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To: Health professionals
From: Medical office / Asia Regional Program
Date: 27 July 2001

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Li Wangyang
CHINA

Key words POC / ill-health / ill-treatment

Summary

On 6 July 1998, AI issued a medical appeal for Li Wangyang who was serving a thirteen year sentence for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". He was released on medical parole in July 1996, but eight months later he was taken back to Yuanjiang prison in Hunan province, Central China, in the middle of his treatment. AI was concerned at reports that he suffered heart disease. (See: AI Index: ASA 17/15/98, 6 July 1998; available on the internet at: <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA170151998>). Li Wangyang was released early in June 2000 because of his poor health. In February 2001 he went on hunger strike, demanding that the authorities pay for the treatment of his ailments. He was subsequently reapprehended in May 2001 and, on 9 July 2001, he was formally charged with subversion which often carries sentences of at least 10 years' imprisonment. It is likely that the charges of engaging in "incitement to overthrow the government" stem from his public struggle to demand compensation for his ill-treatment. It is not known where Li is currently being held.

Recommended actions

Please write polite letters on professional letterhead paper to the addresses below:

stating that you are writing about Li Wangyang whom you believe has been imprisoned solely for non-violent expression of his opinions and whom you regard as a prisoner of conscience;
appealing for Li Wangyang's prompt and unconditional release;
expressing serious concern at reports of Li Wangyang's medical problems, at least some of which appear to have been acquired, and left untreated, in prison;
seeking information on his current state of health and asking for details of whatever medical treatment he is receiving;
urging that Li Wangyang receive all necessary medical care in accordance with provisions set out in international standards.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 30 September 2001, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Addresses

Acting Governor of the Hunan Provincial People's Government
ZHANG Guoguang Daishengzhang
Hunansheng Renmin Zhengfu
7 Wuyizhonglu
Changshashi 410011
Hunansheng
People's Republic of China

Director of the Hunan Provincial Department of Justice
WU Zhenhan Tingzhang
Sifating
2 Shaoshanlu
Changshashi 410011
Hunansheng
People's Republic of China

Copies

Chinese Medical Association
42 Dongsixidajie
Beijing 100710
People's Republic of China
Fax: (86) 10 6512 3754
email: cmafrd@public3.bta.net.cn

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

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MEDICAL CONCERN
Li Wangyang
CHINA

Introduction

On 6 July 1998, AI issued a medical appeal for Li Wangyang who was serving a thirteen year sentence for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". He was released on medical parole in July 1996, but eight months later he was taken back to Yuanjiang prison in Hunan province, Central China, in the middle of his treatment. AI was concerned at reports that he suffered heart disease. (See: AI Index: ASA 17/15/98, 6 July 1998; available on the internet at: <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA170151998>). Li Wangyang was released early in June 2000 because of his poor health. In February 2001 he went on hunger strike, demanding that the authorities pay for the treatment of his ailments. He was subsequently reapprehended in May 2001 and, on 9 July 2001, he was formally charged with subversion which often carries sentences of at least 10 years' imprisonment. It is likely that the charges of engaging in "incitement to overthrow the government" stem from his public struggle to demand compensation for his ill-treatment. It is not known where Li is currently being held.

The present situation

Li Wangyang is reported to be weakened by his hunger strike and by the chronic ailments he suffers. Since at least May 2001 he has been reported to have been unable to walk unaided. AI is unaware of any independent medical examination having been carried out to assess Li's current state of health. The organization is urging that Li Wangyang be promptly released on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience and that he meanwhile receive proper diagnostic attention and whatever medical care he requires.

Background information

During the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations across China in 1989, Li Wangyang became chair of the independent Shaoyang Workers Autonomous Federation formed in Hunan Province in May 1989. He reportedly organized strikes and demonstrations, gave speeches and was a popular and influential figure locally in Shaoyang. Independent or autonomous workers' groups are illegal in China. The All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only officially recognized trade union. It is government-controlled and maintains a monopoly on representing workers' interests in China.

Li Wangyang was arrested on 9 June 1989 a few days after the crackdown against civilians in Beijing. According to a report in the *Hunan Ribao*, Li Wangyang was accused of "putting up banners, issuing leaflets, carrying out liaison trips, spreading rumours, uttering reactionary slogans", inciting workers to go on strike and setting up the independent and autonomous workers' organization in Shaoyang. He was charged with "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement" and tried by the Shaoyang City Intermediate People's Court in early 1990. He was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment and was due for release in 2002. However, he was twice released on medical grounds, firstly in 1996, when he was returned to prison prematurely and again in June 2000. It is reported that he spent many periods in solitary confinement and suffered severe beatings from prison guards while in detention. After undertaking a hunger strike in February 2001 to press for medical care to respond to medical needs acquired in prison, he was again harassed and finally re-arrested in May 2001. His sister Li Wanglin was sentenced on 7 July 2001 to 3 years' detention reportedly on subversion charges for her part in helping publicise her brother's case.