

[The Norwegian Nobel Committee](#) has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022 to one individual and two organisations.

The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy.

This year's Peace Prize is awarded to human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organisation Memorial and the Ukrainian human rights organisation Center for Civil Liberties.

Ales Bialiatski was one of the initiators of the democracy movement that emerged in Belarus in the mid-1980s. He has devoted his life to promoting democracy and peaceful development in his home country. Among other things, he founded the organisation Viasna (Spring) in 1996 in response to the controversial constitutional amendments that gave the president dictatorial powers and that triggered widespread demonstrations. Viasna provided support for the jailed demonstrators and their families. In the years that followed, Viasna evolved into a broad-based human rights organisation that documented and protested against the authorities' use of torture against political prisoners.

Government authorities have repeatedly sought to silence Ales Bialiatski. He was imprisoned from 2011 to 2014. Following large-scale demonstrations against the regime in 2020, he was again arrested. He is still detained without trial. Despite tremendous personal hardship, Mr Bialiatski has not yielded an inch in his fight for human rights and democracy in Belarus.

The human rights organisation Memorial was established in 1987 by human rights activists in the former Soviet Union who wanted to ensure that the victims of the communist regime's oppression would never be forgotten. Nobel Peace Prize laureate [Andrei Sakharov](#) and human rights advocate Svetlana Gannushkina were among the founders. Memorial is based on the notion that confronting past crimes is essential in preventing new ones.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Memorial grew to become the largest human rights organisation in Russia. In addition to establishing a centre of documentation on victims of the Stalinist era, Memorial compiled and systematised information on political oppression and human rights violations in Russia. Memorial became the most authoritative source of information on political prisoners in Russian detention facilities. The organisation has also been standing at the forefront of efforts to combat militarism and promote human rights and government based on rule of law.

When civil society must give way to autocracy and dictatorship, peace is often the next victim. During the Chechen wars, Memorial gathered and verified information on abuses and war crimes perpetrated on the civilian population by Russian and pro-Russian forces. In 2009, the head of Memorial's branch in Chechnya, Natalia Estemirova, was killed because of this work.

Civil society actors in Russia have been subjected to threats, imprisonment, disappearance and murder for many years. As part of the government's harassment of Memorial, the organisation was stamped early on as a "foreign agent". In December 2021, the authorities decided that Memorial was to be forcibly liquidated and the documentation centre was to be closed permanently. The closures became

effective in the following months, but the people behind Memorial refuse to be shut down. In a comment on the forced dissolution, chairman Yan Rachinsky stated, “Nobody plans to give up.”

The Center for Civil Liberties was founded in Kyiv in 2007 for the purpose of advancing human rights and democracy in Ukraine. The center has taken a stand to strengthen Ukrainian civil society and pressure the authorities to make Ukraine a full-fledged democracy. To develop Ukraine into a state governed by rule of law, Center for Civil Liberties has actively advocated that Ukraine become affiliated with the International Criminal Court.

After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Center for Civil Liberties has engaged in efforts to identify and document Russian war crimes against the Ukrainian civilian population. In collaboration with international partners, the center is playing a pioneering role with a view to holding the guilty parties accountable for their crimes.

By awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022 to Ales Bialiatski, Memorial and the Center for Civil Liberties, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to honour three outstanding champions of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence in the neighbour countries Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Through their consistent efforts in favour of humanist values, anti-militarism and principles of law, this year’s laureates have revitalised and honoured Alfred Nobel’s vision of peace and fraternity between nations – a vision most needed in the world today.

Oslo, 7 October 2022

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<<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2022/press-release/>>

## A BEACON OF LIGHT

III. Niklas Elmehed © Nobel Prize Outreach

Ales Bialiatski

The Nobel Peace Prize 2022

Born: 25 September 1962, Vyartsilya, Karelia, Russia

Residence at the time of the award: Belarus

Prize motivation: “The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy”

Prize share: 1/3

### **The fight for human rights and democracy**

Ales Bialiatski has worked to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus since the 1980s. He has been called a beacon of light for these efforts throughout Eastern Europe.

A constitutional amendment adopted in 1996 gave President Alexander Lukashenko dictatorial powers, triggering protests and demonstrations. The authorities cracked down hard on the protests, and many people were jailed. Ales Bialiatski then founded the organisation Viasna (Spring) to provide support for the incarcerated demonstrators and their families. In the years that followed, Viasna evolved into a human rights organisation that documented the authorities' abuses against and torture of political prisoners.

As a result of Ales Bialiatski's work, the government authorities sought to silence him. In 2011, they sentenced him to several years' imprisonment for alleged tax evasion. He was released in 2014. In June 2021, in the wake of the massive demonstrations against President Lukashenko's dictatorship that broke out after the presidential election in August 2020, Ales Bialiatski was again jailed, this time without trial or conviction. He was still in prison when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022.

To cite this section

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## MEMORIAL

The Nobel Peace Prize 2022

Founded: 1987

Prize motivation: "The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy"

Prize share: 1/3

The fight for human rights and democracy

Memorial was founded in the former Soviet Union in 1987. Its initiators included the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov and human rights defender Svetlana Gannushkina. The organisation documented the victims of the crimes committed during the Stalinist era.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the organisation continued this work while also focusing on human rights violations in Russia. During the Chechen wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2009),

Memorial gathered information on abuses and war crimes committed against the civilian population by Russian and pro-Russian forces. The head of Memorial's branch in Chechnya, Natalia Estemirova, was murdered because of her role in this work.

In 2016, the authorities declared Memorial to be a foreign agent, and in 2021 the Russian Supreme Court ruled that Memorial was to be liquidated because it had defended the rights of persons who allegedly had ties to terrorist organisations. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in March 2022, the authorities declared Memorial to be illegal and took over the offices of the forcibly dissolved organisation.

To cite this section

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<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2022/memorial/facts/>

Center for Civil Liberties

The Nobel Peace Prize 2022

Founded: 2007

Prize motivation: "The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy"

Prize share: 1/3

The fight for human rights and democracy

In 2007, democracy and human rights activists founded the Center for Civil Liberties (CCL) in the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv. In its early years, the organisation put pressure on the authorities to ensure that Ukraine developed into a full-fledged democracy and a state governed by the rule of law. A key objective was Ukraine's accession to the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

When Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and supported the breakaway republics Donetsk and Luhansk, the center began to document cases of unlawful imprisonment and other abuses against the civilian population in these areas.

After Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022, the CCL concentrated on documenting war crimes against the civilian population perpetrated by Russian soldiers in the occupied areas. This work was carried out in cooperation with bodies such as the International Criminal Court. The organisation also engaged in important efforts to document the forced relocation of civilians from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia.

To cite this section

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