

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 172/08 (ASA 17/084/2008, 18 June 2008) Incommunicado detention/fear of torture and other ill-treatment and new concern: medical concern

CHINA

Huang Qi (m), aged 46, human rights activist

During a 26 May visit by his lawyer, Sichuan human rights activist Huang Qi claimed that he had been questioned for long hours and sometimes deprived of sleep: he had once been interrogated continuously for three days without rest. Huang Qi said he had two tumours, diagnosed by the doctor in the detention centre, on his stomach and chest that had developed since March. He also said that he was suffering from frequent headaches, an irregular heartbeat and insomnia. The authorities have turned down repeated requests by his family to release Huang Qi on bail to await trial. Amnesty International is concerned that Huang Qi may not be receiving adequate medical treatment.

Huang Qi is awaiting trial for "unlawfully holding documents classified as highly secret." He was detained by plainclothes police on 10 June 2008. He had no access to lawyers or his family, on the grounds that the charges against him involved state secrets, and was only allowed a first meeting with a lawyer on 23 September after more than three months held incommunicado. On 3 February, the court forbade Huang Qi's lawyer to make photocopies of the case documents assembled by the police in their investigation, to prepare his defence, again on the grounds that they contained state secrets. By law the court should have made a public announcement of Huang Qi's trial three days before it began, but in fact it gave only one day's notice to his family and lawyers, on 2 February. Later that day, after objections by Huang Qi's lawyers, the court postponed his trial to a date that has not been announced.

Huang Qi had been jailed as a prisoner of conscience from August 2001 to June 2005, for "inciting subversion of state power," because he had published the names of people arrested after the 4 June 1989 military crackdown on pro-democracy activists, on his Chinese-language website, www.64tianwang.com. He was beaten in prison. He was released on 4 June 2005. Since then, he has continued to maintain his website, and has helped victims of human rights abuses to sue the government or document and publicize their cases to increase pressure for government accountability.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The authorities keep a tight rein on freedom of expression, so as to suppress dissent, and have cracked down hard to suppress real or perceived dissent in the media. The Criminal Law contains broad and vaguely defined charges of "stealing and revealing state secrets" and "subversion," which are used to detain and prosecute activists, journalists and internet users, and have discouraged reporting of sensitive issues, such as human rights concerns or disagreement with the government. In the wake of the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the authorities at first allowed unprecedented and widely praised reporting freedoms in the quake zone, but then tightened their control of the media as local families began public protests calling for accountability for local officials, especially with regard to the collapse of school buildings which they said had been poorly constructed. Several journalists were prevented from reporting in the region, and some were detained for trying to cover the protests. The local authorities also took steps to prevent protesters from travelling to Beijing to petition the central government over their grievances.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Chinese or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to release Huang Qi immediately and unconditionally, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and assembly;
- urging them to ensure Huang Qi has access to his family and lawyers, and to any medical attention he may require;
- urging them to ensure that Huang Qi is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while he remains in custody;
- calling on them to end use of vaguely-defined charges relating to "state secrets" to crack down on human rights defenders

APPEALS TO:

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

ZENG Shengquan Tingzhang
Director of the Sichuan Provincial Department of Public Security
Sichuansheng Gong'anting
9 Jindunlu
Chengdushi 610041
Sichuansheng
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 28 86301177
Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

MENG Jianzhu Buzhang
Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China
Gong'anbu
14 Dongchang'anjie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100741
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 July 2009.