

## Two Foreign Missions for Human Rights

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Program seeks to aid foreign scientists, health professionals, and engineers whose human rights have been violated, and works to encourage the use of scientific methods to document violations and the protection of human rights. Two recent efforts support those goals.

### Doctors in Turkey Face Attacks

When two men who assist torture victims in Turkey went on trial this month, a delegation organized by AAAS was on hand to demonstrate opposition to the Turkish government's attacks

mission. "They're afraid to report or protest torture because they assume nothing will happen [to change the situation], and they fear possible retaliation."

The case involving Köse and Çinkiliç is unusual, Amitay said, because it stems from government attempts to force doctors to reveal the names of victims who were treated—an admission that torture occurred. The initiative, he explained, came from the foreign ministry, which is seeking to shut down the foundation's operations following embarrassing reports that hundreds of torture victims have been treated at its four centers.



**On trial in Turkey.** Defendants Tufan Köse and Mustafa Çinkiliç, at left, join Human Rights Foundation of Turkey officials at a press briefing.

on doctors in this and other recent incidents.

Tufan Köse, a physician, and Mustafa Çinkiliç, a lawyer, are employees of a center in Adana, operated by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, that treats victims of torture. They were charged with disobeying government orders for their refusal to hand over the center's medical files, including confidential patient records.

Mike Amitay of the U.S. Helsinki Commission said the case appears to reflect growing government reaction against doctors who expose abuses of Turkish citizens at the hands of security officials. "Torture is widespread, and doctors are under pressure to deny that it's occurred," said Amitay, who joined the AAAS

AAAS has been monitoring the case through its electronic Human Rights Action Network. A 14 May alert protested the Turkish government's demands on the grounds that they "represent serious violations of internationally accepted standards of medical ethics, which protect the patient-caregiver relationship."

Elisa Muñoz of AAAS's Science and Human Rights Program attended the follow-up trial on 5 July. A decision in the case was postponed for the second time, and another hearing is set for 13 September.

From talks with Turkish authorities, "we got the feeling that the government wants to resolve the case, to diminish world attention," Muñoz said. "But it's hard to know what direction it will go in." Members of the AAAS mission appealed to the government to find a way to allow the center to continue operating without violating medical ethics. Muñoz said the delegation was "surprised" by statements from some Turkish officials "denying that torture is a problem."

In other actions, the group—which also included representatives of the Berlin Medical Association, Doctors of the World,

and Physicians for Human Rights—met with physician Seyfettin Kizilkan, whom supporters say is under government attack for advocating democratization and human rights in Turkey. He is appealing a sentence stemming from a conviction for illegal weapons possession—a case that Muñoz said appears strongly to have been fabricated. After interviewing associates of Kizilkan and examining the legal evidence, the delegation urged the Turkish government to drop the charges and reinstate him as chief physician of Social Security Hospital in Diyarbakir.

For more information, contact Muñoz at 202-326-6797 or by e-mail at emunoz@aaas.org.

### Hong Kong Groups Fear Restrictions

As Hong Kong begins a one-year countdown to the transfer of sovereignty to China, the colony's highly active human rights community is nervously preparing for possible restrictions on its activities.

"No one has promised that their work will be stifled in post-transfer Hong Kong. There are no threats that human rights offices will be raided and documents destroyed," said George Edwards, whose Center for Comparative and Public Law at the University of Hong Kong operates the Law-on-Line database, which includes human rights information. "But," he added, "in some circles, fears of that happening abound, and the feeling is that it would be best to be prepared for the worst."

During a trip to Hong Kong last month, Mark Girouard and Stephen Hansen of the Science and Human Rights Program found that many human rights groups in Hong Kong are rushing to get on-line, to house and disseminate their documents and keep lines of communica-

tion open to the outside world in the event of Chinese constraints after the handover, set for 1 July 1997.

Hansen and Girouard were in Hong Kong exploring ways in which AAAS could offer technical assistance to human rights groups in their quest to more fully exploit on-line resources. As one outcome, AAAS is planning a training workshop in Hong Kong on applications of the Internet and other electronic resources to human rights work. The Science and Human Rights Program has conducted similar training in many countries.

Mike Jendrzeczyk, the Washington director of Human Rights Watch/Asia, said the concerns that human rights advocates in Hong Kong have about post-transfer curtailment of their work are well founded based on a number of recent signals from Beijing that are "raising a great deal of anxiety across the board."

A key concern for human rights advocates is possible controls on use of the Internet and freedom of expression. Chinese officials recently announced their intent to monitor information entering China via the Internet, and new regulations forbid the transmission of information that "may hinder public order." In addition, computer networks in China are required to use only international on-line channels provided by the telecommunications ministry.

"Hong Kong is both an information source and a catalyst for human rights in the region,"



**Chilly days ahead?** Human rights advocates in Hong Kong are tense over impending Beijing control.

Jendrzeczyk said. "It's precisely for that reason that China is worried. They don't want Hong Kong to become a laboratory for spreading greater freedom and openness to the rest of mainland China."

Hong Kong's human rights community is diverse, and some groups are quite small, Girouard pointed out. While most use computers regularly, he said, many lack the expertise and resources needed to use the Internet effectively in their work. Yet, "many groups realize the importance of getting on-line to continue their work," Hansen said. Many are developing home pages on the World Wide Web, for example. An area of growing interest, Hansen noted, is data security and encryption of sensitive material.

One major topic to address in the workshop, Girouard said, is requirements for publishing electronically in Chinese. "Right now the feeling is that the Internet is an English language-based medium that's not widely accessible or necessarily useful to groups that work primarily in Chinese," he said. Hansen added: "A major technical challenge is to bridge the gap from English to Chinese, and not to reinforce the barriers."

Contact Hansen at 202-326-6796 or shansen@aaas.org; Girouard at 202-326-6615 or mgirouar@aaas.org.

### Population Effects on Biodiversity

To anyone who has visited a congested national park lately or watched a favorite shoreline give way to development, it's all too clear that the crush of humanity is taking a major toll on treasured ecosystems. With major new funding, AAAS's Program on Population and Sustainable Development is planning an international research project to help address the problem.

The 3-year effort, set to begin this summer, will gather scientific evidence about the impacts of human population pressures on biodiversity conservation. Stud-

ies will be carried out at protected sites around the world that are environmentally threatened by human activities.

Program director Victoria Dompka said AAAS is undertaking the project, funded by a \$200,000 MacArthur Foundation grant, to increase the body of scientific knowledge that policymakers and resource managers need to devise conservation strategies. "In protected areas around the world, she said, "population growth and related factors such as migration, tourism, and high levels of resource consumption are contributing to a loss of biodiversity, but there's

very little understanding beyond an intuitive or anecdotal level."

Because the relationship between human population and the environment is complex, she noted, scientists must look at population growth's effects on the biodiversity of actual sites to observe the true impacts. A network of researchers with expertise in both the natural and social sciences will do fieldwork in several countries.

An advisory group of scientists and partner institutions in the project will meet soon to select the researchers and frame the research questions. The findings will be published and dis-

seminated widely.

The project is an outgrowth of a meeting the AAAS International Directorate organized last year to identify scientific research priorities related to issues of population and biodiversity conservation (see "Inside AAAS," 31 March 1995, page 2018). The book of proceedings, *Human Population, Biodiversity and Protected Areas: Science and Policy Areas*, was published last month. It includes recommendations, overview papers, and case studies of protected sites in six countries.

For more information, contact Dompka at 202-326-6658 or at vdompka@aaas.org.

## Disabled Students Soar at NASA

Blind since birth, Marco Midon is passionate about the need for people with blindness to maximize communication with others to get things done. "If you don't do that, it's a limitation," he said. "I consider my communications equipment"—an array of apparatus that includes speech synthesizer, computer, scanner software, and portable phone—"to be part of me, and I take it wherever I go."

The senior at Florida International University credits that network of assistive technology with enabling him "to be as productive as I have been" during a 10-week internship at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. He is among seven undergraduate students with disabilities participating until 2 August in NASA's Technical Experience for Select Students (N-TESS). This year for the first time the program is being managed by AAAS's Project on Science, Technology, and Disability.

Midon is working with a contractor, Computer Sciences Corporation, on a project that aims to help NASA cut costs by using commercial software to do tasks such as designing a ground station and taking real data from satellites. For his part, Midon is using the project as a model to design software that would enable a blind person to interface directly with the instrumentation in this and other science and engineering applications so as to interpret the data. "I'd been thinking about doing this, and the internship gave me the impetus to do it," he said.

"This is not just an internship to make money," he added. "I've wanted to work at NASA all my life. This is a chance to show what I can do."

Two weeks ago he presented a paper on similar work he's done at the International Conference on Computers Helping People With Special Needs, held in Austria.

Meanwhile, across Goddard's sprawling campus in Greenbelt, Maryland, another N-TESS intern, John McDonald, has been lending a hand in a testing room for equipment used in the Hubble Space Telescope. His mentor,

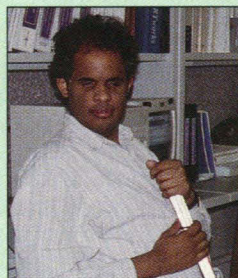
Chuck Manns, thinks McDonald was a godsend. "We've thrown a lot at him," said Manns, who became a mentor again this summer because he found the experience so positive last year.

Dysgraphia—a problem with fine motor control—makes taking timed tests a struggle for McDonald, an engineering major at Cornell. But, "with a lot of practice and patience," he's learned to deal with his disability.

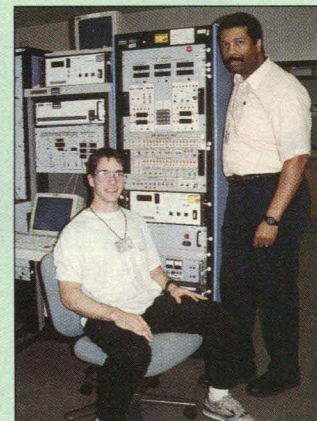
Working adjacent to the "clean room" with its full-size replica of the giant telescope, McDonald has been re-designing the floor plan configuration for a control center at the Goddard facility to accommodate new equipment. He also wrote a conversion program for some of the hardware-testing equipment that interprets the data for technicians.

As one requirement of their internships, the N-TESS students must do a formal presentation of their work for officials at Goddard. "We think it's important that aspiring technicians recognize they not only have to do good research work, but also know how to present it," said Dillard Menchan, who heads the Equal Opportunity Programs Office at Goddard.

For information about N-TESS, contact AAAS program manager Laureen Summers at 202-326-6649 V/TDD or at lsummers@aaas.org.



**Test of talent.** Marco Midon, above, and John McDonald, seated, with mentor Chuck Manns, find NASA experience more than a summer job.



PHOTOS BY DIANA PARSELL