Report on
Science and Human Rights

Somalia Releases Political Prisoners, Scientists

On 15 March 1989, the government of Somalia announced the release of 21 political prisoners and a series of human rights initiatives. According to the National Academy of Sciences, 12 scientists, engineers, and health professionals are among those freed, two of whom were condemned to death last year but reprieved following international appeals from the U.S. Congress, science organizations, and human rights groups.

Those released include agronomist Osman Abshir Abdellah; biochemist Safia Hashi Madar; civil engineer Suleiman Nuh Ali; economists Mohamoud Omer Hashi and Aden Warsama Said; geologist Mohamed Barud Ali; medical doctors Aden Yusef Aboker, Mohamoud Hassan Tani, Osman Abdi Megal, and Mohamed Ali Salub; mathematician Abdi Ismail Yunis; and veterinarian Abdillahi Ali Yusuf.

The Somali prime minister, General Mohamed Ali Samater, announced last February that his government had offered an unconditional amnesty to all Somalis living abroad and plans to investigate charges of human rights violations committed by public officials. The government agency frequently cited by human rights groups as responsible for such abuses is the National Security Service (NSS), an intelligence agency with virtually unlimited powers of surveillance, investigation, search, arrest, and detention. Since 1970, the NSS has detained hundreds of Somalis who were later charged with “crimes against the State.”

In October 1987, a delegation of scientists assembled by the human rights committees of the National Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Medicine visited Somalia to investigate the status of Somali scientists, including those held in detention. After their visit, the delegates sent a letter to President Mohamed Siad Barre appealing for the release of 11 imprisoned scientists. In its trip report, published in early 1988, the delegation urged the Somali authorities “to take all necessary measures to end torture and mistreatment” of political detainees and to allow human rights and medical groups access to them.

Several Somali prisoners released in recent years have said they were tortured into signing false confessions by the security police. Suleiman Nuh Ali, a 1971 graduate of Howard University’s school of architecture who had been jailed since September 1982, said in a statement smuggled from prison early last year that police had ordered him to sign papers confessing that he had subversive materials in his possession. When Ali refused, he said he was taken from his cell, “handcuffed, blindfolded, driven in a land cruiser and taken to a beach. Then I was tortured, very badly. Many nights were repeated until I was forced to sign anything they wanted.”

Ali, who was working as a consultant to the U.S. Agency for International Development at the time of his arrest, was released in March and is believed to have returned to his home in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. During Ali’s imprisonment, students at Howard University in Washington formed a committee on his behalf.

Other organizations that have campaigned for the release of imprisoned Somali scientists include the Committee of Concerned Scientists, New York Academy of Sciences, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Mathematical Society, Amnesty International, American Chemical Society, United University Professions, World Medical Association, and Asia Watch.

—Eric Stover

Abdi Ismail Yunis
Health Workers Harassed in the Philippines

At the AAAS annual meeting in January 1989, Dr. June Lopez, a psychiatrist and program chair of the Philippine Action Concerning Torture (PACT), participated in a symposium sponsored by the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility on the rehabilitation of torture survivors under repressive political systems. We spoke with Dr. Lopez about her work and about the general human rights situation in the Philippines under the Aquino administration. What we learned was that after three years in office, President Aquino is still having a difficult time improving the human rights situation in the country.

President Aquino’s early advocacy of human rights encouraged many working in the human rights field. The Philippine president ordered the release of hundreds of political prisoners. She created an independent Commission on Human Rights to investigate reports of human rights violations, and issued memoranda requiring the teaching of human rights at all levels of education and as a part of military and police training.

However, with the rise of vigilante groups and the military response to the armed insurgency, human rights advocates—from lawyers, community organizers, to health workers—now find themselves at considerable risk. In 1987 and 1988, five human rights lawyers were murdered. Members of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, the Catholic church-based human rights monitoring organization, have been harassed, detained, and tortured. TFDP reports that from March 1986 through November 1988 there were over 700 “salvagings” (political killings), 1,676 cases of torture (approximately 27% of the 11,911 persons arrested during this time), and 224 reports of missing or “disappeared” persons. According to TFDP figures, there remain over 650 political prisoners, many of them charged with common crimes.

Health Workers Targeted

Health and human rights organizations and community workers have become the targets of harassment and violence by both the military and vigilante groups. Among the targets is the Manila-based Medical Action Group (MAG), a membership organization of Philippine health professionals who advocate better access to health care and a respect for human rights in the Philippines, of which Dr. Lopez is an active member. According to Dr. Lopez, “there are reports of community-based health workers being harassed by local vigilante groups, harassments ranging from death threats to outright killings. And there have been health workers who have been the victims of massacres. These types of cases are documented in a survey conducted by the Medical Action Group on cases of violations of medical neutrality and the human rights of health professionals and workers from January 1987 to June 1988.”

“Now, at another level, health workers have been accused of rendering health care service to rebels. And for this reason, they have been labeled as communist sympathizers at the very least. It is much more difficult to prove the motives behind certain killings, like that of a physician who was killed right in his clinic in a city about an hour away from Manila. We have reason to believe that a vigilante group was responsible. [Dr. Patricio Santiago, a senior medical officer at the Angeles City General Hospital, was killed by armed men inside his clinic on 30 June 1988. Two weeks before, the murdered body of a human rights lawyer who represented suspected New People’s Army (NPA) members was brought to Santiago’s clinic.]

“Those kinds of threats are very difficult to prove in terms of motive at the moment. There are always claims that the motives were personal vendetta or whatever. Somehow, the government, specifically the military, has been able to find a way to escape responsibility.

“But the most concrete harassment of health workers is the identification in the newspaper of several health organizations as communist fronts. This occurred in late November 1988. Col. Gerardo Flores, an intelligence officer with the Philippine Constabulary, specifically named the Alliance of Health Workers, which is a kind of trade union of health workers, especially hospital workers like attendants, nurses, and nurses aides. The chair of that organization, former Constitutional Convention Commissioner member Minda Luz Quesada, was identified as a communist leader, along with the officers of the Medical Action Group, along with myself as program chairman of PACT, and along with the Health Action for Democracy (HEAD). This is a rather systematic black labelling.”

Treatment of Torture Survivors

MAG formally initiated its PACT program to aid survivors of torture and their families in January 1986. One of several programs in the Philippines offering such assistance, PACT has gathered physicians, psychologists, and social workers who contribute their time at the PACT center in Manila to out-patients. PACT has also established a volunteer network of health professionals who provide services on a non-center basis. In 1988, PACT therapists offered treatment to 151 survivors of torture. But often those in need of help, Dr. Lopez points out, “will not come forward to ask for our help. Right now we are providing service largely to people who have been tortured during the Marcos regime. For some reason the torture survivors of this particular government [of President Aquino] or the military establishment have not come forward to receive treatment and rehabilitation.”

Response of Professional Organizations

The involvement of Philippine professional associations in activities to end the practice of torture and to
support physicians who are offering assistance to survivors appears to be changing slowly. The Philippine Nurses Association published in the July-September 1988 issue of the *Philippine Journal of Nursing Issues* an article appealing for a wider respect for medical neutrality in the country. The article documented cases of health workers on medical missions who were harassed, detained by the military or vigilante groups, tortured, or who were facing trial for alleged criminal activity. The Philippine Nurses Association declared that it

shares in the belief that medical neutrality, which recognizes the right of any patient and the right of any health personnel to treat anyone regardless of social status, political beliefs and affiliations, is presently being violated. ... The harassments of health workers are already clear indications of the unjust practices of the so-called 'guardians of the people,' be they military or vigilante groups. These are indications that the state through this government is not capable of protecting those who are committed to work for our people in terms of providing health care.

The PNA statement is part of an ongoing campaign by MAG and other health organizations to urge a greater respect for medical neutrality. Under President Marcos, Presidential Decree 169 medical practitioners are required to report the treatment of patients for serious and less serious physical injuries to the nearest Philippine constabulary unit under pain of penal or administrative sanctions. When President Aquino came to power, Dr. Lopez stated, "It was supposed to have been repealed. It has not been repealed under President Aquino. It was just dressed up. It's now Executive Order 212. [Executive Order 212 requires the medical practitioner to report such injuries to the nearest government health authority.]

There is now a bill in Congress sponsored by Senator Edgardo Angara, who is the chair of the Health Committee of the Senate, repealing this executive order. It has not yet been passed."

On the whole, according to Dr. Lopez, the attitude of the professional associations towards human rights appears to be one of "benign neglect. However, in November Dr. Lopez presented a paper on torture at the scientific meeting of the Philippine Psychiatric Association. "So there is a kind of scientific openness—a bit," she said.

—Kari Hannibal

**University of El Salvador Attacked**

The University of El Salvador (UES) may be forced to shut down for the second time in ten years as a rising wave of violence engulfs the university and government-imposed economic sanctions limit the institution's ability to function. For over a year, faculty members, students, and university workers have been arrested, killed, and threatened. Troops surrounded the university campus three times since December. In addition, the Salvadoran government refuses to provide the university with desperately-needed funds for its operating budget and to rebuild the earthquake-damaged campus.

Nine years ago, the UES faced similar threats when army troops forcefully occupied the campus, effectively closing the university for four years. The military claimed that the UES was an armed camp and a sanctuary for “subversives,” supporters of the armed opposition FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). Faculty members and students were detained or “disappeared” and the university’s rector was assassinated by a death squad in late 1980. University property was stolen or destroyed during the military occupation. The university reopened in February 1984 with a reduced budget, little equipment, and few books. Compounding the university’s troubles, the October 1986 earthquake destroyed approximately 70% of the campus.

**University Affected by Increasing Violence**

The detentions, death threats, and murders characteristic of the early 1980s are again on the rise. Nine members of the university community have been killed since May 1988 and many have been detained. Two university students were killed in February 1989 alone. Mario Antonio Flores Cubas, an economics student, was arrested and killed, reportedly by uniformed soldiers on 2 February 1989, and Orlando Rafael Ramos Lizama, a third-year medical student, was killed on 16 February 1989, reportedly by a death squad. The bodies of both victims bore signs of torture and bullet wounds. In addition, three students from the UES who were arrested in February and accused of political crimes are still in detention.

Dr. Herberth Wilfredo Barillas, vice-rector of the UES and a physician, and Mario Alfredo Cabrera, the administrative manager of the university, both reportedly received telephoned death threats in mid-January from ARDE, the Revolutionary Anticomunist Action of Extermination, a new self-proclaimed "death squad." The callers demanded that the men leave the country within 72 hours. Bombs exploded in the houses of the dean and vice-dean of the Faculty of Sciences and Humanities in San Salvador on 13 January, after both men received telephoned death threats reportedly from ARDE. On 16 December 1988, Rosa Imelda Medrano Gonzalez, head of the Law Faculty of the western branch of the UES in Santa Ana, was shot dead on her return from a demonstration in San Salvador to demand additional funding for the university.

On 23 December 1988, several bombs exploded in the
January 1989, but reinstated on 21 January. Colonel Juan Orlando Zepeda, Commander of the First Brigade of the Infantry in San Salvador, publicly accused the UES of having served as a base for the planning and execution of a terrorist attack on 20 January 1989, when two car bombs exploded near the Treasury Police buildings.\(^3\)

A university spokesperson responded that the military cordon was ordered not because of the car bombs but was intended to prevent the normal functioning of the university.\(^4\)

The military again surrounded the university in March prior to the presidential elections.

The violent incidents at the UES are only part of a general deterioration of the human rights situation in El Salvador nationally. Violations by both the armed forces and rebel troops rose significantly in 1988 according to local and international human rights organizations. The death squads, operating once again after a lull with the accession of a civilian president in 1984, are said to be made up of military and security force personnel either in plainclothes or in uniform and sanctioned by the military authorities.\(^5\)

In this atmosphere, the UES will find it increasingly difficult to sustain its role as an institution of higher learning in the months ahead.

—Janet Gruschow

Notes

Circulation Note

There will only be two issues of the Report on Science and Human Rights in 1989, due to budget constraints.

If you know of others who would like to receive this newsletter, please send us their names and addresses. We will add them to our mailing list. The Report on Science and Human Rights is distributed free of charge.
Chinese Astrophysicist Denied Permission To Travel to the United States

14 November 1988

Dear Editor:

Several months ago, a number of us invited the astrophysicist Fang Lizhi of the Beijing Astronomical Observatory, People's Republic of China, to come to the United States for several months to carry out scientific research and to give lectures at a number of universities and conferences. We were therefore dismayed to learn recently that Fang's permission to travel to the United States has been revoked, despite earlier assurances that he would be permitted to visit. Since no official explanation was given for this action, we can only assume, on the basis of news reports from China, that this refusal was a consequence of Fang's outspoken advocacy of political reform and human rights.

As one of China's most distinguished scientists, Fang brings great credit to his country. By virtue of his intellectual integrity and scientific productivity, he is an inspiration as well as a mentor to many young Chinese scientists.

Like physicist Andrei Sakharov of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Fang has publicly expressed strong views on issues of intellectual freedom and human rights. It is therefore ironic that his permission to travel to the United States has been revoked at just the time that Sakharov has been granted permission to travel to the West.

During the past few years, several of us have visited China to attend conferences and give lectures, and we have been impressed by the rapid advance of Chinese science. This progress is due in large part to the Chinese leadership's open policy of intellectual exchange, which has permitted Chinese scientists to join the mainstream of international scientific cooperation. Such cooperation has greatly benefited the scientific community in both China and the United States.

The revocation of Fang's permission to travel to the United States is inconsistent with this policy of open exchanges. We fear it may have a chilling effect on scientific exchanges between China and the United States and may therefore slow the rapid development of Chinese science which is now taking place. Instead, we hope that the Chinese leadership will take a broad view and continue the policy of open travel that has been so beneficial for intellectual exchanges between China and the world and for science in general.

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CSFR Sponsors Medical Visit to South Africa

A delegation of five physicians and a staff member of the AAAS traveled to South Africa from 9 through 16 April to discuss medical and human rights issues with a wide range of health professionals there. The visit was part of the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility's continuing inquiries into the role of the health professional in promoting respect for human rights and took place a year and a half after the publication of the CSFR report Turning A Blind Eye?: Medical Accountability and the Prevention of Torture in South Africa.

The trip was sponsored by the CSFR, the Committee on Health and Human Rights of the Institute of Medicine, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Public Health Association. The delegates had attempted to visit the country in April 1988 but their visa applications were denied at that time with no explanation.

The delegates visited the areas of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. They met with government officials in the Ministry of Health, faculty at six of the eight medical schools in the country, representatives of health professional society organizations and research councils, and grass-roots community-based health organizations. They were also able to meet with groups documenting human rights violations and to interview persons who had been in detention and persons who provide health care and social services for ex-detainees. The delegates inquired about the teaching of medical ethics, responses to the health problems associated with detention, and generally the type of medical care available for the white, Indian, colored, and African population groups in the country. A report of the trip should be available this summer.

—Kari Hannibal
New Soviet Law Limits Freedom of Speech

The political reforms currently under way in the Soviet Union involve a review of the entire legal and judicial system, including the penal code. During the past year, a number of Soviet lawyers and government officials have suggested that amendments to the code would include substantial changes to those articles which had restricted freedom of speech and which had been most often used to prosecute political activists, including many scientists. In particular, they suggested that Article 190-1 of the RSFSR penal code (and its equivalent in the codes of the other republics) dealing with the dissemination of "fabrications known to be false which defame the Soviet state and social system" would be abolished and that Article 70 (and its equivalents) dealing with "agitation and propaganda aimed at subverting or weakening the Soviet state" would be modified.

On 8 April 1989, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet passed a decree amending the all-Union law "On Criminal Liability for Crimes Against the State," which sets out the categories of criminal offenses and punishment dealt with by the penal code. The decree amends Article 70 so that it now prohibits not "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" but "public appeals to overthrow the state." The decree also specifies a new offense—"insulting or discrediting" state organs and officials—and "instructs" the presidia of the Supreme Soviets of all the republics to amend their legislation on state crimes accordingly.

The decree has been criticized by many Soviet lawyers, intellectuals, and human rights groups on the grounds that it contradicts the principles of glasnost and perestroika and provides ample opportunity to prosecute those who criticize government policy or advocate far-reaching changes in the political system. It is widely believed that the decree was motivated in large part by the waves of ethnic unrest and nationalist demonstrations in many Soviet republics, most recently in Georgia, and that it will be used to clamp down on groups calling for greater national autonomy.

In its new version, Article 70 prohibits "public appeals to overthrow the Soviet state and social system or to change it using means that are incompatible with the USSR Constitution." It also prohibits appeals "to obstruct the implementation of Soviet laws with the aim of undermining the political and economic system of the USSR, as well as the publication or circulation of materials containing such ideas." These offenses carry a sentence of up to three years in prison or a fine of 2,000 rubles. If "committed repeatedly," or by an organized group, or with "the use of mass-reproduction facilities," these same actions are punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment or a fine of 5,000 rubles. If they are carried out "on the instruction of foreign organizations" or "with the use of resources or equipment supplied by foreign organizations," the sentence may be ten years in prison.

The new wording of Article 70 is disturbing for several reasons. The fact that it prohibits all "appeals to overthrow" the state, not only those which involve or advocate the use of violence, gives rise to fears that it may be interpreted to include any appeal for far-reaching constitutional reform. The reference to "mass-reproduction facilities" suggests that the use of even a photocopying machine or computer to produce a document advocating such reform could lead to a heavy prison sentence. Given that the Soviet constitution affirms the principle of singe-party rule, the reference to attempts to change the system continued on page 7

Upcoming Conferences on Health and Human Rights

The Danish Medical Group of Amnesty International (AI), the Committee of Concerned Forensic Scientists, and the Danish Center of Human Rights are organizing an international medical congress on the Detection and Examination of Human Rights Violations, to be held in Copenhagen, 4–7 September 1989. The topics to be covered include "Medical and Legal Aspects of Detection of Torture," "Forensic Medicine and Human Rights," "Psychiatric Aspects," "The Death Penalty," "Planning and International Coordination of AI Medical Groups," and a working group session on practical involvement for AI members. For further information, please contact: Medical Congress of Human Rights, 1989; c/o Amnesty International, Medical Group Office; Frederiksbergade 1; 1360 Copenhagen K; Denmark, telephone: (45–1) 11–89–29.

The Center for Victims of Torture in Minnesota is holding a training conference on Establishing a Practice: Intervention, Training and Research in the Area of Torture Treatment, on 2 June 1989 at the Law School of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The conference objectives are to provide a comprehensive overview of treatment and research in the area of torture and trauma; to provide information and skills required to differentiate clinically the population of torture survivors and their family members from other clinical populations for the purposes of referral and intervention; and to illustrate the practical application of skills relevant to the treatment of survivors of torture and trauma. For further information, please contact: Douglas Johnson or Barbara Chester, Center for Victims of Torture, 722 Fulton Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, telephone: (612) 331–1820.
by unconstitutional means raises the possibility that people may be prosecuted for calling for a multi-party system or for membership in an independent group which claims to be in the process of forming a political party. The reference to "foreign organizations" and any material assistance they might provide threatens the many independent groups which have contacts with supporters in the West.

Equally disturbing is the wording of the new Article 11-1 of the all-Union law, which is apparently intended to replace Article 190-1. The article prohibits "the public insulting of discrediting" of central and regional state bodies, as well as public organizations and their officials, and stipulates a sentence of up to three years' imprisonment or a fine of 2,000 rubles. A number of Soviet lawyers and others have pointed to the vagueness of the word "discrediting" and have expressed fears that the law might be used not only against "extremists" but also against journalists who criticize incompetent or corrupt public officials.

On 25 May, the newly-elected Congress of People's Deputies will meet to select members of the Supreme Soviet, which will be asked to ratify the decree at its first session. It is widely expected that the decree will be the subject of heated debate during the Congress meeting, as a number of reformist deputies, among them Andrei Sakharov, have announced that they think they will try to get the decree revoked or modified. Whether they succeed in doing so, remains to be seen.

—Jane Cave

Notes:
1. The decree was published in the government daily, Izvestia, 11 April 1989.

Case Updates

On 21 December 1988, as part of a government amnesty for political prisoners, Soh Sung, a 43-year-old Korean born in Japan, had his prison term reduced from 20 years' imprisonment. Sung was a graduate student in sociology at Seoul National University when he was arrested under the National Security Law in April 1971 and charged with "anti-state activities." During his trial he admitted visiting North Korea but denied spying for North Korea or acting as an agent provocateur to incite students to demonstrate against the South Korean government. According to Amnesty International, Sung was beaten during his initial interrogation and has been held in isolation for more than 17 years.

On 16 February 1989, the High Court of Kenya reduced a five-year jail term imposed on Dr. Odhiambo Olel in 1987 for his alleged membership in Mawkonya, a clandestine socialist opposition group. The sentence was reduced to three years. Dr. Olel, a medical doctor, was a government health officer until his arrest on 20 March 1987. According to The Standard newspaper in Nairobi, the High Court expressed concern that Dr. Olel's original sentence was extremely harsh and excessive. In July 1988, the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility appealed to Kenyan officials to investigate reports that Dr. Olel was ill-treated immediately after his arrest.

On 15 February 1989, military prosecutor Major Sergio Cea arrived at the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, the human rights office of the Catholic Church in Chile, with a judicial order to seize the Vicaría's medical records on patients treated for bullet wounds between January 1985 and December 1986. Auxiliary Bishop Sergio Valech, who heads the Vicaría, told Major Cea that the medical records were removed from the Vicaría to protect doctor-patient confidentiality. When the prosecutor asked Valech to reveal their location, he declined to reply. The military prosecutor is continuing his investigation into the April 1986 shooting of a police officer by suspected guerrillas during an armed robbery of a bakery. A man claiming to have been a bystander who was wounded in the incident went to the Vicaría for medical attention and was later found to have been involved in the shooting. Dr. Ramiro Olivares, the medical director of the Vicaría, was charged with "assisting armed groups" and imprisoned for over a year in 1986 and 1987. He was released on bail in December 1987. The bishop has questioned whether the authorities are investigating the shooting or using the case to discredit the work of the Vicaría.

New Members on AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility

At the 1989 AAAS annual meeting, the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility gained several new members and said farewell to two dedicated past members. Judith Swazey of the Acadia Institute in Maine and Cristian Orrego, a molecular biologist at the University of California, completed their terms with the Committee and will be missed. Orrego advised the Science and Human Rights Program for the past six years and was primarily responsible for initiating the program's forensic sciences projects. Swazey advised the Professional Ethics Program. Succeeding Dr. Orrego as part of the three-person advisory committee for the Science and Human Rights Program is Richard Claude, a professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland and a noted human rights scholar. Other new Committee members are John Ladd, Dept. of Philosophy at Brown University, and Caroline Whitbeck, a senior research scholar at MIT.
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The Office of Scientific Freedom and Responsibility and its Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility monitor the actions of the governments of the United States and other nations which may circumscribe the freedom of scientists or restrict the ability of scientists to exercise their professional responsibilities, and report on developments affecting scientific freedom and responsibility.

The Science and Human Rights Program within the Office of Scientific Freedom and Responsibility collects and disseminates information about foreign scientists, engineers, and health professionals who are victims of human rights abuses or who experience infringements of academic freedom. It also develops and applies scientific methods and techniques to the documentation and prevention of human rights abuses. The concerns of the Office of Scientific Freedom and Responsibility are universal and independent of the ideology of any government or the individuals it attempts to aid.

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