

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 17/05/97
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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Asia Regional Program
Date: 30 January 1997

**Further information on
MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION
Zhou Guoqiang
CHINA**

(See AI Index: ASA 17/21/96; 27 February 1996)

Keywords

Theme: POC/ill-health/tuberculosis

Summary

Zhou Guoqiang is a prisoner of conscience who has been involved in the creation of a number of dissident groups seeking reform in China and has been detained on previous occasions. He has been assigned to a labour camp to undergo hard labour for four years. This is due to expire in 1998. AI appealed on his behalf in February 1996 and is renewing this appeal in view of recent reports that he continues to suffer from pulmonary tuberculosis which is not being adequately treated. See the attached external information.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- mentioning (if appropriate) that you wrote last year about Zhou Guoqiang who was then reported to be in poor health
- appealing (or renewing your appeal) for Zhou Guoqiang's prompt and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience
- noting with concern reports of his tuberculosis and general ill-health
- seeking information on his current state of health and asking what kind of treatment he is receiving
- urging that Zhou Guoqiang receive all necessary medical care in accordance with provisions set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

Addresses

See over

Governor of the Heilongjiang Provincial People's Government

Tian Fengshan Shengzhang

Heilongjiangsheng Renmin Zhengfu

202 Zhongshanlu

Haerbin Shi 150001

Heilongjiangsheng

People's Republic of China

Telegrams: Governor of the Provincial People's Government, Haerbin, Heilongjiang Province, China

Director, Bureau of Reform through Labour, Heilongjiang Province

Juzhang

Heilongjiangsheng Laogaiju

51 Hanchangjie

Haerbin Shi 150080

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People's Republic of China

Director of the Shuanghe labour camp

Laogai Suozhang

Laogaifenchang

Shuanghe nongchang

Gannanxian 2213

Heilongjiangsheng 162105

People's Republic of China

Director, Department of Public Health, Heilongjiang Province

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Further information on MEDICAL CONCERN

Zhou Guoqiang
CHINA

See ASA 17/21/96, 27 February 1996

In February 1996, Amnesty International expressed concern about Zhou Guoqiang, a prisoner of conscience, who has been in poor health since 1995, reportedly with heart and lung problems. However what prompted particular concern was information that he had contracted tuberculosis. The most recent information about Zhou Guoqiang suggests that he continues to suffer from tuberculosis and that he is not receiving appropriate anti-tuberculosis medication. Amnesty International continues to urge his prompt and unconditional release and for all necessary medical care to be provided without delay.

Background

Zhou Guoqiang is being held at the Shuanghe Labour Farm in Heilongjiang Province in the north-east of China, where he is being forced to perform hard labour. He is 42 years old and a lawyer, poet and labour rights activist. Zhou Guoqiang was originally assigned to three years' "re-education through labour" in 1994, but was sentenced to an additional year for allegedly trying to escape from the labour camp. His sentence is now not due to expire until March 1998.

Zhou Guoqiang was involved in the founding of several independent workers' organizations and dissident groups, including the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation in 1989, the Peace Charter in 1993 and an independent labour organization, the League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People (LPRWP) in 1994. The League's founders intended to establish a nationwide information network and a mediation body to help negotiate in labour disputes. However, days before their planned visit in March 1994 to the Ministry of Civil Administration to obtain registration, several members of the LPRWP were detained including Zhou Guoqiang and Liu Nianchun¹.

Zhou Guoqiang and his wife, Wang Hui, were arrested together in Beijing on 3 March 1994. His wife was held for a week before being released. Zhou Guoqiang was accused of "collaborating with hostile organizations and elements both inside and outside the country to carry out anti-government activities". According to information published by the official China News Service, these accusations resulted from his activities to promote the Peace Charter, his contacts

¹ Amnesty International appealed on 15 January 1997 for the release of Liu Nianchun, who was also a founding member of the LPRWP. Liu Nianchun is also in poor health and has been assigned to three years' re-education-through-labour for trying to formally register the League for the Protection of the Rights of the Working People. Liu Nianchun and Zhou Guoqiang are being held at the same labour camp in Heilongjiang Province. See AI Index: ASA 17/02/97.

with foreign journalists, his "illegal installation of a fax machine" and "his plans to distribute T-shirts bearing provocative slogans".

Zhou Guoqiang was held in incommunicado detention for six months and then, in September 1994, assigned to three years' "re-education through labour". His wife learned of his sentence only after he had been transferred to the Shuanghe Farm labour camp.

In July 1995 an additional year was added to Zhou Guoqiang's sentence after he was accused of attempting to escape from the camp. Also in 1995 he developed chest problems manifested by severe coughing, general debility and night sweats; these symptoms have persisted. Following a visit in October 1995, Zhou Guoqiang told visiting relatives that he had undergone an X-ray examination in June 1995 but his relatives (one of whom is a doctor) were not permitted to see the X-ray. His wife, Wang Hui, who had also visited him, said, "There are 12 prisoners to each very dirty and badly heated room; they are underfed and receive practically no care when they are sick." She added that her husband was very weak.

Ever since her husband's arrest in 1994, Wang Hui has been campaigning hard for her husband's release. For this, she has been detained on several occasions and regularly faces harassment and close monitoring by the authorities. In September last year, Wang Hui appealed to representatives of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, who were meeting in Beijing at the time, to help secure her husband's release. She was detained on 20 September, within days of this appeal, and then released a month later on 20 October 1996. Amnesty International appealed for her release at the time and remains concerned for her security.