

Committee on Human Rights of Mathematicians

General Description

- Committee is standing
- Number of members is about nine
- Term is three years

Principal Activities

The Committee has in fact confined its activity to the rights of foreign mathematicians. Definitions, obligations, and restrictions are contained in the document entitled *Charge to the Committee on Human Rights, Concerning Foreign Mathematicians* (inserted below), which is a document endorsed by the Council. The potential reminder of the charge has not been written.

Taken from the Council Minutes of 03 April 2004:

Charge to the Committee on Human Rights, Concerning Foreign Mathematicians

1. The AMS believes that human rights violations are serious matters. In recent years, the AMS has intervened on behalf of several foreign mathematicians and even on behalf of whole groups of mathematicians. This Committee will assist the Society in such matters by investigating alleged violations of human rights of foreign mathematicians whether these violations are alleged to have occurred in the U.S. or abroad and by recommending appropriate action whenever action seems warranted.

2. A foreign mathematician, for the purpose of the Committee, is a person residing outside the U.S. and professionally engaged in a mathematical science (such as pure mathematics, applied mathematics, mathematical statistics, computing science, and operations research) or trained for such activity. The purpose of this rule is to limit the activities of the Committee to cases in which our members may be presumed to have a feeling of genuine professional identification with the alleged victim. By violations of human rights, the Committee is to understand violations of freedoms enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Affirmation adopted by the National Academy of Sciences, USA, violations which deprive a mathematician of the opportunity to practice his or her profession. In most cases, it would be inappropriate to consider less drastic offenses such as dispute over appointments, denial of promotion or withdrawal of professional recognition.

3. The first duty of the Committee is to investigate complaints received by it or referred to it by officers of the Society. The Committee is encouraged to make polite inquiries to foreign governments and embassies (since a timely polite inquiry may be more valuable than a vociferous protest later on). In conducting its investigation, the Committee cannot always hope to prove a case beyond a reasonable doubt or to hear all sides. In some cases, the Committee may be unable to elicit information from the government in question, and may have no way of direct communication with the victim. The committee should arrive at recommendations for actions (or inaction) using common sense, any source of information available, and the advice of organizations which have had extensive experience in human rights cases (in particular, the International League for the

Rights of Man and Amnesty International). More specific information can be found at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

4. The Committee should not work from a particular political orientation but rather should be willing to defend the human rights of any foreign mathematician whatever that mathematician's political stance or ideology may be.

Other Activities

Two members will serve as the AMS representatives to the American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Coalition of which the AMS is a full member. These representatives shall be chosen by the AMS President and will be expected to travel to the twice-yearly coalition meetings in Washington D.C. Their travel expenses will be reimbursed. The two representatives will sit on the Council of the AAAS-HRC and have full voting privileges.

Miscellaneous Information

The business of this committee can be done by mail, electronic mail, or telephone, expenses which may be reimbursed by the Society.

Note to the Chair

Committee chairs should be informed, at the beginning of each fiscal period, of the budget of their committees and cautioned to remain within the budget. Such items as travel reimbursement, accommodations, and meals for guests of any kind fall within these budgets.

Work done by committees on recurring problems may have value as precedent or work done may have historical interest. Because of this, the Council has requested that a central file system be maintained for the Society by the Secretary. Committees are reminded that a copy of every sheet of paper should be deposited (say once a year) in this central file. Confidential material should be noted, so that it can be handled in a confidential manner.

Authorization

Council minutes of 23 August 1976, p.3; Council minutes of 26 January 1977, attachment.

Council minutes of 03 April 2004, item 4.5;

Updated 10/31/90; 8/24/94; 5/04/95; 3/22/99; 4/3/04; 10/13 Other Activities, membership, Note, Misc Info

Past Members

A list of current and past members is available here:

<http://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/committees/humanright-past.html>