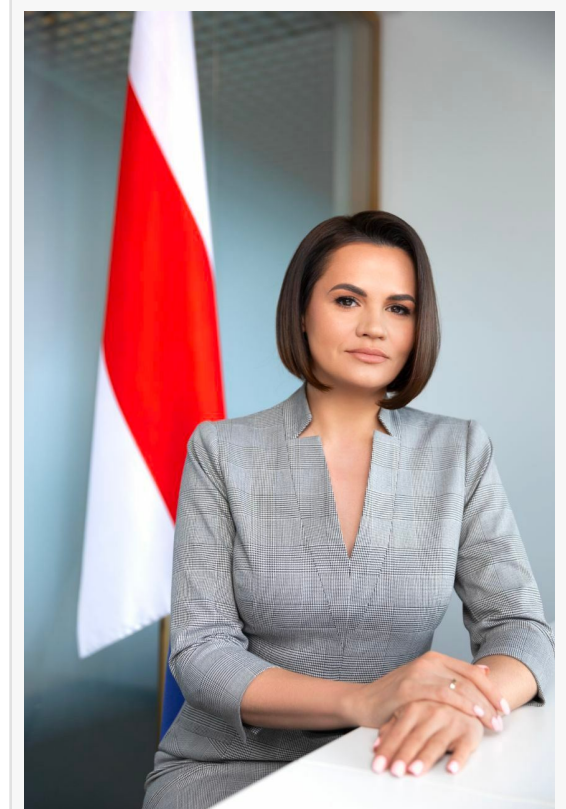
Belarusian President-elect Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and Russian Human Rights Activist Evgenia Kara-Murza Will Receive 2024 Prize

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, August 14, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice today announced that it will award the 2024 Lantos Human Rights Prize to a pair of extraordinary women who have been beacons of courage and determination in the fight against tyranny and autocracy in the former Soviet Union region: President-elect Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Head of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus, and Evgenia Kara-Murza, human rights activist, Advocacy Director of the Free Russia Foundation, and wife of unjustly imprisoned Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was released in a major prisoner exchange earlier this month.

"It is a tremendous honor to receive the Lantos Human Rights Prize alongside an inspiring leader and freedom fighter, President-elect Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya," said Ms. Kara-Murza. I see this high distinction as a very humbling recognition of my advocacy efforts but, most importantly, as a beautiful and heartwarming gesture of solidarity with those of my compatriots who are bravely speaking out against the crimes committed by Vladimir Putin's regime despite obvious risks to their own freedom and very often their lives. I am grateful to the Lantos Foundation for recognizing their struggle and standing with them, and against tyranny and repression."

"I am deeply honored to receive the Lantos Human Rights Prize alongside a woman I greatly respect, Evgenia Kara-Murza," said President-elect Tsikhanouskaya. "This award not only recognizes my efforts but also celebrates the indomitable spirit of the Belarusian people. Joining the ranks of distinguished laureates makes me both proud and humble. I am grateful to the

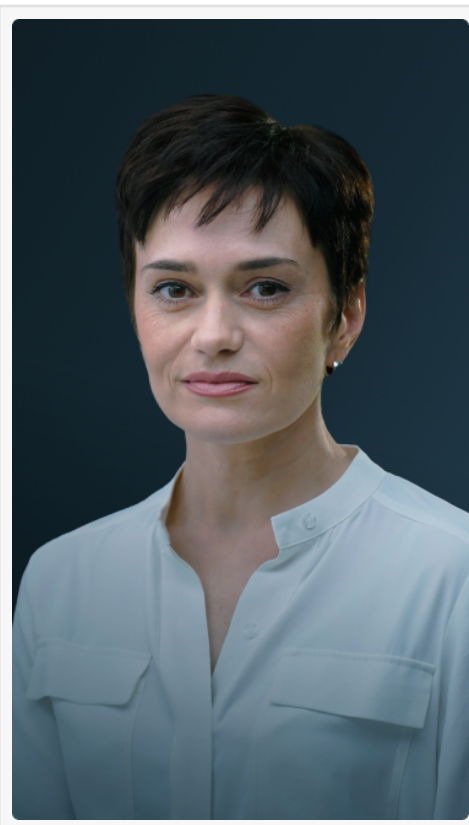


President-elect of Belarus Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

Lantos Foundation for acknowledging our struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights in the face of tyranny and imperial aggression. Receiving this Prize gives me renewed hope and strength to continue fighting for the values we share with our fellow Europeans and with all freedom-loving people of the world.”

This will mark the 16th annual awarding of the Lantos Prize ([see a full list of former laureates](#)). The 2024 recipients will be honored at an invitation-only ceremony on September 26 in Washington, DC.

President-elect Tsikhanouskaya and Ms. Kara-Murza share a similar path to the advocacy and human rights leadership that has earned them this distinction. Ms. Tsikhanouskaya became a candidate for president in Belarus in 2020 after her husband, Syarehi Tsikhanouski – who had declared himself a presidential candidate – was arrested at the direction of Belarusian leader Aleksandr Lukashenka, along with most other opposition figures in the country. When Ms. Tsikhanouskaya was unable to file on her husband’s behalf for the election, she made the decision to enter the race herself, running against Lukashenka on a platform of constitutional reform and freeing political prisoners. Though she called herself “an accidental candidate” and said she was running for office only out of love for her husband, her candidacy resonated with and inspired her fellow Belarusians. Lukashenka claimed victory in that year’s election, but independent observers and election monitors agreed that, had the vote been free and fair, Ms. Tsikhanouskaya would have won the presidency. Instead of assuming her rightful place as president, she was forced to flee Belarus and now leads a government-in-exile from Lithuania. Her husband remains imprisoned, serving an 18-year sentence.

A portrait of Evgenia Kara-Murza, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, looking directly at the camera against a dark background.

Evgenia Kara-Murza, Advocacy Director, Free Russia Foundation

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*President-elect of Belarus
Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya*

Ms. Kara-Murza spent many years working behind the scenes as a translator and interpreter for pro-democracy NGOs, while her husband Vladimir became one of the boldest and most eloquent critics of the Putin regime. He was also a driving force behind the adoption of the Global Magnitsky Act, which has been replicated in dozens of

countries around the world and serves as one of the best accountability tools for human rights abusers. Vladimir was arrested in Moscow in April 2022 after publicly criticizing Putin for his brutal and murderous assault on Ukraine. He was sentenced to 25 years, which until his release

he was serving in a Siberian penal colony, though his failing health had seen him recently transferred to a prison hospital. Vladimir suffers from a neurological condition caused by two near fatal poisonings, which independent journalistic investigations have linked to the FSB, Russia's primary security agency.

For more than two years following Vladimir's arrest, Ms. Kara-Murza has assumed a prominent advocacy role – not only on behalf of her husband and other Russian political prisoners, but as an advocate for human rights accountability and democratic change in Russia. Her advocacy work has taken her around the world, and she has addressed legislative bodies and heads of state in dozens of countries. She serves as Advocacy Director for the Free Russia Foundation, a pro-democracy and anti-war Russian civil society organization, and President of the 30 October Foundation that provides financial support to families of political prisoners in Russia. She and her children live in exile in the United States, where Vladimir will now reunite with his family. Although Ms. Kara-Murza has joyfully celebrated her husband's freedom, she has also made clear that her advocacy on behalf of political prisoners, Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian hostages will continue, as will her fight to hold dictators like Putin and Lukashenka accountable for their numerous crimes.

"It is an incredible honor for the Lantos Foundation to bestow the Lantos Human Rights Prize on these two women," said Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, President of the Lantos Foundation. "Although they did not seek out the role of prominent human rights defenders, when called upon to step into the arena, they did so with determination and grace. These courageous women have been willing to lead, despite the immense dangers and personal risk, and have become among the most respected individuals standing in principled opposition to the rule of despots like Putin and Lukashenka. They are carrying forward their husbands' fight for freedom, justice, and democracy. In addition to honoring these women, the Lantos Prize gives us an opportunity to celebrate Vladimir's freedom and to shine a bright light on the continued unjust imprisonment of Syarehi Tsikhanouski and the many political prisoners who remain behind bars."

The Prize is named for the late Congressman Tom Lantos, co-founder of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

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