

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA 2014 BANNED BOOKS WEEK

Amnesty International works steadily and impartially to protect fundamental human rights of people of all walks of life. In conjunction with Banned Books Week at the end of September, we direct attention to the plight of individuals who are persecuted because they produce, circulate or read books or newspapers or other writings. Because of the proverbial “power of the word”, many journalists and artists are under attack around the world—by governments and by opposition groups— whether or not they actually are critical of those in authority or of others seeking power.

This year we are highlighting the plight of six individuals. In this kit you will find information on all six cases, including background, calls to action, sample letters and petitions. Please contact AIUSA if you have any additional needs.

2014 Cases

Mohammed al-Ajam	Qatar
Prageeth Ekmaligoda	Sri Lanka
Manolis Kypreos	Greece
Eskinder Nega	Ethiopia
Yang Tongyan	China
Ahmed Zeidabadi	Iran

To learn about additional AIUSA cases specific to a country, region or human rights issue, contact JHeiss@aiusa.org. To work on cases similar to those in this packet or on broader censorship issues outside Amnesty International’s purview, check a library or the Internet for organizations such as:

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression	www.abffe.org/banned.htm
American Library Association	www.ala.org/bbooks
Article 19	www.article19.org
Committee to Protect Journalists	www.cpj.org
Index on Censorship	www.oneworld.org/index_oc (local or state)
Intellectual Freedom Committees	www.ifex.org
International Freedom of Expression Clearinghouse	www.freemedia.at
International Press Institute	www.jhr.ca
Journalists for Human Rights	www.internationalpen.org.uk
PEN International	www.rsf.fr
Reporters Sans Frontières	www.wpfc.org
World Press Freedom Committee	

MOHAMMED AL-AJAMI

QATAR

Qatari poet Mohammed al-Ajami, detained since November 2011, was sentenced to life imprisonment on November 29, 2012 for offenses that relate to his poems. He appears to be a prisoner of conscience, convicted solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Mohammed al-Ajami, also known as Mohammed Ibn al-Dheeb had been arrested by state security on November 16, 2011 in the capital, Doha, and charged with “inciting to overthrow the ruling system” and “insulting the Amir”. He had presented himself to state security when summoned, and been immediately arrested. He was detained incommunicado for months before he was allowed family visits and has been held in solitary confinement during his entire detention. He is detained in Doha's Central Prison.

The prosecution is reported to have brought the charges over a 2010 poem in which Mohammed al-Ajami criticized the Amir. However, activists in the Gulf region believe that the real reason for his arrest was his 2011 work “the Jasmine Poem”, which he wrote during the wave of protests throughout the Arab world that began in December 2010. The poem criticized Gulf States and read: “we are all Tunisia in the face of the repressive elite”.

His trial, which began in November 2011 at the Criminal Court in Doha, is said to have been marred by irregularities, with the court sessions held in secret. His lawyer was not allowed to attend one of the court sessions and had to provide his defense in writing only.

The same court sentenced him to life in prison on November 29, 2012. Observers were not allowed to enter the court, and Mohammed al-Ajami himself was not present at the sentencing. He is expected to appeal. A copy of the verdict obtained by Amnesty International gives no reason for the harsh sentence, but the organization understands that the charges on which he was convicted were based on the content of his poetry.

Take Action

Send letters and petitions using the sample letter below.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani
Prime Minister and Ministry of the Interior

PO Box 920
Doha, State of Qatar

Your Excellency;

I am writing to express my deepest concern regarding imprisonment of the poet Mr. Mohammed al-Ajami also known as Mohammed Ibn al-Dheeb. It appears that he has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

He was arrested on November 16 2011 by the state security forces following the publication of his "Jasmine Poem" which broadly criticized governments across the Gulf region, saying, "we are all Tunisia in the face of the repressive elite". The information indicated that his trial at the Criminal Court in Doha have been marred by irregularities, with the court sessions held in secret. On October 2013 Qatar's Court of Cassation upheld an appeal court's sentencing of him to 15 years in prison.

I am calling on you to release Mohammed al-Ajami immediately and unconditionally, as we consider him a prisoner conscience who is imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Sincerely,

Also write to:

Amir of the State of Qatar
Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani
PO Box 923
Doha, State of Qatar
Fax: +974 4436 1212
Salutation: Your Highness

Copy to:

Attorney General
Dr. Ali bin Fetais Al Marri
PO Box 705
Doha, State of Qatar
Fax: +974 4484 3211

PRAGEETH EKNALIGODA

SRI LANKA

Prageeth Eknaligoda is a Sri Lankan journalist, cartoonist and political analyst who has been missing since he left work on the evening of January 24, 2010, just days before a presidential election in Sri Lanka. Shortly before his “disappearance,” Prageeth Eknaligoda had completed a comparative analysis of the two main presidential candidates, coming out in favour of the opposition. In the days leading up to his “disappearance,” he told a close friend that he believed he was being followed. Local residents reported seeing a white van without numbered plates close to his house around the time he went missing. White vans have been used in many abductions and enforced “disappearances” in Sri Lanka, particularly since 2006, when state agents and paramilitary groups allied to the government stepped up attacks on government critics. On January 25, 2010, his wife, Sandya Eknaligoda, went to lodge a complaint with the Homagama police about his presumed abduction. Instead of promptly responding to her complaint, the police detained her for several hours at the police station before releasing her. She believes her husband was abducted on orders of the government because of his criticism of the Sri Lankan government. She also suggests he may have been targeted because he had investigated allegations that the Sri Lankan army used chemical weapons in northern Sri Lanka in 2008.

Since Prageeth Eknaligoda “disappeared” in 2010, two government officials have claimed they had information that he had fled overseas. Neither has been able to provide any credible evidence for these claims. Since 2006, fifteen journalists have been killed and a further 25 forced to flee Sri Lanka in fear of their lives.

Amnesty International is concerned that Prageeth may have been subjected to enforced disappearance due to his professional activities as a journalist.

Take Action

Send letters and petitions using the samples below.

Visit tinyurl.com/WhereisPrageeth and send an online letter to President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, calling on him to 1) Investigate the enforced disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda, make the results of the investigation public and hold accountable those responsible for his “disappearance;” and 2) End the climate of impunity that has allowed a long campaign of intimidation and violence against independent journalists in Sri Lanka.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

Dear President Rajapaksa,

I am deeply concerned about Prageeth Eknaligoda, a Sri Lankan journalist and political analyst working for the organization Lanka-e-News. On January 24, 2010, he disappeared shortly after leaving work at the Lanka-e-News office in Homagama, near Colombo. Local residents told the Sri Lankan press that they had seen a white van without number plates close to his house around that time. The last contact with him was at 9:30 P.M. that day; since then, his phone has not functioned and his friends and family have not heard from him. In the days leading up to his disappearance he had told a close friend that he believed he was being followed.

On January 25, 2010, his wife, Sandya Eknaligoda, went to lodge a complaint with the Homagama police about his presumed abduction. Instead of promptly responding to her complaint, the police detained her for several hours at the police station before releasing her.

Since 2006, at least 15 media workers have been killed in Sri Lanka, with no one held accountable for these murders. Numerous journalists have been detained while others have left the country after receiving death threats. Physical attacks and the relentless intimidation of journalists are threatening freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. The disappearance of Mr. Eknaligoda is but one example.

I respectfully request that the Sri Lankan government investigate the disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda, make the results of the investigation public and hold accountable those responsible for his disappearance. I would also request that the government investigate the conduct of the police personnel responsible for registering Sandya Eknaligoda's complaint about her husband's abduction and take appropriate disciplinary action against those personnel. I would also ask that the Sri Lankan government end the climate of impunity that has allowed a long campaign of intimidation and violence against independent journalists in Sri Lanka.

Sincerely,

Name: _____

Address: _____

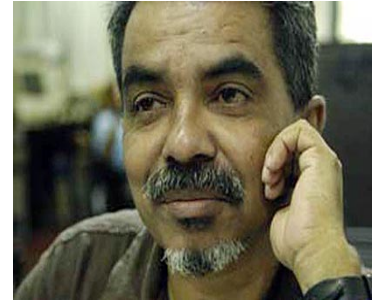


AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL – SRI LANKA
WHERE IS **PRAGEETH EKNALIGODA**

TO: Inspector General of Police Service N. K. Illangakoon

Dear IGP:

On **January 24th 2010 Prageeth Eknaligoda**, a journalist and cartoonist who had written articles critical of the Sri Lankan government **disappeared**. Reportedly 15 journalists have been killed since 2006 without prosecutions occurring for these crimes. Amnesty International believes his support for the opposition candidate prior to the January 26th 2010 Presidential election may have made him a target.



Neighbors saw white van without ID plates near Prageeth’s home the day of the disappearance. There are reports that others have been abducted by paramilitary groups and state agents as far back as 2006. **Prageeth** himself was **abducted by such a van in 2009 and released after a day**.

Please use your position **to investigate the disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda**. Please **make the results of this investigation public and hold accountable those responsible**.

Respectfully:

Printed Name	Signature	City / State	Zip Code

Send completed petitions to: Amnesty International Group 471, 4632 Briar Ridge Road, Oceanside CA 92056

MANOLIS KYPREOS
GREECE

Manolis Kypreos is an experienced journalist who has travelled to some of the most dangerous places on earth, covering events such as the 22-day conflict in Gaza and Southern Israel in 2008-2009. In June 2011, he was made deaf in both ears by a stun grenade thrown in front of him by the Greek police while he was covering the protests in Athens, Greece. Manolis Kypreos was stationed in Syndagma Square, Athens, reporting news of protests against new austerity measures that were introduced by the Greek government. Some police officers requested that he stop photographing them. He then retreated to an arcade on a nearby street where he continued to report on the happenings in Syndagma Square. The head of riot police approached him once again and asked him why he was taking photos, to which he responded by showing the officer his journalist's accreditation. In response, the head of the riot police unit used abusive language against Manolis and pointed him out to another officer in his unit, who threw a stun grenade in front of him which exploded, leaving Manolis hearing impaired. On his way to the hospital on foot, Manolis Kypreos tried to protect an adolescent from potential beating, and as a result sustained more injuries himself at the hands of the Greek riot police.

Amnesty International calls for the criminal investigation into the injury and ill-treatment of Manolis Kypreos to be prompt, independent, thorough and effective and for the police officers responsible for his injury and ill-treatment to be brought to justice, and for disciplinary measures to be brought against the police officers found responsible. We further urge the authorities to provide Manolis Kypreos with a level of compensation which takes full account of the consequences of his loss of hearing. We call on the authorities to ensure that in future the police do not use stun grenades, tear gas and other chemicals against peaceful protesters in a way that violates international standards, and that policing of demonstrations complies with international law enforcement standards.

Take Action

Send letters and petitions using the information above to the following targets:

Mr. Charalampos Athanassiou
Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights
96 Mesogheion Avenue
11526 Athens
Greece
Tel: 2107767000
Email: Grammateia@justice.gov.gr
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr. Nikos Dendias
Minister of Public Order and Citizens' Protection
Ministry of Public Order and Citizens' Protection
4 P. Kanellopoulou Street
10177 Athens
Greece
Tel: 0030 210 6924 558
Fax: 0030 210 6929 764
Salutation: Dear Minister

ESKINDER NEGA
ETHIOPIA

Eskinder Nega is a journalist who was arrested on September 14, 2011 after making speeches and writing articles criticizing the Ethiopian government and calling for freedom of expression to be respected. He was charged with terrorism offenses and was found guilty of charges of "preparation or incitement to terrorist acts," "participation in a terrorist organization", "high treason." and sentenced to 18 years of prison on July 13, 2012. In Ethiopia, authorities often use criminal charges and accusations of terrorism to silence dissenters. This "Anti-Terrorism Proclamation" that was used to convict Eskinder Nega enables the prosecution of legitimate and peaceful activities as terrorist acts.

Amnesty International considers Eskinder Nega to be a prisoner of conscience. The Ethiopian authorities should immediately and unconditionally release Eskinder Nega, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression by criticizing the government and calling for reform. The authorities must stop using criminal proceedings, or the threat of such, to silence their critics, and end other forms of harassment of journalists and members of civil society including human rights activists. The Ethiopian government must seek to immediately amend laws which unduly restrict freedom of expression and association, including the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and the Charities and Societies Proclamation. The Ethiopian authorities should remove unlawful restrictions on who may visit Eskinder Nega in prison.

Take Action

Send letters and petitions using the information above to the following targets:

Prime Minister - Hailemariam Desalegn

P.O. Box 1031

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Fax: +251 11 155 20 20 / +251 11 551 4300 / +251 11 551 1244

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice - Berhan Hailu

P.O. Box 1370

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Fax: + 251 115 517 775

Salutation: Dear Minister

YANG TONGYAN
CHINA

Yang Tongyan is a freelance writer and a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Center. He is currently serving a 12-year sentence for "subversion" in Nanjing prison and is due to be released on December 22, 2017. His conviction was based on his writings in support of political and democratic change in China.

He was also accused of receiving money from abroad for distribution to imprisoned dissidents and their families, and of planning to form a local branch of the banned China Democracy Party. In his defense, Yang Tongyan argued that he was merely exercising his right to freedom of expression to convey his aspiration for democracy and that using funds from overseas fell under the category of humanitarian relief. Coinciding with his trial, his supporters held a 24-hour hunger-strike outside the Court. According to the Court verdict, "Freedom of speech and association are political rights bestowed upon citizens in China's constitution, but the constitution clearly stipulates that in the exercise of these political rights, citizens shall not endanger the interests or security of the state. Defendant Yang Tongyan posted numerous articles on websites hosted overseas, attacking the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system ... There is sufficient evidence that he conspired to subvert China's state power."

In 2007 he was reportedly forced to work making footballs and basketballs in an apparently toxic environment for 8-10 hours per day, but was transferred to lighter work as prison librarian at the end of the year. His health has reportedly worsened during his time in prison and he is suffering from diabetes, arthritis and high blood pressure. He has been denied medical parole. Yang Tongyan had previously served a 10-year prison sentence for criticizing the crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy movement and allegedly trying to form an opposition political party. He was released in 2000 but has since been detained twice, including for 15 days in 2004 after he wrote articles commemorating the crackdown of the 1989 pro-democracy movement to mark its 15th anniversary.

Take Action

Write to the President, Premier, and Ministry of Justice calling on them to release Yang Tongyan immediately and unconditionally. Urge them to take effective measures to ensure freedom of expression in line with Chinese constitutional guarantees and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed and declared an intention to ratify in the near future.

President of the People's Republic of China
Xi Jinping 习近平
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Email: gov@govonline.cn
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice of the P.R. of China
WU Aiyong Buzhang
Sifabu
10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 65292345
Email: pfmaster@legalinfo.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Minister

Premier of the People's Republic of China
Li Keqiang 李克強
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

In addition, write to the Prisoner Governor and Higher People's Court urging them to ensure that Yang Tongyan is allowed and independent medical assessment and access to medical treatment that he may require. Urge them to consider Yang Tongyan for sentence reduction.

Prison Governor
Jianyuzhang
Nanjing Prison

Post Box 1215-12
9 Ningshuang Lu, Nanjing
Jiangsu 210012

People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Prison Governor

President of the Jiangsu Provincial Higher People's
Court
Xu Qianfei 許前飛
Jiangsusheng Gaoji Renmin Fayuan

75 Ninghailu
Nanjingshi 210024
Jiangsusheng
People's Republic of China
Email: jsfy_mygt@chinacourt.org
Salutation: Dear President

Finally, write to the National People's Congress, the Information Office of the State Council and the Ministry of Information Industry urging them to take effective measures to ensure freedom of expression in line with Chinese constitutional guarantees and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed and declared an intention to ratify in the near future.

Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National
People's Congress
Zhang Dejiang 張德江
Quanguo Renda Changwu Weiyuanhui Bangongting
23 Xijiaominxiang
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100805
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 63097934
Email: english@npc.gov.cn or icc@npc.gov.cn or
tgxx@npc.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Chairman

Minister of Information Industry of People's Republic
of China
Miao Wei 苗圩
Xingxi Canyebu
13 Xichanganjie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100804
People's Republic of China
Email: webmaster@mii.gov.cn
Salutation: Your Excellency

State Council Information Office
Wang Chen 王晨
Wang Xingming Juzhang
No.225 Changyangmennei Dajie,
Dongcheng District,
Beijing 100010
People's Republic of China
Fax:+86 10 65592364
Salutation: Dear Director

AHMED ZEIDABADI

IRAN

Ahmed Zeidabadi is a journalist and a spokesperson for the Graduates' Association, which has promoted reform and greater respect for human rights in Iran. He was arrested in 2009 and sentenced to six years imprisonment,

five years of internal exile, and was banned for life from participating in all social and political activities. He is a prisoner of conscience, held only for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association. In Evin Prison, he had been held in solitary confinement for 35 days in a coffin-like cell measuring only 1.5 meters. He suffered from a severe lung condition, and was granted temporary medical leave. He returned to Raja'I Shahr Prison on January 19, 2014 after four months.

Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ahmad Zeidabadi as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association. Further, we call for his recent unexplained weight loss to be investigated and for him to be provided with any necessary medical care, outside the prison if doctors think that is necessary. We urge the authorities to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer, his family and adequate medical treatment, and call for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into reports that Ahmad Zeidabadi was tortured in detention and for anyone found responsible for torture or other ill-treatment to be brought to justice promptly and fairly. Finally, we ask for review of Articles 183 to 186, 498 and 499 of the Penal code which restrict freedom of association, Articles 500, 513, 514, 609 and 698 which restrict freedom of expression, and Articles 607, 608 and 610 which restrict freedom of assembly so they are fully compatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights.

Take Action

Send letters and petitions using the information above to the following targets:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
(care of) Public relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street
Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street intersection
Tehran, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: info@dadiran.ir (Subject line: FAO Ayatollah Larijani)

Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid Keshvar
Doust Street
Tehran, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: info_leader@leader.ir or via
<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter>

Head of the Tehran Judiciary
Ali Reza Avaei
Karimkhan Zand Avenue
Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Ally 17, No 152
Tehran, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir

Copies to:

Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights
Mohammad Javad Larijani
Bureau of International Affairs, Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
South of Serah-e Jomhouri,
Tehran 1316814737, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir (In subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

Mr. Sohrab Soleimani, Head of Tehran Prisons and Security Corrective Measures Department
Email info@tehranprisons.ir (in the subject line: FAO of Mr Sohrab Soleimani)

Mr. Mohammad Mardani, Head of Raja'i Shahr Prison
Email info@tehranprisons.ir (in the subject line: FAO of Mr Mohammad Mardani)