

AI Index: PRE 01/409/2010  
08 December 2010

## **China must end human rights crackdown in advance of Nobel award**

Amnesty International is today calling on the Chinese government to end its intensifying crackdown on Chinese human rights activists ahead of the Nobel Peace Prize awards ceremony in Oslo on 10 December.

Amnesty International and Chinese human rights groups have documented hundreds of cases of people being detained, interrogated, or arrested in advance of the event honouring jailed Chinese human rights activist Liu Xiaobo.

“The Chinese government’s travel restrictions target not just human rights defenders, but also ordinary travellers who somehow trigger the government’s suspicion,” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary General. “This reaction violates Chinese law as well as China’s international obligations and constitutes a serious breakdown in the rule of law.”

Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo is currently serving an 11-year sentence for “inciting subversion of state power” for his part as the leading author behind “Charter 08”, a manifesto calling for the recognition of fundamental human rights in China.

Liu Xiaobo has consistently maintained that the sentence violates both China’s own constitution and basic human rights, but, like many others in China who have chosen to speak out, he has been severely punished.

He is just one of thousands of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience currently being held in China. Among the recent cases that Amnesty International has highlighted are:

- Liu Xianbin, a prominent Sichuan democracy activist detained since 28 June 2010 on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power”.
- Gao Zhisheng, named one of China’s “top 10 lawyers” by the Ministry of Justice in 2001, he was later arrested and tortured for his human rights activities and has been “missing” since being taken by police from his home in Shaanxi Province on 4 February 2009.
- Tan Zuoren, an environmental activist critical of the high death rate in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake due to substandard construction, he was later convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” for commemorating the Tiananmen Square massacre and sentenced to a five-year prison sentence.
- Hairat Niyaz, a Uighur journalist convicted on charges of “endangering state security” in the wake of the 2009 Urumqi riots, he is now serving a 15-year sentence and being held incommunicado.
- Dhondup Wangchen, a Tibetan filmmaker arrested, tortured and held without charge for more than a year before being sentenced in a secret trial to six years’ imprisonment for “inciting separatism”.

“The Chinese government should release Liu Xiaobo and all the other prisoners of conscience,” said Salil Shetty. “They should uphold internationally recognised human rights standards, many of which are enshrined in their own constitution.”

The recent crackdown also coincides with a concerted campaign by Chinese authorities to disrupt the

Nobel awards ceremony.

Nobel rules require the winner or his or her immediate family to personally accept the prize. Liu Xiaobo's enforced absence means that for the first time since 1938, the peace prize will not be awarded at the ceremony.

Liu Xiaobo's wife, Liu Xia, could have collected the award for him, but she has been detained by Chinese authorities and is currently under house arrest in Beijing. She is unable to move about freely and has not been allowed to be in contact with friends or family for nearly two months.

Chinese authorities have also pressured other countries to boycott the ceremony. However, despite a campaign of political and economic pressure, only 18 countries have declined the invitation to the ceremony.

"The Chinese government should be celebrating this global recognition of a Chinese writer and activist," said Salil Shetty. "Instead, the government's very public tantrum has generated even more critical attention inside and outside China – and, ironically, emphasized the significance of Liu Xiaobo's message of respect for human rights."