

# CEU Open Society Prize Awarded to Russian Opposition Figure Yulia Navalnaya

VIENNA, AUSTRIA, June 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The prestigious Open Society Prize of the Central European University ([CEU](#)) is being awarded this year to Russian opposition figure Yulia Navalnaya, widow of long-time regime critic Alexei Navalny, who was murdered in a Russian penal colony last year. Instead of her, their daughter Daria accepted the award during a gala dinner in Vienna on June 21st.

In her laudatio, Prof. Shalini Randeria, President and Rector of CEU said: "Yulia Navalnaya experienced the full scale and cruelty of political repression and persecution, she has emerged as a resolute and courageous leader in the struggle against authoritarianism and corruption. She has become a powerful voice for justice, dignity, and democratic reform in Russia. By awarding its most prestigious prize to Yulia Navalnaya, CEU honors her fearless advocacy, her unwavering defense of human rights, and her steadfast commitment to upholding the ideals of an open society against brutal repression by a dictatorship."

For many years, Navalnaya remained largely in the background, supporting her husband in his work as an "invisible helper," as she once described herself. It was only after her husband's Novichok poisoning in 2020 that she stepped into the spotlight, a role she has embraced even more strongly since Alexei Navalny's death in February 2024. Today, she is considered the most prominent Russian opposition figure and has announced her intention to return to Russia and to participate in politics once President Vladimir Putin's regime ends.

The CEU Open Society Prize is awarded annually to an outstanding individual or group whose achievements have advanced democracy and an open society—both founding principles of the university. Past recipients include Sir Karl Popper (1994), the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan (2008), Belarusian Nobel Literature laureate Svetlana Alexievich (2015) and Doctors Without Borders (2016). Last year, the award went to Austrian extremism researcher Julia Ebner.

## About Yulia Navalnaya

For many years, Yulia Navalnaya stayed in the background, supporting her husband in his work as an "invisible helper," a role that earned her the nickname "First Lady of the Russian Opposition." After her husband was poisoned with the nerve agent Novichok in 2020, she pressured President Vladimir Putin to allow her husband to travel to Berlin for treatment. Following Navalny's arrest upon the couple's return to Russia in January 2021, Yulia Navalnaya

became a leading figure in the protests and was herself detained multiple times.

After her husband's death in a Siberian penal colony in February 2024, Navalnaya delivered a widely noted speech at the Munich Security Conference, calling for Putin and his allies to be punished for "what they did to our country, my family, and my husband" and to "fight against this terrible regime in Russia." Three days later, she announced in a video message that she intended to continue her late husband's political fight.

Two weeks later, she gave another speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, calling Putin a "bloodthirsty mafioso." "For three years they tortured my husband, starved him in a tiny cell, and then they killed him," Navalnaya said. "This public murder has shown that Putin is capable of anything and that he cannot be negotiated with."

In July 2024, a warrant for her arrest was issued in Russia on charges of participation in an extremist organization. In October 2024, Navalnaya announced in a BBC interview that she intends to run for office after the end of Putin's era.

#### About CEU

The Central European University (CEU) is a private, non-profit university where students from over 100 countries receive interdisciplinary education and engage with key societal challenges. CEU is accredited in both the United States and Austria and offers English-language bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities, Law, Environmental Studies, History and Public Policy. Based in Vienna, CEU combines its strong academic and intellectual focus with the historical, cultural, and social diversity of the region, offering a global perspective on good governance, sustainable development, and social transformation.

#### Media Relations

CEU - Central European University

+43 1 252307111

press@ceu.edu

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Bluesky](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Other](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/824391503>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire,

Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.