



American Physical Society's Andrei Sakharov Prize

Former ICFOnian Omid Kokabee awarded APS Human Rights Prize.

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Former ICFonian Omid Kokabee, most recently a graduate student at the University of Texas but currently imprisoned in Iran, was one of two scientists to be awarded the American Physical Society's Andrei Sakharov Prize, which recognizes outstanding leadership and achievements of scientists in upholding human rights. The award citation reads: *"For his courage in refusing to use his physics knowledge to work on projects that he deemed harmful to humanity, in the face of extreme physical and psychological pressure."*

Omid was arrested in Iran in January 2011 during a family visit while enrolled in the University of Texas. He has been charged with "communicating with a hostile government" and is currently serving a 10 year sentence. In a public letter dated March 2013, Kokabee states that he was being persecuted for refusing to work on Iranian military projects including the development of laser-based uranium enrichment technology that could be used to produce

material for nuclear weapons. He reported that he has been offered freedom from prison several times in exchange for his cooperation, but has refused.

"With this recognition of Kokabee," said Hossein Sadeghpour, chair of the APS Committee on International Freedom of Scientists, "the APS has not only reaffirmed the spirit of Andrei Sakharov's work, but has shed new and important light on the plight of a budding scientist who cannot speak for himself."

Along with Kokabee, the APS is also presenting the 2014 Sakharov prize to Boris Altshuler of the Lebedev Physical Institute, Moscow for "his life-long struggle for democracy in Russia and for his advocacy on behalf of the rights of neglected children."