

# Endangered Scholars Worldwide

*The last four months have been exceptionally bad ones for academic freedom. As well as the four new cases listed below, many instances of generalized repression have victimized countless teachers and students around the world. In February a decision of the Federal High Court of Ethiopia effectively dissolved the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, in violation of International Labor Organization conventions to which Ethiopia is a signatory. Teachers have come under even more severe attack in Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe's campaign against the Progressive Teachers' Union has led to hundreds of teachers fleeing the country in fear of police violence. During this same period, students in Iran have continued to face brutal repression, with over 50 student activists arrested and many feared tortured since the clampdown began in December.*

*Less grave than any of these cases but also worthy of mention is an instance of concern to academic freedom that has emerged in the United States. In May of this year, Wendy Gonaver was fired from her new job teaching American studies at California State University, Fullerton due to her refusal to sign a loyalty oath committing her to "defend" the US and California constitutions "against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Gonaver, a Quaker, had offered to sign the statement if she could amend a personal statement declaring her pacifist beliefs, but was refused. Her case follows that of another Quaker, Marianne Kearney-Brown, who was fired in February from California State University, East Bay for inserting the word "nonviolently" into the oath. Kearney-Brown was rehired after her case attracted media attention. The oath is a remnant of an anticommunist policy of the 1950s that requires all California public servants to sign it.*

—Arien Mack

Information current, to the best of our knowledge, as of June 8, 2008.

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

**DR. MATROOK AL-FALEH**, a professor of political science of King Saud University in Riyadh, was arrested on May 19 by Saudi secret police. His arrest came only days after Dr. al-Faleh had issued a statement on torture and prison conditions following a recent visit to his jailed colleague, **DR. ABDULLAH AL-HAMED** (featured in the previous issue of *Social Research*). Dr. al-Faleh is a member of the Arab Committee for Human Rights and an active advocate of civil society and constitutional reform in Saudi Arabia. He was previously arrested and pardoned after serving two years of a six-year sentence—along with Dr. al-Hamed and two others—for circulating a petition calling for constitutionally guaranteed human rights. According to Dr al-Falah’s wife, he has been on a hunger strike since his arrest and his health is deteriorating.

**DR. MUHAMMAD ‘ALI ABU RAZIZA**, a professor of psychology at the University of Um al-Qura in the city of Makkah (Mecca), was arrested by religious police in January after meeting with a young woman in a coffee shop. Under Sharia law, it is an offense to be alone in the company of a member of the opposite sex who is not an immediate relative. According to press reports, Dr. Abu Raziza had upset officials from the religious police who were his students during an argument in one of his classes. He later received a telephone call from a woman asking him to meet her at a coffee shop to discuss a problem. He was said to have agreed to the meeting on the condition that she bring a male guardian but upon his arrival at the coffee shop he found the woman alone. He was sentenced to eight months’ imprisonment and 150 lashes by a criminal court in Makkah on March 3. He has also been prevented from teaching classes and carrying out other jobs involving direct contact with members of the public. Prince Khalid Al-Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the governor of Makkah Province, is currently deciding whether the sentence will be carried out.

Appeals to:

Ambassador Adel A. Al-Jubeir  
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia  
601 New Hampshire Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
Fax: 202-944-3113  
Email: info@saudiembassy.net

King Abdullah bin `Abd al-`Aziz  
Al Sa`ud  
Royal Palace  
Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Salutation: Your Majesty:

**CHINA**

**GUO QUAN**, a professor of literature at Nanjing Normal University who was stripped of his post last year following his political advocacy of democracy, was arrested on May 17, apparently as a result of his articles criticizing the government response to the May 12 earthquake in Sichuan Province. Guo holds a master's degree in law and a doctorate in philosophy, and has published a number of books and articles in China. His early writing focused mainly on philosophy, religion, and literary analysis. His work turned political last November when he challenged the one-party system by writing an open letter to government officials advocating multiparty competition and launching the China Democracy Party. He was subsequently banned from teaching and demoted to a position in the university library in November on the grounds that his letter violated the university constitution. In January of this year he threatened legal action against Google and Yahoo when he discovered they had removed his name from their Chinese search engines.

Appeals to:

His Excellency Jiang Zemin  
President of the People's Republic  
of China  
Zhong Nhai, Beijingshi 100032  
People's Republic of China  
Salutation: Your Excellency:

## **AFGHANISTAN**

**SAYED PERWIZ KAMBAKHS**H, an Afghan journalism student, was arrested on charges of blasphemy in October 2007 for distributing an article to his classmates on Koranic passages said to discriminate against women. On January 22, Sayed was sentenced to death by a court in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif in a trial that took place behind closed doors and in which Sayed's lawyer was not present. In a subsequent statement, his lawyer has claimed that the "confession" used in the trial was extracted under torture. Sayad was transferred to Kabul on March 27 and is currently awaiting an appeal hearing. He is said to be suffering from poor health and severe psychological stress from his experience in prison.

### Appeals to:

Said T. Jawad  
Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of Afghanistan  
The Embassy of Afghanistan  
2341 Wyoming Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
E-Mail: [info@embassyofafghanistan.org](mailto:info@embassyofafghanistan.org)

## **UPDATES**

The following scholars remain in prison: **KO AUNG HTUN** (Burma), **HU SHIGEN** (China), **IGOR SUTYAGIN** (Russia), **ZHENG YICHUN** (China), **XU ZERONG** (China), **EMADEDIN BAGHI** (Iran), **USSAMA AL-MULLA** (Iraq), **ABDULLAH AL-HAMID** (Saudi Arabia). Information about them and about how to support them can be found on our website: <[www.socres.org/angerededscholars](http://www.socres.org/angerededscholars)>.

—Written by John Clegg