

About the Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Prize

The Solidarity Prize was established in 2014 by Poland's Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski.

It is awarded for outstanding achievements in promoting and defending democracy and civil liberties. It aims to promote democratic culture, to inspire and acknowledge actions which support peaceful evolution of the international environment towards respecting human rights and freedoms as well as strengthening the rule of law and good governance on local, regional, and international levels.

The Lech Wałęsa Solidarity Prize is a distinction awarded to individuals or organisations that contribute to advancing democracy and civil liberties around the globe with efforts undertaken in the spirit of international solidarity.

The first recipient was Mustafa Dzhemilev, the Ukrainian leader of fight for the rights of the Crimean Tatars. In 2015, the prize went to Zhanna Nemtsova, a journalist, social activist, and daughter of the assassinated Russian opposition figure Boris Nemtsov.

In 2024, Minister Radosław Sikorski decided to relaunch the initiative. Last year, the prize was awarded to Pavel Latushka, a Belarusian dissident, a pro-democracy advocate, and deputy head of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus.

The winner is selected by the Prize Committee, which is composed of: Lech Wałęsa (Chair of the Committee), the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, and a representative of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. Each laureate receives a statuette along with substantial prize money in the amount of PLN 1 million.

A short biography of the award winner



Berta Soler Fernandez (born in Matanzas in 1963) is a Cuban dissident and, since late 2011, the leader of the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) opposition group, set up in 2004. The group was initially made up of the wives and female relatives of the 75 political prisoners detained during a wave of repression known as the Black Spring in 2003. One of them was Berta Soler's husband, Angel Moya, sentenced to 20 years in prison for "counterrevolutionary" activism.

In protest against repressions imposed by the communist regime, the Ladies in White would organise marches down Havana's Fifth Avenue and gather at St Rita's Church every Sunday to pay tribute to the jailed dissidents. They were recognisable by their white clothes. Since April 2016, the Ladies in White have been banned from church services. They have also been prohibited from assembling for the symbolic marches in Havana.

Berta Soler and Angel Moya are among Cuba's most adamant dissidents. Their house has been under constant camera and police surveillance. The leader of the Ladies in White has been under house arrest. The Cuban regime detained her on a number of occasions.

In 2015, state security officers arrested Ms Soler on her way to a meeting with Pope Francis when he was visiting Cuba. Since January 2025, repressions brought down on her have been increasingly severe. Following a meeting with a US chargé d'affaires in Havana on 17 April 2025, she was detained and deprived of her phone.

Regular arrests and home confinement have made it difficult for Ms Soler to carry on with her opposition activism. Nonetheless, both her and her spouse turned down an offer to emigrate to Spain, where they could continue to fight for human rights and democracy in Cuba. Ms Soler is a symbol of moral resistance to the totalitarian regime built by the Castro brothers.

In 2005, Berta Soler received a Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought on behalf of the Ladies in White. She was also presented with the 2013 Oxi Day Battle of Crete Award.