

Russian Human Rights Advocate Kara-Murza and Belarusian Democracy Leader Tsikhanouskaya Receive 2024 Lantos Prize

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice has awarded the 2024 Lantos Human Rights Prize, its highest honor, to 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 former political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza. The pair of extraordinary women received the award at a ceremony held at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, attended by Members of Congress, representatives from the diplomatic community, and human rights activists.



Speaker of the House Emerita Nancy Pelosi presents the Lantos Human Rights Prize medal to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, President-elect of Belarus (credit: Emily Chastain/Lantos Foundation)

The ceremony marked the sixteenth year the Lantos Foundation has awarded the Lantos Human Rights Prize. It is given to a human rights champion, or champions, each year to help draw attention to human rights violations around the world and to encourage governments to make human rights a priority on equal footing with other policy decisions.

“

Don't stop standing for what is right. Don't stop your support for Ukraine and Belarus. It is our common fight for freedom”

*Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya,
President-elect of Belarus*

Ms. Kara-Murza was introduced by her husband, who was released last month in a groundbreaking prisoner exchange with Russia. He said, “I don't know how she was able to do it – travel the world to address international

organizations, meet with government leaders and parliamentarians, speak with countless

journalists, be the voice, not just for me, but for all the political prisoners in Russia who are deprived of their own voices – and how she did it with such grace, eloquence, and dignity.”

In her acceptance speech, Ms. Kara-Murza decried the oppression faced by Russians living under Vladimir Putin’s regime, saying, “Deprived of the right to free and fair elections, freedom of speech, association, and assembly, people have no way of peacefully and safely voicing their opinion about the regime and its crimes. And yet, despite it all, many people continue to take a stand.” She went on to list, by name, lawyers, journalists, activists, and those who have paid the ultimate price and lost their lives amid unjust imprisonment, including Alexei Navalny. “These people were faced with evil and chose to make a stand,” she said. “It is to all of them, to their moral courage and their resilience, that I want to dedicate the Lantos Prize.”

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who independent election monitors have confirmed was the rightful winner of the 2020 presidential election in Belarus, was introduced by Speaker of the House Emerita Nancy Pelosi. In her introductory remarks, Pelosi noted the many dignitaries and luminaries who have spoken at the U.S. Institute of Peace over the years. “None of them surpass the courage, determination, and effectiveness of the two women we honor today,” she said. “It is with great pride, and great emotion as well, that I have the honor to introduce the President – I call her Madame President – of Belarus.”

President-elect Tsikhanouskaya, whose husband remains imprisoned, addressed Vladimir Kara-Murza, saying “Your release is a beacon of hope. It shows that no matter how dark the days may



At the Lantos Human Rights Prize ceremony (l-r) Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Evgenia Kara-Murza, Katrina Lantos Swett, Annette Lantos Tillemann-Dick, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (credit: Emily Chastain/Lantos Foundation)



Russian opposition politician and recently released political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza congratulates his wife Evgenia Kara-Murza at the 2024 Lantos Human Rights Prize ceremony (credit: Emily Chastain for Lantos Foundation)

seem, freedom is never beyond reach.” She went on to say, “Today I accept this Prize, of course not for myself. This is the Prize for those heroes who continue to fight: for our journalists who were forced into exile and those behind bars; for our fearless women; for our human rights defenders; for my husband Siarhei, who remains incommunicado for more than 500 days serving his 19-year sentence...The Belarusian people will never stop fighting for the freedom we dream of, and no repression and no threat will stop us.”

She also implored the United States to stand firm against dictators like Putin and Alyaksandr Lukashenka, saying, “Many nations around the world look at you as the leader in the fight for democracy and human rights. So don’t stop standing for what is right. Don’t stop your support for Ukraine and Belarus. It is our common fight for freedom.”

The ceremony also featured remarks from Thor Halvorssen, Founder and President of the Human Rights Foundation, Annette Lantos Tillemann-Dick, Chair of the Lantos Foundation Advisory Board, and Tomica Tillemann, Lantos Foundation Board Member, as well as a violin solo titled “Against Despair.” The piece, composed by a high school senior who participated in the Lantos Foundation’s [Activist Artist Scholarship program](#), was dedicated to all those suffering under Putin’s regime.

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, President of the Lantos Foundation, noted that the Lantos Prize ceremony was honoring a love story – the Prize recipients’ love of their husbands and of their countries. She said, “Each of these women turned their love for their partner, and their pain and anger at the injustice they were subjected to, toward a larger purpose and goal...Love that is, in the words of the writer Antoine de St. Exupéry, ‘gazing in the right direction’ can embolden us and encourage us to fight for the causes, for the countries, and for the people we care about. When we fight, let us do so in the spirit of these two brave women.”

Past Lantos Prize laureates include His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the late Professor Elie Wiesel, real-life hero of the film Hotel Rwanda Paul Rusesabagina, founder of the global Magnitsky movement Bill Browder, co-founder of the Afghan National Women’s Soccer Team Khalida Popal, renowned human rights lawyer Irwin Cotler – among other notable figures (see a [full list of laureates here](#)).

For more information about the ceremony, including photos and video, please contact press@lantosfoundation.org.

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About the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice: The Lantos Foundation was established in 2008 to carry forward the legacy of Congressman Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor ever elected to the U.S. Congress and a leading human rights champion. The Foundation works with a range of partners and often in cooperation with the U.S. Government on issues that span the globe. The Foundation’s key areas of focus include human rights issues

related to religious freedom, rule of law, internet freedom and activist art. The Foundation also administers the Lantos Congressional Fellows Program, supports human rights advocates, activists and artists through its Front Line Fund grant program, and awards the annual Lantos Human Rights Prize.

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