



Amnesty International

Group 524

October 2025



Events Recap Banned Books Week Action China IAR Case

Welcome

The focus this month is on the Banned Book Week action and our continuing work for Yu Wensheng. We hope to see you at the Commons on **October 21** at 6pm.

International Day of Peace/Activist Meetup

Once again we participated in the North Hills International Day of Peace event on September 21 and met with AIUSA Staff member Jennifer Estrada on September 30. See page 2.

Banned Books Week Action

This month we will focus on the Banned Books Week action and we have some good news already! See pages 2 -5.

China Case

We will continue our group's Individual At Risk case, **Yu Wensheng** in China. We will sign cards of solidarity and send an **updated** version of our letters this month. See pages 6-7.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



September Events

Once again we participated in the meaningful International Day of Peace event at North Park on September 21. We tabled with petitions for the closing of “Alligator Alcatraz” and signed up interested attendees for our newsletter and gave away Amnesty stickers, buttons, pens and shirts.

On September 30 we, along with Group 39 members, had the pleasure of meeting with Jennifer Estrada, AIUSA Community Program Manager and Laura Osborne-Coffey, Area Coordinator. They were on their way to the Mid Atlantic Regional Conference. Over a pleasant dinner we discussed both of our Group’s efforts and activities as well as how we can attract new members. They both offered their assistance in any matter that we have concerns about and were impressed with our dedication.

Banned Books Prisoner Released

Alaa was listed in 2023’s and this year’s Banned Books actions and has been freed



Alaa Abdel Fattah, a prisoner of conscience and a leading voice of Egypt’s 2011 revolution, was granted a presidential pardon after six years of unjust imprisonment. He was sentenced to five years in December 2021 for "spreading false news" through a social media post, and although his sentence was set to end on September 29, 2024, Egyptian authorities refused to release him.

Since 2019, Amnesty International has issued 17 Urgent Actions for his release. Alaa was also featured in Amnesty’s 2023 and **2025 Banned Books Week Action**. Thanks to supporters like you in our global rapid response network, we never lost hope that justice would prevail.

Let this moment remind us that perseverance and collective action can drive meaningful change. Together, we can continue to fight for justice, freedom, and human rights for all.



YASHAR OR YAXIA'ER XIAOHELAITI / 亚夏尔·肖合拉提



UYGHUR SONGWRITER SENTENCED TO 3 YEARS FOR HIS RAP LYRICS AND BOOKS IN HIS POSSESSION

China

Yashar, also known as Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti (亚夏尔·肖合拉提), and using the stage name "Uigga," a 27-year-old Uyghur songwriter, is serving a three-year prison sentence for creating music and possessing Uyghur-language books. Convicted on June 20, 2024, of "promoting extremism" and "illegally possessing extremist materials," he endures unjust imprisonment for expressing his cultural identity and freedom of expression.

SAI ZAW THAIKE

PHOTOJOURNALIST SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON FOR REPORTING ON A CYCLONE

Myanmar

Photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaïke traveled undercover to Rakhine State, Myanmar, determined to report on the devastation of Cyclone Mocha, which slammed into the country in May 2023. Sai embedded himself with a relief team, but after a week there, Sai Zaw was arrested. He was interrogated, beaten, and in September 2023, sentenced by a military tribunal to 20 years in prison with hard labor. His trial lasted just one day. Following the 2021 military coup, the military raided the offices of "Myanmar Now," a news agency where Sai worked. The media outlet was subsequently banned, and staff had to flee the country.





MARK KISLITSYN

TRANS MAN RECEIVES 12-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR EXPRESSING ANTI-WAR ACTIVISM

Russia

Mark Kislitsyn, a 28-year-old transgender man and LGBTQI+ activist, was sentenced to 12 years for high treason after donating \$10 to a Ukrainian bank. He claimed the transfer was for humanitarian reasons. Despite his gender identity, he is imprisoned in a women's colony, forced to

wear women's clothing, and denied gender-affirming treatment. Kislitsyn had been arrested and fined previously for his anti-war picket and was known to criticize the Russian invasion of Ukraine on social media.

Kislitsyn's sentencing "[takes place against the backdrop of an accelerating crackdown on LGBTI rights.opens in a new tab](#)" In May, Russian security forces arrested at least 10 book publishing professionals in Moscow on "extremism"-related charges over alleged "LGBTI propaganda" in books published by affiliated printing houses.

MOHAMMAD BIN NASSER AL-GHAMDI

30 YEARS IN PRISON FOR PEACEFUL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Saudi Arabia

Mohammad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, a 56-year old retired teacher, was sentenced to death for his peaceful social media (X and YouTube) activity criticizing the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the country's foreign policy, and calling for the release of detained clerics. Although his death sentence was commuted, Mohammed was resentenced to 30 years in prison.





**SONIA DAHMANI
LAWYER AND MEDIA PERSONALITY
JAILED FOR SPEAKING OUT AGAINST
RACISM**

Tunisia

Sonia Dahmani, a 59-year-old Tunisian lawyer and prominent media personality, frequently appeared on radio and TV shows, such as “Emission Impossible” on IFM Radio and “Denya Zida” on Carthage+. She regularly commented on migration, racism, and other political issues, such as the poor detention conditions

in prisons. Sonia Dahmani is facing five separate legal proceedings for publicly criticizing authorities about Tunisian prison detention conditions and speaking out against issues like racism. She has been arbitrarily detained since May 11, 2024.

**PROTECT STUDENTS’ RIGHTS TO FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION**

**STOP THE CRACKDOWN: PROTECT
STUDENT RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION AND STOP REVOKING VISAS
OF FOREIGN STUDENTS**

USA

No one should be ripped away from their family and sent to detention just for exercising their right to freedom of expression or be punished for peacefully protesting. No one should be threatened for exercising free speech by speaking at a protest or for publishing

an op-ed, and no one should be deported for speaking out for human rights. All students should feel like they belong on their campuses and are free to be themselves without being harassed or singled out. Universities must fight to protect students’ rights and refuse to collaborate in the government’s attacks on campuses.





Individual At Risk Case

Our group has been selected to work on the case of **Yu Wensheng** of China.

We have this update:

Xu Yan visited Yu Wensheng with their son on early March, and they found that his conditions in prison are quite poor. The treatment he is receiving in prison is substandard. Despite the fact that his family has deposited money for him, he is unable to use it within the prison, which often leaves him hungry due to the insufficient prison meals. Additionally, the prison does not allow his family to send him clothing, and he is forced to wear old, worn-out prison-issued garments. Xu Yan and their son are deeply concerned about his well-being given these conditions. Yu and Xu have expressed a strong desire for him to be transferred to another prison, ideally one in Beijing. Beijing is Yu's registered domicile. Currently, Xu and their son must travel over 1,000 kilometres to visit him, which is physically, emotionally and financially exhausting for them, especially as both Xu and the son are in poor health. She also hopes the Chinese authorities will remove the individuals who are stationed 24/7 to monitor her and her son, allowing them to move freely without surveillance.

I have updated our regular letters to reflect these concerns and a sample letter is on the next page.



Chief Procurator Zhu Yapin
People's Procuratorate of Beijing Municipality
No. 9 Jianguomen North Street
Dongjeng District, Beijing, 100010
People's Republic of China

Dear Chief Procurator Zhu:

On April 13, 2023, prominent human rights lawyer **Yu Wengsheng** and his wife Xu Yan were taken into police custody while en route to meet the delegation of the European Union to China in Beijing, where they were to attend a meeting with the EU's Ambassador to China, Jorge Toledo Albinana, and another senior EU official. On October 29, 2024, Suzhou Intermediate Court sentenced Yu Wengsheng to three years in prison and Xu Yan, to one year and nine months in prison for "inciting subversion of state power." Vague and overly broad charges such as these are often used in China to prosecute persons who were merely exercising their guaranteed human rights.

On January 6, 2025, the Suzhou Intermediate People's Court rejected Yu Wengsheng's appeal against his three-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion of state power", passed down in a trial in October 2024. His wife, activist Xu Yan, was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison for the same offense and was released on January 13, 2025.

Yu is being held at a detention center in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. His lawyers have been denied access to him and his case files. Without regular access to lawyers of his choice and verified information about his condition and wellbeing, Yu is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

We urge you to take the following actions in this case:

- Immediately and unconditionally release **Yu Wengsheng**, unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized criminal offense:
- pending his release, allow him regular access to his family and lawyers of his choice and allow use of monies deposited for needed food and clothing items.
- pending his release, we urge that **Yu Wengsheng** is transferred to a prison in Beijing where he is domiciled.
- pending his release, ensure that he has access to adequate medical care, and is are not subject to torture and other ill-treatment.
- Ensure the full freedom of **Xu Yan** and her family, protecting them from any form of harassment or intimidation.

Respectfully yours,