

## update ~ recent focus cases

### Eynulla Fatullayev, AZERBAIJAN - released Banned Books Week 2008 & 2010

In April 2007, after years of harassment — including beatings, threats and libel suits — by the Azerbaijani government, outspoken independent newspaper editor Eynulla Fətullayev (Fatullayev), began serving prison sentences totaling eight and a half years and for libel and other trumped-up charges. He had been convicted of defamation after writing two articles that disputed the official account of the 1992 mass killings in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. And he subsequently was convicted of terrorism charges for publishing an article that criticized Azerbaijan's foreign policy decisions.

On 26 May 2011, Eynulla Fatullayev was released shortly after a presidential pardon and returned to his family home.

Amnesty International still urges the Azerbaijani authorities to quash his convictions, release all prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijan, and “end the recent clampdown on dissenting voices, whether online or on the streets”.



### From message sent “to all Amnesty International activists” by Eynulla Fatullayev after his release:

Dear friends,

*I am a former prisoner of conscience – Eynulla Fatullayev. The other day I regained my cherished liberty, thanks to the efforts of the international community. I'm absolutely confident that it was your support and tireless struggle for my rights that enabled me to return to my life. ... I was repeatedly transferred from one prison into another, charged with absurd and inconceivable accusations. ... I was between life and death. I witnessed much evil and bearers of evil. The evil was my daily routine ...*

*... Life in prison is suppressed, for the violence is eager to obliterate all signs of vitality and viability.*

*However, it was you, my friends and saviors from the Amnesty International that kept alight the flame of hope in my soul. I received messages from you while at the remotest places and desperate situations. These messages gave comfort to my soul, inspired hope in dead-end situations. Your campaign, your letters- they sustained hope in me, helped me out of the abyss of despair. Amnesty International has once again proved its inestimable worth, its hope for salvation.*

*I am grateful to you. You have saved my family from death, and I'll never forget you, to the end of my life. I was not alone in my prison, in winter or summer, on dark or bright days. And again – it was Amnesty International that contributed to this. ...*

*Thank you very much for your service to conscience and God, for conscience is God's presence in us.*

*I bow my head to you all.*

*Yours respectfully,  
Eynulla Fatullayev*

### J.S. Tissainayagam, SRI LANKA - free Banned Books Week 2008 & 2009

While at Harvard University as a Nieman Fellow following his June 2010 pardon, **J.S. Tissainayagam** spoke at the AI Northeast Regional Conference in 2010 and participated in a “Journalists At Risk” workshop. Co-founder of the *North Eastern Monthly*, he had been detained in 2008 and sentenced to 20 years for allegedly “inciting communal disharmony” (reporting about abuses by the military directed against civilians during the civil war in Sri Lanka).



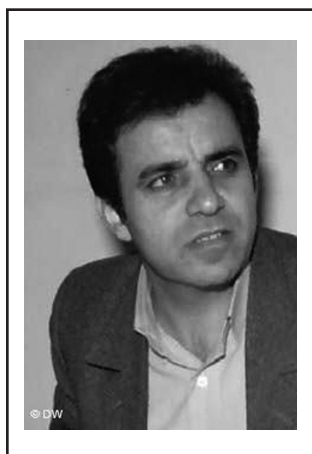
Kelly Turley, from AI Group 133 in Somerville, Massachusetts, making a presentation to “Tissa” at the Northeast Regional Conference, Boston University, November 2010

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### **Mohammad S. Kabudvand, IRAN - still imprisoned** **Banned Books Week 2009**

Kurdish human rights defender Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand is still serving sentences totalling 10 1/2 years imposed since May 2008 for “acting against state security by establishing an illegal group [the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan]”. He also is facing other charges brought against him while in prison for his writings on women’s rights and other human rights issues. Poor prison conditions are worsening his health problems, and he reportedly suffered two strokes in 2010.



### **Emadeddin Baghi, IRAN - released again** **Banned Books Week 2008**

Emadeddin Baghi, award-winning author of *The Tragedy of Democracy*, has been arrested repeatedly and has served a total of 5 years & 19 days in prison on various charges connected with his writing and human rights campaigning. The effects on his health have been dire. When he was released again on 20 June 2011, after serving two concurrent one-year sentences for “propaganda against the state”, he told other prisoners: “although I am going, half my existence is still imprisoned with you”.



### **Hengameh Shahidi, IRAN - furloughed** **Banned Books Week 2010**

Hengameh Shahidi, a journalist and political activist serving a 6-year sentence in Evin prison while suffering from a heart condition, was granted a medical leave in May 2011, around the time of her 36th birthday. An earlier medical leave of absence was cut short in mid-November 2010 with no explanation. Her health is said to be improving.



### **Arzhang Davoodi, IRAN - still imprisoned** **Banned Books Week 2006**

Teacher, author, poet, and director of television documentaries Arzhang Davoodi, serving a 15-year prison sentence for peaceful expression of opinion, has been tortured, deprived of medical treatment, and further punished with solitary confinement in terrible conditions. He continues to protest Iranian prison conditions (July 2011).



### **Thich Quang Do, VIET NAM - confined** **Banned Books Week 1995**

Although released from prison in a 1998 amnesty, the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do, eminent scholar and writer and Supreme Patriarch of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam, is under pagoda arrest since 2001 as a prisoner of conscience. Despite decades of restriction, he has produced poems, novels, anthologies, a dictionary, commentary, and protest. A 2010 interview with him by the Oslo Fellowship may be read in English at <[www.queme.net](http://www.queme.net)>.



### **Anna Politkovskaya, RUSSIA - killing unresolved** **Banned Books Week 2007**

The arrest in Chechnya on 31 May 2011 of a suspect in the October 2006 murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya is a major step towards justice AI said. “An effective investigation into the murder ... remains a key benchmark to demonstrating that Russia is willing and able to tackle the violence against journalists and human rights defenders.” The accused and any alleged accomplices should have a fair trial in proceedings that meet international standards.



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### **Chekib El-Khiari, MOROCCO - released** **Banned Books Week 2010**

As part of a wider amnesty that commuted or shortened the sentences of 190 prisoners, following a memorandum submitted to King Mohamed by Morocco's new National Human Rights Council, journalist Chekib El-Khiari was pardoned on 14 April 2011. He had been serving a three-year sentence for his June 2009 conviction on politically motivated charges apparently related to news accounts of high-level corruption.



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### **Shi Tao, CHINA - still imprisoned** **Banned Books Week 2006**

Journalist & poet Shi Tao is still serving a 10-year prison sentence imposed in 2005 for “illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities” (via Yahoo!) concerning a Central Propaganda Department communiqué on how journalists should handle the 15th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. To take further action, go to <[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)> and click on Individuals At Risk.



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### **Yang Tongyan, CHINA - still imprisoned** **Banned Books Week 2007 & 2008**

Having previously served a ten-year prison sentence for criticizing the crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy movement, Yang Tongyan, a freelance writer and a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Center, is continuing to serve a 2006 12-year sentence for “subversion of state power”, in Nanjing Prison. His health reportedly has worsened during his time in prison and he is suffering from diabetes, arthritis and high blood pressure.



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### **Liu Xiaobo, CHINA - still imprisoned** **Banned Books Week 2009**



“This is for the lost souls of June 4th,” said Liu Xiaobo — a scholar, poet, literary critic, and former participant in the 1989 pro-democracy movement — after learning that he had been awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Congratulating him, Amnesty International called on the Chinese authorities to release all prisoners of conscience including Liu, who is serving an 11-year prison sentence. China did not allow him to travel to the award ceremony in Oslo.

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### **Kareem Amer, EGYPT - released** **Banned Books Week 2007**

Prisoner of conscience Kareem Amer (Abdel Kareem Nabil) was released on 17 November 2010, 12 days after completing a four-year sentence for allegedly criticizing then-President Mubarak, Egypt's al-Azhar religious authorities, and Islam in a blog. AI urged impartial investigation of allegations that he was abused by Alexandria officials of State Security Investigations (SSI) in the days before his release.



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### **Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, MEXICO - threatened again** **Banned Books Week 2009**

Apparently in part because of her books exposing a child pornography ring and trafficking of women & girls, journalist and human rights defender Lydia Cacho has received new death threats in the summer of 2011 and has had to leave her home. No one has been brought to justice for the acts of intimidation over several years.



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