

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH FEARS FOR PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, was finally able to talk to his mother on 17 September 2020, the first time since he was detained more than four years ago. It is reported that his health had deteriorated and that he appears to show symptoms of malnutrition. Known to suffer from serious health concerns, there are grave fears for his wellbeing. Sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment following a secret trial in January 2019, Huang Qi is a prisoner of conscience who has been detained solely for exercising his human right to freedom of expression.

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 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 has still had no access to a lawyer of his choice since being sentenced to prison.

After being held incommunicado for four years, it was a relief to learn that Huang Qi was finally able to have a video call with his mother on 17 September 2020. However, I find it worrying that Huang’s mother does not know whether she will be able to speak to Huang Qi again, as no confirmation has been provided that any future meetings will be allowed. Without regular and unrestricted access to his family, and a lawyer of his choice, I fear that Huang Qi remains at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

I find it distressing to hear reports that Huang Qi’s health has deteriorated and that he appears to show symptoms of malnutrition. Already known to suffer from chronic kidney disease and hydrocephalus, as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs, Huang Qi’s access to immediate and proper medical care must be given absolute priority.

Huang Qi is a prisoner of conscience, detained simply for exercising his human right to freedom of expression and must be immediately and unconditionally released, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his human rights.

Pending Huang Qi’s release, I call on you to immediately:

- Ensure that he has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- 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. 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’s mother, Pu Wenqing, published an open letter online in April 2020 stating that she was supposed to visit 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 was no further information about when she would be allowed to see Huang Qi. In the letter, Pu shared that her own health was deteriorating rapidly, with no treatment available for the tumours spreading in her lungs. She is also suffering from diabetes and liver, kidney and stomach ailments and expressed fear that she would not see her son before she dies.

Huang Qi was finally able to talk to his mother on 17 September 2020, the first time since he was detained more than four years ago. The conversation, which reportedly lasted for 30 minutes, mainly focused on Huang Qi’s current situation. It is also reported that Pu asked Huang to video call her monthly; however, it is unclear that whether the authorities will grant this request.

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 repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. Then 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 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.

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.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or Chinese

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 25 November 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/asa17/2246/2020/en/>