



**22 October 2014 – Denis Mukwege Mukengere was announced the winner of Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2014. He won Europe’s top human rights prize for helping gang rape victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

The now 59-year-old Congolese gynaecologist is the founder and medical director of the [Panzi Hospital](#) in Bukavu. He founded his hospital amid the 1998 war in eastern DR Congo to treat victims of sexual violence who have sustained serious injuries. During the worst periods, it was estimated that one woman was raped every minute in DR Congo.

### **A gynaecologist fighting for women's rights**

The war in DRC might be officially over, but the armed conflict still continues in the eastern part

of the country, including gang rapes and other attacks against civilians. Dr. Mukwege travels abroad often to advocate women’s rights, but currently still performs surgery two days a week and now has operated on over 40.000 women during his career.

After winning many awards for his work, the doctor now has been announced laureate of the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament.

"The Conference of Presidents decided unanimously to award Dr Denis Mukwege from Democratic Republic of Congo the Sakharov Prize for his fight for protection especially of women," said EP President Martin Schulz.

### **The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**

The [Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought](#) was set up in 1988 and is awarded each year by the European Parliament. It honours individuals and organisations defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Last year, it was [awarded](#) to Pakistani campaigner for girls’ education Malala Yousafzai, who won the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

This year’s second and third place go to the Ukrainian protest group Euromaidan and Azerbaijani activist Leyla Yunus.

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