



Amnesty International

Group 524

January 2024



Write For Rights Recap Prisoner News Journalists Disappearance

Welcome

I hope everyone is well and had a wonderful holiday season. We have news from the Write For Rights event and more concerning prisoners we have worked on. Our focus this month is the disappearance of two Palestinian journalists. We hope to see you at the meeting January 16 at 6pm.

Write For Rights Recap

The Group 39 Pittsburgh Write For Rights event was a success and generated over 300 letters. It was encouraging to have our Group 524 so well-represented that night. As a final step of this action we will be signing cards of solidarity to all of the case subjects at our meeting.

Prisoner Release News

New information concerning Iranian Toomaj Salehi and Vietnamese-Australian Chau Van Kahm is on page 2.

Guantanamo Anniversary

The tragic 22nd anniversary of the prison at Guantanamo was January 11 and an action for its closure is detailed on pages 3 and 4.

Disappeared Journalists

Nidal al-Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed are two journalists who were detained in October with whereabouts unknown. Details and an action are on pages 5 and 6

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).



Prisoner Rearrest and a Release

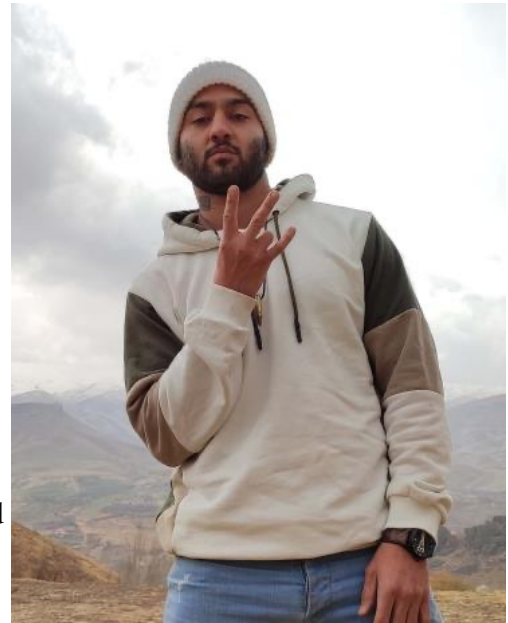
Last month we announced his release but he has been rearrested.

UPDATE Toomaj Salehi Rearrested

Last month we learned that Toomaj Salehi was rearrested by Iranian authorities. Toomaj was featured during AIUSA's [2023 Banned Books Week Action](#) (August-October) and spotlighted through Campaigns in Q3 (July-Sept).

We learned that his recent arrest was he was arrested for "spreading lies" about his mistreatment in prison, which included having several fingers broken and a broken leg. In addition, he was struck in the head and face. During his rearrest, he was beaten again with rifle butts.

We are working with AIUSA's Country Specialist for Iran and we will continue to advocate for Toomaj's unconditional release.



MAJOR WIN: CHAU VAN KHAM RELEASED!

After meeting with a friend and fellow pro-democracy activist during his trip to Vietnam in January 2019, Chau Van Kham, now 73 years old, was detained and sentenced to 12 years in prison for "terrorist activities."

In July, after years of campaigning by Amnesty and his family — and support from 36,000

Amnesty members who signed a petition for his release, [Chau Van Kham returned home to Australia a free man!](#) "I and my family would like to say thank you to Amnesty and all people who signed the petition in support of me, raising your voice for my case and bringing me back to my family and Australia. Thank you very much — Cám ơn em." — Chau Van Kham



Guantanamo Anniversary

January 11 will mark the 22nd anniversary of the opening of the Guantanamo detention center by the US government. Today, 30 men remain detained there without trial. Most have never even been charged with a crime. **Of the 30 men detained, 16 have been cleared for transfer out of the prison** by all relevant security agencies of the US government, some for over a decade, yet remain imprisoned there arbitrarily.

President Biden has a critical window of opportunity to end these ongoing abuses by closing the detention center before the end of his term.

Help us close Guantánamo and ensure the transfer of all cleared detainees to countries where their human rights will be respected. Act now to tell President Biden to shut down the Guantánamo Bay detention facility!



Group 524
January 2024



President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

After more than 22 years of injustice, I ask you to please shut down the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay. The U.S. government's use of indefinite detention without charge as a response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 has been unlawful from the outset. This detention regime must be brought to an end.

The impunity that persists in relation to the enforced disappearance, torture and other ill treatment, and other human rights violations committed against these detainees is unacceptable, and a stain on the U.S. human rights record. Torture and enforced disappearance are crimes under international law.

As an Amnesty International supporter and supporter of human rights, I urge you to work toward a lawful solution for the detainees still held at the Guantánamo Bay facility by: either transferring them for release, or bringing individuals to justice in federal courts, if this can be achieved in accordance with international law and standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

All detainees already cleared for transfer should be transferred immediately to countries where their human rights will be respected. The remaining men who have not been charged with a crime should likewise be transferred as soon as possible. Those who were subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment must receive genuine access to rehabilitation and redress. Finally, those responsible for torture and enforced disappearance must be brought to justice in a fair trial.

This appeal is long overdue. You made a promise to end this ongoing injustice and close the Guantánamo Bay facility. But after nearly three years in office, you haven't lived up to that commitment. Please, do the right thing – I urge you to close Guantánamo Bay once and for all.

Thank you.

Kind regards,



Demand the Immediate Release of Palestinian Journalist Nidal al Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed

Nidal al-Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed, two journalists from the occupied Gaza Strip. Both were detained by Israeli forces on 7 October while they were reporting the Hamas-led attack and are held in conditions constituting enforced disappearance. Since then, Israeli authorities have refused to disclose their whereabouts or the legal grounds and reasons for their arrest. Two and a half months since their disappearance, and no information has been shared about their whereabouts, not even confirmation that they are still alive.

Israeli authorities must immediately disclose their whereabouts and the legal grounds for their arrest, grant them access to legal representation and ensure their humane treatment. Unless charged with an internationally recognized criminal offense, they must be immediately released.



Group 524
January 2024



Embassy of Israel in the United States
Ambassador Michael Herzog
3514 International Drive, NW,
Washington DC 20008

Dear Brig. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi,

I am deeply concern over the enforced disappearance of **Haitham Abdelwahed**, (25) and **Nidal al-Waheidi** (31), two journalists from the occupied Gaza Strip whose whereabouts have remained unknown since October 7, 2023. The detention of the two journalists was widely documented as they were reporting from Beit Hanoun/Erez crossing. Two-and-a-half months since the two went missing while on duty, their families, colleagues, and friends have received no information about them.

As recently as December 18, the Israeli army told Israeli daily, Haaretz that a “number of” detainees from the Gaza Strip died in custody at the military detention facilities in the Beersheba Airfield, also known as Sdeh Teyman, where hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza are held in conditions that violate the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

We urge you to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Nidal al-Waheidi and Haitham Abdelwahed, detail the legal grounds for their detention, ensure their humane treatment, including access to medical services and protection from torture and other ill-treatment, and grant them access to the lawyers appointed by their families. Unless they are charged promptly with a criminal offense and granted a fair trial in accordance with international standards, they must be immediately released.

Yours sincerely,

cc.

Secretary Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520