

CONFRONTING FALSE ALLEGATIONS¹

In recent weeks and months, there have been reports in several publications that contain factually inaccurate information about the Albert Einstein Institution and its work. These reports have included the claims that the Institution has received guidance and financial support from the United States government, and that its mission and activities seek to advance policies of the U.S. government worldwide. In the interest of individuals and groups who would otherwise explore nonviolent action for their own situations, but who may reject it outright because of these negative and inaccurate allegations, we wish to take steps to ensure that our work is evaluated on its own merit and not on how others choose to characterize it.

Since its founding in 1983, the Albert Einstein Institution has worked to increase understanding about the nature and potential use of nonviolent struggle in acute conflicts, so that groups may recognize that there exist alternatives to both violence and passive submission to oppression. This generic information is shared directly with individuals and groups through printed publications, online dissemination of our material, translations of our publications into other languages, and sometimes, when we are able to do so, directly with groups in response to their requests.

The Albert Einstein Institution is an independent nonprofit organization. It does not take direction from any other organization, or from any government, including the US government. Our funding is from private individuals and small foundations, and is extremely limited. The allegation of funding and support for the Albert Einstein Institution from the CIA, or any other government body, is categorically false. Indeed, as we struggle to advance our work on nonviolent alternatives to war and violence while operating out of a two room rent-free office with a small staff, we find these statements to be totally disconnected from the daily reality that we face.

In principle, however, we are not opposed to accepting funds from institutions that have in turn received their funds from government sources, as long as there is no dictation or control of the purpose of our work, individual projects, or of the dissemination of the gained knowledge. If policy makers recognize that these ideas merit attention, that is a positive step, and one that we would welcome. However, most policy makers instead ignore our work and hold fast to their belief in the power of violence, as witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Despite the dearth of available funding for this work and the negative criticism we have received, nonviolent struggle is increasingly being recognized by large numbers of people worldwide as a powerful and effective means of struggle to wage conflicts to address a wide variety of the world's problems.

¹ This statement is written by Jamila Raqib, Executive Director of the Albert Einstein Institution, December 8, 2007.

People are becoming increasingly aware that nonviolent struggle requires consideration as an alternative to both violence and submission. Actions by groups that decide to employ this nonviolent technique are receiving greater recognition and threatening the power of their authoritarian governments. Individuals, groups, media organizations, governments, and other institutions are, in turn, beginning to understand that something very significant is taking place. How then, is the leap made by our accusers to misrepresent nonviolent struggle as a Western construct for manipulation of the peoples of developing nations?

The Albert Einstein Institution is making a major contribution to the understanding and spread of information about nonviolent struggle and its application in extreme crises. Our analyses and studies can provide major understanding of the nature and potential of nonviolent struggle to individuals and groups who wish to explore the potential of this nonviolent technique for their own situation.

The literature that we have available on our website or in printed form is of a generic nature, and is available to any group who wishes to access it. We do not give groups specific instructions or advice, nor do we prohibit any person or group from accessing or making use of this information. It is therefore accessed by individuals from a range of countries and environments with diverse backgrounds and views. These include such varied groups as Kurdish groups in Iraq and Turkey, individuals and groups from Central Asian republics, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, a collection of Eritrean exile groups, pacifist organizations, Israeli settlers, Nepali human rights organizations, and activists from numerous other countries on nearly every continent.

One publication in particular, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, has been an important factor in the worldwide dissemination of these ideas in recent years. This publication, originally written at the request of a Burmese dissident in 1993, is a serious introduction to the use of nonviolent action to oust dictatorships. Since its original translation into the five languages of Burma, the publication has spread almost completely on its own, with almost no funding available to assist its promotion, translation, or printing. To date, it is available in translated form in thirty languages, including Indonesian, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, Kyrgyz, Vietnamese, Farsi, Tibetan, Azeri, Russian, Khmer, Serbian, and numerous others. Several of the translations available on the website of the Institution have been downloaded thousands of times. Two additional translations of this publication are currently in preparation.

Another publication, *The Anti-Coup*, contains important recommendations for dealing with another type of threat: coups d'état against democratically elected governments. It details measures that civilians, civil society, and governments can take to prevent and block coups d'état and executive usurpations. The publication also includes specific legislative steps and other

measures that governments and non-governmental institutions can follow to prepare for anti-coup resistance.

Ironically, this increased recognition and growing demand for our work comes at a time when the Institution's finances are unable to adequately respond to this demand. We have had to drastically reduce our staff and programs, which has decreased our capacity to be responsive to individuals and groups who request information and publications.

As Gene Sharp writes, knowledge of these ideas and their applications for diverse objectives is *power potential*. With wise thinking and careful planning, this *power potential* can be transformed into *effective power*, and can level the playing field in a world where nations and groups with the military might to enforce their will on a population often attempt to do so. Nonviolent struggle is indeed the weapon of the poor and oppressed. It is a means by which oppressed populations can gain an advantage over powerful and wealthy elites, whose capacity to use violence against them is usually far superior. It is therefore ironic that those who might view themselves as champions of the poor and dispossessed then characterize this work as being wielded to advance the causes of the powerful.

Some accusers will continue to present nonviolent action, wherever it occurs, as a Western plot, despite evidence to the contrary. Those who attempt to dismiss the nonviolent struggles taking place as being instigated, controlled, and manipulated from Western capitals, do a grave injustice to millions of people. This view ignores work by activists of nonviolent struggle in studying, writing, thinking and reflecting on their own experiences, organizing, preparing translations, and planning--deciding how they can empower themselves to strive for changes in their society--independent of any outside group or foreign agenda.

We refer you to two open letters by Gene Sharp on the home page of the Albert Einstein Institution at www.aeinstein.org. We also invite you to review our website and access our publications, many of which are available for download.

Persons, groups, and regimes that support the power elites of the world will see our information, that peaceful liberation is possible, as dangerous. We ask that you do not believe and spread their lies. Instead, we need help to continue and expand our studies of the possibility of popular empowerment and peaceful liberation.
