

# AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

## Committee on the International Freedom of Scientists (CIFS)

**Annual Report 2005**  
(submitted by the Chair)  
January 15, 2006

### **Committee Members:**

Ani Aprahamian  
J.D. Garcia, Chair  
Edward Gerjuoy  
John Gillespie, Vice Chair  
Robert Perry (*through May*)  
Ivan Schuller  
Boris Spivak  
Oleg Starykh  
Yue Wu

The CIFS has continued to pursue the monitoring of concerns regarding human rights of scientists, both domestically and throughout the world. The Committee undertakes to assist scientists whose ability to pursue their scientific goals is curtailed solely for political reasons, wherever that may occur.

In this report we use the format that has by now become traditional for our report.

### **Efforts on behalf of individuals:**

#### **China**

Our efforts in China over the years have not elicited any strong resonance within the scientific community in China, reportedly because of fear of reprisals and dislike of foreign interventions. We are monitoring four cases, mentioned in previous reports, of senior scientists imprisoned for political reasons. In 2005, APS President Marvin Cohen, APS Editor-in-Chief Marty Blume and APS Treasurer Tom McIlrath traveled to China for other purposes. CIFS composed a letter detailing specifics on these cases, to be discussed by these officers with their counterparts in the Chinese scientific community as opportunities arose. There was only a very limited response to this effort. We will continue to monitor the situation.

#### **Russia and former USSR**

During the past two years, the Russian courts have rejected the openness that was starting to develop, have become more rigid and have placed much tighter controls on the defense, in the political prosecution of scientists. Trials such as those of V. Danilov and I. Sutuyagin, mentioned in previous reports, have resulted in stiffer sentences, have rejected appeals, even by the European community and the Committee on Human Rights in Russia. There appears to be not

much hope for a turnaround or for any recourse to work. CIFS had written many letters in the past on the Russian cases, but there was little enthusiasm left for such apparently futile efforts. The only bright spot in this picture was the release of Professor Yuri Bandazhevsky in Belarus.

## **U. S. A.**

CIFS has a number of cases it has been working and monitoring within the U. S. Some of these have been mentioned in previous reports. Two of them involve persons whose visa status changes have put them at risk of deportation. The primary reason for their deportation status appears to be bureaucratic missteps, but the system seems unable to correct missteps. CIFS has expended significant efforts on behalf of these individuals, contacting Congressional Offices, finding legal advice for them, and putting them in touch with individuals knowledgeable on how the INS works. Their status remains ambiguous. The individuals have expressed gratefulness of APS efforts on their behalf.

In a different kind of case, Theodore Postol of MIT asked for CIFS help in preventing a perceived retaliation by MIT officials concerning taking away his group's working space and other adverse administrative actions, allegedly for his work debunking the anti-ballistic missile system. CIFS wrote the MIT President, asking for information about these allegations. MIT has since settled their issues with Professor Postol, though he also became ill in the ensuing interval.

## **Efforts at education of the APS Membership on Human Rights**

At the March 2005 meeting of the APS, CIFS Past Chair Edward Gerjuoy organized a session on the history of human rights activity by APS members. The session was well received and very successful, attracting over 100 members, and honoring several of the most active APS members on civil rights. While the session was not a CIFS sponsored activity, CIFS did participate and was involved in its genesis.

CIFS is very supportive of all efforts by the APS International Affairs Office to publicize how much the APS has done and is doing in the human rights arena.

## **Efforts at communicating with AAAS and other organizations**

CIFS' APS staff has been attending coordinating meetings among several organizations' staffs, attempting to set up more effective communication concerning human rights cases in the scientific community. We are now part of an alert network, the Human Rights Coordinating Council, and receive bulletins on cases as they are developing and are prepared to bring to their attention the cases we encounter.

## **Visa problems**

Early in 2005, the visa problems that had developed as a result of 9/11 began to clear. CIFS was grateful to Amy Flatten, International Affairs Director, for her due diligence in helping to pressure the Office of Homeland Security to deal with this problem affecting students and

postdoctoral associates throughout the country. CIFS was involved in the early stages of that problem.

### **Andrei Sakharov Prize**

After the APS' successful fundraising campaign to raise the money for this Prize, CIFS was given the lead role in implementing the prize. John Gillespie chaired the Prize Committee, and Edward Gerjuoy was a member, together with Andy Sessler, Sidney Drell and Gary Steigman. The first prize will be awarded in 2006.