

Science and Human Rights at the American Chemical Society

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Office of International Activities

American Chemical Society



Historical Perspective: American Chemical Society and Human Rights



- Human rights activities initiated in 1980s with the USSR and China; expansion of activities over 25 years
- Primarily addressing human rights violations affecting individuals through letter writing campaigns, conducting fact-finding meetings with government officials at home and abroad, and other public outreach activities
- Statement on Freedom of International Exchange

ACS Position Statement

The American Chemical Society (ACS), the world's largest scientific society, is concerned about limitations on openness in scientific exchange.

The Society's mission is to encourage, in the broadest and most liberal manner, the advancement of chemistry in all its branches. We recognize that science and scholarship flourish when scientists collaboratively pursue and publish research and communicate without externally imposed impediment, limitation or restriction.

ACS is pleased to note that the scientific community has opposed discrimination. However, it remains important for organizations that represent scientists and educators go on the record in favor of the most open and fair exchange among scientists without limitations imposed by national and global political concerns.

ACS believes scientists should not participate in the transnational isolation of colleagues; rather they should work vigorously to create occasions for scholars to convene, to discuss topics of mutual interest, and to build scientific networks. It is through such networks that scientific collaboration can grow and be sustained over time for the benefit of all humankind.

ACS Case Selection Criteria



At the 2011 ACS National Meeting in Denver, the ACS Board of Directors approved the following guidelines when the Society weighs selection and engagement in human rights cases, wherever they occur. Case selection will be:

- Grounded in principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), ICSU Statute 5 (Universality of Science) and the Objects of the Society;
- Oriented toward professionally engaged chemists, chemical engineers or practitioners in closely related fields in the physical and natural sciences (such as material science, nanotechnology, biochemistry, and molecular biology);
- Directed towards human rights and scientific mobility abridgments and issues where ACS is uniquely positioned and qualified to impact the case in a meaningful way;
- Considered in the context of whether domestic remedies have been exhausted, unless it appears that such remedies would be ineffective or unreasonably prolonged;
- Made based upon clear evidence and a factual description of the alleged rights violations.

ACS Case Response Procedures

- ACS members, local sections, divisions, committees, or ACS staff offices may generate a request for action when evidence of abridgement of the scientific mobility and human rights of chemists, chemical engineers and other scientists in closely related fields is reported.
- A request for action will be transmitted to the chair of the Committee on Professional and Member Relations.
- If warranted by the evidence and consistent with ACS human rights case selection criteria, P&MR will recommend that the Society issue a statement on the matter or take such related action as may be appropriate, with signature prerogative from the ACS President, President Elect, Past President, Chair of the Board, and/or Chair of P&MR. P&MR will carry out this action under delegated authority from the Board.
- In addition, The Office of the ACS Executive Director or authorized designee will regularly monitor agencies and organizations engaged in human rights activities for evidence of abridgement of the scientific mobility and human rights of chemists, chemical engineers and other scientists in closely related fields, and make a request for action as outlined above.

Raising the profile of science and human rights more broadly across ACS



- **Among Founding Societies of the AAAS Coalition**
- **Leadership of the Steering Committee and Welfare of Scientists Working Group**
- **ACS Network – Welfare of Scientists Forum**
- **ACS Science and Human Rights Primer**
- **ACS / Scholars At Risk Science and Human Rights Webinar Series –**
 - **Best Practices in Defending Human Rights, Science**
 - **Human Rights – Water, Health and Access to Scientific Knowledge**
- **ACS National Meeting Symposia - perspectives on the history, needs and new strategies for addressing human rights and infringements to scientific freedom**

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ACS 2012 Presidential Statement of Dr. Bassam Shakhshiri

“Today our biggest challenge is to help sustain Earth and its people in the face of population growth, finite resources, malnutrition, spreading disease, deadly violence, war, climate change, and the denial of basic human rights, especially the right to benefit from scientific and technological progress.”

Science and society have what is essentially a social contract that enables great intellectual achievements but comes with mutual expectations of benefiting the human condition and protecting our planet.”

Resources

Human Rights Treaties

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:**
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>
- **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights:**
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

Human Rights Organizations

- **Amnesty International:** www.amnesty.org/
- **Human Rights Watch:** www.hrw.org/
- **Human Rights First:** www.humanrightsfirst.org/
- **Frontline: Protection of Human Rights Defenders:**
<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/>

Resources



ACS Resources

- **ACS Statement on Freedom of International Scientific Exchange:**
http://portal.acs.org/portal/PublicWebSite/policy/publicpolicies/balance/scientificexchange/WPCP_011536
- **ACS Network's Welfare of Scientists Group:**
<https://communities.acs.org/groups/welfare-of-scientists>
 - Start discussions, post news updates and upload documents

External Resources

- **Scholars at Risk:** <http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/>
- **Committee of Concerned Scientists:** <http://concernedscientists.org/>
- **National Academies Committee on Human Rights:**
<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/humanrights/index.htm>
- **Network for Education and Academic Rights:** <http://www.nearinternational.org/>

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