

INTERNATIONAL PEN

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International PEN protests the continued detention of leading dissident writer and former President of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, Liu Xiaobo

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We the undersigned, support International PEN, the world association of writers with members in over 100 countries, in its call for the release of **Liu Xiaobo**, prominent dissident writer, former President and current Board member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, who has been detained since 8 December 2008 for signing Charter 08, a declaration calling for political reforms and human rights. Liu Xiaobo is being held under Residential Surveillance, a form of pre-trial detention, at an undisclosed location in Beijing, and no charges against him have been made known.

Liu Xiaobo is among a large number of dissidents to have been detained or harassed after issuing an open letter calling on the National People's Congress Standing Committee to ratify the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and launching Charter 08, a declaration calling for political reforms and human rights. These activities formed part of campaigns across China to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December), and the Charter has now been signed by more than 7000 scholars, journalists, freelance writers and activists. International PEN is alarmed about an apparent crackdown on those who have endorsed the Charter, and urges that all signatories of Charter 08 are protected from further harassment.

International PEN considers Liu Xiaobo to be held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to free expression, and therefore in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which China is a signatory, as well as Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution. PEN demands the immediate and unconditional release of Liu Xiaobo and all those currently detained in the People's Republic of China for the peaceful expression of their opinions.

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