

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE DENIED ACCESS TO FAMILY

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment following a secret trial in January 2019. His 87-year-old mother has not able to see him since 2016 and, as her own health continues to deteriorate, she worries that she may not never see him. Huang Qi continues to suffer from serious health concerns of his own and, without access to a lawyer of his choice or his family, he is at real risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Minister Tang Yijun
Minister of Justice
6, Chaoyangmen Nandajie,
Chaoyang Qu,
Beijing Shi, 100051
People's Republic of China*

Dear Minister Tang:

I am writing to express my concern for **Huang Qi** (黄琦), who is currently serving a 12-year sentence in Sichuan Bazhong Prison for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. His 87-year-old mother, Pu Wenqing, is gravely ill and has been unable to see him since he was taken away in 2016.

On 25 April 2020, Pu published an open letter online stating that she was supposed to have visited Huang Qi two months after his transfer to Sichuan Bazhong Prison in December 2019. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, her visit was cancelled and there has been no further information about when she will be allowed to see Huang Qi. Founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, Huang Qi was charged with “intentionally leaking state secrets” (故意泄露国家秘密罪) and “providing state secrets to a foreign entity” (为境外非法提供情报罪) by the Mianyang City Intermediate People’s Court on 29 July 2019. Huang Qi is a prisoner of conscience and he should not be imprisoned for peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. It is distressing to learn that Huang Qi has had no access to a lawyer since he was sentenced.

I also worry about Huang Qi’s own health in prison. Suffering from chronic kidney disease and hydrocephalus, as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs, it is unclear whether he even has access to adequate medical care.

I call on you to immediately:

- **Release Huang Qi immediately and unconditionally unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards.**
- **Pending his release, ensure that Huang Qi has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**
- **Pending his release, allow him prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request or as necessary.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Huang Qi founded “64 Tianwang” together with his then-wife Zeng Li in 1998, and the website continues to be one of the few major mainland-based websites that report and document petitioners’ protests in China. Most of the website’s contributors were petitioners before becoming citizen journalists to report on other petitioners’ protests and arrests.

Incidents of ill-treatment have been reported throughout his detention. Most recently, Huang Qi told his lawyer on 23 October 2018 that doctors and detention centre officers provided false reports of his blood pressure and understated the extent of his critical medical conditions. Previously on 28 July 2017, Huang Qi told his lawyer that he was made to stand for hours at a time and repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. Then on 3 November 2017 he said he had been beaten up by other detainees at the Mianyang City Detention Centre, Sichuan Province, on 24-26 October, with knowledge of at least one of the detention centre’s officers.

Over the years, Huang Qi and other “64 Tianwang” contributors have been frequently detained or harassed by the Chinese authorities. Huang Qi has been imprisoned twice. He was first detained in June 2000 – the 11th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown – before being convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to five years in prison in May 2003. He was again imprisoned for three years after exposing the substandard building scandal following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan.

According to “64 Tianwang”, the website’s citizen journalists have been questioned or placed under brief detention more than 100 times since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, and at least 30 have been imprisoned or placed under criminal detention. Ten “64 Tianwang” journalists are currently in prison, including Wang Jing, Zhang Jixin, Li Min, Sun Enwei, Li Chunhua, Wei Wenyuan, Xiao Jianfang, Li Zhaoxiu, Chen Mingyan and Wang Shurong.

Huang Qi’s lawyers have also faced retaliation by the authorities. In February 2018, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice notified Guangzhou-based lawyer Sui Muqing that he was being disbarred. The lawyer, who had previously represented Huang Qi, believes his disbarment was related to his legal representation of human rights defenders. Another of Huang Qi’s lawyers, Liu Zhengqing, was also disbarred in January 2019.

Pu Wenqing was taken away by Sichuan police in early December 2018 while travelling from Sichuan province to Beijing to seek help from diplomats for her son, Huang Qi. According to sources, she was repeatedly threatened by the police during detention before being released on 21 January 2019. According to Pu’s letter, state security officers stopped her from meeting and hiring human rights lawyers. Pu has shared that her own health is deteriorating rapidly, with no treatment available for the tumours spreading in her lungs. She is also suffering from diabetes and medical problems with her liver, kidney and stomach and is afraid that she will not see her son before she dies.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or Chinese
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 June 2020
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Huang Qi (He/Him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/0838/2019/en/>