



THE COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT, 2006

This year the Committee of Concerned Scientists -- now 34 years old -- spoke out for scholars and scientists in nineteen countries who were the victims of human-rights abuse or repression. We acted on behalf of our academic colleagues around the world, upholding their rights to speak, move, and share their work freely. In many cases we were gratified to see that unjust imprisonment was ended or suffering relieved. The following is a summary of our activities in 2006.

CHINA

Li Jianping, an Internet journalist, wrote frequently for overseas news Web sites banned in China, such as Boxun News, Epoch Times, China Democracy and ChinaEWeekly. Some of his articles criticized the government and the Chinese Communist Party leadership. In May 2005, police searched Li's home and office, seizing documents and records. Li was arrested in June 2005 on charges of "incitement to subvert state power." Although the case against him was rejected twice by prosecutors because of insufficient evidence, he was convicted in October 2006 and sentenced to two years in prison. We appealed first during his trial and again to protest his conviction and sentencing.

Ren Zhiyuan, a secondary school teacher in Zoucheng, Shandong province, was detained in Nantong, Jiangsu Province, on May 10, 2005 and charged with "subversion of state power." Ren was accused of disseminating on the Internet an essay called "The Road to Democracy," in which he expressed the opinion that the people have the right to overthrow tyranny by violent means. Ren was also suspected of drawing up plans to establish an organization called "Mainland Democracy Frontline." He was convicted of subversion in March 2006. We protested the 10-year prison sentence imposed on Ren and called for his release.

Tan Kai was one of six members of Green Watch, an environmental activist group, who were arrested in October 2005. Although most of the others were quickly released, Tan Kai remained in detention and went on trial in May 2006 on the charge of "illegally obtaining state secrets." The charge against Tan related to his employment as a computer repair technician, in the course of which he made a routine backup copy of a Party official's computer. It appears that the real reason for his arrest, however, was his involvement in Green Watch, which was monitoring the environmental pollution by a chemical factory in Dongyang City, Zhejiang Province. The provincial government declared Green Watch an illegal organization in November 2005. We wrote in 2005 and again in 2006 to ask that Tan Kai receive a fair hearing with a full opportunity to present his defense.

Oeser, who attended the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing as a visiting scholar, is the author of 10 books, including *Notes on Tibet* (2003) and two books on the Cultural Revolution, which the government has banned from distribution in China. Oeser is the first Tibetan writer inside the mainland to openly raise in Chinese critical questions about China's role in Tibet and to urge Beijing to negotiate with the Dalai Lama. She was removed from her position at the Tibet Cultural Association in Lhasa in 2004 after China's United Front Department and its Publications Bureau determined that her writings contained "political errors." Because readers in China have no access to her books, Oeser began publishing her work on blogs in February 2005. Three of her blogs have been shut down by the government, most recently her blog at <http://woeser.bokee.com>, which was closed in September 2006. We protested this censorship and urged that Oeser be allowed to publish her work freely.

VIETNAM

Dr. Pham Hong Son, a medical doctor and businessman, has been held since March 2002 at the Yen Dinh prison camp in Thanh Hoa province. He was charged with espionage and sentenced to 13 years in prison because he distributed material which accused the government of violating human rights. Upon appeal, his sentence was reduced to five years. Dr. Pham Hong Son's health has greatly deteriorated, and he has not been given competent medical care. We asked for his release and for the immediate medical treatment he requires.

SRI LANKA

Balasingham Sugumar, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Culture at Eastern University, Batticaloa District, was abducted on September 30. Armed men in civilian clothes arrived at his house and said that they were taking him away for questioning and would release him once they had finished their inquiry. They warned his family not to tell anyone of their visit. In our letter we commended President Mahinda Rajapakse's promise to investigate Dr. Sugumar's fate and urged that the findings of the investigation be made public. Shortly thereafter we received a reply from the Sri Lanka Army Headquarters which explained that Dr. Sugumar had been released. His kidnappers had demanded and obtained the resignation of Dr. Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, the Vice Chancellor of Eastern University, in return for Dr. Sugumar's safe return.

MYANMAR

Ko Thet Win Aung, a 34-year-old student leader, died in Mandalay Prison on October 16, 2006. He had been dismissed from school in 1991 for his political activities and detained for nine months, during which time he was reportedly tortured. In 1998 he was re-arrested along with two other students, Aye Aung and Myo Min Zaw, both of whom are still imprisoned and in poor health. They had been helping to organize peaceful student demonstrations that called for improvements to the educational system and the release of political prisoners. Ko Thet Win Aung was sentenced to 59 years' imprisonment. For most of his sentence he was held in prisons distant from his family and lacked access to the essential food and medicine provided by family visits. We called for a prompt, independent investigation into the cause of his death. We also requested that Aye Aung and Myo Min Zaw be released, and in the interim that they be moved near their families and provided with adequate nutrition and medical treatment.

IRAN

Dr. Ramin Jahanbegloo, who is well known internationally for his writings on democracy and non-violence, was arrested on April 27 and detained in solitary confinement without charge. Dr. Jahanbegloo was arrested at the Tehran airport as he was leaving for Brussels to attend a conference sponsored by the German Marshall Fund. He was charged with "having contacts

with foreigners,” which is not a crime under Iranian law. It appears that Dr. Jahanbegloo was detained for delivering lectures on the prospects for democracy in Iran. We called for Ramin Jahanbegloo to be either promptly charged for a criminal offense or else unconditionally released. He was released on bail on August 30.

Maharam Kamrani, a medical doctor, and Ebrahim Rashidi, an engineer, were arrested in March and charged with “acting against national security.” The arrest came one day after Kamrani and Rashidi, who are activists for the rights of the Azeri Turk minority community in Iran, had requested and been denied a permit to hold a commemorative event. They were held in solitary confinement and denied access to their families or lawyers, and those who attempted to visit them were threatened with arrest themselves. Kamrani and Rashidi have been released on bail but are still awaiting trial. We wrote initially to protest their detention. Later we welcomed the news of their release on bail, calling at the same time for the charges against them to be dropped.

In 2006 numerous professors were removed from their posts in Iranian universities on account of their "liberal" or "secular" political views. It was reported that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had called for university students to denounce teachers who expressed secular opinions and to demand their removal. We deplored this practice and urged that it be discontinued immediately.

SYRIA

‘Aref Dalila, an economist, Fateh Jamous, a mechanical engineer, and Kamal al-Labwani, a physician, are all being held in ‘Adra prison because of their peaceful political activities. Dr. Dalila, the former dean of the faculty of economics at Aleppo University, was arrested in September 2001 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by the Supreme State Security Court on charges of "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means," "propagating false information abroad," and "inciting a foreign state to initiate aggression against Syria." The last charge carries a possible death sentence or life imprisonment. Dr. Dalila has a history of heart problems and deep vein thrombosis and is reportedly in need of surgery but has been denied independent medical care. Fateh Jamous was first imprisoned for more than 15 years and then re-arrested in May 2006, after addressing an Amnesty International conference in Sweden on human rights and appearing on a radio program in Great Britain to promote peaceful reform in Syria. He is charged with "aggression aiming to incite civil war and sectarian fighting and incitement to kill," a charge whose maximum sentence is the death penalty. Dr. Kamal Labwani was sentenced to three years for "inciting armed rebellion." He was an active member in the independent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Syria. We called for the release of all three men and for humane treatment and access to independent medical care during detention.

‘Ali Sayed al-Shihabi, a 50-year-old English teacher, was summoned to a meeting with State Security agents on August 10 and held incommunicado for five months without any charge or explanation. Shihabi is a former prisoner of conscience who was detained between 1982 and 1991 for his membership in the outlawed Party for Communist Action. He has since left the party. His 2006 arrest was connected to the articles he has published on websites such as Hiwar al-Mutamedn ("Civilized Dialogue"). We urged that ‘Ali Sayed al-Shihabi be either charged with a recognizably criminal offense or speedily released, adding that he should be granted access to family members and lawyers while in custody. Shihabi was released under a presidential amnesty on January 9, 2007.

TURKEY

Writer Elif Shafak was tried by the Istanbul 7th High Criminal Court on charges of “insulting Turkishness” under Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, along with her publisher Semih Sökmen and translator Asli Bican. All three were accused in connection with Ms. Shafak’s novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*. The trial ended in acquittal for lack of evidence on September 21. Other academics, writers, journalists and publishers have been brought before the Turkish courts under Article 301. In addition to calling for dropping the charges against Shafak and her co-defendants, we asked for a full review of Turkish legislation with the aim of removing any remaining laws that can lead to the imprisonment of literary professionals solely for the practice of their right to freedom of expression.

ISRAEL

We expressed concern about reports that Israel maintains a blanket ban on Palestinian students who wish to enter Israel in order to obtain higher education. In particular, we supported the recommendation of the Israeli Supreme Court that Sawsan Salameh, a doctoral student in chemistry from the West Bank, should be allowed to attend the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Agreeing with the Rector of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Professor Haim Rabinowitch, who recently stated "There is a need to allow students who are not suspected of any activities that endanger the security of Israel to stay in Israel for purpose of academic learning," we called on the Israeli government to lift the blanket ban and deal individually with each case.

Dr. Tarik Ramahi, a cardiologist in New Haven, Connecticut who also teaches at Al Quds University, was impeded from traveling freely between Israel and the United States. Dr. Ramahi established a program at Al Quds to teach cardiology and gastroenterology and also treats patients at Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria Hospital. Although he had previously been able to renew his tourist visa every three months, in September he was warned upon arrival at Ben Gurion Airport that he might not be admitted on his next visit. Dr. Ramahi was permitted to return to Israel in December. We urged the Israeli government to create an arrangement that would both preserve security and enable the free movement of Palestinian academics into and out of Israel and the territories.

EGYPT

Abdel Karim Suliman Amer, also known as Kareem Amer, a former student at Al-Azhar University, was detained in Alexandria in November on charges of “incitement to hatred of Islam” and “circulating rumors threatening public order” for having criticized the government and Islam on his blog (www.karam903.blogspot.com). Kareem Amer was first arrested in October 2005 because of his online writings about the sectarian strife that took place in Alexandria that year. In March 2006 the University expelled him because of his secular ideas and then filed a report against him with the Public Prosecutor's Office. We protested his being arrested simply for exercising his right to freedom of speech. Kareem Amer was sentenced to four years in prison on February 22, 2007.

LIBYA

This year yet again we appealed repeatedly on behalf of the five Bulgarian nurses, Valya Georgieva Cherveniyashka, Snezhanka Ivanova Dimitrova, Nasya Stojcheva Nenova, Valentina Manolova Siropulo, and Kristiana Malinova Valcheva, and a Palestinian doctor, Ashraf Ahmad Jum'a, who were accused of deliberately infecting Libyan children with HIV. They had been convicted in 2004 and sentenced to death after the court disallowed the testimony of expert

witnesses who declared that the infections existed before the accused began working at the hospital. The Libyan Supreme Court overturned the earlier sentences in December 2005 and ordered a retrial, but in December 2006 a second death sentence was handed down. We initially urged the court to order a new, independent scientific assessment of the cause of the HIV infections and to allow the testimony of independent experts in order to provide a fair trial. After the second trial we demanded that the death sentence be immediately rescinded and the accused freed, in the absence of evidence against them.

TUNISIA

Dr. Abdelhamid Jelassi, an engineer, was arrested along with others in 1991 and convicted in a mass trial on charges of "plotting to overthrow the state." He was recently transferred from al-Mahdia to Messadine prison after he and other prisoners launched a hunger strike on November 5 to protest their imprisonment. Since then, his wife, Monia Brahim, has been prevented from seeing him and has received no news about his health or his conditions in the new prison. She was also interrogated by police about her contacts with human rights organizations overseas. We called for an end to the mistreatment of Dr. Jelassi, who was being punished for protesting his situation through a hunger strike, and asked that his family be allowed to see him immediately and without harassment.

ETHIOPIA

We wrote again on behalf of Dr. Berhanu Nega, a professor of economics and mayor-elect of Addis Ababa, who has been held in Kaliti prison since November 2005. He was arrested along with many other members of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy following demonstrations against the contested result of parliamentary elections. Dr. Nega, who suffers from high blood pressure and cardiomyopathy, was being held in a large cell with a total of 270 political and criminal prisoners. Although he had been hospitalized in June, he was sent back to prison after 20 days without having been examined by a cardiologist. We called for him to be transferred to better conditions, in accordance with his doctors' recommendations. Dr. Nega has since been moved to a less crowded and better ventilated cell. Although his conditions remain harsh, it is hoped that the move will aid his health.

Wasihun Melese and Anteneh Getnet, teachers and activists in the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, were arrested on September 23 and held incommunicado without being charged. The ETA has been critical of government education policies and has been subject to numerous government attempts to close it. Hundreds of ETA members have been detained or arbitrarily dismissed in recent years, reportedly because they failed to support the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. Getnet was previously abducted and beaten in May 2006 and is still suffering from the injuries he sustained. We called for the immediate release of Wasihun Melese and Anteneh Getnet. They were released on bail in October.

ZIMBABWE

We deplored the arrest and assault of university students who were participating in a peaceful demonstration in Harare on October 11 to demand improved conditions at the University of Zimbabwe and other state institutions of higher learning. Several leaders of The Zimbabwe National Students' Association (ZINASU) were detained overnight and beaten by police, and one, Samuel Mangoma, sustained serious injuries. Around 800 students participated in the demonstration. We called for an immediate end to violence against the students and their leaders.

SOUTH AFRICA

Professor Fazel Khan, a sociology lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN), was brought up on disciplinary charges and faced possible dismissal for giving an interview in which he criticized an article about him published in *Ukzndaba*, a university newsletter. It was also reported that in January UKZN imposed a restrictive "Electronic Communications Policy" which allows the university to read staff members' e-mail and computer files, and which has been used to sue another academic, Professor Jimi Adesina, for defamation after he criticized university policies. We protested the disciplinary charges against Dr. Khan and asked for the university's policy to be reformed so that in future faculty members may express themselves freely without fear of reprisal.

CUBA

We appealed again on behalf of Dr. Oscar Biscet, the head of the "Friends of Human Rights" project, who was arrested in December 2002 for a peaceful gathering in a private home and sentenced to 25 years in prison. His physical condition has seriously deteriorated, as recently witnessed and reported by his wife Elsa Morejon. Dr. Biscet has high blood pressure and has lost a significant amount of weight. We criticized his continuing imprisonment, requested that he receive immediate medical help, and called for his condition to be publicly reported by independent experts.

Martha Beatriz Roque, a former political prisoner on whose behalf we have written before, has endured intense physical and verbal harassment for over a year. Roque, an economist, was imprisoned in the spring of 2003. She was given a 20-year sentence but released on parole for health-related reasons in July 2004. In May 2005, she organized a gathering of more than 200 dissidents to discuss promotion of a Western-style democracy in Cuba. Since July 2005, intruders have repeatedly punched and slapped her in her own home, menacing notes have been slipped under her door, and she is pursued by shouted threats in the street. Roque sent letters to the Justice and Interior Ministries in May, asking the government either to stop the aggressive acts or to put her back in jail for her own safety. The Justice Ministry, however, told her the issue did not fall under its jurisdiction. Other dissidents have complained of physical and psychological harassment as well. We called on the government to ensure her safety and the safety of others who have committed no crime, but are being harassed and endangered merely for the peaceful expression of their opinions.

MEXICO

Police and paramilitary units repeatedly assaulted teachers in Oaxaca who were striking for salary increases and improved working conditions. The strike began with a peaceful protest in May. On June 14, Oaxaca state governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz ordered that tear gas be used on the protesters, and several were killed. The teachers' salaries were stopped on August 1, and four of their leaders were detained. Although President Vicente Fox Quesada issued a statement on September 25 describing his administration's plans to resolve the Oaxaca conflict, reports of a violent police crackdown against the strike continued. We asked him to intervene immediately in order to prevent further bloodshed and to bring about a peacefully negotiated end to the conflict. The strike ended in December.

ITALY

A group called Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine proposed that the Venice Biennale withdraw an already accepted Israeli work entitled "Life Saver: Typology of Commemoration in Israel" because it focused on Israeli experiences and "totally excluded the Palestinians." We condemned this proposal on the grounds that since works of art and architecture invite dialogue and response from observers, to exclude the Israeli entry would suffocate dialogue and invalidate the very right of personal response that APJP claimed on behalf of Palestinians.

UNITED KINGDOM

We condemned a boycott proposal directed against Israeli universities, academic journals, and scholars by the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. The proposal referred to "continuing Israeli apartheid policies, including construction of the exclusion wall and discriminatory educational practices," and urged the association's members to "consider the appropriateness of a boycott of those that do not publicly dissociate themselves from such policies." Although NATFHE members voted for the boycott, their decision was invalidated by the subsequent merger of NATFHE with the Association of University Teachers, which did not endorse the boycott.

UNITED STATES

Fifty-five Cuban scholars and academics who had planned to attend the annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, beginning on March 15, were prevented from doing so when their visas were denied. U.S. Government policy considers Cuban academics to be employees of the Cuban government and therefore ineligible for visas. The LASA international congress is the world's leading forum for academic discussion on Latin American and the Caribbean, and the scholars who were denied visas are experts in their fields. We issued a strong request that visas be granted immediately, in support of the American ideals of free speech and academic exchange.

Dr. Waskar Ari, a Bolivian scholar who received his doctorate from Georgetown University and studies religious beliefs and political activism among indigenous Bolivians, was unable to take the post offered him by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln because the federal government withheld his visa without any explanation. We asked that the government either grant the visa or, if Dr. Ari was considered a security risk, inform him of the fact and permit him to defend himself.

A group of Iranian scientists and their family members, about 80 people in all, were prevented from traveling to a university reunion in California when their visas were revoked upon their arrival in the U.S. These scientists and engineers had legally obtained 15-day visitor visas to attend an event organized by the Sharif University of Technology Association. Some of them were held overnight in local jails with their families and deported the following day without any official explanation. Others were told that their visas were revoked under a 2002 U.S. law that bars the issuance of visas to nationals of Iran and four other countries regarded as "state sponsors of terrorism," unless the person is deemed to be no threat to national security. We registered our distress at learning that scholars with legally obtained visas were turned back from entering the United States for peaceful purposes and expressed our hope that in future, visas issued to nonthreatening persons will be honored and the holders treated with respect.

GOOD NEWS

Dr. Oscar Kaibyshev, 67, a physicist in Ufa, Bashkortostan, the former director of IMPS, a division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, was a leading researcher in materials science and processing. The criminal charges he faced were based on his exporting dual-use technology to South Korea, but his research, patented in the United States and the subject of several articles, had long been in the public domain and did not represent state secrets. While Dr. Kaibyshev on whose behalf we have written repeatedly, received a suspended sentence of six years in prison, he was also fined and prohibited from taking any position of leadership for 3 years.

Chinese physicist Tong Shidong was conditionally released from prison on March 9. He had been detained in June of 1999 and was subsequently charged with subversion for attempting to lawfully register a chapter of the opposition China Democracy Party (CDP) at Hunan University.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Chile's newly inaugurated President, Michelle Bachelet, in March. In the week before the meeting, 14 members of Congress signed a letter urging Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to ask Bachelet about the Weisfeiler case.

CONCLUSION

In 2006, as the increasingly brutal war in Iraq commanded the world's attention, CCS continued to monitor the plight of individual colleagues in a number of less-observed places. Many have risked their own safety in order to speak out against repressive conditions in their home countries, to continue their scholarly work in the face of obstacles, and to draw attention to the ongoing struggle for human rights.

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,

Sarah Penso
Executive Director