

April 2021

**Our Next Meeting:
Thursday, April 8th,
7:00pm via Zoom.**



Remembering Cornelia Cerf
see page four

Taiwan: Support Chiou Ho-shun's pardon application after 32 years on death row

Chiou Ho-shun was arrested in 1988 in relation to the murder of Ko Hung Yu-lan and the kidnapping of Lu Cheng. He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1989.

According to Chiou Ho-shun himself and confirmed by years of investigations from different parties, during detention and interrogation, Chiou was beaten repeatedly, blindfolded, tied up, forced to sit on ice and subjected to electric shocks and having water mixed with pepper poured into his mouth and nose. Prosecutors used the “confessions” obtained through police torture of Chiou and other co-defendants as evidence to prove guilt, even though no material evidence linking Chiou Ho-shun to the crimes has ever been presented in court. Later, the key evidence against Chiou Ho-Shun even went missing. Because of problems with earlier trials, Taiwan’s Supreme Court ordered the case to be retried 11 times, but it still affirmed Chiou Ho-shun’s death sentence in 2011.

As he was being sentenced to death for the last time, Chiou said he didn’t understand “why the judge didn’t have the courage to deliver the verdict of not guilty when I didn’t kill anyone”. Thirty-two years since his first conviction, Chiou Ho-shun is still on Taiwan’s death row. With all judicial remedies nearly exhausted because of the passage of time, Chiou still waits in prison for his case to be overturned. Chiou

Ho-shun, a young man in his 20s when he entered prison, has now become an old man full of grey hair and struggling with illness.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty, cruel and inhuman treatments and unfair trials in all cases. The legal system and the government should protect people’s dignity and personal safety at all costs. Therefore, Amnesty International is calling on President of Taiwan to use her powers to address the violations of the right to fair trial that have tainted Chiou Ho-shun’s conviction, accept his petition for pardon and commute his death sentence after 32 years in despair.

Send letters to:

President Tsai Ing-wen

Office of the President of the Republic of China (Taiwan)
No. 122, Sec. 1, Chongqing S. Rd
Zhongcheng District
Taipei City 100
Taiwan (R.O.C.)
Salutation: Dear President Tsai

Urgent Action: Russia ! Release Activist and End Prosecution

NAME AND PRONOUN:

Mikhail Iosilevich (he/him/his)

On March 3rd, the Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Court, in Central Russia, upheld the decision to detain activist Mikhail Iosilevich. He is accused of cooperation with an “undesirable” organisation, Open Russia, a “crime” punishable by up to six years in prison. Mikhail Iosilevich is being targeted for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association. Charges against him must be dropped and he must be immediately released.

The “undesirable organizations” law was adopted in May 2015 as part of the Russian authorities’ ongoing crackdown on freedom of association and expression (see details here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/2223/2015/en/>).

It introduced amendments to several Russian laws. According to the law, the Office of the Prosecutor General can designate a foreign or international non-governmental organization “undesirable” if it deems that the organisation poses a threat to the country’s “constitutional order, defence potential or state security”. An “undesirable” organization must immediately stop all activities in Russia from which point any cooperation or association with it is deemed unlawful and an offense. Following two penalties within a year’s period under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences for cooperation with an “undesirable” organisation, the “offender” can be prosecuted under Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code for further violations of the law on “undesirable” organizations. The law has been used arbitrarily to ban from Russia a number of foreign organisations, mostly those providing funding for civil society. Currently, the “undesirable organizations” register includes 31 organizations.

On April 26th, 2017, the Prosecutor General’s Office declared “undesirable” the UK-registered organisations Otkrytaya Rossia and Open Russia Civic Movement (both founded by an exiled critic of President Vladimir Putin, Mikhail Khodorkovsky). There is a Russian movement Otkrytaya Rossia (Open Russia) - an initiative that brought together activists

in Russia - which is neither a registered “organisation”, nor is a foreign one. Nonetheless, activists who are associated with Otkrytaya Rossia are regarded by the Russian authorities as members of a banned foreign organisation and face prosecution. Dozens of activists have been fined for their activities under the Code of Administrative Offenses.

Three people have so far been convicted for alleged cooperation with an “undesirable” organization. In February 2020, a court in Yekaterinburg (the Urals) sentenced Otkrytaya Rossia’s ex-coordinator Maksim Vernikov to 300 hours of community service. In October 2020, a court in Krasnodar (southern Russia) sentenced another former Otkrytaya Rossia coordinator and activist Yana Antonova to 240 hours of community service. Finally, on February 18, 2021, a court in Rostov-on-Don (southern Russia) sentenced Anastasia Shevchenko - also a former co-ordinator of Otkrytaya Rossia and the first person to face criminal prosecution under this law - to four-year



suspended imprisonment and four years on probation.

Mikhail Iosilevich is a civil society and political activist and the local leader of Pastafarians (or followers of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster). He supported and organized a number of local events, including an anti-corruption rally, a “Monstration” (a march under absurd slogans in protest against restrictions of freedom of expression) and other events. He was fined twice in July 2019 and June 2020 under Article 20.33 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences (“Carrying out activities of an undesirable organization”) for providing the premises (his café, which also houses the local Pastafarian church) for civic initiative Free People forum attended by opposition activists, including those from Otkrytaya Rossia.

The criminal case against Mikhail Iosilevich was initiated on September 29th, 2020. The investigation alleges that Mikhail Iosilevich provided his café to an opposition group associated with Otkrytaya Rossia, for the training of election monitors. On 1 October, law enforcement officials conducted searches in Mikhail Iosilevich’s flat, his café and homes of five other Nizhnii Novgorod activists, including prominent

independent journalist and editor of online media Koza Press Irina Slavina. The day after the search, Irina Slavina committed suicide by self-immolation in front of the local Ministry of Interior. She had left a message on her Facebook page saying; “Russian Federation is to blame for my death”. For months, the authorities had targeted her with prosecution and fines.

In January 2021, a second criminal case was initiated against Mikhail Iosilevich for his alleged failure to report his second (Israeli) citizenship to the Russian authorities. The activist maintains that he had duly informed the authorities as prescribed by law.

Sample Letter

Dear Head of the Investigative Directorate,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the ongoing criminal prosecution and detention of civil society activist Mikhail Iosilevich.

On October 8th, 2020, Mikhail Iosilevich was charged under Article 284.1 of the Russian Criminal Code for alleged cooperation with an “undesirable organization”. The investigators accused him of having provided the premises for a training conducted by an “undesirable” organisation, Open Russia. While this is a “crime” only under Russian legislation, which itself contravenes Russia’s international human rights obligations and must be repealed, the prosecution of Mikhail Iosilevich is also based on false grounds. He insists that the training had been conducted by another organization, Golos, a Russian movement of election monitors, and that there is no evidence of his involvement with Open Russia.

On January 30th, 2021, a district court ruled that Mikhail Iosilevich must be detained on remand for allegedly making a threatening phone call to a “witness” in his case. An expert examination of the audio recording of the alleged call concluded that it was not Mikhail Iosilevich’ voice. Nevertheless, the Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Court rejected Mikhail Iosilevich’s appeal and ruled on March 3rd, that he must remain in detention until March 28th. Mikhail Iosilevich has committed no internationally recognisable criminal offense. He is being targeted for his peaceful activism and for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association.

I urge you to ensure Mikhail Iosilevich’ immediate release and an end to his unfounded criminal prosecution.
Yours sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 34.21. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Airat Saetovich Akhmedshin

Head of the Investigative Directorate
Investigative Committee, Nizhnii Novgorod region
Ul.Marshala Voronkova, 22a
Nizhnii Novgorod 603950
Russian Federation
Twitter: @sledcom_rf
Online form (Russian only): <https://nnovgorod.sledcom.ru/references>

Ambassador Anatoly Antonov

Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20007
Fax: 202 298 5735
Email: rusembusa@mid.ru
Twitter: @RusEmbUSA
Facebook: @RusEmbUSA
Instagram: @RusEmbUSA
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: May 10th, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.



In February 2018, Group 48 members, missing Cornelia's presence at our monthly meetings, brought the meeting to her, with a special letter-writing event that took place at her retirement home.

Remembering Cornelia

Cornelia Cerf was a wonderful person and a really committed member of Amnesty International.

Group 48 probably wouldn't have survived without her. In the early years, she got most of the Latin American cases because of her fluency in Spanish and she not only wrote letters, but I know that in one case, after the husband and father had been imprisoned, she sent the destitute family a monthly check. Cornelia was also an animal lover, and typically, she translated her love into action: well into her senior years she volunteered to walk dogs for, I believe it was, the Humane Society. And, of course, she was a dear friend to all of us! --*Jane Kristof*

Cornelia represented the heartbeat of our group. She was steadfast in her devotion to the group. Her voice was one of strength and clarity which was helpful when she would represent the group in explaining what Amnesty was to student groups. Her truest passion was on display when she was working on a group's prisoner of conscience case. She would pour her heart and soul into her case. Cornelia came to our monthly meetings for over 40 years. Her vision and leadership will be missed. Besides all that she was a very sweet soul. We shall miss you. --*Marty Fromer*

Our dear friend Cornelia Cerf passed from this life into death on Sunday, February 27th at the age of 99. She will be sorely missed, but will remain close to our hearts. What a beautiful and interesting life she led! Her work in Amnesty International remains for us a model of commitment and persistence for relieving the suffering of others, and a desire to ensure that prisoners of conscience would not be forgotten. For me personally, Cornelia remains a hero, and I smile when I remember riding with her in her convertible, as she drove rather erratically as we talked about the latest Amnesty cases. As Jane noted, Cornelia was critical in helping to establish Group 48 and helping to

AIUSA Group 48

<https://aipdx.org>

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\$0.55 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz
\$0.35 - Domestic Postcard

International Postage
\$1.20 - Up to 1 oz



Cornelia at a Group 48 meeting in 2014, on Valentine's Day, joining in a solidarity photo action for Chinese activist Xu Zhiyong, leader of the New Citizens' Movement, a social networking activity popularized throughout China.

keep it going in those early days.

May God bring her blessings and rewards for all the good she has done as she dances in heaven. I hope we can gather and share memories one of these days soon. --*Dave Albertine*

I'm reminded of the Irish toast: "May you be in heaven a full half hour before the devil knows you're dead." I'd guess a full week in the case of Cornelia.

When the AGM was in Portland, Cornelia and Jane were recognized for starting Group 48. Cornelia was a great, inspiring friend.

--*Max White*

I have very fond memories of taking my girls out to dance with Cornelia in her huge backyard when they were little. One time she took us next door to see the large pools the neighbors had dug in their front and back yards. The water had green algae or some other floating plant covering it and our poodle Moon went running ahead of us and ended up plunging right in. Luckily it was shallow. He came out covered with green slime. We went into their front yard and it happened again. We had to go bathe him back at Cornelia's. We humans all had a good laugh. Moon wasn't as amused.

--*Janan Stoll*



Cornelia at a Group 48 meeting in March 2014 joining in a Nowruz celebration (Iranian New Year) for POC Majid Tavakkoli, who was released in 2015.

Urgent Action: China

FIRST CONTACT WITH DETAINED UYGHUR IN YEARS

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ekpar Asat (he/him)

For the first time since he went missing in April 2016, Uyghur businessman Ekpar Asat was able to communicate with his family. During the short three-minute video conversation in late January 2021, he told his family members that he had been held in solitary confinement and his health was declining both physically and mentally. His family confirmed that he had lost significant weight and that he looked pale with lots of black spots on his face. Convicted without any known trial on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” and sentenced to 15 years in prison, there are grave concerns for Ekpar Asat’s condition and wellbeing.

Ekpar Asat is a Uyghur businessman dedicated to helping older people and children with disabilities. He founded a popular social media app that featured information on a variety of current affairs and cultural topics. He went missing in April 2016, after which he was later convicted without any known trial on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” and sentenced to 15 years in prison. His family only found out about the trial through communications between the Chinese authorities and a few US senators in December 2019 and January 2020. He is currently detained in a prison in Xinjiang’s Aksu prefecture.

The US embassy in Beijing encouraged Ekpar Asat to apply for the US State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) after he met with Max Baucus, then the American ambassador to China, in Xinjiang in 2014. The IVLP is a professional exchange programme in which current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields experience the US first-hand and build relationships with American counterparts.

The US State Department mentioned Ekpar Asat’s case in its 2019 human rights report on China. After a bipartisan group of US senators urged China to release Ekpar Asat, the Chinese embassy in Washington, DC, responded by email in January 2020 with information about Ekpar Asat’s conviction and sentencing but

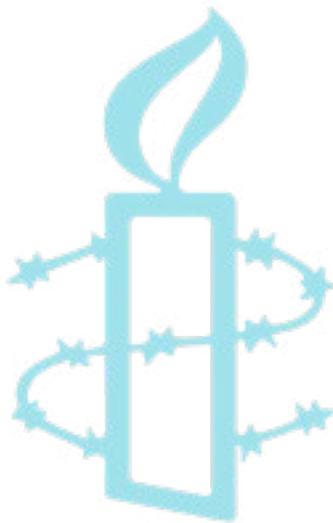
without providing any further details.

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region’s population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han who are the majority in “interior” China.

Media reports have illustrated the extent of new draconian security measures implemented since Chen Quanguo came into power as Xinjiang’s Party Secretary in 2016. In October 2016, there were numerous reports that authorities in the region had confiscated Uyghur passports in an attempt to further curtail their freedom of movement. In March 2017, the Xinjiang government enacted the “De-extremification Regulation” that identifies and prohibits a wide range of behaviours labelled “extremist”, such as “spreading extremist thought”, denigrating or refusing to watch public radio and TV programmes, wearing burkas, having an “abnormal” beard, resisting national policies, and

publishing, downloading, storing, or reading articles, publications, or audio-visual materials containing “extremist content”. The regulation also set up a “responsibility system” for government cadres for “anti-extremism” work and established annual reviews of their performance.

It is estimated that up to a million Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim people have been held in the “transformation-through-education” centres. The Chinese authorities had denied the existence of such facilities until October 2018, when they began describing them as voluntary, free “vocational training” centres. They claim that the objective of this vocational training is to provide people with technical and vocational education to enable them to find jobs and become “useful” citizens. China’s explanation, however, contradicts reports of beatings, food deprivation and solitary confinement



that have been collected from former detainees.

China has rejected calls from the international community, including Amnesty, to allow independent experts unrestricted access to Xinjiang. Instead, China has made efforts to silence criticism by inviting delegations from different countries to visit Xinjiang for carefully orchestrated and closely monitored tours.

Sample Letter

Dear Ambassador

I am writing to express my grave concern for Uyghur businessman Ekpar Asat, who is serving a 15- year prison sentence in a prison in Aksu Prefecture for “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” without any known trial.

While it is a welcome development that Ekpar Asat was finally able to communicate with his family for the first time since 2016, I find it distressing to learn how significantly his health appears to have deteriorated. During the three-minute video conversation with his family members in late January 2021, he was seen to have lost a lot of weight and looked pale with black spots on his face. He told his family members that his health was declining both physically and mentally, and it is feared that he has been suffering from lack of sunlight exposure and malnutrition.

It is further alarming to learn that Ekpar Asat has been held in solitary confinement, which can worsen his conditions and wellbeing. According to international human rights laws and standards, solitary confinement shall be used only in exceptional cases as a last resort, for as short a time as possible and subject to independent review, and only pursuant to the authorization by a competent authority.

Failure to provide adequate food and health care to detainees and prolonged solitary confinement, particularly when combined with isolation from the outside world, may violate the prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

I therefore call on you to:

- Ensure that Ekpar Asat has access to adequate food, health care and prompt access to medical attention;*
- Ensure Ekpar Asat has regular, unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and his family and that he is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;*

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 79.20. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Director Wang Jiang

Prison Administration Bureau of Xinjiang
Uyghur Autonomous Region
No 380, Huanghe lu, Urumqi People's
Republic of China
830000, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director Wang

Ambassador Cui Tiankai

Embassy of the People's Republic of China
3505 International Place NW
Washington, DC 20008
Fax: 202 495 2138
Twitter: @ChineseEmbinUS
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 23rd, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

- Release Ekpar Asat unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that he committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards.*

Sincerely,