

PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION



Zheng Yichun, a Professor of English, was arrested by the security services in Yingkou, Liaoning Province, on December 3, 2004, and charged with "suspicion of inciting subversion of state power". Professor Zheng's arrest was first made public on the February 24, 2005, when the Yingkou daily first broke the story. According to reports, the police also searched Professor Zheng's home and took away various effects, including his computer and some of his written work.

The Prosecutor's Office cited 63 of Zheng's articles as evidence for the charges against him. They were among 300 articles that the police confiscated from his home. Zheng, a prolific Internet writer and poet, has published several books on a number of topics, including political reform, increased capitalism in China and an end to the practice of imprisoning writers.

Zheng's trial on April 26, 2005, lasted less than three hours and was attended by high-level authorities of northeast China's Liaoning Province. Zheng's defence lawyer, Li Mingchang, entered a guilty plea but argued that his client's writings were protected under Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution, which guarantees freedom of the press. Li said that this constitutional protection should outweigh charges of subversion brought under Article 105 of Chinese criminal law.

Zheng was convicted on July 21, 2005, of "incitement to subversion of state power" for his critical writings, many of which were posted on-line on overseas Web sites. He was sentenced to seven years in prison on September 20 by the Yingkou Intermediate People's Court, Liaoning Province. Zheng is being held in the No.1 Prison in Panjin City, Liaoning Province. His health has reportedly already taken a turn for the worse since his arrest. Zheng suffers from diabetes.

Zheng was born in 1959 in Yingkou City, Liaoning Province, and is part of the ethnic Korean minority in China.

PEN Canada deplores the persecution of individuals seeking to express their views peacefully over the Internet. We believe that Zheng Yichun has been sentenced in violation of his 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.

Send appeals to:

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