

# Endangered Scholars Worldwide

*Social Research was founded by a group of scholars known as the University in Exile, refugees from Nazi Europe who found a home at the New School. In each issue we publish the names and details of scholars, researchers, and students who have been threatened or imprisoned, along with ways to offer them support. We see this effort as consistent not only with our own history as a journal but with the need to call attention to the increasing and often brutal attempts to silence our colleagues around the world.*

*If you are aware of a scholar or student whose case you believe we should investigate, please contact us at [socres@newschool.edu](mailto:socres@newschool.edu).*

## **SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS: NEW AND CONTINUING CASES**

### **BAHRAIN**

Prison sentences have been handed to **JALILA AL-SALMAN** and **MAHDI 'ISSA MAHDI ABU DHEEB**, both board members of the Bahrain Teachers' Association, arrested on charges of "inciting hatred against the regime" and "calling to overthrow and change the regime by force" following the group's call for a teacher strike in March 2011. They have been sentenced to three and ten years, respectively. Amnesty International has expressed serious concerns about Mahdi's health and fears that he may die in prison. During a hearing in December 2011, Mahdi showed clear signs of having been beaten while in detention.

Previously featured scholars from Bahrain who remain in prison include **DR. ABDUL-JALIL AL-SINGACE**, a professor of engineering at

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Information current, to the best of our knowledge, as of March 7, 2012. Additional information and more current information about many of these cases may be available on our website at <http://www.newschool.edu/cps/endangered-scholars/>.

the University of Bahrain, sentenced to life imprisonment on June 22, 2011, on charges of training and financing a terrorist organization, and reportedly tortured during his pre-trial detention; and **RULA AL SAFFER**, an assistant professor at the College of Health Sciences and the head of the Bahrain Nursing Society, sentenced on September 29, 2011, to 15 years in prison.

The threats to scholars in Bahrain extend beyond the individual cases reported here. According to a report from Scholars at Risk, in the year since pro-democracy protests began in February 2011, at least 100 faculty and staff have been dismissed from the University of Bahrain for participating in the protests, and over 500 students have been suspended or expelled.

#### Appeals to:

His Majesty Sheikh Hamad bin Issa  
Al-Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
P.O. Box 555  
Rifa'a Palace  
Kingdom of Bahrain  
Fax: +973 176 64 587

Dr. Fatima Al-Balushi  
Minister of Human Rights and Social  
Development, Acting Minister of Health  
Ministry of Human Rights and  
Development  
Manama  
Kingdom of Bahrain

Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al-Khalifa  
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
P.O. Box 450  
Al-Manama  
Bahrain  
Fax: +973 175 31 284

#### **CHINA**

Scholars featured in previous issues who remain in prison in China include writer and editor **TASHI RABTEN** (pen name **TE'URANG**), sentenced to four years' imprisonment on June 2, 2011, for his critical political writings; **LIU XIAOBO**, a human rights activist and 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, held in an undisclosed location in Beijing since his arrest in December 2008 for "inciting subversion of state power"; and **GUO QUAN**, a former literature professor at Nanjing Normal University, sentenced to 10 years in prison and 3 years of deprivation of politi-

cal rights in October 2009 on charges of “inciting subversion of state power.”

Appeals to:

His Excellency Hu Jintao  
President of the People’s Republic of  
China  
Zhong Nhai  
Beijing 100032  
People’s Republic of China  
Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr. Wang Shengjun  
President, Supreme People’s Court No. 27  
Dongjiaominxiang Dongcheng District  
Beijing 100745  
People’s Republic of China  
Fax: +86 10 65292345 (c/o Ministry of  
Communication)  
Salutation: Dear President

Facebook group in support of Liu Xiaobo:  
<<http://www.facebook.com/Free.Liu>>

## **IRAN**

**MASSOUD SEPEHR**, a political science lecturer at Shiraz Azad University, has been detained without charge since his arrest on November 17, 2011. According to a report from his wife, published by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, security officials initially advised her not to speak with the media about the arrest so that the charges could be cleared quickly. In the months that have passed, officials have not provided reasons for the arrest. Sepehr suffers from several health problems, including high blood pressure and kidney problems, and is at risk of severe complications if he is not attended by a physician.

**SOHRAB RAZZAGHI**, a former faculty member and head of the Volunteer Actors Institute, an organization dedicated to research and education of activists and civil society organizers, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in October 2011. Neither he nor his lawyer was present at his own trial and there is no possibility of appeal. He was arrested in October 2007 and was held in solitary confinement for one month in Evin Prison without access to legal counsel. Razzaghi was formerly a professor at Allameh Tabatabaee’s Law and Political Science College but was fired in 2005 during a wave of politically motivated dismissals of critical scholars. According to the International Campaign for Human

Rights in Iran, other detainees were forced into making false confession against Razzaghi, who has denied the charges against him.

Scholars from Iran who remain in prison include seven people connected to the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, following coordinated attacks on the Institute in May 2011, including **KAMRAN MORTEZAIE** and **VAHID MAHMOUDI**, each sentenced to five years, and **RAMIN ZIBAIE**, **MAHMOUD BADAIVAM**, **FARHAD SEDGHI**, **RIAZ SOBHANI**, and **NOUSHIN KHADEM**, each sentenced to four years; three cultural figures, all charged with "acting against national security" through supporting Kurdish opposition groups, including poet **JAMAL KHANI**, serving a two-year sentence; educator **FARHAD VAKILINIA** serving three years; **NAEEM NAJAFI**, a student, serving four years, and Kurdish author and scholar **SAJJAD JAHANFAR** serving one year; religious scholar **AHMAD GHABEL**, who re-entered jail on July 31, 2011, to begin a twenty-month sentence on charges of acting against the regime and national security; and **DR. MOSTAFA ALAVI**, an Iranian doctor and researcher sentenced to fifteen years in August 2008 for "plotting against the regime."

Appeals to:

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali  
Khamenei  
Leader of the Islamic Republic  
The Office of the Supreme Leader  
Islamic Republic Street–  
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
E-mail: info@leader.ir  
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi  
Head of the Judiciary  
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh /  
Office of the Head of the Judiciary  
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.,  
South of Serah-e Jomhouri  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
E-mail: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In  
the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah  
Shahroudi) Salutation: Your Excellency

## **RUSSIA**

**SVYATOSLAV BOBYSHEV** and **YEVGENY AFANASYEV**, both professors at Baltic State Technical University in St Petersburg Russia, have been detained without formal charges or trial since March 2010. The professors are accused of spying and passing state secrets to China.

Appeals to:

Dmitry Medvedev  
President of Russia  
Ilinka Str, No. 23  
103132, Moscow, Russia

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

**DR. SA'UD MUKHTAR AL-HASHIMI**, a medical doctor and faculty member at the King Abdulaziz University, was sentenced in November 2011 to 30 years in prison, which is to be followed by a 30-year travel ban. He had been awaiting trial in solitary confinement since his arrest on February 2, 2007. Prior to his arrest, al-Hashimi had called for greater transparency in research centers of academics and religious scholars. According to a report from the Islamic Human Rights Commission, he has faced torture throughout his detention.

Previously featured scholars from Saudi Arabia who remain in prison include **DR. YUSUF AL-AHMAD**, an Islamic scholar who teaches at Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud University in Riyadh, arrested after posting a YouTube video critical of long-term detentions of security suspects without due juridical process; **NADHIR AL-MAJID**, a teacher and writer, detained on April 17, 2011, soon after the appearance of an article in which he criticized the Saudi government; and university professors **SA'UD AL-DUGHAITHIR**, **MUHAMMAD BIN NASIR AL-GHAMIDI**, and **ABD AL-KARIM AL-KHADHAR**, all members of a group of nine intellectuals who drafted a party proposal seeking to create what would have been the first political party in Saudi Arabia, arrested on February 16, 2011.

Appeals to:

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin Abdul  
Aziz Al-Saud  
Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933  
Airport Road  
Riyadh 11134  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 403 1185

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal  
bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Nasseriya Street  
Riyadh 11124  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 403 0645

Mr. Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy  
President  
Human Rights Commission  
P.O. Box 58889  
Riyadh 11515  
King Fahad Road  
Building No. 373  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 4612061

## **TURKEY**

Previously featured scholars who remain in prison in Turkey include **BÜSRA ERSANLI**, a constitutional law expert and professor of political science at Marmara University in Istanbul, arrested on October 28; and academic and writer **RAGIP ZARAKOLU**, arrested as part of the same crackdown as Ersanli.

### Appeals to:

His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan  
Prime Minister of Turkey  
Office of the Prime Minister  
06573 Basbakanlik  
Ankara Turkey  
Fax: 90 312 417 04 76

His Excellency Sadullah Ergin  
Minister of Justice  
06669 Kizilay  
Ankara, Turkey  
Fax: 90 312 419 3370

## **ENDANGERED STUDENTS: NEW AND CONTINUING CASES**

### **BAHRAIN**

**HASSAN 'OUN**, an 18-year-old student at the Shaikh Khalifa Institute of Technology, was reportedly subject to torture and other mistreatment during his detention by authorities after being arrested on January 23, 2012, on charges of “illegal public gathering.” According to reports from a lawyer present at an interrogation as well as other detainees, Hassan 'Oun's body showed signs of torture and one of his legs was swollen. He told the lawyer that he was forced to stand for 11 hours straight, was beaten with a hose, and was threatened with rape. He had been detained once before in 2011 after involvement in anti-government protests, during which he was also allegedly tortured,

according to information he provided to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. His brother is currently in hiding and is at risk of torture if he is discovered.

Appeals to:

His Majesty Sheikh Hamad bin Issa  
Al-Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
P.O. Box 555  
Rifa'a Palace  
Kingdom of Bahrain.  
Fax: +973 176 64 587

Dr. Fatima Al-Balushi  
Minister of Human Rights and Social  
Development, Acting Minister of Health  
Ministry of Human Rights and  
Development  
Manama  
Kingdom of Bahrain

Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al-Khalifa  
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
P.O. Box 450  
Al-Manama  
Bahrain  
Fax: +973 175 31 284

## **BELARUS**

**ALIAKSANDER ATROSHCHANKAU**, a previously featured scholar from Belarus who remains in prison, is an international law student at the European Humanities University. He was sentenced in the spring of 2011 to four years in prison on charges of inciting rioting following protests over the disputed Belarusian presidential election in December 2011.

Appeals to:

President of the Republic of Belarus  
Alyaksandr G. Lukashenka  
Karl Marx Str. 38  
220016 g. Minsk  
Belarus  
Fax: +375 (172) 26 06 10 or  
+375 (172) 22 38 72  
Tel: +375 (172) 22 38 72  
Email: [pres@president.gov.by](mailto:pres@president.gov.by)  
Salutation: Dear President

## **BURMA (MYANMAR)**

**KO AUNG HTUN**, a writer and former student activist, arrested in Burma in the winter of 1998, remains in prison. He was convicted of violating state censorship and engaging in unlawful association and sentenced to 17 years of imprisonment.

Appeals to:

Senior General Than Shwe  
Chairman, State Peace and Development  
Council  
Ministry of Defense  
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar  
(for US Postal Service, “Burma” should  
appear in parentheses after “Myanmar”  
on envelope only, not in the letter itself)  
Salutation: Dear Senior General

Minister Counselor U Myint Lwin  
Chargé d’Affaires  
Ad Interim Embassy of Myanmar  
2300 S Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
Salutation: Dear Sir

## **IRAN**

Women’s dormitories at Allameh Tabatabaee University in Tehran were raided by authorities several times in February 2012 and students’ rooms searched in what has become a frequent illegal practice at Iranian universities, according to a report from the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. In this particular set of raids, several students were removed and banned from the dorms, and one student was expelled for keeping “immoral films” on her computer. Since October 2011, authorities have sought to control the conduct and communications of students in the dorms through raids like these as well as the installation of surveillance cameras. In light of the invasion of their privacy, students refer to the dorms as “the glass room.”

**SHIRZAD KARIMI**, a Kurdish university student and a member of the Kurdish Students Democratic Union, was given a three-year suspended prison sentence (meaning that he will not serve the prison sentence unless he is convicted of a subsequent crime) in February 2012 on charges of “propagation against the regime.” He was arrested on

September 12, 2011, along with several other members of the Kurdish Students Democratic Union.

**MOHSEN SANATIPOUR**, a student activist and journalist, was sentenced to one year in prison. His arrest follows a two-semester university suspension in response to his involvement in pro-democracy activities. He was arrested in May 2009 by the Ministry of Intelligence.

**ABOLFAZL TABARZADI**, a civil engineering student and human rights activist, was transferred from Karoon Prison to the psychiatric ward of a hospital in Ahvaz due to the development of severe depression and paranoia while in prison. The transfer was made in January 2012. Tabarzadi began serving a nine-month sentence in October 2011 after being convicted of “acting against national security” and “contact with foreign media.” Prior to his arrest he was fighting to gain visitation rights for political prisoners, such as his uncle, a fellow human rights activist. He remains under tight security in the hospital.

Previously featured students from Iran who remain in prison include: **PAYMAN AREF**, arrested on October 30, 2011, currently in jail, though the official charges against him remain unclear; **ABDOLLAH MOMENI**, a student activist and spokesman for Iran’s largest reformist student organization currently in Evin Prison; **MAHDIEH GOLROO**, a student activist and member of the Right to Education Council in Tehran, currently serving a sentence of two years and four months in Evin Prison on charges of “propaganda against the regime,” “congregation and mutiny,” and cooperation with the Mojahedin Khalq Organization, an outlawed political group; **MAJID TAVAKOLI** and **BAHAREH HEDAYAT**, distinguished student activists sentenced to eight-and-a-half and nine-and-a-half years, respectively, for their involvement in anti-government protests in 2009; and **BEHROOZ JAVID-TEHRANI**, a student activist and prisoners’ rights campaigner who was sentenced to seven years in jail in 2005. All are at risk of torture and need your support.

Appeals to:

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali  
Khamenei  
Leader of the Islamic Republic  
The Office of the Supreme Leader  
Islamic Republic Street–  
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
E-mail: info@leader.ir  
Salutation: Your Excellency

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi  
Head of the Judiciary  
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh /  
Office of the Head of the Judiciary  
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.  
South of Serah-e Jomhouri  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
E-mail: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In  
the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah  
Shahroudi) Salutation: Your Excellency

## **SUDAN**

Over 300 students were arrested and many severely beaten in a police raid on dormitories at the University of Khartoum in the early morning hours of January 17, 2012. The arrests were an attempt to preempt planned student protests to take place the following weekend. The would-be protestors were calling for the removal of the director of the university, because of his decision to call police onto campus to disperse an earlier protest. These original student protests were in support of the al-Manasir ethnic group, who required compensation after being affected by the building of a dam.

### **Appeals to:**

His Excellency Lt. Omar Hassan Ahmed  
Al-Bashir  
President of the Republic of Sudan  
President's Palace  
PO Box 281, Khartoum, Sudan  
Telegrams: President al Bashir, Khartoum,  
Sudan  
Fax: +249 183 783 223/ +249 183 771 651/  
+249 183 787 676

His Excellency Mohamed Boshara Dosa  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 302 , Al Nil Avenue  
Khartoum, Sudan  
Fax: + 249 183 780 796/ +249 183 770 883

His Excellency Ambassador Daffa-Alla  
Elhag Ali Osman  
Permanent Representative to the UN  
Permanent Mission of the Republic of  
Sudan to the United Nations in Geneva,  
Avenue Blanc 47  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Fax: +41 22 731 26 56  
Email: mission.sudan@bluewin.ch,  
mission.sudan@ties.itu.int

## SYRIA

ISLAM AL-DABBAS and MAJD AL-DIN KHOLANI, both students involved in organizing peaceful protests in and near Damascus since March 2011, were arrested on July 22 and August 8, 2011, respectively, and are being held incommunicado in undisclosed locations. According to reports from Amnesty International, both were beaten following their arrests and are at risk of torture.

Appeals to:

President

President

Bashar al-Assad

Presidential Palace

al-Rashid Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 332 3410

Minister of Interior

Major Sa'id Mohamed Samour

Ministry of Interior

'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 222 3428

## GOOD NEWS: RELEASES

### CHINA

ZHENG YICHUN, professor of English at Liaoning University, was released on January 19, 2012, after completing his seven-year sentence. He was arrested in 2004 on charges of "suspicion of inciting subversion of state power." He is now subject to three years of deprivation of political rights.

### SUDAN

We are happy to report that **PROFESSOR MOHAMED ZAIN AL-ABIDEEN**, Dean of the College of Higher Education at the University of Al Zaiem Al Azhari in Omdurman, was released on March 4, 2012. He had been arrested on February 20, 2012 by the National Intelligence and Security Service. The arrest came shortly after the publication of an article critical of the government in the daily newspaper *Al Tayar*.

## SYRIA

YASSIN ZIADEH, brother of human rights researcher and activist RADWAN ZIADEH, was released from prison in November 2011 after

being held without charge for four months. Yassin Ziadeh was wrongly held as part of the government's retaliation for his brother's research and human rights work.

## **VIETNAM**

We welcome the release of **PHAM MINH HOANG**, a blogger and lecturer of mathematics at Ho Chi Minh City Polytechnic Institute, on January 13, 2012. Pham was sentenced on August 10, 2011, to three years in jail and three years of house arrest for belonging to Viet Tan, a banned pro-democracy group, and for publishing an anti-communist blog. While he was released after a significant reduction of his original sentence, the court upheld the three-year house arrest, which he is now serving.

## **SOURCES:**

Amnesty International <<http://www.amnesty.org/>>

Bahrain Center for Human Rights <<http://www.bahrainrights.org/en>>

English PEN <<http://www.englishpen.org/writersinprison/>>

Human Rights in China <<http://www.hrichina.org/>>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) <<http://www.hrw.org/>>

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran <<http://www.iran-humanrights.org/>>

Islamic Human Rights Commission <<http://www.ihrc.org/>>

Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) <<http://www.nearinternational.org/>>

Scholars at Risk (SAR) <<http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/>>

—Written by Matt Congdon