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# **PEN Concerned about Terms of Release of Cyber-Dissident in China**

## **Repression of Writers and Journalists Persists 204 Days before Olympic Games Begin**

New York, Toronto, January 16, 2008—After one month in detention, Chinese internet writer and dissident Wang Dejia (pen name Jing Chu) was released on January 12, 2008 after agreeing not to write anything political for one year. While writers in the International PEN community welcome this news, the terms of Wang's release and the continued detention and harassment of dozens of other writers in China in advance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics remains deeply troubling.

According to PEN's information, Guangxi-based dissident writer Wang Dejia was arrested at his home in Quanzhou on December 13, 2007 and taken to the Detention Center of Quanzhou County, where he was held on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power" for articles specifically criticizing the human rights climate in China as the government prepares for the Olympic Games. He was released on January 12, 2008, "pending trial for one year." According to Wang, the police demanded that he not write anything "attacking the leadership of the Party and State," "inciting subversion of state power," or any "political commentary." He accepted these demands "on a

temporary basis,” he said, while reserving his right to write. Wang’s personal items that were seized by police during his arrest, including his computer, have not yet been returned.

“These conditions are almost as repressive a form of censorship as a prison term,” said Dr. Yu Zhang, Secretary-General and Writers in Prison Committee Coordinator of the Independent Chinese PEN Center. “Mr. Wang is a well-known defender of human rights in China, but now is threatened with trial to be silenced until after the Olympic Games.”

“Removing a writer from prison and then prohibiting him from writing certain things makes a mockery of China’s promises to the world and to the International Olympic Committee,” said Isobel Harry, Executive Director, PEN Canada. “China promised an improved human rights climate and freedom of the press when awarded the Olympics, and yet there are still at least 41 writers, journalists and cyber-dissidents in prison.”

Over the last month, the international community has noted an increase in the level of repression against Chinese writers. Members of the International Chinese PEN Center have been harassed and detained, and their activities stifled. Hu Jia, an internationally respected freelance reporter, blogger, and civil rights, environmental and AIDS activist, was arrested on December 27, 2007. He has been refused access to his lawyer and his wife and infant child are subject to harassment and virtual house arrest.

“There are now just over 200 days until the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing on August 8, 2008,” noted Francine Prose, President of PEN American Center. “The silencing of these writers speaks loudly to the authorities’ refusal to admit that their citizens are ready for freedom of expression. Now is the time for the Chinese government to truly live up to its

promises by releasing the remaining 41 writers in prison and restoring these fundamental human rights.”

For more information on PEN’s China campaign, “We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression: Countdown to the Beijing Olympics,” including biographies of the 41 imprisoned writers, visit [www.pen.org/china2008](http://www.pen.org/china2008) and [www.pencanada.ca](http://www.pencanada.ca)