

IFEX Advocacy Action News

A monthly bulletin for IFEX members to promote campaigns and share advocacy information

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IFEX CAMPAIGNS and ADVOCACY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Message from the Editor

Welcome to the first edition of *IFEX Advocacy Action News!*

This monthly IFEX bulletin, produced by the Campaigns and Advocacy Support Programme, is focused on member-involved campaigning, advocacy initiatives and information. It is meant to promote action, analysis and collaborative involvement among members facing critical free expression issues and violations. As a pilot project, it was sent to a small test group during June and July 2006, and will now be sent to the membership monthly from August – December 2006. We welcome members' feedback and we hope you find this useful!

-*IFEX Campaigns Coordinator Sheila Gruner* (gruner@ifex.org)

About the Programme

The Campaigns and Advocacy Support Programme at IFEX is a new and developing programme that aims to foster collaboration, provide training and advice, and deepen commitment to addressing free expression violations and issues among the IFEX membership. Many IFEX members have expressed a desire for the network to build on its capacity to disseminate alerts worldwide. The programme focuses on bringing further attention to specific free expression cases and campaigns, and to supporting members on action-oriented advocacy projects. It relies on input and advice from the entire IFEX community.

Programme highlights

- **A programme planning process** has been underway since April 2006 with the aim of establishing areas for campaigns and advocacy support at IFEX. An overview highlighting programme components, activities and timelines will be available before October 2006.
- **Rapid and Organised Action Response (ROAR)**: A new effort underway at IFEX to follow up on specific free expression violations and alerts. See below.

International Member-led Campaigns

Various IFEX members brought their campaign efforts to the Brussels General Meeting in February 2006, and they have seen great advances since then:

The Tunisia Monitoring Group (TMG), supported by 15 IFEX member organisations, coordinated its most recent mission to Tunisia in April 2006. The next steps for TMG efforts are now being determined through a planning process. See: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/74626/> . For further information contact Kristina Stockwood, IFEX-TMG Coordinator (stockwood@ifex.org)

The International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal, a coalition effort coordinated by International Media Support (IMS) with various IFEX members, has been underway since 2005, when a Royal Coup by King Gyanendra led to the deterioration of human rights and press freedom. Two missions have taken place to the country since 2005, the most recent in March 2006, just before the peaceful "Rhododendron Revolution", which forced the King to step down. Democracy was reinstated, although many challenges face the new Nepalese coalition government, with press freedom and free expression still under pressure. The next mission will occur from 4 to 7 September 2006. IFEX members in Nepal will continue working with international members and other organisations to protect and promote freedom of expression.

The Ethiopia/Eritrea Campaign continues to be a primary target for advocacy for IFEX members in Africa. Campaign efforts are underway, supported by NAFEO (Network of African Free Expression Organisations). Stay tuned for more information.

RAPID AND ORGANISED ACTION RESPONSES (ROAR)

Rapid and Organised Action Responses (ROAR) are part of the IFEX Campaigns programme strategy to support rapid, short term follow-up actions. These can include Joint Action letters in which members can use IFEX's Alert Network to appeal for signatures from other members on an urgent case. Other ROAR actions can include raising awareness of cases in the *IFEX Communiqué* and *IFEX Advocacy Action News!*, through developing short-term campaigns with IFEX support, and through raising visibility of free expression issues and cases through press freedom awards and other events. Contact Sheila Gruner (gruner@ifex.org) if your organisation would like more information or would like to engage in a ROAR activity.

WATCH FOR JOINT ACTION LETTERS – YOUR SIGNATURE IS NEEDED!!

Joint actions that need IFEX member support NOW:

- **Ramin Jahanbegloo - Iran:** PEN Canada is monitoring the situation facing this journalist who has been incarcerated in Iran and recently released. For updates on the current status of his case and for more information visit <http://www.pencanada.ca/>
- **Ching Cheong – China (Hong Kong):** The Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) is collecting signatures (speedy action is requested) for a joint action protesting the trial of Hong Kong journalist Ching Cheong, who has been charged with espionage. To sign the joint action, contact Serenade Woo, Chairperson of the HKJA, before 12 September 2006: serenadewoo@yahoo.com.hk

Joint action campaigns to watch for:

- **Marlene Esperat - Philippines:** The case of columnist Marlene Esperat's murder is currently being tried in the Philippines. International pressure could have a real impact on this case, which, if successful, would strengthen efforts to break the impunity surrounding the murders of journalists in the country. The Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) is preparing a joint action letter that would coincide with witnesses being brought forth in the Esperat murder trial by mid-September. Contact Nathan Lee at nathan@cmfr-phil.org

MEMBER ADVOCACY FOCUS

BREAKING NEWS! PEN Canada has notified the IFEX Clearing House as we prepare this bulletin that Ramin Jahanbegloo has been released from jail as of today 30 August 2006. Please stay tuned to PEN Canada's updates for more information on this case.

Campaigning for the release of imprisoned Canadian-Iranian writer and scholar Ramin Jahanbegloo

IFEX Advocacy News! interviews David Cozac, PEN Canada's Programmes Coordinator and Morteza Abdolalian of Iran Watch Canada

PEN Canada is leading a campaign to free Ramin Jahanbegloo of Iran, a Canadian-Iranian academic currently imprisoned in Iran. Kristina Stockwood, IFEX Outreach Coordinator, spoke to David Cozac, PEN Canada's Programmes Coordinator, and Morteza Abdolalian, Editor and Publisher of IRAN WATCH CANADA (www.moriab.blogspot.com).

Q: What is the current status of the Jahanbegloo campaign? Can you give an idea of whom and what is involved?

David Cozac: We are asking IFEX members to sign on to the PEN Canada joint action letter by 15 September, calling for Jahanbegloo's release. They can also send their own letters of appeal to Iranian authorities or launch their own campaigns. They can engage natural allies in their countries, such as academic associations. We are also calling on as many Centres of International PEN to sign on. PEN Canada is liaising closely with the Canadian government to strategise on effective ways to secure his release. Jahanbegloo is an Honorary Member of PEN Canada, which results in him becoming a focus of our advocacy for imprisoned writers.

PEN Canada is working with the University of Toronto – where Jahanbegloo worked for five years – which itself has launched a spirited campaign to get their former colleague freed. We are planning to approach the Special Rapporteurs of the OSCE and the UN to ask them to issue a joint statement on the detention of Ramin Jahanbegloo.



Ramin Jahanbegloo has been imprisoned in a security wing of Evin prison in Iran since his arrest at Tehran airport on 28 April 2006.

Q: Why did you choose to do a joint action on this particular case in Iran? What impact are you expecting it to have?

We believe that the Jahanbegloo case is the most pressing free expression issue currently in Iran. For PEN Canada, it also has some eerie similarities to that of Zahra Kazemi¹. Indeed, Jahanbegloo – also a dual citizen – is detained in Evin Prison, where Kazemi was brutally murdered in 2003. To date, those responsible have yet to be brought to justice. We do not want the same fate to befall Jahanbegloo. In terms of the joint action, PEN Canada believes that it is important for other IFEX members who would not otherwise know about the case to learn about him and about the free expression situation in Iran. We also believe that having the support of an international grouping of free expression organisations would deliver a strong message to the Islamic Republic that the world is watching the Jahanbegloo case very closely.

¹ See <http://ifex.org/en/content/view/full/75597/> for more information on Zahra Kazemi.

Q: What are the major pitfalls and barriers to this campaign?

Dealing with the Iranian government is always a delicate matter. If one pushes them too hard on an issue, they will either push back harder or go silent. However, we believe that it is essential to keep the pressure on, primarily because we still have Zahra Kazemi fresh in our mind. We must target our advocacy very carefully to see where we might have the most impact (such as our recent request to meet with Iranian embassy officials in Ottawa.)

A further barrier is the struggle to keep the Jahanbegloo case in the spotlight. He has now spent over three months in detention. It is easy for other events in Iran or elsewhere in the world to receive media coverage, so we must be vigilant to ensure that the spotlight on Jahanbegloo not be turned off.

**Stay tuned for an
update on this
situation from PEN
Canada:**

<http://www.pencanada.ca/>

Messages can be sent to:

dcozac@pencanada.ca

Q: What are the factors that can ensure that this is successful campaign, through securing Jahanbegloo's release?

Consistent international pressure – from the NGO community, the UN and, especially, foreign governments – is key. Jahanbegloo must not be forgotten. It's important to keep the human element – Jahanbegloo's human face – prominent. He is, after all, an esteemed academic and philosopher who has never been a radical.

Q: From your perspective as an Iranian living in Canada, why is this case significant?

Morteza Abdolalian: This case is significant because Ramin Jahanbegloo is a Canadian citizen, a thinker and professor of philosophy at a university in Canada. He is the author of more than twenty books and internationally renowned. He is the second Canadian to be arrested by Iran. Jahanbegloo is now sitting in solitary confinement in Evin prison and no one knows what would be his fate - is he going to be murdered like Zahra Kazemi? This must be stopped and the Canadian government must use every means and the international forum to raise its voice louder for his immediate release.

Professor Jahanbegloo was arrested on 27 April 2006. He has been charged with "espionage", "contact with foreign individuals" and preparation for the "orange revolution" in Iran. These are serious charges. The Ministry of Information, the public prosecutor's office and "Kayhan" newspaper have produced a "confession video film" from Jahanbegloo in Evin prison showing that he confessed to the charges and that he made a mistake and is sorry for what he did. I hope soon he will be released. It takes many years to produce a person like Professor Jahanbegloo and my country and the Middle East needs this type of people badly!

MEMBERS LINK

Articles of Interest:

"Free expression deteriorating rapidly in Africa, says NAFEO"

On 12 and 13 June 2006, the Coordinating Group of the Network of African Freedom of Expression Organisations (NAFEO) met in Lagos, to discuss media freedom and freedom of expression in Africa and to promote ways of strengthening organisations working for media freedom and freedom of expression.

Read the article: <http://www.misa.org/cgi-bin/viewnews.cgi?category=1&id=1150272690>

Other Campaigns around the world:

"Information Wanted" Campaign

In Spring 2006, a consortium of organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina started the "Information Wanted" campaign. The campaign activities will culminate on 28 September 2006, marked as the International Day of Free Access to Information.

See: <http://see.oneworld.net/article/view/138067/1/>

Amnesty International's "Irrepressible" Campaign

Adapting 'People Power' to the electronic age, Amnesty International has urged web users to sign an online pledge which will be presented to a UN meeting on the future of the Internet in November 2006. See: <http://irrepressible.info/>

Tools for Effective Campaigning:

IFEX Campaigns Handbook:

This handbook is a toolbox of tips, best practice case studies and resources for campaigning in defense of free expression. It is available in English, French and Spanish, and is being translated into Russian, Farsi, Arabic and Turkish.

See: <http://www.ifex.org/download/en/IFEXCampaignHandbook.pdf>

Call to IFEX members:

- ~ **Want to start a campaign? Need advice or support?**
- ~ **Tell us about your organisation's campaigns and advocacy efforts!**
- ~ **Share articles, websites and campaigns tools!**

Contact Sheila Gruner, IFEX Campaigns Coordinator at
[**gruner@ifex.org**](mailto:gruner@ifex.org)