



THE COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS, INC.
ANNUAL REPORT, 2005

This year the Committee of Concerned Scientists – now 33 years old – raised its voice on behalf of scholars and scientists in twenty-eight countries on five continents. We repeatedly took action to help our academic colleagues around the world whose work was hindered by illegal or repressive measures. Many of these individuals were harassed for their support of human rights or for their critical attitudes towards their own governments. The following pages summarize our responses to the events of 2005.

RUSSIA

Dr. Oscar A. Kaibyshev, a leading researcher in materials science and processing, was charged with illegally exporting dual-use technology to South Korea. The technology, however, had been published in academic journals and was in the public domain. When the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted an independent audit, they found that no unauthorized data had been exported to any country. Nevertheless, Dr. Kaibyshev was fired from his position at the Institute for Metals Superplasticity Problems (IMPS) and placed under house arrest. He faces a 10-year prison sentence if found guilty. In March, Dr. Kaibyshev appeared before the Superior Court in his hometown of Ufa, but the judge rejected his plea to return to his old post, refusing even to listen to his appeal. We wrote twice to urge that Dr. Kaibyshev be released from house arrest until his trial, that his research not be hindered in the meanwhile, and that he be ensured a fair and open trial.

We wrote again on behalf of Yuri Samodurov, the director of the Andrei Sakharov Public Center and Museum, his colleague Ludmila Vasilovskaya, and the artist Anna Mikhalkhuk, who were indicted for violating Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (inciting hostility toward religious believers and humiliating them). In January 2003, Russian Orthodox activists vandalized an exhibition in the Sakharov Museum titled “Caution! Religion.” The exhibition featured highly controversial works, including an image of Christ on a Coca-Cola advertisement, entitled “Coca-Cola: This is my blood.” While the activists were acquitted, officials of the church condemned the exhibition and the parliament ordered the state prosecutor to act. The first commission charged with evaluating the exhibition did not find it guilty of incitement to religious hatred, but the second did, unanimously, conclude that the exhibition had incited religious hatred. Our letters argued that the exhibition, being held in a museum, was not meant to incite hatred, and that in the interests of freedom of speech, the exhibit’s organizers should not be punished. At their trial on March 28, 2005, Mikhalkhuk was acquitted, while Samodurov and Vasilovskaya were convicted of instigating religious and ethnic hatred and fined 100,000 rubles each.

BELARUS

Professor Yury Bandazhevsky, a nuclear scientist and former rector of the Gomel Medical Institute, was arrested in 1999 after he criticized public health policy by reporting on the effects of lingering radioactivity on the population in the Chernobyl area. He was convicted of taking bribes from students on the testimony of one person, who herself admitted taking bribes. Dr. Bandazhevsky denied the charges, stating that he believed he had been arrested in retaliation for his criticism of the authorities. International and domestic trial observers found that his right to a fair trial was repeatedly violated. In January 2005, Dr. Bandazhevsky was to be considered for parole. We wrote twice, asking that he be granted this parole in light of his precarious health. Then, when the commission of his labor colony settlement refused to grant him a conditional early release, we asked for a personal pardon. On August 5th, 2005, after serving four years of an eight-year sentence, Dr. Bandazhevsky was conditionally released under an amnesty declared by President Lukaschenko to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

AZERBAIJAN

The eminent physicist Eldar Salayev, president of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences (1983) and recipient of both the State Prize in 1972 and the Vavilov Prize in 1982, was detained in October and kept in isolation at the order of the Ministry of National Security, accused of plotting mass unrest and coup d'etat by force. However, it appears that his imprisonment was carried out in retaliation for Professor Salayev's open criticism of government policy and for his human rights activities, which included petitioning for the release of political prisoners and demanding justice in the cases of government officials involved in corruption, torture, and election rigging. Human rights organizations in the area called the arrest an intimidation tactic aimed at opposition leaders on the eve of elections in Azerbaijan. We requested that Professor Salayev be immediately released and allowed to exercise his freedom of expression without harassment. On January 18, 2006, news sources in Russia reported that Professor Salayev's family had confirmed reports that he had been released. It remains unclear whether the criminal suit filed against him on charges of plotting coup d'etat has been dropped.

TURKMENISTAN

The historian Rakhim Esenov, 78, is being investigated for his novel 'Ventsenosny Skitalets' (The Crowned Wanderer). The book has been banned in Turkmenistan for 10 years, apparently because one character was portrayed as a Shia Muslim rather than a Sunni. In 2004, Esenov was accused of illegally importing 800 copies (published in Moscow) into Turkmenistan and arrested on charges of "inciting social, national and religious hatred using the mass media," facing a prison sentence of up to four years if convicted. Esenov was released later that year after undertaking in writing to remain in the country, but the charges against him have not been dropped. He was repeatedly questioned, once suffering a stroke during interrogation. Esenov needs medical attention unavailable in Turkmenistan and is being prevented from traveling to Moscow for it. We requested that the charges against him be dropped, that his book be permitted in Turkmenistan, and that he be allowed to exercise his right to freedom of movement so that he can obtain the medical treatment he requires.

UZBEKISTAN

Dissident Elena Urlaeva was placed under house arrest in May to prevent her from attending a peaceful human rights demonstration and then confined to a psychiatric hospital in July. Although a psychiatric commission found her sane and not in need of treatment, on October 21 she was forcibly given powerful drugs used to treat schizophrenia. She has been charged with “desecrating state symbols” for allegedly distributing leaflets ridiculing the Uzbek coat of arms. Urlaeva had previously been forced to take psychotropic drugs in 2001 and 2002. We expressed our concern over the abuse of psychiatric facilities to punish dissent, as well as over the repression of peaceful political activity.

NEPAL

Numerous student activists were detained or placed under house arrest, while police forces were placed at the entrances of a number of universities to arrest student leaders. We expressed shock at these arbitrary and illegal actions, while urging that students taken into custody be immediately released.

CHINA

In 2004 a court in the Muslim Uighur region of Xinjiang in northwest China convicted Abdulghani Memetemin, a teacher, writer and journalist, of “violating state secrets and sending them outside the country,” sentencing him to nine years in prison and an additional three years of suspended political rights. Memetemin was jailed--and tortured--in retaliation for reporting on human rights violations against the ethnic Uighur community. We called for his release, noting that the accounts of torture threw suspicion on the validity of his trial.

Li Boguang, a graduate in philosophy, political science and law and director of the Qimin Research Centre in Beijing, wrote an article in early December of 2004 about farmers who, accusing a local mayor of corruption, had called for the mayor's resignation. He was quickly arrested, his house searched, and his materials seized, apparently in retaliation for his activities on behalf of the farmers. We wrote to urge his release. In March 2005 it was reported that he had been released on condition that he remain in Beijing and have no contact with farmers or others seeking to petition the government about abuses by local officials.

Yan Jun, a biology professor and writer, was sentenced to two years in prison on December 8, 2003 for having written essays on behalf of the students arrested during the Tiananmen Square incident. We wrote to protest his imprisonment. He was released on April 4, 2005. On January 6, 2006 it was reported that after his release from prison he could no longer work and had not been allowed to depart the country or obtain a passport. He was detained by the border patrol on January 2 after jumping from a Chinese tourist boat in an attempt to seek political asylum from the government of Taiwan.

Yang Zili, a geophysicist and well-known dissident, was condemned to eight years' imprisonment on November 10, 2003 for having founded a discussion group on Chinese political reform. He was charged with inciting subversion of state power. We protested his being imprisoned simply for speaking out against the government.

CHINA, CONTINUED

Asked for the protection of Professor Jiao Guobiao of Beijing University, who composed and circulated on the Internet an article, "Crusade Against the Propaganda Department," attacking the propaganda arm of the Chinese government and its control over the news media. Professor Jiao had his classes at Beijing University cancelled and his graduate students removed, was blacklisted by Chinese publishers and finally was asked to leave the University. We wrote to protest his being punished for publishing his work and to ask that he be protected from harassment.

Zheng Yichun, a writer and professor of English, was arrested on December 3, 2004 and tried in April and again in July for "inciting subversion of state power." His offense consisted of writing essays calling for political reform and deploring the detention of writers. He was given a seven-year jail term, to be followed by three years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting subversion." He is a diabetic in precarious health who has not received medical treatment in prison. We wrote twice to protest his being detained for his criticisms of the government.

Abdulla Jamall, a Uighur teacher in Kashgar, was arrested after submitting the manuscript of a book to a publishing house. He was accused of inciting "separatism," apparently because of the contents of his manuscript. The police had not released the charges against him, and he was being held in an unknown location. We wrote to protest his detention and ask that he be protected from torture or other abusive treatment.

Sonam, a monk who had helped open a medical clinic in the Potala Palace in Lhasa, was abducted by the Chinese police outside the palace around the 21st of August. He was not charged with any crime and had not been seen since he was taken away. We urged that he be released and protected from torture or other harm.

Six members of an environmental civil society group, "Green Watch," were arrested on October 19 in retaliation for their monitoring of environmental pollution by a chemical factory in Dongyang City, Zhejiang Province. Although most were released the same day, one of them, Tan Kai, remains in criminal detention. We asked that he be provided with legal advice and given a fair and open trial, noting that the group's efforts to stop pollution should never have been punished in the first place. On January 2, 2006, it was reported that Tan Kai's father and attorneys had still not been granted permission to visit him.

MALAYSIA

The Malaysian Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971 severely restricts the rights of students and even prevents them from joining political parties. On December 13, 2004, a student named Ali Bukhari Amir was interrogated by an investigative committee of the Science University of Malaysia regarding articles he wrote for the campus newspaper and told he would have to show any future articles for clearance to the university authorities. In November 2004, a journalism student, Soh Sook Hwa, was fined for campaigning during general elections. We urged that the Act be amended and that the university not be permitted to persecute and punish students for their free speech.

INDONESIA

Human-rights activist and scholar Munir Said Thalib was murdered by poisoning in September 2004. After a Presidential Fact-Finding Team found that senior intelligence officers were implicated in the killing, the Indonesian government failed to act to bring the murderers to justice. In addition, a criminal defamation investigation was brought against two members of the fact-finding team: Usman Hamid of Kontras (Commission for the Missing and Disappeared) and Rachland Nashidik of Imparsial. We protested the government's failure to act and the impediments placed in the way of the fact-finding team's carrying out its mandate.

MYANMAR

Ko Aye Aung, a second-year physics student at Dagon University in Myanmar, was imprisoned in 1998 after a peaceful demonstration, with his sentence later extended to 45 years. His trial was not conducted according to international standards and he was tried together with 50 other students. In addition, he was subjected to torture while in prison. We urged that he be released and that his physical safety and health be ensured.

Dr. Than Nyein, National League for Democracy MP, physician and director of a private clinic, has been in prison since 1997 for arranging a meeting with NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Even though his sentence has been served, he has not yet been released and remains in custody without charge or trial. In addition, Dr. Than Nyein is seriously ill and has been denied medical treatment. We called for his release and asked that he receive medical care while in detention.

IRAN

Washington Institute visiting fellow Dr. Mohsen Sazegara was given a seven-year prison sentence in absentia, with no opportunity to defend himself. A former student leader in the movement against the shah in the late 1970's, Dr. Sazegara helped found the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and in the 1980's served in the government in many roles. Two years ago, however, Dr. Sazegara was arrested by the Ministry of Intelligence and his two hunger strikes forced his removal to London for treatment. We urged that Dr. Sazegara be given a fair, legal and open retrial, that his lawyers be allowed to register an appeal and that he be permitted to defend himself.

Professor Mohamad Reza Fathi, who had made statements on the internet criticizing the local government, was arrested by the Edareh Amaken (morality squad) on March 26, held for three days, and interrogated without a lawyer present. He was charged with publishing false information, insults and disturbing the peace. We wrote to request that he be allowed to publish his opinions without harassment.

IRAQ

Huda El Ammash, a physician who had been held without former charge or trial for over two years, was being detained at Camp Cropper, near Baghdad Airport. She was reportedly accused of manufacturing anthrax weapons. We asked that Dr. Ammash be formally charged, permitted access to legal representation, and given a fair and open trial. She was released in December 2005.

ISRAEL

Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al Quds University, and Dr. Menachem Magidor, President of Hebrew University, issued a statement calling for cooperation between the two universities. We wrote to Dr. Nusseibeh to express our appreciation for the joint statement and our opposition to the British Association of Univeristy Teachers' call to boycott Israeli universities. After tremendous public outcry, the AUT Council held a special meeting in May and the boycott was rescinded.

SAUDI ARABIA

On March 15, 2004, two professors in Riyadh--Dr. Tawfiq al-Qussayyir, professor of Electronics, and Dr. Matrouk al-Falih, political scientist--and one former professor of contemporary literature, Dr. Abdullah al-Hamid, were arrested for advocating democratic reform. This August, after intense international pressure, including a CCS protest letter, they were pardoned.

SYRIA

Mustafa Omar Abdi Malik, a 19-year-old medical student at Damascus University, was detained without charge in September. He was held incommunicado, apart from one visit with his mother, and not allowed to speak with his lawyer. We requested that he be given full access to his lawyers and family and that he be either formally charged or immediately released.

TUNISIA

We protested as censorship the legal submission procedure which requires one to deposit books with the Ministry of the Interior before being allowed to print them. The system has been misused and the publishing of some books has been obstructed for 10 years or more. We applauded the recent cessation of this procedure with respect to the press and urged that the law regarding books be rescinded as well.

EGYPT

Nine people supposedly connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, among them medical doctors, engineers, and a university professor, were seized in Zagazig on January 31, 2005. It appeared that their only offense was the peaceful exercise of free speech. We wrote to urge their release.

Dr. Mohamed al-Sayyid Sa`id, deputy director of the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, was banned from appearing at a book fair. The ban was retaliation for remarks about the need for constitutional reform that Dr. Sa'id made at a public meeting with President Hosni Mubarak. We protested the punishment for Dr. Sa'id's comments.

The Egyptian government was reported to be censoring university course books, restricting discussions in class, and forbidding controversial research topics at both public and private universities such as Cairo, Alexandria, 'Ain Shams, and Hilwan Universities, as well as the American University in Cairo. We protested these violations of academic freedom.

TURKEY

The state prosecutor accused the Education Workers' Union (Egitim Sen) of illegal activity for stating that it would work for the right of individuals to be educated in their mother tongue. Because the Turkish Constitution prohibits the teaching "as a mother tongue" of languages other than Turkish, the Supreme Court ordered the union closed. In July 2005, however, the union delegates voted to remove the offending article from the union's statutes. We wrote twice to ask that all charges against Egitim Sen be dropped and that the union be permitted to function normally. We also protested reports that peaceful demonstrators against the trial had been beaten and dispersed with tear gas and that a secondary case had been brought against the board of Egitim Sen for organizing a peaceful demonstration.

SUDAN

Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim, associate engineering professor at the University of Khartoum and Chair of the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO), was arrested on May 8, the day before he was due to leave for Ireland to receive a human-rights award. Dr. Ibrahim, who was imprisoned for seven months last year, had been arrested again in January 2005, held without charge and released in March. Since the May arrest, he and two colleagues, Yasir Salim and Abdallah Tara, had been held incommunicado and without charge in Khartoum. We wrote to ask that Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim and his colleagues be released. All three men were released later in May.

LIBYA

Death sentences were pronounced in May 2004 for five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor for allegedly infecting 400 children with HIV at a Libyan hospital. Expert witnesses had testified at the trial that the infections were due to poor hygienic practices at the hospital. We wrote repeatedly in 2004 and 2005 to protest the death sentences and to urge that the evidence exculpating the nurses and doctor be reconsidered in a fair trial. On December 25, 2005, the Libyan Supreme Court overturned the convictions and ordered a retrial.

ETHIOPIA

Police attacked hundreds of students at Addis Ababa University who were peacefully demonstrating to protest the outcome of the parliamentary elections. Student demonstrations at Kotebe Teachers College, Debub University, Jimma University, and Gondar University were suppressed as well: students were beaten, one student, Shebray Delelagne, was killed by police fire and six other students were wounded, and over 2,000 were arrested. We protested the suppression of demonstrations and asked that those arrested be released immediately.

Professor Berhanu Nega, an economist and lecturer at Addis Ababa University, founder and head of the Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, and member of the Executive Committee of the main opposition party, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), was detained in November and beaten in connection with peaceful demonstrations organized by the CUD over the May 2005 general elections. We wrote to urge his release and the humane treatment of detained prisoners.

Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, a retired geography professor, human rights defender, and founder and former chair of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), was arrested with other members of the CUD. Professor Woldemariam had been seriously ill for months. We wrote to protest his arrest and ask that he be given medicine and treatment while in detention.

BOTSWANA

Dr. Kenneth Good, an Australian citizen and political science professor at the University of Botswana in Gaborone for more than 15 years, was ordered to leave Botswana on February 18 for criticizing, in an academic paper, the president's decision to choose his own successor. Although he submitted an appeal to the High Court, the police deported him to South Africa. We wrote to urge that Professor Good be allowed to return to Botswana and continue his career of education there.

CUBA

A meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba was convened on May 20, 2005 by the economists and pro-democracy activists Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Felix Bonne Carcasses, and Rene Gomez Manzano. We wrote in May and August to protest both the harassment aimed at preventing them from attending the assembly and the 20-year prison sentences handed down to Manzano and others for attending a peaceful demonstration. Our third letter deplored the confiscation of money and medicine meant for Manzano's family.

CHILE

We expressed our support of a letter sent by James Arthur, president of the American Mathematical Society, about the case of Dr. Boris Weisfeiler, professor of mathematics at Penn State University, who disappeared in 1985 in southern Chile. For many years we have supported Dr. Olga Weisfeiler, sister of the missing man, in her search. See our website for more information.

COLOMBIA

Riot police in tanks used tear gas and opened fire on students participating in a peaceful protest at the University of Valle in Cali on September 22. Jhony Silva Aranjuren, a university chemistry student, was killed, and psychology student German Perdomo was shot and taken to intensive care. We deplored this violent and illegal behavior on the part of the police and called for those responsible be held accountable for their actions.

GUATEMALA

Death threats were sent to the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG), its Executive Director, the anthropologist Fredy Peccerelli, and his family. It is thought that military officers who were active during the civil war are afraid of the work FAFG has been doing, exhuming the mass graves of people massacred during the conflict and providing documentary evidence of massacres they carried out. We requested police protection for FAFG and Dr. Peccerelli's family and asked that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

PERU

Death threats were made in February and August against three forensics experts, Luis Alberto Rueda Curimania, Carlos Alberto Suarez Canlla, and Maximo Angel Banda Roca, who investigate human-rights cases for the Medical Legal Institute in Ayacucho. We asked that the government act to stop the death threats and provide the scientists and other staff of the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology team with police protection.

BRAZIL

Three anthropology professors in the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Area who are active in the Indigenous rights movement, Fabio Almeida de Carvalho of the Federal University of Roraima, Pierlangela Nascimento da Cunha of the Organization of Indigenous Teachers of Roraima (OPIR), and Telmo Ribeiro Paulino of the Center of Makuxi Training, Lower Cotingo Region, were attacked by illegal rice farmers who were angry at the government's inclusion of their land in a protected area. We requested protection for the professors as they carry out their research.

UNITED KINGDOM

We vigorously condemned the April decision of the AUT (Association of University Teachers) Council of the UK to boycott Haifa University and Bar-Ilan University. The boycott was rescinded in May.

CONCLUSION

In 2005, with much of world attention turned toward the ongoing struggles in Iraq, the terrorist bombings in London, and other tragedies, CCS persisted in watching over individual beleaguered colleagues, many of whom face torture, harsh treatment and danger to their very lives in the prisons of the world.

As always, we offer our particular gratitude to our co-chairs, Joel Lebowitz, Paul Plotz and Walter Reich, whose vigorous initiative, kindness, and wise counsel make our continuing endeavors possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Maud Kozodoy
Executive Director