Human Rights & Banned Books Week: Engaging with Amnesty International

Internationalizing Banned Books Week & Emphasizing Human Rights in Public, Academic, and School Libraries

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“Of special recognition is Amnesty International’s approach to Banned Books Week, said Immroth Award Chair Charles Kratz. Rather than focusing on book censorship, per se, Amnesty International’s approach focused on the logical consequences that would follow when governments are allowed to censor. Beyond the removal or burning of books comes the removal and physical harm to authors, journalists and others.

To some degree it could be said that American Library Association Banned Books Week programming focuses on the book and Amnesty International focuses on the people.
Banned Books Week 2023

From September 15 through October 15, 2023, Amnesty International USA will spotlight six cases highlighting individuals or communities whose human rights are under attack because of their work as authors, journalists, bloggers, filmmakers, poets, novelists, photojournalists, publishers, academics, musicians, and librarians.

https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/banned-books/bbw2023/
Amnesty International creates case sheets and related materials suitable for display in libraries.

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Toolkits are also created and available on the website with sections on how libraries and bookstores can get involved.
Filmed by scholar and ethnographer, Rahile Dawut.
Performers Profiles: Ubulhásan Muhámmtät

Ubulhásan Muhámmtät was born in 1955 in Kuya Village, Qaraqash county, Khotan, and is a sixth-generation dastanchi who learned the tradition from family members. By the age of eighteen, he was able to perform dastan independently, accompanying himself on the rawap and tāmbur. His repertory includes more than ten dastans, including Abdurahman Pasha, Iptarnamā, Sivit Nochi, Imami Husayin, Kiyiknamā, Toynamā, and others. In March 2008, Ubulhásan was recognized as a representative heir of the dastan tradition in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Intangible Culture Protection list and in 2013 on the national list.

Ubulhásan Muhámmtät accompanying himself on tāmbur, 2011.

1. Epic texts show the reciprocal relationships between oral and written literature.

Live, extemporized performance of dastan has had an enormous influence on written dastans, as well as on other literary forms. Many writers and poets in Uyghur literary history have been inspired by themes and imagery from popular epics. At the same time, written literature has affected—and continues to affect—oral literature. The relationship between the oral and the written is complex and reciprocal. For example, field research in southern Xinjiang, particularly in Khotan, shows that numerous dastanchis have learned epics such as Abdurahman

Study Questions
1. The time log notes two rhythmic changes in the excerpt. Can you write out the different rhythmic patterns, and identify what time signature(s) is (are) being used?
2. This excerpt is dominated by relatively consistent, repetitive melodic patterns; as with rhythm, the time log notes points in the dastan where melodic changes occur. First, trace out the contours of these different melodic patterns. Second, devise a form of transcription for drawing these patterns in relation to each other.
US Department of State Sept 29, 2023:

"We condemn the reported life sentence handed down by the Government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) following secret court proceedings of Professor Rahile Dawut, an anthropologist and expert on Uyghur folklore and traditions."

"Professor Dawut and other Uyghur intellectuals, including Ilham Tohti, have been unjustly imprisoned for their work to protect and preserve Uyghur culture and traditions. Professor Dawut’s life sentence is part of an apparent broader effort by the PRC to eradicate Uyghur identity and culture and undermine academic freedom, including through the use of detentions and disappearances."
TAKING ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
HELP RELEASE DETAINED WRITERS AND PUBLISHERS!

At least one million predominantly Muslim men and women have been detained in Xinjiang, China since 2017. Some have disappeared, others have been sentenced to or detained in internment camps. Many people are imprisoned because of their academic publications, reporting, or literary works.

YOUR INFORMATION

FIRST NAME
Last Name

Email Address

Street Address

City
Select State

Postal Code
00000
United States

Phone Number

By providing your mobile number, you are signing up to receive calls, text messages from Amnesty International USA at 213.33. Reply STOP to quit. Msg and data rates may apply. Privacy & Terms.

Do not exchange my postal address with other organizations. (Note, we NEVER exchange email addresses.)

CUSTOMIZE YOUR MESSAGE

Please release detained writers and publishers.
BUYING BOOKS, AMPLIFYING VOICES:
The following books are written by or about authors identified by Amnesty International as individuals arrested, murdered, harassed, exiled, or executed for their published creative works (writing, photography, etc.). These texts are available in English from domestic and international book sellers.

Libraries and bookstores are encouraged to buy and make available books by or about authors and publishers who have been imprisoned, murdered, or harassed in light of their writing or publications. The act of purchasing and making available the words of such authors is a counterweight to the censorship of authoritarian regimes. Inclusion of such texts in a college or university library is likely to broaden the discussion of relevant global issues and help students and faculty understand the nature and effects of censorship.

Note: Titles listed below, are not necessarily the cause of the author’s persecution; rather, they represent the work of the author and the possible silencing of a voice. Book descriptions and cover art are drawn from Amazon.com or the publisher website unless otherwise noted. Information regarding cases is drawn from Amnesty International. Other writing by Banned Books Week authors and creators is available online; non-English print publications are not listed below.

NEW TITLES IN 2022

Alaa Abd el-Fattah (Egypt) - Imprisoned: sentenced to 5 years
Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah is serving a five year sentence after being convicted of spurious charges of spreading “false news” over his social media posts.

“Powerful ideas of protest and freedom of expression from the world-renowned Egyptian political prisoner and activist collected in English for the first time. With a foreword by Naomi Klein.” Alaa’s written voice came to symbolize much of what was fresh, inspiring and revolutionary about the uprisings that have defined the last decade. Collected here for the first time in English are a selection of his essays, social media posts and interviews from 2011 until the present. He has spent the majority of those years in prison.”
Toomaj Salehi - Hip-hop musician sentenced to 6 years in prison and ban on his artistic activities in light of his music, videos, and posts on social media.

-- Amnesty International

Video with English subtitles:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSUIw bRI0Jo
I love banned books because...

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/banned-books/bbw2023/
Supporting Youth Programming
International human rights documents & law that promote freedom of expression?

... and, especially, Article 19 the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a legally binding treaty.

**ARTICLE 19**

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

- Article 19; Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Article 19 of the ICCPR provides that:

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
Amnesty International (AI) applies the human rights framework in their work.

During Banned Books Week, AI language includes reference to human rights principles, international laws, and standards. For example:

- Government’s obligation to protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression;
- All persons who have been vested with state authority ... are responsible for supporting the realization of these rights for all people;
- Under human rights law, governments have obligations to set a framework for conduct that enables people’s enjoyment of their rights;
- ... deny equal access to all, jeopardizing community members’ right to education and right to health …
- Reports mirror serious challenges to freedom of expression found in authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world;
- States must respect, protect and fulfill the right to free expression by not interfering with it as well as take active steps to ensure people can enjoy this right.

Widespread efforts throughout the U.S. that permit state and municipal-sponsored censorship through book bans on content related to race, gender, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ subject matter restrict the right to freedom of expression. They also deny equal access to all, jeopardizing community members’ right to education and right to health, among other rights.

Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and erodes the U.S. government’s obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression:

States must respect, protect and fulfill the right to free expression by not interfering with it as well as take active steps to ensure people can enjoy this right. The right to freedom of expression is violated whenever a government limits the freedom of individuals to hold opinions or to seek, receive, or impart information.

Under human rights law, governments have obligations to set a framework for conduct that enables people’s enjoyment of their rights. All persons who have been vested with state authority for certain tasks such as public administration are responsible for supporting the realization of these rights for all people.

Amnesty International is concerned about the targeting of librarians and teachers in light of the publications they use to support their professional responsibilities, including elevated incidents of threats & harassment as well as police reports filed against library staff regarding books available for circulation. These reports mirror serious challenges to freedom of expression found in authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world.

According to data from the Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked in 2022, there were 41 reported incidents of threats and/or harassment, and 25 police reports filed against library staff regarding books available for circulation.
Encourage libraries across Arizona to participate with Amnesty International Banned Books Week Programming.

Encourage partnership between Arizona Libraries and local Amnesty International or other community groups.

https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/banned-books/bbw2023/
In this forgotten place I have no lover’s touch
Each night brings darker dreams, I have no amulet
My life is all I ask, I have no other thirst
These silent thoughts torment, I have no way to hope

Who I once was, what I’ve become, I cannot know
Who could I tell my heart’s desires, I cannot say
My love, the temper of the fates I cannot guess
I long to go to you, I have no strength to move

Through cracks and crevices I’ve watched the seasons change
For news of you I’ve looked in vain to buds and flowers
To the marrow of my bones I’ve ached to be with you
What road led here, why do I have no road back home

Translation by Joshua L. Freeman
Contact / Get Involved:

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https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/banned-books/

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