

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

Larry Siems, PEN American Center, (212) 334-1660 ext. 105, lsiems@pen.org

Isobel Harry, PEN Canada, (416) 703-8448 ext. 22, iharry@pencanada.ca

Yu Zhang, Independent Chinese PEN Center, +46-8-50022792, wipc@penchinese.net

Chinese Writer and Professor Guo Quan Detained Faces Possible Subversion Charges for Articles on Earthquake Response

New York, Toronto, Stockholm, May 22, 2008—Guo Quan, a writer and former associate professor of literature at Nanjing Normal University, has been detained for his articles on the government response to the May 12th earthquake in Sichuan Province and may face subversion charges in what PEN called part of “a pattern of intensified harassment of dissident writers in China.”

According to PEN’s sources, Guo was taken into custody on May 17, 2008, and held incommunicado until the following day, when his family was finally informed of his whereabouts. His detention most likely stems from seven articles published in six days on mainland Chinese web sites critical of the government response to the earthquake and questioning the safety of certain structures. He will reportedly be held without charge for 10 days, after which he may face criminal detention. Guo’s computers were confiscated by authorities.

Guo Quan, aged 40, holds a Master’s degree in Law and a PhD in Philosophy, and has published a number of books and articles in China. His early writing focused mainly on philosophy, religion, and literary analysis, and turned political last November when he challenged the one-party system by writing an open letter to government officials advocating multi-party competition and founding the Chinese New Democracy Party, which he says claims 30 million members.

After the party’s founding, Guo was dismissed from his teaching position at Nanjing Normal University. He continued to write articles on various political and social issues on his blog and other mainland Chinese web sites before they were deleted and his blog was shut down. Many of these articles have been collected on overseas Chinese web sites such as Boxun.com and EpochTimes.com.

Guo’s detention followed the May 15 release of writer and Independent Chinese PEN Center member Zhou Yuanzhi, who was taken from his home in Zhongxiang City, Hubei Province on May 3, 2008 and held at an unknown location under the Residential Surveillance law, which provides for interrogation of suspects without formal arrest. He reported that during that time he was held at a hotel and questioned by the police about his articles, books, contacts and interviews. Though no longer in detention, Zhou remains under heavy restrictions. He is forbidden from traveling beyond his home city without police authorization, prohibited from communicating with strangers, and banned from publishing. These restrictions could last up to six months under Chinese law, during which Zhou could be formally detained and questioned at any time.

PEN American Center, PEN Canada, and the Independent Chinese PEN Center are among the 145 worldwide centers of International PEN, an organization that works to promote friendship and intellectual co-operation among writers everywhere, to fight for freedom of expression, and represent the conscience of world literature. On December 10, 2007, the centers launched We Are Ready for Freedom of Expression, an Olympic countdown campaign to protest China's imprisonment of at least 41 writers and journalists and to seek an end to internet censorship and other restrictions on the freedom to write in that country. For more information, please visit www.pen.org/china2008, www.pencanada.ca, and www.chinesepen.org.

###