

January 2002 Worldwide appeals

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China

Brother and sister jailed for claiming compensation

Li Wanglin was sent to a labour camp for three years in July after she helped her brother appeal for compensation for abuses he allegedly suffered in jail.

Her brother, **Li Wangyang**, (pictured), aged 51, a veteran labour activist formerly imprisoned for his activities during the 1989 pro-democracy protests, was sentenced on 20 September to a further 10 years on charges of “incitement to subvert state power”. He had been demanding compensation to pay for the treatment he needed after his previous 11 years in prison.

He was reportedly severely ill-treated in prison and was released on medical parole in July 1996, but eight months later he was taken back to prison in the middle of his treatment. He is now thought to be seriously ill with heart problems and goitre. Li Wangyang was released early in June 2000 because of his poor health but was subsequently harassed and finally rearrested in May 2001 after he went on hunger strike to demand compensation for his ill-treatment. Since May he has not been able to walk unaided.

Please write, appealing for the prompt and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Li Wanglin and Li Wangyang.

Send appeals to: Zhang Yunchuan, Governor of the Hunan Provincial Government, Hunansheng Renmin Zhengfu, 7 Wuyizhonglu, Changshashi 410011, Hunansheng, People’s Republic of China.
Fax: +86 731 221 3765.

Syria

Arrested for criticizing the government

Riad Seif, an independent member of the Syrian National Assembly and a leader and organizer of the National Dialogue Forum, was arrested on 6 September. The previous day, he had hosted a political seminar where the guest speaker called for political reform and democratic elections. According to an official, Riad Seif was prosecuted after the National Assembly gave “special permission” which removed his parliamentary immunity.

Lawyer **Riad al-Turk**, a 71-year-old opposition activist, was arrested by the *al-Amn al-Siyassi*, Syrian Political Security, on 1 September. He was apparently receiving emergency medical treatment for a heart problem at the time of his arrest, in the city of Tartus. He is currently believed to be held incommunicado in ‘Adra civil prison.

Another seven people were arrested by the Syrian Political Security in September, in addition to parliamentarian **Mamun al-Humsi**, who was arrested in August and remains held in ‘Adra prison. They are all being held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. AI considers them to be prisoners of conscience, arrested for their opinions and peaceful criticism of the government. The trial of Riad Seif and Mamun al-Humsi before the Damascus Criminal Court started in November on charges of “attempting to change the constitution by illegal means”. Riad al-Turk and the other eight prisoners of conscience have reportedly been referred to the Supreme State Security Court, but their trial has not begun.

AI is concerned at the apparent clamp-down by the Syrian authorities on groups exercising their right to freedom of expression and association. In February the authorities imposed a number of restrictions on discussion forums and activities of civil society groups. Since then there has been a wave of arrests, which appear to be targeting human rights defenders and civil society activists.

Please write, calling for the release of Riad Seif, Riad al-Turk, Mamun al-Humsi and others arrested for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association. Express concern at the current wave of arrests apparently targeting human rights defenders and activists.

Send appeals to: His Excellency, President Bashar al-Assad, Presidential Palace, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic. Telex: 419160 prespl sy.

Turkmenistan

Surviving prisoner should be released

In 1995 **Mukhametkuli Aymuradov** and **Khoshali Garayev** were charged with anti-state crimes including “attempted terrorism”. There was no evidence that the two men had used or advocated violence, and there was compelling circumstantial evidence to support allegations that the two had been punished solely because of their association with exiled opponents of the government of Turkmenistan.

On 10 December 1998 the two men were sentenced to an additional 18 years’ imprisonment, five years to be spent in a maximum security prison. The new sentences related to an alleged prison escape attempt in October 1998. There have been credible and persistent allegations that the escape attempt was orchestrated by the authorities so that the two prisoners would not be transferred, under their previous sentence, from a maximum security regime to a less restrictive one.

In September 1999 Khoshali Garayev died in the maximum security prison in Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk). According to prison authorities, he hanged himself after he was put in solitary confinement following a fight in his cell. However, there are allegations that Khoshali Garayev died as a result of torture. In a letter shortly before his death, he had appeared hopeful that he would benefit from an upcoming presidential amnesty and would be back with his family in the year 2000.

Following Khoshali Garayev’s death, AI expressed serious concern for the safety of Mukhametkuli Aymuradov, who was reportedly not receiving appropriate medical attention for ailments including a gastric ulcer, cholecystitis, a heart attack and recurring inflammations of the kidneys and the bladder. AI is calling for Mukhametkuli Aymuradov’s release on the grounds of his poor health and allegations that he was sentenced on fabricated charges. AI’s repeated calls for a retrial have gone unheeded and there appears to be no prospect of him receiving a fair trial.

Please write in English, Russian, Turkmen or your own language, calling for the immediate release of Mukhametkuli Aymuradov, and for him to receive appropriate medical treatment.

Send appeals to: President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Niyazov, 744000 g. Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Fax: +993 12 35 51 12

Quotes from a letter passed on to AI from Mukhametkuli Aymuradov:

“From October 1994 I have been imprisoned in Turkmenistan, torn from my wife, children, grandchildren, family and all those close to me.

“I am confined with criminals, murderers and drug addicts, violent criminals, in cells containing 12 to 14 people, suffering insults, humiliations, hunger, illness, including infectious diseases, absence of essential medication, cold in the winter, exhausting heat in summer. The prison officials refuse to accept and pass on food which my wife and children send from home.”