

URGENT ACTION

CHINESE PRO-DEMOCRACY WRITER DETAINED

Zhao Shiyong (better known by his pen name Zhao Dagong), a writer who has called for democratic reform in China, was taken from his home in the city of Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, by police on 11 January. He is a prisoner of conscience, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

The authorities have given no reason for his detention, but it appears to be connected to his signing of a proposal for legal and political reform known as Charter 08, and his support for an imprisoned author of the document.

According to friends of **Zhao Shiyong**, a dozen police arrived at his home at 11am on 11 January. They searched his house and took him away some time between 5 and 6pm. They also confiscated his two computers, some documents, some personal letters and many books. The police did not give Zhao Shiyong or his family any reason for his detention or the confiscation of his property.

Police also briefly detained his wife and adult son. They were both released later the same night, but have been told by police to not talk about what happened to them or discuss what questions they were asked. On the evening of 12 January, Zhao Shiyong's wife telephoned the police, seeking information about her husband's situation. They told her that his case is being investigated but refused to tell her why he was detained. Under Chinese law, Zhao Shiyong's family should have been given formal notification of his detention within 24 hours.

Zhao Shiyong has been questioned and warned by authorities not to cause trouble since he put out a public statement on the internet on 16 December 2009, seeking to share the criminal responsibility for Charter 08 with Liu Xiaobo.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Chinese or your own language:

- - calling on the authorities to release Zhao Shiyong immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression;
- urging them to guarantee that while he remains in custody, he will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and will have access to his family, legal assistance of his choosing and any medical care he may require;
- calling on the authorities to end the use of vaguely defined crimes to prevent dissidents and activists from peacefully demanding legal and political reform.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 FEBRUARY 2010 TO:

Director of the Shenzhen Municipal

Public Security Bureau

Li Ming, Juzhang

Shenzhenshi Gonganganju

4018 Jiefanglu

Shenzhenshi

Guangdongsheng 518008

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 755 84464060

Salutation: Dear Director

Acting Mayor of Shenzhen Municipal

Wang Rong, Shizhang

Shenzhenshi Renmin Zhengfu

Fuzhong 3 Lu, Shimin Zhongxin C qu 3

Lou

Futianqu Shenzhenshi

Guangdongsheng 518035

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 755 82002880

Salutation: Dear Mayor

And copies to:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

Wen Jiabao, Guojia Zongli

The State Council General Office

2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu

Beijingshi 100017

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of

Foreign Affairs

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zhao Shiyong (better known as Zhao Dagong), a member of the non-governmental organization, the Chinese Independent Pen Centre, has written many articles calling for reform of the Chinese political system and for greater freedom of expression. Some of his articles can be found at: <http://www.boxun.com/hero/zhaodagong/> and <http://zhaodagong.bokee.com/>

Charter 08, initially signed by approximately 300 Chinese scholars, lawyers and officials, is a proposal for fundamental legal and political reform in China that aims to achieve a democratic system that respects human rights. Charter 08 was published online on 9 December 2008. Numerous signatories of the charter have been questioned and harassed by Chinese authorities since its launch.

Liu Xiaobo, a well-known scholar, has been detained since 8 December 2008 for writing Charter 08, and was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment on 25 December 2009 for "Inciting subversion of state power".

Human rights activists in China who attempt to report on human rights violations, challenge policies that the authorities find politically sensitive, or try to rally others to their cause, face serious risk of abuse. Authorities use broad and vaguely defined charges of "stealing, possessing and leaking state secrets" and "subversion" to arbitrarily detain and prosecute activists, journalists and internet users. Many are jailed as prisoners of conscience after politically motivated trials, while growing numbers are being held under house arrest with the police conducting intrusive surveillance and standing guard outside. Since the beginning of 2009, a year that marks several sensitive anniversaries in China, the crackdown on human rights activists has intensified. Family members of human rights activists, including children, are increasingly targeted by the authorities in the crackdown.

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