

Scholars at Risk

Andrew M. Sessler

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

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Human Rights Groups And Their Area of Action

1. Committee on the International Freedom of Scientists (The American Physical Society), Physicists primarily
2. The AAAS Clearing House, Scholars
3. The New York Academy of Sciences, Scholars
4. The National Academy of Sciences Human Rights Committee, Scholars
5. Amnesty International, Anyone
6. Many Other Human Rights NGOs, Anyone (or sometimes geographic areas of specialization)

All are pro-active except the AAAS that only informs...

The National Academy of Sciences Human Rights Committee

The NAS HRC consider cases “closed” while they are still pending. Once they are resolved they go on a “public site”:

<http://www7.nationalacademies.org/humanrights/index.html>

There you will find more than 50 cases resolved over the last 5 years. They cover countries like Egypt, Kosovar, Burma, Syria, Turkey, Tunisia, Cuba, Guatemala, Vietnam, and on and on. And they cover essentially all the scholarly fields: psychiatry, engineering, economics, medicine, sociology, and on and on.

Professor Saad Eddin Ibrhim

A resolved case. Acquitted March 18, 2003

Sociology professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim was acquitted on March 18, 2003, by Egypt's high court of justice after having been brought to trial three times on the same charges. Several of his colleagues who had also been arrested were acquitted as well. (The charges against him included accepting foreign funds without authorization, disseminating false information harmful to Egypt's interest, and embezzlement. These charges were widely criticized by the international community as being unjust and politically motivated.) **He is still frequently harassed.**

Dr. Alp Ayan

Turkish Psychiatrist

Alp Ayan is a Turkish psychiatrist and psychotherapist. He is one of a number of principled Turkish medical doctors who, at great personal risk, have documented cases of torture and treated torture survivors in Turkey and have been targeted for harassment by the Turkish Government. Since 1996, Turkish authorities have repeatedly accused Dr. Ayan of wrongdoing. Named as a defendant in 41 cases, he has been acquitted in all but two instances, often following lengthy trials and numerous court appearances.

At this time Dr. Ayan is appealing guilty verdicts in the Last two cases. If the convictions are upheld, he faces prison sentences totaling three years and one day.

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In the first case, Dr. Ayan was part of a group of people who were arrested in September 1999 when they were en route to the funeral of an inmate who had been killed by security forces. After 113 days in pre-trial detention, he was charged with participating in an “illegal demonstration” and “resisting the police with violence,” and released pending trial. After a trial that lasted more than four years, on February 13, 2004, he was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months and one day in prison.

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In the second case, on July 24, 1996, a nongovernmental organization issued a press statement about Turkish prisoners who were on a hunger strike to protest their harsh conditions of confinement. As the spokesperson for the group, Dr. Ayan read this statement aloud to a gathering of people. He was later charged with participation in an “illegal meeting.” In June 1999, he was convicted and sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Myrna Mack Chang

Murdered, in Guatemala in 1990 was anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang. The National Academy Human Rights Committee has been working on her case ever since. They have sent several missions to Guatemala, continually insisted that both the actual murderer and the intellectual authors of the crime be found and brought to justice, and provided strong support to Myrna's sister as she pushed the case through the courts and to the scientists at the Social Science Research Center, where Myrna worked, who have been threatened and harassed over the years.

Fredy Peccerelli

Fredy Peccerelli, forensic anthropologist, is a founding member of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG, Fundación de Antropología Forense) and currently serves as its executive director. He has dedicated his professional life to gathering evidence to document human rights atrocities in his country, exhuming and identifying human remains, and returning them to their families for proper burial.

Mr. Peccerelli has been personally involved in the investigation of more than 150 mass gravesites in his country. During the past several years, Mr. Peccerelli and other members of the FAFG staff, and their families, have received multiple death threats and have been subjected to serious acts of intimidation, particularly while conducting exhumations in rural areas of Guatemala. He has been subject to a clear pattern of intimidation and threats.

Mesfin, Woldemariam

On November 1, 2005, Ethiopian geographer Mesfin Woldemariam, economists Berhanu Nega, Befekadu Degefe, and Muluneh Eyual and engineers Hailu Shawel and Gizachew Shifferaw were detained, along with other leaders of the Ethiopian opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) Party, and hundreds of CUD supporters. The detentions followed widespread protests on October 31, 2005, against the contested May 2005 general elections. The CUD had called for a stay-home strike to be followed by peaceful demonstrations, but, when police began shooting with live ammunition, violence erupted.

Mesfin, Woldemariam

On December 21, Professor Mesfin, Dr. Berhanu, Mr. Hailu, Mr. Muluneh, and Mr. Gizachew were among 123 politicians, journalists, and civil society activists and 8 organizations (4 independent news organizations and the 4 political parties that united to form the CUD) charged by the Federal High Court in Addis Ababa with a range of crimes, many of which carry the death penalty. Twenty-one of the individuals originally charged have been released. Of the 111 defendants who remain charged, approximately 80 are in custody. (The remaining individuals are either in hiding or are residing abroad.)

Reprise

I could easily go on and on, for there are very many cases which are currently active.

I have only mentioned a few, just to give you the flavor of the work that human rights activists actually are doing,

But, most importantly, the cases have shown you the tremendous risks that individuals are undertaking so as to preserve human rights. It is this aspect that we find so amazing and so inspiring.