

## 2020 IPA Prix Voltaire Shortlist

Embargoed until 10 March 2020

The shortlist for the 2020 IPA Prix Voltaire is:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>
1.	Avesta Yayinlari	Turkey
2.	Mr Chong Ton Sin	Malaysia
3.	Liberal Publishing House	Vietnam
4.	Maktaba-e-Daniyal	Pakistan

### **Avesta Yayinlari, Publishing House, Turkey**

Avesta was founded in 1995 and has published around 700 books in more than 50 series, with some in English and French but most in Kurdish and Turkish. The company has faced lawsuits over the

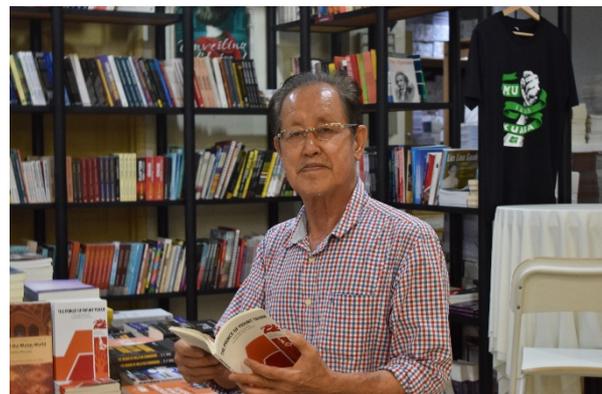
years for a number of its books. Upon the opening of a bookshop in south eastern Turkey in 1999 these lawsuits intensified and their warehouse subject to an arson attack which destroyed 3000 books and ultimately the closing of the store in 2016. The owner of the publishing house, Abdullah Keskin, was investigated in 2019 on charges of propaganda for terrorist organisations. The company received the Turkish Publishers Association Freedom of Thought and Expression award in 2019.

In addition to the investigation into the owner of the publishing house, Abdullah Keskin, in 2019 for “propaganda for terrorist organizations”, he was also charged and received a prison sentence for “separatist propaganda” in [2002](#) for publishing a U.S. [journalist’s book](#) about Turkey’s Kurdish minority population. This was later reduced to a fine. According to a [book on censorship in literature](#), he had faced criminal charges five times in 1999 and twice in 2001 for publishing historical and academic books that referred to the Kurd’s struggle to maintain their identity, language and traditions.



### **Mr Chong Ton Sin, Gerakbudaya/SIRD Publishing House, Malaysia**

At the age of 52, after many years of political activism and 8 years in detention, Mr Chong Ton Sin launched Gerakbudaya Publishing House in 2000 and then an academic imprint SIRD in 2003. His intention was to create a publishing house and distributor for controversial but important books for Malaysians to read at affordable prices and in all the country’s major languages. At the



time, much of Malaysian media and publishing was directly or indirectly controlled by the government through ownership and censorship. Recent books included *The Sarawak Report* on the 1MDB scandal, other publications have focused on other voices from Malaysia’s recent political history as well as on deforestation (a source of corruption in Malaysia). The latest publication which has been subject to an investigation was *Unveiling Choice* by Maryam Lee – a Muslim feminist on the social pressure to wear the headscarf in Malaysia. The results of the investigation are still unknown.

Gerakbudaya has also published books which would be unable to be published elsewhere, such as *Once a Jolly Hangman* by Alan Shadrake, which was banned in Singapore with the author arrested.

### Liberal Publishing House, Vietnam

The publishing house was founded in February 2019 in Ho Chi Minh City by a group of dissidents as a direct challenge to the government's control of the industry and to bring the non-fiction work of Vietnam's growing crop of dissident writers to the nation's readers.

"Every printing house in Vietnam is controlled by the government. We had to buy our own printing press to do it clandestinely," said Liberal Publishing House's founding member



In Vietnam such publications are known as Samizdat - the illegal copying and distribution of books - and are banned by the government as "anti-state" activity. Under Article 117 of Vietnam's criminal code, anyone involved in Samizdat risks a jail term of 20 years.

According to Amnesty International's Vietnam campaign team, police have questioned nearly 100 people for either owning or reading books printed by Liberal Publishing House. In November 2019 Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch [called](#) for the intimidation and harassment of Liberal Publishing House to stop.

Al Jazeera reported on how Liberal Publishing house works in a clandestine manner and how it pushes boundaries [here](#). It seems that in the past, the tendency for clandestine publishers focused on translated books, but Liberal Publishing house also publishes books from Vietnamese authors inside the country. [On 3 January 2020](#), authorities detained activists for reading books from Liberal Publishing House in "an apparent crackdown on independent reading in the country". They also issue reports on political events – most recently on 9.2.2020 – such as the attack on Dong Tam, Vietnam:

*February 9 marks one month since the brutality in Dong Tam. On that day, the Liberal Publishing House and the Dong Tam Task Force [released](#) an updated version of the report "Fighting Over Senh Field: A Report on the Dong Tam Village Attack," confirming that, apart from the killing of local leader Le Dinh Kinh's, at least 26 residents have been arrested, and the number of arrests might still increase. "This report reaches the conclusion that this event is the largest peacetime land dispute in Vietnam in terms of troops deployed, as well as one of the deadliest; it also highlights concerns about police brutality, abuse of power, and the contradictory concept of the 'people's ownership of land' in Vietnam." Read the report, [here](#), and please share it widely as a way to call for an independent investigation into this attack.*

<https://nhaxuatbantudo.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/NhaxuatbanTuDo/>

## Maktaba-e-Daniyal, Pakistan

The award-winning satire "A Case of Exploding Mangoes" by journalist turned novelist Mohammed Hanif about Pakistan's former Martial law administrator /president Gen Zia-ul-Haq was published in Urdu in Pakistan by Maktaba-e-Daniyal in November 2019. In January 2020 copies were confiscated in a raid on the publisher and the author reported to have received a defamation notice from Gen Zia's son.



Online [reports](#) cite the author Mohammed Hanif (via Twitter) claiming that people claiming to be from the ISI barged into his Urdu publisher Maktaba Daniyal offices, confiscated all copies of the Urdu translation of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. The manager was threatened, and officials had demanded information on his whereabouts. Hanif also said security agents seized stock from his Karachi publishers and bookshops in Islamabad and Lahore. The book was launched to acclaim in English in 2008, when it, was long-listed for the Man Booker prize. The book won the Commonwealth first book prize in 2009.