

PEN CANADA
25 YEARS for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION

June 24, 2009

His Excellency Hu Jintao
President of the People's Republic of China
State Council
Beijing 100032
P.R. China

Mr. Meng Jianzhu
Minister of the Public Security
East Chang'an Avenue 14
Beijing 100741
P.R. China

Excellencies,

On behalf of the 1,200 members and associate members of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of an international organization of writers dedicated to protecting freedom of expression wherever it is threatened, I am writing to express our extreme concern regarding the formal arrest of prominent writer and past president of the Independent Chinese PEN Center, Liu Xiaobo.

As you know, as of June 8, 2009, Mr. Liu had been held for the maximum six months under "residential surveillance," and therefore, under Chinese law, ought to have been freed on that day. We were deeply troubled to learn instead that on June 24, police notified Mr. Liu's wife of his formal arrest on suspicion of "inciting to subvert state power."

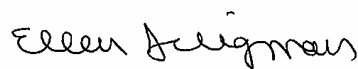
We also learned that the official news agency, Xinhua, has reported that Mr. Liu was involved in "agitation activities, such as [the] spreading of rumours and defaming the government." The report offered no evidence for this claim, except an alleged confession Mr. Liu is said to have made while in police custody.

In light of reports that Mr. Liu has not been allowed to see his wife, Liu Xia, or lawyer, Mo Shaoping, in over two months, we seek assurances that he will be granted access to them as a matter of urgency, and we renew our call for his immediate and unconditional release.

Liu Xiaobo is a respected colleague and an internationally recognized advocate for the rights Chinese citizens are guaranteed under both international law and China's own constitution. PEN Canada is seriously concerned that Mr. Liu's formal arrest on the named charges violates his right to freedom of expression as set out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Ellen Seligman
President, PEN Canada

Cc: Ambassador Lan Lijun
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Ottawa, ON K1N 1A1

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