

**Laudation to the special recognition of 2022 Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award, the Mayor
Oleksandr Babych, from Hola Prystan in Ukraine**

By the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Vasco ALVES CORDEIRO

Solidarity, freedom, equality and courage have been severely tested since Putin launched his brutal attacks on Ukraine almost a year ago.

Cities and regions across Ukraine have been paying a terrible price while showing strong will and determination against the oppressor.

In March 2022, the Mayor of Hola Prystan, Oleksandr Babych, was abducted and since then illegally detained and tortured by the Russian forces.

His courage is a symbol of a fight being carried out by all Ukrainians and citizens on behalf of our shared European values.

This is why the Jury of the Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award decided to send a strong signal of hope by granting Mayor Babych with a special recognition.

With this, we send a signal of hope and solidarity to all the mayors of Ukraine, the ones also in Russian jails like Mayor Babych – Ihor Kolykhaev from Kherson, Yevheniy Matveev from Dniprorudne, Volodymyr Karabero from Manhush, and Serhiy Khilchenko from Khrestivka – and to the ones helping their people every day.

With this, I want to reiterate an important call. We, the European Committee of the Regions, the assembly of local and regional representatives in Europe, the voice of a million of local and regional leaders are calling for the immediate release of all imprisoned Ukrainian mayors.

Regions and cities from all over Europe are with Ukraine, standing for solidarity, freedom and equality. Standing for peace!

On behalf of the European Committee of the Regions, the City of Gdańsk and the International Cities Of Refuge Network, I am honoured to grant this special recognition to the Mayor of Hola Prystan, Mr Oleksandr Babych. Congratulations!