

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 267/91 Re-arrest of Former Prisoner of Conscience

5 August 1991

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC): ZHANG Weiguo, 35-year-old journalist

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Zhang Weiguo, a noted dissident journalist and former prisoner of conscience, was re-arrested on 30 July 1991, according to a report by Reuters news agency quoting his brother Zhang Weijun. Zhang Weiguo was reportedly arrested at 2 am on 30 July 1991, at the home of relatives in the coastal province of Zhejiang. Zhang Weiguo had left his Shanghai home in late June after reportedly suffering harassment by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Shanghai.

According to Zhang Weijun, the PSB said that Zhang Weiguo was being "held for surveillance" but the family does not "know what that means". He added that "[the PSB] told us to send some clothes but did not say where he [Zhang Weiguo] was or what kind of case it was. They were very secretive and so we are extremely worried". "We want him released but most importantly we want to know what is happening and why he was taken away. Where he is, that is what we want to know."

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Zhang Weiguo, aged 35, is the former Beijing bureau chief of the World Economic Herald, a Shanghai-based weekly newspaper noted for its reformist views, which was closed by the authorities prior to the crackdown against pro-democracy activists in June 1989. Zhang Weiguo was taken into custody in June 1989 and detained as a prisoner of conscience, without charge or trial, for 20 months. He was released on 12 February 1991, after reportedly "confessing" to unspecified crimes, according to a Shanghai government official. His release may in fact have been conditional on his abstaining from making public statements, but Zhang Weiguo did speak out publicly. On 8 April 1991, the Hong Kong newspaper Ming Pao published an article based on an interview with him in which he described his conditions of detention in the Shanghai No 1 Detention Centre. He said among other things that, in early 1990, he shared with 15 other prisoners a cell of about 15 square metres. Newspapers, when available, had to be read in a few minutes and passed from cell to cell.

In an interview with British BBC TV journalists in May 1991, Zhang Weiguo said of his situation:

*"I am not under overt pressure... In theory I have all the rights of a citizen. But I have a lot of trouble exercising these rights. For example I get regular visits from the PSB men... The authorities can dock my wages... they can interfere with my mail by screening it."*

*"I've made a personal decision to ask for the establishment of democracy and legality in China. The reason I feel free to express such a notion in front of you is because that is a right to which I am entitled as a citizen by our law and constitution. If I get into trouble when I exercise my right that means there is something wrong with Chinese laws..."*

Zhang Weiguo left Shanghai for the home of relatives in Zhejiang province after giving these interviews. He was arrested in his mother's hometown in Zhejiang.

Amnesty International is concerned that Zhang Weiguo has been re-arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and may now be held as a prisoner of conscience. The organization calls on the authorities of the PRC to release Zhang Weiguo immediately and unconditionally.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern at the reported re-arrest of Zhang Weiguo and urging that Zhang Weiguo be immediately and unconditionally released as his detention appears to be the result of his non-violent exercise of the right to freedom of expression recognized under international human rights standards;
- urging the authorities to make public his whereabouts and grant him access to his family and to a lawyer of his own choice.

**APPEALS TO:**

**Chief Procurator, Zhejiang province:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 September 1991.