



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission  
Defending Freedoms Project  
Prisoner List – 1/28/15**

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**AZERBAIJAN**



**Hilal Mammedov (m)** is a journalist and human rights activist, speaking up for minority groups in Azerbaijan. He is the chief editor of the Baku-based newspaper “Tolyshi Sado” (The Voice of Talysh), printed in Azerbaijan’s minority language, Talysh. He was also head of a committee fighting to defend a well-known Talysh scientist and human rights activist who was imprisoned for 10 years on spying charges and eventually died in prison. Having already been arrested in 2008 and charged with spying for Iran, Hilal Mammedov was apprehended once again on June 21, 2012 and accused of possession of illegal drugs. His trial began on January 29, 2013 at the Baku Court of Grave Crimes. The hearing took place behind closed doors, despite requests to have a public trial. On September 27, 2013 Judge Azer Orujov found Mamedov guilty of selling drugs, high treason for espionage for Iran and incitement to national, racial, social and religious hatred and hostility. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment. On January 21, 2014 the Baku Court rejected an appeal on behalf of Mamedov and upheld the original verdict. Mammedov’s family insists he has never used any such drugs and the arrest was politically motivated. Azerbaijani authorities repeatedly deny that there are any political prisoners in the country.

**BAHRAIN**

**Ibrahim Sharif, Hassan Mshaima, Abdel-Wahab Hussain, Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Salah al-Khawaja, Sa’eed Mirza al-Nuri and Mohamed Habib al-Miqdad** are among fourteen opposition activists in Bahrain serving prison sentences handed down by a military court following anti-government protests in February and March 2011. They were not given fair trials and some of them were reportedly tortured. They are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully expressing their opinions and their activism. The 14 activists were arrested between March 17 and April 9, 2011. In most cases, they were arrested in the middle of the night by several security officers who raided their houses and took them to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado for weeks. In most cases, they were only allowed to see their lawyers and family during the first court hearing in May 2011. Many of the 14 defendants alleged they were tortured during their first days of detention when they were being interrogated by officers from the National Security Agency (NSA), an investigating

authority associated with the Ministry of Interior. Many of them were then held incommunicado for weeks. Some of the 14 were allowed to see their lawyers during questioning by the Military Prosecutor ahead of the trial, but they were not allowed to see their lawyers during NSA interrogations just after they were arrested.



**Abdulhadi al-Khawaja (m)** has been a well-known human rights defender for more than twenty years. Until February 2011, al-Khawaja worked as a regional coordinator for the international organization Front Line Defenders.

Just before his current detention, Mr. al-Khawaja had publicly criticized the regime's brutal response to the anti-government protests in Bahrain. Early on April 9, 2011, fifteen masked men stormed into al-Khawaja's apartment, breaking down the door with a sledgehammer and beat al-Khawaja until he lost consciousness. He was taken into custody along with his two sons-in-law. Authorities held him incommunicado for several weeks and tortured him. On May 8, 2011, al-Khawaja's trial began before the National Safety Court – a military tribunal. He was prosecuted along with a diverse set of twenty other individuals. Despite the lack of evidence against him, Mr. al-Khawaja was charged and convicted with financing and participating in terrorism to overthrow the government, as well as spying for a foreign country. On June 22, 2011, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. On April 2, 2012, the Bahraini Court of Cassation began to review the verdicts of Mr. al-Khawaja and thirteen other defendants charged in relation to the 2011 anti-government protests. On April 30, 2012, the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial in civilian court and refused to release al-Khawaja on bail pending the trial. On September 4, 2012, a Bahraini appeals court upheld his sentence of life in prison. On January 7, 2013, Bahrain's highest appeals court upheld al-Khawaja's conviction and life sentence.

al-Khawaja has suffered four fractures to his face, requiring a four hour surgery to repair his jaw as a result of beating by security guards. He has also been subjected to sexual and psychological torture. On February 8, 2012, al-Khawaja began a hunger strike to protest his wrongful detention and treatment in prison. He ended his hunger strike after 110 days on May 30, 2012. During his hunger strike, al-Khawaja's health deteriorated and he reportedly lost 22 pounds.



**Ahmed Humaidan (m)** is a renowned Bahraini photographer who is currently serving ten years in prison for his artistic work. Humaidan has won 163 photography awards from competitions in the United States, Hungary, and Serbia for his efforts to capture pictures of human rights abuses perpetrated by police and security officials in Bahrain. Unlike many other photojournalists,

Humaidan preferred not to remain anonymous, and as a result, Bahraini officials targeted him.

After receiving news that he was wanted for charges of “demonstrating illegally” and “using violence to assault police and damage public properties” Humaidan went into hiding from April to December 2012; throughout this time, his family and friends didn't know of his wellbeing or whereabouts. However, at around midnight on December 29, 15 plain clothed officers finally located and arrested him at a local shopping mall. He was held incommunicado for over 19 hours before he was able to contact his family.

On March 26, 2014, Humaidan was sentenced to 10 years in prison for participating in an attack against a police station on the island of Sitra in 2012. Fadhel Al-Sawad, Humaidan's lawyer said that there was no substantial evidence presented against his client except for the confessions that were given under torture and information that was given by "confidential" sources. According to Humaidan's family, he has been subject to a wide array of physical and psychological torture techniques.



**Abduljalil Al-Singace (m)** is a Bahraini engineer, blogger, and human rights activist. On his blog, *Al-Faseela*, Al-Singace wrote critically about human rights violations, sectarian discrimination and repression of the political opposition in his native Bahrain. He also monitored the human rights situation for the Shia-dominated opposition Haq Movement for Civil Liberties and Democracy.

He was arrested in 2009 and 2010 for his human rights activities and released later. On March 17, 2011, one month after his release, 48 police officers entered Al-Singace's home, beat him, and took him to the police station at gunpoint. This time, government officials arrested him for his involvement in a peaceful protest that occurred earlier in March. He was detained at Al Qurain military prison where he was subjected to verbal, physical, and sexual assault, prolonged solitary confinement, and forced standing despite his physical condition. On June 22, 2011, Al-Singace was charged with "plotting to topple" the government, and as a result, the National Safety Court sentenced him to life in prison. On January 7, 2013, Al-Singace appeal was brought to Court of Cassation, unfortunately the court upheld his prescribed sentence.

Despite his ill treatment, Al-Singace has remained defiant, having reportedly written a letter to the Bahraini authorities denouncing the practices he has witnessed and experienced while in prison. On October 13, 2012, Al-Singace underwent a hunger strike as a form of protest. Complete details about his current condition are still unknown, but his health condition is suspected to be very poor.



**Naji Fateel (m)** is a board member of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR), a blogger and prolific tweeter, reporting on human rights violations. During marches and protests in villages he has given speeches about human rights and encouraged people to document and monitor violations. Naji Fateel was arrested without warrant at dawn at his home in the village of Bani Jamra, northwestern Bahrain. The house was raided by 12 plain clothed police officers who searched the house and took away with them his daughter's laptop, his camera and phones. The family home was surrounded by riot police during the raid. No reason for his arrest was given and he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated before he was transferred to Dry Dock Prison on May 5, 2013.

On July 11, 2013, Naji Fateel appeared before the Fourth Criminal Court and was charged under Article 6 of the Terrorism Act. This time, he received a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment. . Photographic evidence of torture inflicted against Naji Fateel during his detention has also emerged. On 29 May 2014, the Appeals Court of Bahrain upheld a 15-year sentence against Fateel. Front Line Defenders sent an observer to Naji Fateel's first instance trial, which fell short of fair due process guarantees.



**Adopted by Representative Hank Johnson (D-GA), Mahdi ‘Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb (m)** is the former vice-president of the Bahrain Teacher’s Association (BTA). He was arrested with several other board members after the BTA called for strikes during the spring 2011 protests. While most of his colleagues were released, he was brought to trial before a military court on 15 June on charges that include “inciting hatred towards the regime,” “calling to overthrow and change the regime by force,” “calling on parents not to send their children to school,” and “calling on teachers to stop working and participate in strikes and demonstrations.” He has been tortured and ill-treated.



**Adopted by Representative Jim McGovern (D-MA), Nabeel Rajab (m)**, is a prominent Bahraini human rights activist who is the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights. Rajab was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment on August 16, 2012 for taking part in anti-government protests. He had been convicted on charges of “illegal gathering” and “disturbing public order”

for calling for and taking part in demonstrations in Manama without prior notification on 12 January 12, February 6 and March 31. During the protest, he was assaulted by riot police who punched him several times in the face, head and back. He said: “I fell on the ground but they continued to beat me – they even stomped on me and kicked me.” Nabeel Rajab’s latest conviction and sentence were handed down while he was already serving a three-month jail sentence in a separate case in relation to a tweet he posted. He was held in al-Jaw prison.

On May 24, 2014, after serving two years in prison, Rajab was released only to be detained again on October 1, 2014 for a tweet that was said to have offended the Ministry of Interior. On January 2015, Rajab was sentenced to six months in prison after being charged with insulting a public institution and the army. The court granted Rajab bail of \$500 while he appeals the verdict, if he chooses to pay it.

**BURMA**



**Ko Htin Kyaw (m):** Ko Htin Kyaw is a political activist and director of the Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF), a community-based organization in Burma. He was arrested on May 5, 2014, for his peaceful activism in South Okkalapa Township in Yangon. MDCF held a demonstration in April 2014 calling for the return of land that had been illegally seized by the

Burmese government earlier in the year. The Burmese government claimed that this was a threat to national security and charged him with making statements conducive to public mischief and violating laws of peaceful assembly. He is currently serving multiple sentences totaling more than 12 years.



**Ko Tin Maung Kyi (m):** Tin Maung Kyi is deputy director of the MDCF, and has been repeatedly arrested and harassed for his political activism. He was most recently arrested on May 9, 2014, for the distribution of anti-government pamphlets. Tin Maung Kyi is currently serving multiple six-month prison sentences in Insein

Prison for violating Section 505(b) of Burma’s penal code, which prohibits publishing or circulating information that may cause public fear or alarm, and which may incite people to commit offences “against the State or against the public tranquility”.



**Ko Zaw Win (m):** Ko Zaw Win, also an active participant in MDCF, was arrested while attending the trial of Ko Htin Kyaw on May 9, 2014, and also sentenced under Section 505(b). His charges included trespassing and vandalism, which were later upgraded to sedition. He was taken into custody in Mandalay’s Obo Prison and has since been sentenced to one-and-a-half years’ imprisonment.

## CAMBODIA



**Yorm Bopha (f)** is a Cambodian land rights activist noted for her opposition to development and forced evictions around Boeung Kak Lake. She was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "intentional violence with aggravating circumstances" on December 27, 2012, leading several human rights groups to protest on her behalf. On November 22, 2013, Bopha was released on bail and on June 14, 2013, her sentence was reduced to two years’ imprisonment. According to Front Line Defenders, on January 21, 2014, Bopha was again arrested while petitioning outside the U.S. and French embassies for the release of 23 people who were jailed during a clampdown on worker’s protests earlier in January.

## CHINA



**Liu Xianbin (m)** is a long-time political dissident, organizer of the China Democracy Party and member of an “illegal” Protestant house church. He is also a blogger using the pen name Wan Xianming. On June 28, 2010, approximately 14 National Security officers arrested Xianbin at his home for his support of Charter 08, an online petition which called for expanded liberties and universal suffrage, and for submitting articles to overseas websites and magazines. Xianbin’s writings were critical of the Chinese Communist authorities on issues ranging from corruption, abuses of power, and human rights violations. While there, officers searched his home and confiscated two computer hard drives, two removable drives, his bank card, and records of payments received by Xianbin for articles published on pro-democracy websites hosted overseas.

Additionally during his detention, Xianbin was denied access to a lawyer for months, which was a clear violation of his rights. On March 25, 2011, Suining Intermediate People’s Court brought Xianbin to trial for his actions. The proceeding lasted only two hours, and throughout the proceedings, Xianbin professed his innocence, but his claims landed on deaf ears; he was sentenced to 10 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power.” The court also ruled that he would be denied his political rights for two years and four months after his release. Unfortunately, the Court, located in Sichuan Province, issued a seven-page decision the day of his trial, causing reason to believe that his sentence was pre-determined.



**Dr. Liu Xiaobo (m)** is a Chinese scholar and democracy activist who was sentenced to 11 years in prison for inciting subversion on December 25, 2009.

On October 8, 2010, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded Dr. Liu the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize “in recognition of his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.” Shortly after the announcement, Chinese authorities isolated Dr. Liu’s wife, Liu Xia, from her supporters, the media and foreign diplomats; she remains under house arrest without charge.

The Chinese government previously detained Dr. Liu for his peaceful activities on three occasions, including during the crackdown following the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. In 2008, Dr. Liu was one of the primary drafters of Charter 08, a political manifesto that calls for peaceful democratic reform and respect for the rule of law and human rights in China. The Chinese government detained Dr. Liu on December 8, 2008—two days before the official release of Charter ‘08. The government held Dr. Liu at an unknown location without access to a lawyer for nearly six months and then formally arrested him on June 23, 2009.

On December 23, 2009, Dr. Liu was tried for “inciting subversion.” His wife along with foreign diplomats and journalists were not allowed to attend the trial. The proceeding lasted only two hours and the court limited Dr. Liu’s lawyers to 14 minutes in which to defend against the charges. On December 25, 2009, the court sentenced Dr. Liu to 11 years in prison and two years’ deprivation of political rights. In the verdict, Dr. Liu’s participation in the production of pro-democracy essays, including Charter 08, was cited as evidence against him. Xiaobo remains in jail but in June 2014, the United States named the Washington D.C. road in front of the Chinese embassy after him.



**Liu Xia (f)** is a poet, artist, and founding member of the Independent Chinese PEN Center, a worldwide association for writers. Xia is also the wife of China’s most prominent human rights advocate, Dr. Liu Xiaobo. Her husband is currently serving 11 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power.” Shortly after his imprisonment, Xia’s husband was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize on October 8<sup>th</sup>. After visiting her husband on October 10<sup>th</sup>, Xia returned home only to realize that the government had placed her under house arrest without any formal, legal charge. She updated Twitter to inform her followers that she was being held against her will and pleaded for their help shortly after which her phone and internet lines were cut. Xia has no access to the outside world, and only on rare occasions is she allowed to leave her home. After two years of isolation, two AP journalists managed to get past the security guards to speak with her on December 6, 2012. Then finally at the end of 2012, several of her friends also were able to push through the security guards to get in contact with Liu Xia. She is currently suffering from coronary heart disease and severe depression.



**Chen Zhenping (f)** is a Falun Gong practitioner who was detained in August 2008 for “using a heretical organization to subvert the law.” She is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence in Henan Provincial Women’s prison. Repeated attempts by her lawyer to visit her since her imprisonment have all been blocked by the authorities. Her family has not been able to see her since March 2009. She has been subjected to regular beatings, been forcibly injected with drugs, and given electric shocks on sensitive parts of her body. Since her imprisonment, authorities have blocked visits from her lawyer, and since November 2009, they have denied information on Chen’s wellbeing.



**Guo Quan (m)** is a former professor who has been in prison since 2008 under a ten-year sentence for calling for political reform. In 2008, Guo played a leading role in a campaign to protect the rights of demobilized military officers. He also published criticism about the government's response to the Sichuan earthquake and exposed international human rights violations committed by the Party. He wrote letters to the government throughout 2007 calling for reforms and in December 2007, he announced that China People's Livelihood Party, an opposition party established by Guo, was renamed as the "New People's Party of China." On December 6, 2007, Quan was stripped of his associate professorship at Nanjing Normal University and relocated to the university library to serve as a data management officer.

On November 13, 2008, he was taken into custody by Nanjing police, who also raided his home, where Guo and his wife hosted regular Protestant "house church" activities. His family was informed that he was being criminally detained on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power." On June 10, 2009, Guo's case was recorded on the docket of the Suqian Municipal Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu province, and his trial was held on August 7, 2009. On October 16, 2009, the court convicted Guo of "subversion of state power" and sentenced him to a ten-year prison term. Guo's wife and son fled to the United States on January 23, 2012, where they are appealing for international help in winning his early release.



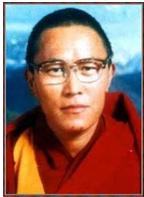
**Alimujiang Yimiti (m)** is a Uyghur Christian who converted from Islam in 1995. He and his wife, Gulinuer, were the leaders of a house church ministry in Kashgar, Xinjiang in the Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. Targeted for his minority faith and ethnicity, on January 12, 2008, the Kashgar police detained Alimujiang on "suspicion of inciting subversion of state power" and "leaking state secrets overseas." He was formally arrested on those charges on February 28, 2008. Later, the charges were changed to "divulging state secrets to foreign individuals" based on a private conversation the Uyghur Christian pastor held with an American Christian friend.

In 2009, he was sentenced during secret trials to 15 years in prison and 5 years deprivation of political rights. In September 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that 'the deprivation of liberty of Mr Alimujiang Yimiti is arbitrary, being in contravention of [...] the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and that he 'is being kept in detention solely for his religious faith'. For the past several years, Yimiti's wife has petitioned police officers, government officials, and state agencies, but the officers refused to see them, even barring Alimujiang's lawyers from visiting him in prison. Yimiti's quality of life in prison is poor; he was hospitalized in 2009, but prison authorities claimed that it was for a routine health check, even though witnesses claimed that there were signs of brutality. Moreover, on January 23, 2013, prison authorities informed his wife that her monthly visits were being reduced to once every three months, without providing a reason.



**Pastor Yang Rongli (f)** has been serving a seven-and-a-half-year prison term since 2009 for leading the 50,000-member Linfen Church in Shaanxi province. Yang is a 1982 graduate of the Linfen Normal College's Chinese department. Because of her excellent academic record, she was retained by the college to teach. She also worked as an editor and reporter. She and her husband, Wang Xiaoguang, were the

leaders of the Jindengtai (Golden Lampstand) Church, a house church in Linfen, Shaanxi province. In 1998, they became the church's full-time clergy and in the following two decades, the church grew to 50,000 members. On September 13, 2009 at 3 a.m., the local Fushan county government dispatched more than 400 police officers and plainclothes police, led by government officials, to the meeting site of the Fushan Christians and the Gospel Shoe Factory, where they brutally beat Christians staying in a dormitory. More than 100 people were seriously injured. On September 23, armed police surrounded the main Jindengtai church building, and on September 25, Yang and six other church leaders were arrested while traveling to the provincial capital of Taiyuan to petition the government. On November 25, the Yaodu District Court convicted Yang and her husband of "illegal occupation of farmland" and "gathering a mob to create a traffic disturbance." Yang was sentenced to a seven-year prison term and fined 30,000 yuan (US\$4,755); her husband was sentenced to a three-year term and fined 10,000 yuan (US\$1,585). Yang is currently suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure, and hepatitis, and despite her ailments, she has been denied medical assistance.



**Tenzin Delek Rinpoche (m)** is a Tibetan Buddhist leader from Garze, Sichuan. Delek has advocated for the protection and preservation of Tibetan culture, religion, and way of life. Over the years, he has built monasteries, provided education for children in remote rural areas, established Buddhist institutions, and promoted social activism in Tibet. In the 1980s, his Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized him as a reincarnated Lama, a title given to those are permitted to teach the Dharma, for his commitment as a Buddhist monk. On April 7, 2002, the government claimed that Delek was involved in bomb blast that occurred on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan. The evidence linking him to this crime was based on a confession made by a relative of Delek's during a torture session. However, the relative later retracted his statement, claiming that Delek was not involved in the attack. . Despite this claim, Delek was charged with of "inciting Splittism," and for his alleged actions in the event he was sentenced to death in December 2, 2002. However, due to international pressure, on January 26, 2005, Delek's sentence was commuted to life in prison. In efforts to free Delek, 40,000 Tibetans, in November 2009, signed a petition asking for a re-trial. Additionally, during that same month, 70 Tibetans were arrested for their participation in a hunger strike that was conducted county seat of Lithang. The case has stirred international controversy for its procedural violations and lack of transparency.

According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, Delek is in poor health with a worsening heart condition and having suffered nervous breakdowns. He carries a walking stick as a result of his feet becoming injured in prison.



**Kunchok Tsephel (m)** is an official in a Chinese government environmental department and the founder of the first Tibetan literary website, Chodme or Butter Lamp. This website, with assistance from poet Kyabchen Dedrol, was founded in 2005 for the purpose of promoting Tibetan literature and culture in China. The Chinese government actively monitored the website since its beginnings, and on several occasions, authorities have shut down public access to the website. In March 2008, the Chinese authorities began to crackdown in the Tibet Autonomous Region following the anti-government protests in Lhasa and other areas; since the onslaught, over 40 Tibetans have been taken into custody for their works on issues contrary to the party's position. On February 26, 2009, Chinese authorities targeted and detained Kunchok. While being held in their custody,

Officers searched his home and seized his computer, cell phone, and other personal belongings. For nine months, the government failed to inform Kunchok's family about his arrest and condition. Then on November 12, 2009, his family was summoned to attend the trial at the Intermediate People's Court of Kanlho, only hear that he had been sentenced to 15 years in prison on the charges of disclosing state secrets. Kunchok trial was conducted behind closed doors and he was denied access to a lawyer.

Many believe that published content on his website, especially information regarding the 2008 protests that occurred across the Tibetan plateau, led to his arrest and conviction. If this is the case, China is violating Article 35 of its' constitution, which provides freedom of speech for all Chinese citizens. Additionally, as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Chinese government failed to provide Kunchok the right to freedom of legitimate expression, the right not to be arbitrarily detained, and the right to a fair trial.



**Lobsang Tsering (m)** is a monk from Kirti monastery in Tibet who was detained by the Chinese police in August 2012. In December, the police announced that they had accused Lobsang of inciting the self-immolation of eight Tibetans, even though five of the self-immolations never occurred. While under arrest, the Supreme Court of China, on December 5, 2012, stated that "criminals behind the scenes who plan, incite, aide, abet... and help those perpetrating self-immolations will be investigated for criminal liability in the crime of intentional murder." On January 31, 2013, Lobsang was charged with the "intentional homicide" of eight Tibetans in Ngaba, and as a result, he was sentenced to death with a two year reprieve.

Lobsang was denied the right to a fair trial, according to Xinhua, a state run news agency, acknowledged that Lobsang was not represented by a lawyer during the court proceedings. Additionally, despite a claim made by a judge who told the Global Times that: "authorities obtained sufficient evidence showing it [the alleged crimes] had been instructed by 'forces from abroad.'" According to Xinhua, the only documented form of evidence presented by the court was two confessions made by Lobsang and his nephew, Lobsang Tsering, who was also arrested and tried under the same charges as his uncle. In their statements, they admitted to encouraging Tibetans to self-immolate under the instructions of the Dali Lama. Many question the accuracy of these confessions because Chinese authorities are known to use torture to extract information out of detainees, and it is feared this may have happened in this case.



**Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Panchen Lama (m)** has been held by Chinese authorities in a secret location since 1995 when he was six years old, allegedly to keep him safe from "Tibetan Nationalists." China refuses all requests, both domestic and international to see Nyima. The Panchen Lama is a high ranking spiritual leader in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy and is passed down by reincarnation. The Dalai Lama selected Gendun Choekyi Nyima in 1995 to be the next Panchen Lama, while Chinese authorities decreed Gyaltzen Norbu to be the next. As the Panchen Lama traditionally is held responsible for the selection of the Dalai Lama, The Chinese authorities believe it is important to control the Panchen Lama's fate.

According to Chinese government claims, he is attending school and leading a normal life somewhere in China. Chinese officials have stated that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is a "perfectly

ordinary boy” who is in “protective custody,” growing up in an “excellent state of health.” However, no outside party has been allowed to visit Nyima because state officials claim to keep his whereabouts undisclosed in order to protect him.



**Bishop James Su Zhimin (m)** was an unregistered Bishop in the city of Baoding in the Chinese province of Hebei. In 1996, the bishop was arrested during a religious procession for conducting unregistered religious activities. In November 2003, his family discovered him by chance at a hospital in Baoding, surrounded by police and public security. He has not been heard or seen from since, despite repeated international inquiries. In all, he has spent 40 years in prison, without charge, without trial. Before being arrested in 1996, Bishop Su Zhimin was held off and on for 26 years either in prison or forced labor camps. The Chinese government deemed him as "counterrevolutionary" because, since the 1950s, he has refused to join the Patriotic Association, the national Chinese Catholic Church which has detached themselves from the Pope's authority. To this day, if one attempts at identifying or memorializing him or holding public events in his honor have met with hostile police action.



**Wang Zhiwen (m)** is a former Peoples Republic of China Ministry of Railways engineer, who was seized from bed on July 20, 1999 for his involvement and leadership in Falun Gong. Falun Gong promotes the practice of meditation and slow-moving qigong exercises with a moral philosophy. The movement was banned two days after Wang's arrest, and those who continue to practice are now considered to be dissidents of the state. On December 26, 1999, Wang was sentenced by the Beijing No. 1 Intermediate People's Court to 16 years in prison and four years deprivation of political rights on the charges of, “organizing and using a heretical organization to undermine implementation of the law,” “organizing and using a heretical organization to cause death,” and “illegally obtaining state secrets.”

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014, he was released from a Chinese prison after serving 5,475 days in jail. While incarcerated, Wang developed diabetes and high blood pressure, and suffered from a stroke immediately prior to his release. Upon Wang's release from prison, he was immediately sent to what his family describes as a “brainwashing center” for 10 days, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October he was released to house arrest. Wang Zhiwen's family is still pursuing his release from in-home detention, so that he is allowed to leave the country.



**Li Chang (m)** is a former high-ranking governmental official in the Ministry of Public Security, belonged to the Chinese Communist Party for over 39 years before becoming a member of Falun Gong. Falun Gong is the practice of meditation and slow-moving qigong exercises with a moral philosophy. The practice is not accepted by Party and those who practice it are considered to be dissidents.

Li originally joined the organization to improve his health, but over time he become more involved and eventually took a leading position in the Falun Dafa Research Society, considered to be vocal point for all of Falun Gong operations. Li is linked to organizing a sit-in protest on April 25, 1999 at the housing compound for the highest-level Communist Party leaders. The protest received a significant amount of attention, and consequently, the Party started to take a hard line against its members.

Li Chang put under house arrest for three months on July 20, 1999, two days before the banning of Falun Gong in China. On October 19, 1999 Li was arrested formally and brought to trial on December 26, 1999. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison and five years of deprivation of rights and charged for “Organizing and using a heretical organization to cause death,” “Illegally obtaining state secrets,” and “Organizing and using a heretical organization to undermine implementation of the law.” The courts decided to commute his sentence to 18 years, since he confessed to his involvement with Falun Gong. He is currently being held at Qianjin Prison in Tianjin and is expected to be released in 2017.



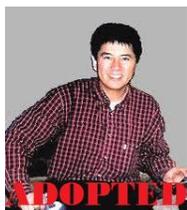
**Ilham Tohti (m)** is a Uyghur economics professor at Beijing’s Minzu University, where he was known for his research on Uyghur-Han relations as well as his activism for the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China.

In 2006, Tohti founded *UighurOnline*, a Chinese-language website devoted to fostering understanding between Uighur and Han people, China’s dominant ethnic group. In 2008, authorities shut down his website citing the websites links to Uyghur “extremists” abroad. After the July 5, 2009 ethnic rioting between Uyghurs and Han in Ürümqi, Tohti’s whereabouts were unknown after he had been summoned from his home in Beijing. Tohti was subsequently released on August 23, 2009 after international pressure and condemnation.

Tohti was again arrested in January 2014, after police raided his apartment and confiscated his laptops, books, and papers. In September 2014, after a two-day trial, Tohti was found guilty of “separatism” and sentenced to life imprisonment in addition to all of his assets being frozen.



**Adopted by Representative Randy Hultgren (R-IL), Zhu Yufu (m)** is a democracy advocate who reportedly is suffering ill-treatment in prison, one of about 1,295 Chinese citizens known or believed to be detained or imprisoned for exercising his or her human rights under international law. In 1998, he was one of the founders of the unrecognized Democracy Party of China (DPC). He also founded the "Opposition Party" magazine that carried articles about the DPC. He was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment (and three-year deprivation of political rights) for publishing a poem that directed people to participate in the 2011 Chinese pro-democracy protests. Formerly a property worker at the Hangzhou City Shangcheng District Urban Housing Bureau, Zhu was convicted of inciting subversion of state power in 1999 and served five and a half years in prison for founding the "Opposition Party" magazine. After his release in 2006, he spoke out against the torture he had suffered in prison and continued to promote democratization. In 2007 he was detained again after a confrontation with a police officer who was questioning his son, and sentenced to two years in prison for "beating police and hindering public duty." Zhu was taken away by police on 7 March 2011. Officers also searched his home, confiscated two computers and other items. Zhu was criminally detained on suspicion of inciting subversion of state power and formally arrested on the same charge on 11 April 2011.



**Adopted by Representative Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), Alimujiang Yimiti (m)** is a Uyghur Christian from Xinjiang Province now serving a fifteen-year prison

term. His home is in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang, and he and his wife have two young sons. While working at a British agri-food company, Alimujiang was the leader of a house church in the city of Kashgar. On 13 September 2007, the Kashgar Religious Affairs Bureau ruled that “Alimujiang Yimiti since 2002 has illegally engaged in religious infiltration under the guise of work, spreading Christianity among the Uyghur people, distributing Christian propaganda and growing [the number of] Christian believers.” On 12 January 2008, the Kashgar police criminally detained Alimujiang on “suspicion of inciting subversion of state power” and “leaking state secrets overseas.” He was formally arrested on those charges on 20 February 2008. On 12 September 2008, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled in its No. 28 document that Alimujiang’s arrest and detention had been arbitrary. In a secret trial on 6 August, the Kashgar Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Alimujiang to fifteen years in prison for the crime of “leaking state secrets to foreigners.” On 16 March 2010, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Higher People’s Court, without holding a hearing and barring lawyers from court, upheld the Intermediate Court’s sentence and added a five-year sentence of deprivation of political rights.



**Adopted by Representative Mark Meadows (R-NC), Zhang Shaojie (m)** is a Three-Self church pastor from Nanle County in China’s central Henan and former Nanle County Three-Self leader, was detained on Nov. 16, 2013, after a series of land disputes with local authorities. Zhang and more than 20 members of his congregation were charged with “gathering a crowd to disrupt the public order.” Zhang was also charged with fraud; the fabricated charge was based on help he gave to another detainee when her son was killed. On July 4, 2014, Zhang was sentenced to 12 years in prison. His final appeal was rejected on Aug. 21, 2014.

## CUBA



**Angel Santiesteban Prats (m)** is a renowned Cuban writer and blogger. He has been published around the world and has received various literary prizes, including the Alejo Carpentier Award organized by the Cuban Book Institute in 2001 for his book “The Children Nobody Wanted” and the Casa de las Américas Award in 2006 for his book “Blessed Are Those Who Mourn.” In March 2009, he started his blog, also titled “The Children Nobody Wanted.”

On December 8, 2012 he was condemned to five years in prison by the Castro regime for his criticism of the dictatorship in his blog. For his open opposition to the regime, Santiesteban has been the subject of continuous harassment and accusations resulting now in arbitrary imprisonment. The regime tried to hide Santiesteban in the Salvador Allende military hospital under the excuse of a dermatological treatment he is receiving, in what his family and lawyer says was meant to avoid him having access to talk to the Commission of National and International Journalists accredited to visit his previous holding spot, La Lima Prison. Following this, Santiesteban was refused by authorities to be taken to a proper hospital and has since been moved to several other detention facilities around the country.



**José Antonio Torres (m)** is a former a correspondent for the government newspaper, *Granma*, in Santiago, Cuba’s second largest city. Torres was arrested

in February 2011 after writing an article that was published in July 2010 about the mismanagement of a Santiago aqueduct project and the laying of a fibre-optic cable from Venezuela. For his critical take on the projects, Torres was sentenced in July 2011 after a closed trial to 14 years in prison for espionage. In addition his university degree in journalism was withdrawn. According to Reporters Without Borders, Cuba's state-run media has made only a few brief references to Torres and little is known about the espionage charges. There are rumors that he may have offered confidential information to the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana.

## ERITREA



**Dawit Isaak (m)** is a writer and journalist with dual Swedish and Eritrean nationality, who has been detained without formal charge in Eritrea since September 2001. He was detained alongside ten other independent journalists and eleven politicians, ostensibly for demanding democratic reforms in a series of letters to President Isayas Afewerki. He is the only Swedish citizen currently being held as a prisoner of conscience. In April 2002, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that Isaak had been hospitalized after being tortured; the Eritrean government denied that he'd been tortured but refused to allow any visitors. In 2005, he was released for two days before being re-imprisoned while on his way to hospital. In 2009, four of Sweden's biggest newspapers featured Isaak's case on their front pages and launched a petition for his release but, the Eritrean president dismissed the issue during a TV interview later that year saying, "We will not have any trial and we will not free him." There have been rumors that Isaak died in prison but no official confirmation has been received.



**Eritrean Patriarch Abune Antonios (m)** was deposed by the government in 2006 and placed under house arrest after he protested the Eritrean Department of Religious Affairs' interference in his church's affairs. In January 2005, the Patriarch's annual Nativity message was not broadcast or televised and the Eritrean Holy Synod met in August 2005 with the main purpose of removing all executive authority from the Patriarch. He was allowed to officiate at church services but prohibited from having any administrative role in church affairs. Among the accusations brought against the Patriarch, were his reluctance to excommunicate 3,000 members of the Medhane Alem, an Orthodox Sunday School movement and his demands that the government release imprisoned Christians accused of treason. In January 2006, he was officially removed from his position as head of the Eritrean Orthodox Church and spiritual leader of more than two-million persons and placed under house arrest. On May 27, 2007, the government installed Bishop Dioscoros of Mendefera as the new Patriarch. That same day, Abune Antonios was forcibly removed from his residence and transported to an undisclosed location. Since then, he has been prevented from communicating with the outside world and reportedly denied medical care.

## ETHIOPIA



**Eskinder Nega (m)** is a prominent Ethiopian journalist who was convicted and sentenced to 18 years in prison on terrorism charges. Prior to his imprisonment, Nega published an online column criticizing the prosecution of journalists and dissidents under Ethiopia's overly-broad 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and

called for an end to politically motivated prosecutions. In the months prior to his arrest, he wrote about the government's use of terrorism laws to silence dissent, the use of torture in prisons and the possibility of an Arab Spring-like democracy movement in Ethiopia.

Nega was convicted on terrorism charges on June 27, 2012 and the court sentenced him to 18 years in prison on July 13, 2012. After postponing his appeal numerous times, the Ethiopian Federal Supreme Court upheld Nega's conviction and sentencing on May 2, 2013. One of the charges against him, "serving as a leader of a terrorist group" was dropped, but had no effect on sentencing.

He received the 2014 Golden Pen of Freedom awarded by the World Association of Newspaper and News Publishers. In May 2012, PEN awarded him its 2012 Freedom to Write Award for his role as an advocate for freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Ethiopia. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has found his detention illegal under international law and called for his immediate release.

## GAMBIA



**Ebrima Manneh (m)** is a journalist and was arrested in July 2006 by officers believed to be from the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). He has been missing ever since. There are conflicting reports for the reason of his arrest. According to some sources, he was arrested following a disagreement with the managing editor of the Daily Observer, a close ally of President Yahya Jammeh. Other sources claim that he was arrested after he attempted to give information to a foreign journalist, deemed damaging to the country's image. Other sources link his arrest to his alleged attempt to print a report which was critical of the government in the Daily Observer. After repeated attempts by his father and many fellow journalists to find out what happened to him, the government issued an official statement on February 21, 2007 denying any involvement in Manneh's arrest or any knowledge of his whereabouts. In 2007, the Media Foundation for West Africa filed an application on behalf of Ebrima Manneh to the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), summoning the Gambian government to answer charges over his disappearance. In June 2008, the ECOWAS court decided that Ebrima Manneh's right to liberty and to a fair trial had been violated by the Gambian government, and it ordered the Gambian authorities to release Manneh from unlawful detention without delay; restore his human rights, including his right to freedom of movement; and provide him with \$100,000 as damages. Although the international community hailed this decision, there has been no response from the Gambian government.

## INDONESIA



**Mr. Filep Karma (m)** is a human rights activist and former civil servant who was arrested in 2004 for raising the Papuan Morning Star flag during an anniversary celebration of Papuan independence from Dutch rule and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

On December 1, 2004, Mr. Karma was arrested for organizing and participating in a ceremony at Trikora Field in Abepura, Papua, to celebrate the anniversary of the 1961 Papuan declaration of independence from Dutch rule. Several hundred Papuans gathered at the ceremony, shouted “freedom,” chanted a rejection of Papua’s Special Autonomy status and raised the Morning Star flag—a symbol of Papuan independence. When Indonesian police attempted to forcibly disband the rally, some attendees threw wood, rocks and bottles. Police responded by firing into the crowd. Mr. Karma and Mr. Yusak Pakage, another participant in the ceremony, were arrested and charged with sedition the next day. In May 2005, Mr. Karma was sentenced to 15 years in prison and Mr. Pakage to 10 years. Mr. Pakage accepted a conditional pardon and was released from prison in July 2010. Mr. Karma has refused a conditional pardon and remains a prisoner of conscience.

Mr. Karma’s health has seriously deteriorated and continues to worsen. He has suffered from prostate issues, debilitating knee and back pain, and chronic respiratory infections.

## **IRAN**



**Behnam Irani (m)** is an evangelical Christian leader from Iran who led a 300-member Church of Iran in Karaj, a city less than 15 minutes outside the capital of Tehran.

In 2011, Irani was sentenced to six years imprisonment for his Christian activities after a raid on a house church in Karaj. In September 2014, Mr. Irani was hit with 18 additional charges, including "Mofsed-e-filarz", which means “spreading corruption on Earth”, a crime punishable by death. However, in October 2014, this charge was dropped and Irani was sentenced instead to six years imprisonment due to his alleged “acting against national security” and forming “a group to overthrow the government.” In total, Pastor Irani is expected to serve a total of twelve years in prison and is therefore due for release in 2023.

Mr. Irani has faced numerous health problems while in prison, including severe bleeding due to stomach ulcers and colon complications. Mr. Irani is married and has a daughter and son.

## **The Baha’i Seven**

The Baha’i Seven are former Baha’i leaders in Iran who have been deprived of the rights accorded to prisoners under Iran's own laws and regulations. Prior to their arrests in 2008, the seven were members of an ad hoc national-level group that attended to the spiritual and social needs of Iran's Baha’i community. In September 2010 they were told that their sentences had been reduced to 10 years after an appeal court acquitted them of some of the charges, including espionage, but they have never been given a written copy of either of the court verdicts. It was first reported on 18 March, 2011 that the 20-year sentence had been reinstated.



**Jamaloddin Khanjani (m)** was a successful factory owner who, because he was Baha'i, lost his business after the 1979 Islamic revolution. Khanjani's volunteer service to his religious community included membership on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran in 1984, a year in which four of its nine members executed by the government. Khanjani was arrested and imprisoned at least three times before this most recent incarceration in 2008. He has four children and six grandchildren. His wife, Ashraf Sobhani, passed away on March 10, 2010 while Khanjani was still in prison. On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Khanjani was transferred to a hospital in Tehran for health treatment.



**Afif Naeimi (m)** is an industrialist who was unable to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor because as a Baha'i he was denied access to university. Born in Yazd, he lived part of his youth with relatives in Jordan after the death of his father. He was long active in volunteer Baha'i service, teaching classes for both children and adults and serving as a member of the Auxiliary Board, an appointed position with the function of inspiring, encouraging and promoting learning among Baha'is.



**Behrouz Tavakkoli (m)** was a social worker who lost his government job in the early 1980's because of his Baha'i belief. Prior to his most recent imprisonment, he experienced intermittent detainment and harassment and three years ago, was jailed for four months without charge, spending most of that time in solitary confinement and developing serious kidney and orthotic problems. Mr. Tavakkoli was elected to the local Baha'i governing council in Mashhad while a student at the university there and later served on a similar council in Sari before such institutions were banned in the early 1980's.



**Vahid Tizfahm (m)** is an optometrist and owner of an optical shop in Tabriz, where he lived until early 2008 when he moved to Tehran. He was born and spent his youth in the city of Urumiyyih and went to Tabriz at age eighteen to study to become an optician. He later also studied sociology at the Advanced Baha'i Studies Institute, an affiliate of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. Since his youth, Mr. Tizfahm has served the Baha'i community in a variety of capacities – for a time as a member of the Baha'i National Youth Committee and later as part of the Auxiliary Board, an advisory group that serves to uplift and inspire Baha'i communities.



**Adopted by Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Fariba Kamalabadi (f)** is a developmental psychologist and mother of three who was arrested twice previously because of her involvement with the Baha'i community. On one of those occasions she was held incommunicado for 10 days. As a youth, Mrs. Kamalabadi was denied the opportunity to study at a public university. In her mid-30s, she embarked on an eight-year period of study and ultimately received an advanced degree from the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, an alternative institution established by the Baha'i community of Iran to serve young people who were barred from university.



**Adopted by Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Mahvash Sabet (f)** is a teacher and school principal who was dismissed from public education for being a Baha'i. Before her arrest, she served for 15 years as director of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, which provides alternative higher education for Baha'i youth. She began her professional career as a teacher and also worked as a principal at several schools. In her professional role, she also collaborated with the National Literacy Committee of Iran. After the Islamic revolution, like thousands of other Iranian Baha'i educators, she was fired from her job and blocked from working in public education.



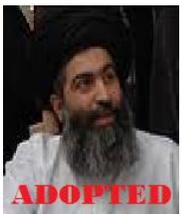
**Adopted by Representative Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), Saeid Rezaie (m)** is an agricultural engineer who has run a successful farming equipment business for more than twenty years. During the early 1980's, when persecution of Baha'is was intense, he moved first to northern Iran and worked as a farming manager and then to Kerman to work as a carpenter, in part because of the difficulties Baha'is faced in finding formal employment or operating businesses. His two daughters, both in their twenties, were among a group of fifty-four young Baha'is arrested in Shiraz in 2006 while working on a project aimed at helping underprivileged young people. In 2006, before his latest incarceration in 2008, Mr. Rezaie was arrested and detained for a period that included forty days in solitary confinement.



**Sima Eshraghi (f)** – A member of the Baha'I community in Iran, she was summoned by the Mashhad Revolutionary court in November of 2010 and was transferred to Vakilabad Prison. Sima was sentenced to five years in prison. She has two children and one of her children, Sina Aghdaszadeh, was recently released on bail by the Mashhad Intelligence Office after two months in custody and is currently awaiting trial.



**Adopted by Representative Illeana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Rozita Vaseghi (f)** is a member of the Baha'i community in Iran. Arrested in March of 2010, she is now serving two five-year sentences in Vakilabad prison in Mashhad and has been banned from leaving the country for 10 years. Rozita has endured months of solitary confinement and was issued new charges while in prison. She is in need of immediate medical attention but the prosecutor for Mashhad, the judge overseeing the prison and the Mashhad branch of the Ministry of Intelligence have opposed this treatment. Rozita has also been denied the right to furlough, despite having now served almost three years of her sentences.



**Adopted by Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN), Ayatollah Mohammad Kazemeni Boroujerdi (m)** is a Shi'a cleric who advocates for the separation of religion and state and has spoken out on behalf of the rights of Iran's religious minorities as well as those of its Shi'a Muslim majority. In October 2006, he was arrested and imprisoned without charge. He and seventeen of his followers were tried by a special court with jurisdiction over Shi'a clerics and sentenced to

death on spurious charges, including “enmity against God” and spreading propaganda against the regime. After an appeal, the death sentence was withdrawn and Ayatollah Boroujerdi was sentenced to eleven years in prison. He currently is serving his prison term, and the government has banned him from practicing his clerical duties and confiscated his home and belongings. He has suffered physical and mental abuse while in prison.



**Adopted by Representative Trent Franks (R-AZ), Saeed Abedini (m)** is a father and husband from Idaho who currently is imprisoned in Evin Prison.

Saeed is a dual national of the United States (via naturalization) and Iran (by birth). He has broken no codified Iranian law, but has been sentenced to eight years in prison for practicing his Christian faith. In the last year, he has been arrested, given a sham trial before a notoriously biased judge, threatened with death, beaten, and denied life-saving medical treatment. **[Also adopted by Representatives Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Raul Labrador (R-ID) and Henry Waxman (D-CA)]**



**Adopted by Representative Jeff Duncan (R-SC), Farshid Fathi (m)** is a Christian pastor who ran a network of house churches in Tehran. Iranian officials arrested him on December 26, 2010. Pastor Fathi currently is serving a 6-year sentence in Iran’s notorious Evin prison. Farshid left Iran to attend seminary in Turkey and then pursued additional training in London with his wife before returning to Iran.

Farshid reportedly is imprisoned alongside Saeed Abedini (see above). Though his crime is being a Christian and spreading his faith, Iranian authorities have cast his Christian activity as “political offenses,” arguing that his Christian activities were equivalent to “actions against national security.” He also was charged with possessing religious propaganda. At trial, the regime offered as evidence that Pastor Fathi had Bibles printed in Farsi, unlawfully distributed them, and possessed Christian literature. The regime also made it difficult for his lawyers to present a defense by denying them full access to the case until just a few days before trial.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**



**Bakhytzhan Kashkumbayev (m)** led the Presbyterian Grace Church in Astana. He has been jailed since May 2013. For a period of time he was detained in a psychiatric hospital where he was forcibly administered psychotropic drugs, a notorious Soviet form of punishment. While he was released from the psychiatric hospital, he was rearrested on charges of extremism. These serious charges carry a possible prison term of three to seven years, with grave implications for both

Pastor Kashkumbayev and the Grace Church. The Pastor was arrested on May 17, 2013 on charges of “intentional infliction of serious harm to health” to parishioner Lyazzat Almenova but her mother called for the case against the pastor to be dropped. The pastor’s pre-trial detention was extended on October 7 until November 17 and he was then supposed to be transferred from prison to house arrest. Finally, after the Pastor’s very brief reunion in prison with his family he was re-arrested and charged with acts of “propaganda of terrorism or extremism or public calls to commit an act of terrorism or extremism as well as the distribution of material of the content indicated.” Pastor Bakhytzhan Kashkumbaev was released on Feb. 17, 2014 after spending nine months in jail awaiting trial. He was convicted of the charge and received a four-year suspended

sentence. Although four other charges were dropped, some fear that new charges could be filed. Pastor Kashkumbaev was freed after court proceedings and returned to the home he shares with his wife, Alfiya. He plans to appeal the conviction.

## MAURITANIA



**Biram Dah Abeid (m)** is an anti-slavery activist and politician from Mauritania. He founded the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA-Mauritania), and was the recipient of the UN Human Rights' Prize in December 2013 for his work on behalf of enslaved Mauritians.

On November 11, 2014 Abeid and 16 fellow activists were arrested while taking part in protests against ongoing impunity for slave holders in the country. He was charged with membership in an unrecognized organization and taking part in an unauthorized assembly, and subsequently held without bail amid allegations of collusion between the executive and judicial branches of the Mauritanian government. Despite international calls for his release, Abeid and two of his colleagues were each sentenced to two years in prison on January 15, 2015.

## PAKISTAN



**Adopted by Representative Joseph Pitts (R-PA), Asia Bibi** is a Catholic mother of five and was a farmhand from the village of Ittan Wali in Sheikhpura District of Punjab province. In June 2009, an argument arose with her fellow labors over whether the water she brought was “unclean” because she was Christian and they Muslim. Later coworkers complained to a cleric that Bibi made derogatory comments about Prophet Muhammad. Police investigated her remarks, which resulted in her arrest and prosecution under Section 295 C of the Pakistan Penal Code for blasphemy. She spent more than a year in jail. On November 8, 2010, a district court in Nankana Sahib, Punjab, sentenced her to death for blasphemy, the first such sentence for blasphemy handed down against a woman. The death penalty is permissible under Pakistani law. On October 16, 2014, the Lahore High Court dismissed her appeal and upheld her death sentence. Her lawyers plan to appeal to the Supreme Court.

## SAUDI ARABIA



**Waleed Abu al-Khair (m)** is a human rights lawyer and founder of the organization Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia. He was arrested for his human rights activism on April 15, 2014, and has been in prison ever since. Until his arrest, he was representing Raif Badawi (who is also included in the Defending Freedoms Project). In fact, al-Khair is Badawi's brother-in-law; he is married to Badawi's sister, Samar, who just gave birth to their first child. On July 6, 2014, al-Khair was found guilty of "inciting public opinion against the government" and "insulting the country's leaders and judiciary," and sentenced to 15 years in prison, a 15-year

travel ban after his release, and fined 200,000 riyals. On January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Saudi Arabia's Court of Appeals denied al-Khair's petition, upholding the full 15-year sentence.



**Raif Badawi (m)** is the founder and editor of the *Free Saudi Liberals* website which encourages religious and political debate. In June 2012 he was arrested in Jeddah and charged with apostasy, “insulting Islam through electronic channels,” and “parental disobedience.” In January 2013, a Saudi court decided not to pursue the apostasy charge, which carries the death penalty in the Kingdom. On July 29, 2013 Badawi was sentenced by the court to 600 lashes, seven years in prison and his website was ordered closed. Badawi received five years for insulting Islam and violating provisions of Saudi Arabia's 2007 anti-cybercrime law through his liberal website, affirming that liberalism is akin to unbelief; two years for insulting both Islam and the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV), or religious police, in comments during television interviews; and three months for “parental disobedience,” apparently because of Badawi's numerous public confrontations with his father over the years. Badawi had appealed his original 2013 conviction and on May 8, 2014 after the retrial was ordered, was given a new sentence of 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes by a Saudi court for insulting Islam.



**Hamad al-Naqi (m)** is a Shia Muslim who in February and March 2012 allegedly made a series of posts on Twitter critical of the Prophet Muhammad, his wife, his followers, and the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Several members of the National Assembly of Kuwait called for his death. Al-Naqi pled not guilty, arguing that he had not posted the messages, and that his account had been hacked. In June 2012, Al-Naqi was found guilty of “insulting the Prophet, the Prophet's wife and companions, mocking Islam, provoking sectarian tensions, insulting the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and misusing his mobile phone to spread the comments” and sentenced to ten years in prison. Al-Naqi was attacked within weeks of entering prison and has been held in solitary confinement for safety reasons. His lawyers appealed his sentence but, in July 2014, Kuwait's top court upheld his ten-year sentence.

## SUDAN



**Dr. Amin Mekki Medani (m)** is a renowned Sudanese lawyer and human rights defender. He is the president of the Confederation of Sudanese Civil Society, Vice President of Civil Society Initiative, and President of the Sudan Human Rights Monitor (SHRM). Dr. Medani was arrested on December 6, 2014 upon his return from Ethiopia when a large number of personnel from the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), arrived at his home in Khartoum just before midnight on Saturday, 6 December. Although his family was not informed of the reasons for the arrest, it is believed he was arrested for signing the “Sudan Call” on behalf of the Civil Society Initiative. The Sudan Call is a statement signed by representatives from political and armed opposition parties, to work towards the ending of the conflicts in Sudan in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile and build a foundation for a lasting democracy based on equal citizenship and comprehensive peace. The 76 year old faces serious health risks, as he suffers from high blood pressure and diabetes and has

been denied his medication. He had been held incommunicado in an unknown location until the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2014, when it was then released that Dr. Medani was being transferred to Kober Prison in Khartoum. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, Dr. Medani was finally permitted to meet with his lawyers and two days later with his family. He continues to be imprisoned facing charges punishable by death under Sudanese law.

Dr. Medani previously served as head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) office in the West Bank and Gaza, Chief of Mission of the OHCHR in Zagreb, Croatia, legal advisor to the Special Representative of the U.N Secretary-General in Iraq as well as Afghanistan, and a Regional Representative for the OHCHR in Beirut, Lebanon. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh in comparative Criminal Law.

## SWAZILAND



Thulani Maseko.



**Mr. Thulani Maseko (m)** is a senior member of Lawyers for Human Rights Swaziland and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, and **Mr. Bhekithemba Makhubu (m)** is a columnist and Editor-in-Chief of *The Nation*. They were arrested on March 17, 2014 on charges of criminal contempt of court following the publication of articles criticizing the judicial system of Swaziland. The articles, published in February and March, questioned circumstances surrounding the arrest of government vehicle inspector, Bhantshana Vincent Gwebu and criticized the lack of impartiality of the Swazi judicial system.

The legality of the arrest, detention and charges against Thulani and Bheki was successfully challenged and the Swazi High Court ordered them released from custody but two days later they were rearrested and detained when the State appealed the ruling. On July 17, 2014, Thulani and Bheki were convicted for “contempt of court” by Swaziland’s High Court. The conviction followed a grossly unfair trial where the presiding judge, Mpendulo Simelane, had declared the trial would be held outside normal law and procedures. On July 25, Bheki Makhubu and Thulani Maseko were each sentenced to two years of prison without bail.

## SYRIA



**Mazen Darwish (m)** is a Syrian lawyer, regarded as one of the country’s most prominent activists and advocates of free speech. He is the president of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (CMFE), which has to operate in secret because of prohibition by the Syrian government. Having already been arrested back in April 2008 and imprisoned for 10 days after reporting on riots near Damascus, he was then was arrested in February 2012. He’s being held along with 15 other journalists but has not been charged with any offence. There has been no news from him since his arrest. In 2012, Darwish was honored as the Reporters Without Borders Journalist of the Year, for his tireless efforts for freedom of expression in Syria. In June of 2014, President Bashar al-Assad announced a general amnesty and began releasing prisoners from

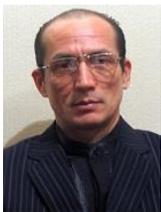
government jails. Rights lawyers have said that prominent prisoners of conscience, including Mazen Darwish, were expected to be freed under the amnesty.

## TURKEY



**Ömer Çelik (m)** is a journalist and photographer for the *Birgün* daily and *DIHA* news agency. He is one of 40 journalists who were arrested during a series of raids on December 20, 2011 in the scope of the ongoing investigations into the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella group that allegedly encompasses the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Çelik and his colleagues are accused of being members of the KCK and their trial is still ongoing at the moment. All of them are either part of the pro-Kurdish media or, like Çelik, members of the mainstream media who occasionally work with their pro-Kurdish colleagues. Çelik denies the charges and his lawyers insist he is only being accused for his professional activities. As the court has declared this ongoing investigation secret, they have not even been able to know the entirety of what they are being charged with and what evidence exists in their case. Çelik is known for authoring several articles criticizing the authorities, as well as his investigations into the shortcomings of the official response to an earthquake in Van region, in October 2011.

## TURKMENISTAN



**Gulgeldy Annaniyazov (m)** is a political dissident and human rights activist who has been detained in Turkmenistan since 2008, when he returned to the country after six years in Norway as a political refugee.

On July 12, 1995, Mr. Annaniyazov organized the first ever anti-government demonstration in Ashgabat. The Turkmen government responded to his peaceful demonstration by sentencing him to 15 years in prison. Mr. Annaniyazov was released under a presidential amnesty in January 1999. After his release, Mr. Annaniyazov received refugee status in Norway in 2002.

On June 24, 2008, Mr. Annaniyazov returned to Turkmenistan after a change in the country's leadership to work for democratic reform. That evening while visiting with friends and family at his parents' home, plain-clothed officers entered the house without presenting any identification or warrant and arrested Mr. Annaniyazov. It has been reported that Mr. Annaniyazov was charged with illegal entry into Turkmenistan and that his trial took place in July 2008. On October 7, 2008, he was sentenced to 11 years in prison. The Turkmen government reportedly brought additional charges against him in connection with the anti-government demonstration he organized in July 1995. It has also been reported that these charges have increased the length of Mr. Annaniyazov's prison term. He was not represented by an attorney and all of the hearings were closed to the public. The court has also refused to provide Mr. Annaniyazov's family with a copy of the sentence, leaving them without any specific information about his conviction or where he is imprisoned.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



**Waleed Al-Shehhi (m)** is a blogger and human rights activist who has been charged under the new cybercrime law in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Al-Shehhi was arrested on May 11, 2013 and then placed in secret detention before being transferred to Al-Wathaba prison. Al-Shehhi is being charged under article 28 of the cybercrime law for having disseminated on his Twitter account information about the trial of 94 UAE citizens, also known as the “UAE94” case. Article 28 of the cybercrime law allows for imprisonment and a fine of up to one million dirhams (approximately 272 000 USD), for anyone who uses information technology “with the intent of inciting to actions, or publishing or disseminating any information, news, caricatures or other images liable to endanger security and its higher interests or infringe on the public order.” Violations are defined as crimes against the state, with no appeal allowed. Foreign media and international observers have been barred from the 13 trial sessions for the “UAE94,” with only handpicked representatives of the national media being granted access into the courtroom.

## **UZBEKISTAN**



**Gaybullo Jalilov (m)** is a human rights defender sentenced to more than 11 years in prison on religious extremism charges. Before his arrest, Mr. Jalilov was a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, where his work focused on government violations of religious freedom, and in particular, on the persecution of independent Muslims in Uzbekistan.

On September 5, 2009, Mr. Jalilov was forced into a vehicle by several men and held incommunicado for nearly three weeks before his father received written notification that criminal charges were being brought against him. Authorities charged Mr. Jalilov and three other men with anti-constitutional activity, distribution of materials that threatened public security, and membership in a banned religious organization. During the trial, Mr. Jalilov testified that he had been coerced into signing a confession that he was guilty on all counts. Authorities relocated hearings without notifying Mr. Jalilov’s attorney or family. In a closed hearing on January 18, 2010, Mr. Jalilov was found guilty and sentenced to nine years in prison.

New charges were brought against Mr. Jalilov in August 2010 based on witness statements that Mr. Jalilov had actively participated in religious gatherings, and that during these gatherings, he had taken part in religious studies and watched DVDs that contained religious extremist content. None of these witnesses appeared in court. On August 4, 2010 in a closed hearing, Mr. Jalilov was sentenced to an additional two years’ imprisonment, extending his sentence to more than 11 years. In April 2012, Gaybullo Jalilov’s family became concerned for his well-being when during their attempt to visit him in Zangiyat, they were told that he had been transferred to a colony in Navoi, with no information on the exact location or on his physical or emotional state. The family received a letter from Mr. Jalilov confirming that he was transferred to Navoi colony.



**Hairulla Khamidov (m)**, a young Uzbek Muslim journalist, was arrested in Tashkent and charged with membership in an alleged extremist group. A police search of his home found recordings of sermons by the independent Muslim clerics. Many believe that Khamidov was targeted because of his popular religious program on a private radio station. In May 2010, Khamidov received a six-year prison camp sentence.

**Mehriniso Hamdamova (f), Zulkhumor Hamdamova (f), and Shahlo Rakhmonova (f)** were convicted in April 2010 on criminal charges of threatening the constitutional order, public security, and public order because they had conducted private religious instruction of girls. Mehriniso Hamdamova, a teacher at an officially approved women's religion course at Karshi's Kuk Gumbaz Mosque, was sentenced to seven years in a prison camp; her sister Zulkhumor Hamdamova, and their relative Shahlo Rakhmonova, each received six-and-a-half-year terms.



**Akzam Turgunov (m)** is an Uzbek human rights activist and political opposition leader who has been detained in Uzbekistan since 2008 on extortion charges. Mr. Turgunov founded and served as Chairman of Mazlum (“The Oppressed”), a human rights organization in Tashkent that advocates on behalf of prisoners of conscience and protests against the use of torture. He also served as Director of the Tashkent section of Erk (“Freedom”), a political opposition party.

Mr. Turgunov was arrested in the town of Manget on July 11, 2008 by the very police department he was investigating for corruption. The charges appear fabricated to conceal a political motive for imprisonment. Following his arrest, the Uzbek officials searched Mr. Turgunov's home in Tashkent, where they seized political materials. They then held Mr. Turgunov incommunicado for 18 days, during which time an officer reportedly poured boiling water down his back, causing him to lose consciousness and suffer severe burns. Though Mr. Turgunov revealed his burn marks in open court, the judge accepted as fact statements made by police that they had not tortured him.

During the trial, the judge denied Mr. Turgunov and his attorney an opportunity to examine the evidence against him or to cross-examine the government's witness against him. On October 10, 2008, the court sentenced Mr. Turgunov to 10 years' imprisonment. The Board of Appeals of the Karakalpakstan Supreme Court affirmed his sentence on December 11, 2008, after a 15-minute hearing. Mr. Turgunov is currently detained at a work camp in the city of Karshi.



**Mohammed Bekjanov (m)** was a prominent Uzbek journalist in the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and has been imprisoned since 1999. Bekjanov came to be recognized as a leading voice in the struggle for democracy in Uzbekistan, becoming an outspoken critic of the party of Islam Karimov. Karimov worked consistently to stifle the voice of the opposition and his government's efforts led to the banning of his newspaper *Erk* in 1994. Consequently, Bekjanov was forced to flee to Ukraine and to sever ties with the *Erk* party and its publications. In 1999, a series of explosions in Tashkent was blamed on *Erk* and President Karimov ordered all members associated with the group to be arrested. Due to his previous connections to the opposition and his work as a journalist for *Erk*, Bekjanov was arrested in Kyiv on March 15, 1999, and extradited to Uzbekistan.

At his trial five months later, Bekjanov's testimony was procured through pervasive torture during his interrogation. Due to his forced self-incrimination, Bekjanov was convicted of conspiracy related to the Tashkent bombings and was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

In January 2012, days before he was due to be released, an Uzbek court handed him another five-year prison term on charges of breaking unspecified prison rules. According to recent news reports, he is being held at a prison in the central Navoi region of Uzbekistan.

## VIETNAM



**Paulus Le Son (m)** is a community organizer and prominent writer for *Vietnam Redemptorist News*. A resident of Hanoi, he is an active community organizer for issues such as HIV and public education; he also serves as member of the John Paul II Group for Pro-Life. His popular personal blog covers issues of social justice, human rights and sovereignty. He was arrested on August 3, 2011 on the charge of “attempting to overthrow the government.” His arrest was part of larger crackdown on human-rights defenders; seventeen others were arrested, mostly from Vinh Province. On May 23, 2013 the appeal trial of Paulus Le Son was heard in a court in the northern city of Vinh. Paulus Le Son had his sentence reduced to four years imprisonment with four years house arrest, down from thirteen years in prison and five years house arrest.



**Adopted by Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ), Father Nguyen Van Ly** has spent over 15 years in prison for the causes of religious freedom, democracy, and human rights. Initially arrested in September 1977 and sentenced to 20 years in a labor camp near Hue, he was later released but prohibited from engaging in religious activities. He was returned to jail in 2001 when he submitted testimony to the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom opposing a U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Act. On March 30, 2007, in a broadcasted show trial, authorities muzzled him while he tried to defend himself. He is a one of the founders of Bloc 8406 and past editor of an underground publication.



**Adopted by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Tran Huynh Duy Thuc (m)** is a Vietnamese blogger, entrepreneur and businessman, who was arrested in May 2009 and is currently serving a 16 year prison sentence. He was initially charged with theft of a telecommunications device, but the authorities were unable to find any evidence for this, and later charged Tran with “promoting anti-Socialist, anti-government propaganda” and undertaking “activities aimed at subverting the people’s government”. He was jailed, along with three other democracy activists, after a trial lasting just one day; his sentence is the longest ever handed down to a dissident in Vietnam. Tran is the founder and CEO of One-Connection Internet, an Internet service provider, and the author of several dissident blogs and articles on Vietnam’s economy.



**Adopted by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Nguyen Van Lia (m)** is a longtime adherent of Hoa Hao Buddhism, a religious group often suppressed by the government, and the co-author of several Hoa Hao Buddhist religious instruction texts and books. He is charged with violating article 258 of the penal code for “abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state,” a crime that could result in a sentence of up to seven years. According to state media, he possessed printed materials, CD’s, and DVD’s criticizing the Vietnamese

government's religious record. He had previously met with the U.S. Consulate and USCIRF officials in Saigon. He was sentenced to a five-year term on December 13, 2011 on the charge of "abusing democratic freedoms."



**Adopted by Representative Ted Poe, (R-TX), Duong Kim Khai Duong (m)** is a pastor for the Mennonite Church in Vietnam, a long-time advocate for aggrieved farmers, a democracy activist and member of Viet Tan, an organization advocating for democracy. Since the early 1990's, he has been detained or arrested thirteen times, often while trying to organize prayer sessions. He was jailed in 2004 for starting an "illegal" religious group. Upon

his release in 2006, he founded the Mennonite Cattle Shed Congregation in order to advocate for religious freedom and social justice, particularly to provide assistance to farmers so they could petition the government for redress in land disputes or corruption cases in Ben Tre and Dong Thap provinces. He also joined Viet Tan during this period. Pastor Duong Kim Khai was arrested on August 10, 2010 on the charge of "attempting to overthrow the government." The condition of his health and place of detention were kept from his family by authorities until October 12, 2010, when it received written confirmation of his arrest. On May 30, 2011, he was sentenced to a six-year prison term (later reduced to five years) followed by five-year term of house arrest. In 2011, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that the Hanoi government's detention and conviction of Pastor Duong Kim Khai and six other land activists were in violation of international law.



**Adopted by Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Doan Huy Chuong (m) and Nguyen Hoang Quoc Hung (m)** are labor activists who were charged with disrupting national security and sentenced to between seven and nine years in prison for organizing workers at a Vietnamese shoe factory in 2010. Government authorities arrested Doan and Nguyen in early 2010 shortly after they helped organize workers at

the My Phong shoe factory in Vietnam, where they distributed a leaflet outlining the striking workers' demands. Authorities held the two organizers for eight months before charging them with threatening national security. On October 28, 2010, 10 days after their indictment, the People's Court of Tra Vinh convicted them and sentenced Doan to seven years in prison and Nguyen to nine years in prison. The organizers were not permitted legal counsel or the opportunity to speak in their own defense. Although they were allowed a lawyer on appeal, the sentence was affirmed by the same court after another closed proceeding.

Throughout their detentions, Doan and Nguyen have been subjected to serious mistreatment. After arresting them, the government held them in solitary confinement for months. They have been the victims of repeated beatings, which often occur after one of their frequent prison transfers. As a result, Doan has lost the use of one hand. Despite continued poor health—including rashes and liver problems—they are forced to endure hard labor.