

RAN #9 March 7, 2008

CHINA: Women writers experiencing ongoing harassment

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: Five months before the opening of the Beijing Olympics on 8 August 2008, International PEN is marking International Women's Day (8 March) by celebrating the work of three women writers under threat in China: **Zeng Jinyan, Tsering Woesser** and **Li Jianhong**. They are among many lesser-known dissidents suffering wide-ranging forms of harassment, including brief detentions, periods of house arrest, travel restrictions, loss of work, denial of access to information and communications, heavy surveillance and censorship.

These women write in the face of great personal risk. They use the Internet to tell their stories and those of others living through similar injustices. Although they are all banned within China, they strive to keep their voices heard, using what freedom remains to them to seek out overseas Chinese websites, publishers, and foreign news outlets. Amidst signs of an apparent crackdown on dissent as the Olympic Games approach, there are fears that all three women are at increasing risk of arrest and lengthy imprisonment. [for their stories, refer to www.pencanada.ca]

Please send the appeal letter below. Note: there are no fax numbers for Chinese authorities. We recommend that you mail your letter to the President of China in P.R. China, and send your appeal to the Chinese embassy in Ottawa asking them to forward it to other authorities in China and welcoming any comments.

For a full list of Honorary Members, click on the following link:
<http://www.pencanada.ca/prison/HonoraryMembers.php>.

March 7, 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 allow writers to live and work freely in your country.

In recognition of International Women's Day, March 8, 2008, I join International PEN's Writers in Prison Committee in protesting the restrictions imposed on **Zeng Jinyan, Tsering Woesser** and **Li Jianhong**, and demand that they are allowed to live and work freely, in accordance with 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 many other writers are experiencing harassment which takes the form of brief

detentions, periods of house arrest, travel restrictions, loss of work, denial of access to information and communications, heavy surveillance and censorship.

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;
- 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
Fax: (613) 789-1911
E-mail 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
Ambassador
Embassy of Canada
19 Dongzhimenwai Dajie
Chao Yang District
Beijing 100600 PRC
Email: beijing-pa@international.gc.ca
Fax: (011 86 10) 6532-5033

Toby Schwartz

Desk Officer, China
Foreign Affairs Canada
Email: toby.schwartz@international.gc.ca