

RAN #8 February 29, 2008

CHINA: Serious health concerns for four writers: **Xu Wei, Jin Haike, Yang Zili** and **Zhang Honghai**, after prolonged periods of detention; reports of ill-treatment.

Please note: On December 10, 2007 PEN Canada launched a Countdown to the Olympics. On that day (242 from Olympics opening) there were 40 writers in prison. Today there are 38. Many upcoming RANS will be part of this campaign; for details see our website. Please participate!

BACKGROUND: Xu Wei, Jin Haike, Yang Zili and Zhang Honghai, reporter for *Xiaofei Ribao (Consumer Daily)*, geologist/writer, writer/computer engineer, and freelance writer respectively, were arrested on March 13, 2001 and charged with 'subversion' as a result of their participation in the 'Xin Qingnian Xuehui' (New Youth Study Group), an informal gathering of individuals concerned with political and economic inequalities who used the internet to circulate articles. On May 28, 2003, Xu Wei and Jin Haike were sentenced to ten years in prison, and Yang Zili and Zhang Honghai to eight years, on charges of subversion. Jin Haike, who received abdominal surgery in November 2007, is reportedly in acute pain. Zhang Hong Hia and Xu Wei were reportedly subjected to ill-treatment in prison, leading Xu Wei to stage hunger strikes in protest, exacerbating concerns for his well-being.

Appeal Letter

February 29, 2008

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

Excellency:

As a member of PEN Canada, I once again join writers from the community of International PEN, the worldwide association of writers, in urging you to release our colleagues who are in prison in your country in violation of their right to freedom of expression.

In particular at this time, I strongly protest the lengthy prison sentences handed down to writers Xu Wei, Jin Haike, Yang Zili and Zhang Honghai, solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions.

According to PEN's information, these four prisoners are all suffering from acute medical problems, some of which do not appear to have been properly diagnosed, and for which there are concerned that they are not receiving appropriate medical attention. At least two of these writers reportedly have suffered mistreatment during their detention.

The members of PEN Canada seek assurances that all four are treated humanely in detention, and granted access to necessary medical care and family visits. In addition, I join my colleagues in calling for their immediate and unconditional release, in accordance with the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which China is a signatory.

China promised an improved human rights climate and freedom of the press when awarded the Olympics, and yet there are still at least 38 writers, journalists and cyber-dissidents in

prison. And removing a writer from prison and then prohibiting him from writing certain things does not honour China's promises to the world and to the International Olympic Committee.

In order that these writers are not simply replaced by others and that writers and journalists are not imprisoned in violation of their right to freedom of expression in the future, we respectfully request that the Chinese government:

- abide by its pledge that "there will be no restrictions on media reporting and movement of journalists up to and including the Olympic Games";
- end internet censorship and reform laws that are used to suppress the free exchange of information and ideas on the internet; and
- not impose conditions of censorship on writers who are released.

China's citizens are ready to exercise the rights they are guaranteed under their constitution and under international law, including the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

With all eyes on China this year, we look forward to the good news that all of our colleagues have been released and that no restrictions have been imposed upon their freedom to write.

Sincerely,

[your signature and name and address]

Copies (care of the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa) to:

Procurator General Mr. Jia Chunwang
Supreme People's Procuratorate
Beiheyuan Street 147
100726 Beijing
P.R.China

H.E. Lu Shumin
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada
Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China
515 St. Patrick Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 5H3
Fax: (613) 789-1911

Huang Huikang
Political Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China
515 St. Patrick Street, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 5H3
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Email Address: chinaemb_ca@mfa.gov.cn

Please also send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

Robert Sinclair
Deputy Director, Human Rights Division
Foreign Affairs Canada
Email: robert.sinclair@international.gc.ca

Robert Wright
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19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie
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