

# APPENDIX 2

## RELIGIOUS PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

**T**hrough USCIRF's Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project Commissioners advocate in support of a prisoner of conscience (noted below). Through increased education, outreach, and advocacy, USCIRF hopes to raise awareness of these and others individuals being imprisoned for their religion or beliefs, reduce their number, and highlight the country conditions that led to their imprisonment.

As mandated in the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act,

USCIRF also will, to the extent practicable, compile online and in official publications lists of persons it determines are imprisoned, detained, disappeared, placed under house arrest, tortured, or subject to forced renunciations of faith for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy by the government of a foreign country that the Commission recommends for designation as a CPC or a non-state actor that the Commission recommends for designation as an EPC.

## PATRIARCH ABUNE ANTONIOS



### COUNTRY

Eritrea

### KEY FACT

Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church

### DETAINED SINCE

May 27, 2007

### BIOGRAPHY

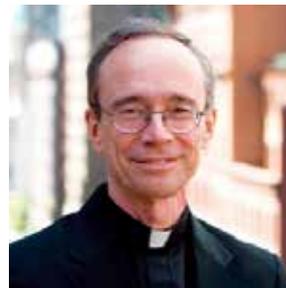
Patriarch Abune Antonios was born on July 12, 1927, in Himberti, a town north of the Eritrean capital, Asmara. His father was a priest. At the age of five, Patriarch Antonios entered the monastery of Debre Tsege Abuna Andrewes, where he was educated, ordained a deacon at the age of 12, and then served as a monk. Patriarch Antonios was ordained a priest in 1942 and was eventually elected abbot in 1955.

When the Eritrean Orthodox Church first sought its independence, Patriarch Antonios was one of the five abbots from monasteries sent to Egypt to be ordained a bishop so that the church would be able to constitute its own Holy Synod. Antonios was ordained as Bishop Antonios of Hamasien-Asmara on June 19, 1994, in Saint Mark's Cathedral in Cairo by His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria.

Following the death in 2003 of Abune Yacoub, then Patriarch of the Eritrean Church, Patriarch Antonios was elected as the third Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church by a joint vote of the Holy Synod and representatives of all dioceses in the presence of the delegates of the Holy Synod of the Egyptian Orthodox Church. Pope Shenouda III, assisted by Eritrean and Coptic Orthodox Metropolitan and Bishops, ordained and enthroned Antonios as Patriarch on April 23, 2004.

The Eritrean government notified Antonios on January 20, 2006, that he no longer would lead the country's largest religious denomination after he called for the release of political prisoners and refused to excommunicate 3,000 parishioners who

opposed the government. One year later, on January 20, 2007, authorities confiscated Patriarch Antonios' personal pontifical insignia. On May 27, 2007, the Eritrean government replaced Patriarch Antonios with Bishop Dioscoros of Mendefera, forcefully removed the Patriarch from his home, and placed him under house arrest at an undisclosed location. Patriarch Antonios, who is 89 years old, continues to be held incommunicado and reportedly is being denied medical care despite suffering from severe diabetes.



For more information on Eritrea, see p. 38. For more information on Chair Thomas J. Reese, S.J., see p. 215.

## RAIF BADAWI



### COUNTRY

Saudi Arabia

### KEY FACT

Blogger

### DETAINED SINCE

June 27, 2012

### CHARGES

Violating Islamic values and propagating liberal thought

### SENTENCE

10 years imprisonment, 1,000 lashes, a fine of one million riyals (equal to about \$266,000), and is banned from any media work or foreign travel for 10 years after his release from prison

## BIOGRAPHY

Raif Badawi was born January 13, 1984, in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. He is a blogger, activist, and the creator of the website Free Saudi Liberals, which encourages debate on religious and political matters in Saudi Arabia.

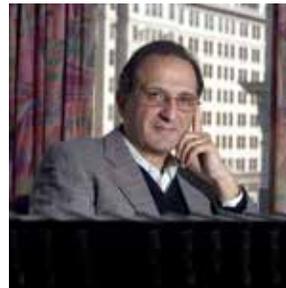
First detained on apostasy charges in 2008, Mr. Badawi was released after a day of questioning. He was arrested on June 17, 2012, on a charge of insulting Islam through electronic channels and brought to court on several charges including apostasy, a conviction which carries an automatic death sentence. Human Rights Watch stated that Badawi's website had hosted material criticizing "senior religious figures." Mr. Badawi had also suggested that Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University had become "a den for terrorists."

Mr. Badawi appeared before a district court in Jeddah on December 17, 2012, charged with "setting up a website that undermines general security," "ridiculing Islamic religious figures," and "going beyond the realm of obedience." On July 30, 2013, the Jeddah Criminal Court sentenced Mr. Badawi to seven years in prison and 600 lashes for founding an Internet forum that "violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought." On May 7, 2014, an appeals court increased the punishment to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison. He also received a fine of one million riyals (equal to about \$266,000) and is banned from any media work or foreign travel for 10 years after his release from prison.

On January 9, 2015, Mr. Badawi was flogged 50 times before hundreds of spectators in front of a Jeddah mosque. He has not received additional floggings, due

partly to international reaction and partly to a medical doctor's finding that he could not physically endure more lashings. On June 7, 2015, Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court denied another appeal from Badawi and upheld the sentence of 1,000 lashes.

Mr. Badawi received the 2015 Sakharov Prize for his human rights work. Raif Badawi married Ensaf Haidar in 2002 in Saudi Arabia; they have three children. His wife and children obtained political asylum in Quebec, Canada in 2013.



For more information on Saudi Arabia, see p. 76. For more information on Vice Chair James J. Zogby, see p. 216.

## PASTOR NGUYEN CONG CHINH AND TRAN THI HONG



### COUNTRY

Vietnam

### KEY FACT

Evangelical pastor

### DETAINED SINCE

April 28, 2011

### CHARGES

Undermining unity

### SENTENCE

11 years imprisonment

### BIOGRAPHY

Nguyen Cong Chinh is an evangelical pastor originally from the Quang Nam Province, and has lived in the Central Highland provinces of Kon Tum and Gia Lai since 1985. He is a long-time pro-democracy activist and critic of the Vietnamese government's ban on preaching in the Central Highlands. He is also the founder of the Vietnamese People's Evangelical Fellowship, a charitable organization that ministers to ethnic minority communities in the central highlands, including ethnic minority prisoners and their families. He and his wife, Mrs. Tran Thi Hong, a Lutheran member of the Vietnamese Women for Human Rights organization, have five children.

In 2011, Pastor Chinh was imprisoned on false charges of undermining national solidarity. Prison authorities reportedly have physically and verbally abused him, and he spent approximately one month in solitary confinement. His health is rapidly declining: he suffers from high blood pressure, acute nasal sinusitis, arthritis, and stomach inflammation and is denied treatment or access to medication.

While the Vietnamese government has unjustly imprisoned Pastor Chinh, they have also engaged in acts of harassment against his wife, Mrs. Tran Thi Hong, including extended periods of surveillance, the sealing up of her house, and prevention of her attending scheduled meetings with her husband or procuring medicine for her sick daughter. On March 30, 2016, local

authorities prevented Mrs. Hong from meeting with then U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom David Saperstein. Although she eventually was able to meet with the ambassador, she suffered for this meeting: she endured a beating that left her with injuries to her head, knee, leg, hand, and foot. This visit was followed by a three-day interrogation during which Mrs. Train Thi Hong was pressured to sign a document stating that her meeting with the Ambassador was illegal and that she was a member of an illegal and subversive church due to her Lutheran faith. After refusing to sign, she was abused for four hours by female officers.



For more information on Vietnam, see p. 114. For more information on Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, see p. 219.

## GEDHUN CHOEKYI NYIMA – THE PANCHEN LAMA



### COUNTRY

China

### KEY FACT

11th Panchen Lama

### DISAPPEARED SINCE

May 17, 1995

### BIOGRAPHY

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on April 25, 1989, in Lhari County, Tibet. After the death of the 10th Panchen Lama, His Holiness the Dalai Lama chose Gedhun on May 15, 1995, to be the 11th Panchen Lama, which is the second-highest position in Tibetan Buddhism.

Three days after his selection as Panchen Lama, Chinese government authorities kidnapped then six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family. On November 11, 1995, Chinese authorities announced their own pick to serve as the Panchen Lama: Gyancaïn Norbu.

Most Tibetans reject this choice, as well as the government's interference in their religious practices. The Chinese government maintains strict control over Tibetan Buddhists, suppressing their cultural and religious practices. Government-led raids on monasteries continue, and Chinese party officials in Tibet infiltrate monasteries with Communist Party propaganda.

In the more than 20 years since Gedhun's abduction, Chinese authorities have provided little information about his whereabouts, alleging that they need to protect him from being "kidnapped by separatists." In May 2007, Asma Jahangir, then United States Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, suggested that the Chinese government allow an independent expert to visit and confirm Gedhun's well-being. On July 17, 2007, the Chinese authorities said that he is a "perfectly ordinary Tibetan boy" attending school and leading a normal life, and that he "does not wish to be disturbed." Authorities say that the state employs both of his parents and that his brothers and sisters are either working or at university.



For more information on China, see p. 32. For more information on Commissioner Tenzin Dorjee, see p. 217.

## GULMIRA IMIN



### COUNTRY

China

### KEY FACT

Website administrator and Uighur Muslim

### DETAINED SINCE

July 14, 2009

### CHARGES

Splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration

### SENTENCE

Life imprisonment

## BIOGRAPHY

Gulmira Imin is a Uighur Muslim and former web administrator for the Uighur-language website Salkin. Ms. Imin was also a government employee in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in northwest China. Xinjiang is home to the majority of the country's Uighur Muslim population.

Ms. Imin was born in 1978 in Aksu in Xinjiang and graduated in 2000 from the Chinese-Uighur translation department of Xinjiang University. In spring 2009, Ms. Imin became the moderator of Salkin, a Uighur-language culture and news website to which she had previously contributed poetry and short stories. Many of her online writings criticized government policies.

On July 5, 2009, Ms. Imin participated in a major demonstration protesting the deaths of Uighur migrant workers in Guangdong Province. Initially peaceful, the protests turned violent, with about 200 people, including ethnic Han Chinese, killed during the riots and confrontations with police. On July 14, 2009, Ms. Imin was arrested in Aksu after authorities alleged she had organized the protests, posted an announcement for them on Salkin, and leaked state secrets by phone to her husband in Norway. Her family was not notified of the arrest, and was unaware of her location until the October 2009 airing of a China Central Television documentary that depicted Imin in prison garb.

On April 1, 2010, the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court sentenced Ms. Imin to life in prison under articles 103, 111, and 296 of China's Criminal Law on charges of "splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration." She alleges she was tortured and

forced to sign documents while in detention. She reportedly was not allowed to meet with her lawyer until the trial. Her appeal subsequently was rejected. Ms. Imin is currently detained in the Xinjiang Women's Prison (Xinjiang No. 2 Prison) located in Urumqi, where she is allowed one family visit every three months.



For more information on China, see p. 32. For more information on Commissioner Sandra Jolley, see p. 218.

## BAGIR KAZIKHANOV



### COUNTRY

Russia

### KEY FACT

Said Nursi follower

### DETAINED SINCE

April 2014

### CHARGES

Organizing extremist activity

### SENTENCE

Three and a half years imprisonment

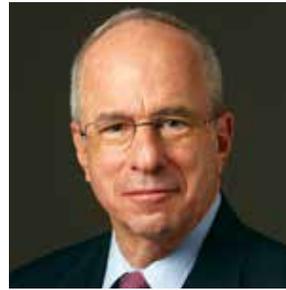
## BIOGRAPHY

Bagir Kazikhanov was born on September 9, 1983, in the Republic of Dagestan, an administrative entity of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Kazikhanov organized regular Islamic study sessions in rented flats between 2012 and 2014. During these sessions, he and his fellow Muslims studied the works of the Turkish Islamic revivalist theologian Said Nursi, along with watching football. Nursi, who died in 1960, was an ethnic Kurd who wrote a body of Qur'anic commentary advocating the modernization of Islamic education. Nursi also criticized the secular character of the post-Ottoman Turkish government, for which he was persecuted. Nursi's emphasis on the integration of modern science into Islamic learning is said to have been an inspiration to Fethullah Gülen, the prominent exiled Turkish Islamic preacher. Although Nursi's writings do not advocate hatred, violence, or the violation of human rights, many of Nursi's works are banned in Russia, reportedly due to state opposition to foreign spiritual and cultural influence.

Mr. Kazikhanov was arrested in the city of Ulyanovsk on April 9, 2014, after participating in one of these study sessions, which authorities deemed to be the "organization of extremist activity" under the Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. He was accused of recruiting a terrorist cell of Nursi followers as part of a supposed "Nurdzhular" movement, which officially was banned in Russia in 2008 but is widely believed to be a legal fiction invented for the purpose of prosecuting Nursi adherents. Mr. Kazikhanov was held in a pre-trial detention center from April to October 2014, and then placed under house arrest until his February 25, 2015, conviction by

Judge Natalya Damayeva at the Lenin District Court in Ulyanovsk. The Judge sentenced him to three and a half years imprisonment.



For more information on Russia, see p. 68. For more information on Commissioner John Ruskay, see p. 218.

## FARIBA KAMALABADI - THE BAHA'I SEVEN



### COUNTRY

Iran

### KEY FACT

Developmental psychologist and Baha'i member

### DETAINED SINCE

May 14, 2008

### CHARGES

Espionage, propaganda against the Islamic Republic, and establishment of an illegal administration

### SENTENCE

20 years imprisonment

## BIOGRAPHY

Fariba Kamalabadi was born on September 12, 1962, in Tehran, Iran. Ms. Kamalabadi graduated from high school with honors but was barred from attending university due to her Baha'i faith.

In her mid-30s, Ms. Kamalabadi embarked on an eight-year period of informal study and eventually received an advanced degree in developmental psychology from the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE), an alternative institution the Baha'i community of Iran established to provide higher education for its young people. The Iranian government does not recognize the BIHE.

Ms. Kamalabadi is one of the seven Baha'i leaders known as "Yaran" or "Friends," who tended to the spiritual and social needs of the Iranian Baha'i community in the absence of formally elected Baha'i leadership due to restrictions by the Iranian government. The other six members are Mahvash Sabet, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakoli, and Vahid Tizfahm.

Ms. Kamalabadi was arrested on May 14, 2008, after an early morning raid on her home. Ms. Kamalabadi and the other Baha'i Seven were held incommunicado for weeks, placed in solitary confinement for months, and spent a year behind bars without access to legal counsel. In 2010, the seven were tried and convicted of charges of "espionage" and "spreading propaganda against the regime." The Baha'i Seven were sentenced to 20 years in prison, the longest of any current prisoner of conscience in Iran.

Since her arrest in May 2008, Ms. Kamalabadi has been held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. Witness

reports describe the prison cell for Ms. Kamalabadi as four meters by five meters in size, with two small, metal-covered windows, and with no bed or pillows.

Ms. Kamalabadi married fellow Baha'i Ruhollah Taefi in 1982 and they have three children, Vargha, Alhan, and Taraneh. Ms. Kamalabadi's father was fired from his job in the government health service in the 1980s because he was a Baha'i; he was later imprisoned and tortured.



For more information on Iran, see p. 44. For more information on Commissioner Kristina Arriaga de Bucholz, see p. 216.

## MAHVASH SABET - THE BAHA'I SEVEN



### COUNTRY

Iran

### KEY FACT

Educator and Baha'i member

### DETAINED SINCE

March 5, 2008

### CHARGES

Espionage, propaganda against the Islamic Republic, and establishment of an illegal administration

### SENTENCE

20 years imprisonment

### BIOGRAPHY

Mahvash Sabet was born on February 4, 1953, in Ard-estan, Iran. Ms. Sabet moved to Tehran when she was in the fifth grade and eventually received a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Ms. Sabet began her career as a teacher and also worked as a principal at several schools. Like thousands of other Iranian Baha'i educators after the Islamic Revolution, she was fired from her job and barred from working in public education. She then became director at the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, a university established by the Baha'i community in 1987 to meet the educational needs of young people who have been systematically denied access to higher education by the Iranian government.

Ms. Sabet was one of the seven Baha'i leaders who were part of the ad hoc group known as "Yaran" or "Friends." This group tended to the spiritual and social needs of the Iranian Baha'i community given the absence of formally elected Baha'i leadership. Ms. Sabet was the first of the Baha'i Seven to be arrested on March 5, 2008, after she was apprehended while visiting Mashhad. The Baha'i Seven were placed in solitary confinement for months, and spent a year behind bars without access to legal counsel. In 2010, the seven were tried and convicted of charges of "espionage" and "spreading propaganda against the regime." They each were sentenced to 20 years in prison, the longest of any current prisoner of conscience in Iran.

Since her arrest in March 2008, Ms. Sabet has been held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. Witness reports describe the prison cell for Ms. Sabet as four meters by five meters in size, with two small, metal

covered-windows, and with no bed or pillows. Despite such conditions, Ms. Sabet has written poems about her experiences while in prison, which she composed on scraps of paper and sent out via friends and family. In 2013, they were published as a book, *Prison Poems*.

Ms. Sabet married Siyvash Sabet on May 21, 1973, and has a son and daughter.

For more information on Iran, see p. 44. Commissioner Kristina Arriaga de Bucholz has also chosen to advocate in support of Mahvash Sabet along with Fariba Kamalabadi.

## MARYAM NAGHASH ZARGARAN



### COUNTRY

Iran

### KEY FACT

Christian convert from Islam

### DETAINED SINCE

January 6, 2013

### CHARGES

Propagating against the Islamic regime and collusion intended to harm national security

### SENTENCE

Four years imprisonment with an additional 42 days

## BIOGRAPHY

Maryam Naghash Zargaran, a Christian convert from Islam and former children’s music teacher, was arrested on January 6, 2013. On March 9, 2013, Judge Mohammad Moghisseh of Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Courts sentenced her to four years in prison for “propagating against the Islamic regime and collusion intended to harm national security” in connection with her work at an orphanage with Iranian-American Christian pastor Saeed Abedini, who had been imprisoned for “threatening the national security of Iran” due to his activity in the Iranian house church movement.

Ms. Zargaran began her sentence on July 15, 2013. On September 29, 2013, she was transferred from Evin Prison to Modares Hospital for treatment after an apparent heart attack, and then returned to prison at an unknown date. On May 26, 2016, she launched a hunger strike to protest the authorities’ lack of attention to her medical needs and refusal to grant her conditional release or medical leave. Following her hunger strike, she was granted temporary medical leave and forced to pay a deposit bond of 350 million toman (approximately \$100,000) in order to leave the prison. The court later ordered she return to prison. Since she was still sick, her family applied for an extension of her leave, which was denied.

On July 15, 2016, Ms. Zargaran launched an indefinite hunger strike to demand her immediate and unconditional release from prison because of the insufficient treatment of her medical issues. Prison officials examined her five days later and issued a report confirming the seriousness of her condition. Although she

again demanded to be released for medical treatment, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence denied her request and she ended her hunger strike at the beginning of August 2016.

Prison officials allowed Ms. Zargaran to return home at the end of August to receive medical treatment. However, because Ms. Zargaran reportedly objected to her furlough conditions, she was sent to Evin Prison. After another five-day medical leave in December 2016, officials informed Ms. Zargaran that her four-year sentence was extended 42 days to reflect time spent outside of prison for medical care during the summer of 2016.

Ms. Zargaran suffers from a severe heart condition, ASD (atrial septal defect), which required surgery prior to her arrest. Her condition necessitates ongoing monitoring and follow-up with a cardiologist, but since her detention, she has not had regular access to such care. She also suffers from diabetes, high cholesterol, and arthritis.



For more information on Iran, see p. 44. For more information on Commissioner Cliff May, see p. 218.

## PWINT PHYU LATT AND ZAW ZAW LATT



### COUNTRY

Burma

### KEY FACT

Interfaith peace advocates

### DETAINED SINCE

July 14, 2015 (Zaw Zaw Latt)  
July 19, 2015 (Pwint Phyu Latt)

### CHARGES

Violating article 13(1) of the Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act, for purportedly crossing the Burma-India border

### SENTENCE

Two years imprisonment

## BIOGRAPHIES

Zaw Zaw Latt and Pwint Phyu Latt are two Muslim interfaith peace advocates who have been imprisoned since 2015. The two participated in an interfaith peace trip in June 2013 to the headquarters of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), during which they delivered a Christian cross and a statue of Buddha as signs of peace. In April 2014, they traveled to Chin State on a humanitarian relief mission, taking pictures at the Burma-India border, a crossing that they stated immigration officers had approved. Nearly two years after their interfaith trip, the Buddhist nationalist group Ma Ba Tha began pressuring the Burmese government to detain them, alleging that both had promoted “inter-religious mating,” insulted Buddhism, and collaborated with the KIA.

The two were arrested in July 2015. After a six-month trial, both were convicted under article 13(1) of the since-repealed Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act for allegedly crossing the Burma-India border, and sentenced to two years in prison. On April 8, 2016, the day on which the government amnestied 199 prisoners, both advocates were charged with violating article 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act due to their 2013 visit to Kachin State, for which they were convicted and sentenced to two additional years in prison with hard labor.

Despite the repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act under which Zaw Zaw Latt and Pwint Phyu Latt were initially sentenced, neither have been released nor had their sentences reduced.



For more information on Burma, see p. 22. For more information on Vice Chairman Daniel Mark, see p. 215.