



NORWEGIAN  
HELSINKI COMMITTEE

**Press release from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee:**

## ANDREI SAKHAROV'S Freedom Award 2012 is awarded to

# Association GOLOS, Russia

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*Oslo, 12 September 2012.* - **The Association Golos is awarded the Andrei Freedom Sakharov Award 2012 for its outstanding efforts to promote democratic values through free and fair elections in Russia, Norwegian Helsinki Committee Secretary General Bjørn Engesland says in a statement today.**

Golos ("Voice") is the only independent organization which conducts nation-wide election observation in Russia. Golos was founded in 2000 and is active in 48 regions of Russia. The organization is known for systematic, efficient and sophisticated methods of monitoring electoral processes in Russia. In a country where a ballot takes place in one or more locations almost every month throughout the year, Golos has focused on strengthening local observation.

The pioneering efforts of Golos have been important in documenting fraud and other violations of election legislation during the election process. Particularly in relation to Duma elections 4 December 2011 and the presidential election 4 March 2012, the organization played an important role when, in collaboration with the newspaper Gazeta.ru, they employed modern technology and published an interactive website that could upload reports on violations from the public. The website, "Karta Narusheniy", became one of Russia's 25 most visited during Duma elections last year.

Golos' efficiency in exposing violations has given the organization many admirers, but has also provoked opposition. Golos has been accused of sabotaging the Russian elections and of being in alliance with the CIA. The organization has been fined and its members detained and harassed. Currently, Golos is in danger of forced dissolution. The future of the organization seems uncertain, given the targeted restrictions of newly introduced legislation for Russian NGOs.

Golos is one of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee's partners in Russia.

### **About Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award**

The Andrei Sakharov Freedom Award was established in 1980 by the Norwegian Helsinki

Committee, with the consent and support of Andrei Sakharov, to assist and support people who were imprisoned or persecuted because of their opinions, beliefs or conscience. The first Sakharov Freedom Award was awarded in 1984.

Past recipients include Charta 77, Czechoslovakia, Evgeniy Zhovtis, Kazakhstan, Ales Bialiatski, Belarus and Sergey Kovalyov, Russia

Sakharov Freedom Award 2012 will be awarded at a ceremony at Hotel Bristol in Oslo on 23 October 2012.