

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST'S HEALTH FURTHER DETERIORATED

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang” was able to speak with his mother on videoconference on 24 November 2022. His health has further deteriorated following his diagnosis of hyperthyroidism in July. With limited access to healthcare and additional supplies, his poor health is at risk of significant deterioration. His mother, 89, continues to be subject to heavy surveillance. The authorities must ensure that Huang has access to immediate and proper medical care and allow him to speak with his family and lawyers of his choice.

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

Director Su Yuanliang
Sichuan Bazhong Prison
9, Xiangjiazhui, Bazhou,
Bazhong shi, Sichuan sheng, 636005
People's Republic of China

Dear Director Su:

*I am writing to express my grave concern for the health and wellbeing of **Huang Qi** (黄琦), a human rights defender who is currently serving a 12-year sentence in Sichuan Bazhong Prison for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. It is distressing to learn that Huang Qi's health has further deteriorated and is at risk of worsening further. The prison authorities must ensure that he has access to immediate and proper medical care.*

For your information, Huang was known to suffer from chronic kidney disease and hydrocephalus, as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs, before being detained. It has been reported that Huang has not been able to access to proper medical care in prison. Huang's mother spoke with Huang via videoconference on 24 November. According to Huang's mother, Huang has become very frail after he was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism in July 2022. It is also worrying that Huang reportedly has only limited access to the account where his friends and family members have deposited money for him to purchase additional supplies in the prison. Huang reportedly has not been able to get necessary treatments in prison for months.

I also find it appalling that the authorities continue to put Huang's elderly mother under heavy surveillance. Pu, 89 years old, has repeatedly requested the authorities allow her to visit Huang, but none of these requests have been granted. The authorities promised her that they would remove restrictions and surveillance after the 20th National Party Congress in October but failed to keep their promise.

Huang Qi should not have spent even a day in prison simply for exercising his rights to freedom of expression. He should be released immediately. Furthermore, there is an alarming pattern of deaths of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. Therefore, pending his release and to ensure that no one else dies while in your detention facilities, I urge you to:

- **Ensure that Huang Qi receives urgent, regular, and adequate medical care,**
- **Ensure that he has regular and unrestricted access to his family and to lawyers of his choice, and that he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Huang Qi founded “64 Tianwang” together with his then-wife Zeng Li in 1998, and the website continues to publish reports of the human right violations investigated by citizen journalists in China. 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 was first taken away in 2016 and has reported incidents of ill-treatment throughout his detention. On 23 October 2018 he told his lawyer that doctors and detention centre officers provided false reports of his blood pressure and understated the extent of his critical medical conditions. Prior to that, on 28 July 2017, Huang Qi told his lawyer that he was made to stand for hours at a time and was repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. On 3 November 2017 he also shared that he had been beaten up by other detainees at the Mianyang City Detention Centre, Sichuan Province, on 24-26 October, with the 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 put on trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment twice. He was 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.

In addition, lawyers who have worked on Huang Qi’s case have also faced harassment and intimidation 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.

There is an alarming pattern of deaths of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. In July 2017, human rights activist and Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo died in custody after the authorities refused his and his family’s requests to receive treatment abroad for his cancer. The same year, Chinese writer and government critic Yang Tongyan (pen name Yang Tianshui) died three months after being released on medical parole and undergoing an operation to remove a brain tumour. Beijing activist and prominent campaigner Cao Shunli died from organ failure after months in custody in March 2014. She was denied appropriate medical treatment while in jail.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or Chinese

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 January 2023

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/asa17/5549/2022/en/>