

PEN CANADA

for **FREEDOM** of **EXPRESSION**

Officials from the Changsha security bureau detained journalist, poet and dissident writer Shi Tao near his home in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, on November 24, 2004. This came several months after he e-mailed notes detailing the propaganda ministry's instructions to the media about coverage of the anniversary of the crackdown at Tiananmen Square. Authorities confiscated his computer and other documents and warned his family to stay quiet about the matter.

On December 14, authorities issued a formal arrest order, charging Shi with "leaking state secrets." On April 27, 2005, the Changsha Intermediate People's Court found Shi guilty and sentenced him to a 10-year prison term. On June 2, the Hunan Province High People's Court rejected Shi's appeal without giving the journalist a hearing. Shi's mother has applied for a review of the appeal hearing on the grounds that it did not comply with China's Criminal Procedures Law.

Shi Tao admits to sending the email, but disputes that the document was a "state secret." The San Francisco-based Dui Hua Foundation, which advocates for the release of political prisoners in China, has translated into English the verdict of the Changsha Intermediate People's Court. According to this translation, the verdict reveals that **Yahoo!** Holdings (Hong Kong) Ltd provided Chinese police with detailed information that enabled them to link Shi's personal email account and the specific message containing the alleged "state secret" to the IP address of his computer. Yahoo! has refused to offer any details beyond the following statement: "Just like any other global company, Yahoo! must ensure that its local country sites must operate within the laws, regulations and customs of the country in which they are based." Yahoo! is not believed to be under any legal obligation to co-operate with the Chinese police.

Shi Tao, aged 37, worked for the Changsha-based daily Dangdai Shang Bao (Contemporary Business News) until May 2004, when he became a freelance journalist and writer. He is a published poet, and is known for his social commentaries published on overseas Chinese-language media such as Democracy Forum (www.boxun.com). He is a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre.

Shi Tao is held at the National Security Bureau of Hunan Province, Changsha. In November 2006, his mother reported that her son was in decent physical shape and that a skin disease from which he had been suffering had been mostly cured by medicine that his family was supplying. Shi Tao was still doing forced labour in prison, which included assembling stone beads as well as cleaning. However, he has restricted access to reading material and is only permitted to write letters to his family.



SHI TAO

PEN Canada believes that Shi Tao has been convicted in clear violation to his fundamental right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We call for his immediate and unconditional release, and urge that the government of the People's Republic of China cease its repression of journalists and writers in the country.

Send appeals to:

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