

# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALIST CONVICTED ON BASELESS CHARGES, DENIED VISITS

Chinese journalist Zhang Zhan was sentenced to another four years in prison on 19 September 2025 for the charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” After she appealed this verdict in late September, it has been reported that neither her family nor her lawyer was allowed to visit her. For a brief period her whereabouts were unknown, until on 18 November her family received confirmation that she is being held at Shanghai Women’s Prison. Neither they nor her lawyer have yet secured permission to visit her, and there are ongoing concerns for her well-being.

### TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

**Warden Chen Jianhua**  
Shanghai Women’s Prison  
No. 1601 Zhangjing Road, Sijing Town, Songjiang District,  
Shanghai 201601  
People’s Republic of China

Dear Warden Chen,

I am writing to express my grave concern for journalist and human rights defender **Zhang Zhan (张展)**, who was sentenced to four years in prison on charge of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” (寻衅滋事罪) at the Pudong New District People’s Court — the same accusation for which she was previously imprisoned. Again, these charges are baseless; she has merely exercised her right to freedom of expression and to defend the rights of others.

After she appealed this verdict in late September, it has been reported that neither her family nor her lawyer was allowed to visit her. More distressingly, for several days her whereabouts were unknown. Her family and lawyer were simply told she had been “transferred” without any indication of her destination.

On 18 November, it was finally confirmed that Zhang Zhan is being held in Shanghai Women’s Prison. However, her family and lawyer have not yet secured permission to visit her.

Zhang had reportedly gone on hunger strike in detention and may have been forcibly fed in January 2025. Her family and lawyer have also been reported to face serious harassment and intimidation by authorities, and her current health status is unknown — a serious cause for concern. As you may be aware, during her previous imprisonment, she went on a partial hunger strike that led to multiple hospitalizations and her weight dropped drastically to just 37 kilograms — half of what she weighed prior to her deprivation of liberty.

**I therefore call on you to:**

- **Release Zhang Zhan immediately and unconditionally and ensure the convictions are quashed;**
- **Pending her release, ensure that Zhang Zhan has regular, unrestricted access to her family and lawyers, as well as access to adequate medical care, and that she is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment;**
- **Stop harassing and threatening human rights defenders, including her family, lawyer and others who are supporting this case.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Chinese journalist and activist Zhang Zhan was reportedly convicted of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” and sentenced to four years in jail following her trial on 19 September 2025 at the Pudong New District People’s Court.

Reports following her detention in 2024 indicated that Zhang had gone on hunger strike while in detention, and has shown signs of having been forcibly fed. Her family and lawyer have been subjected to harassment and intimidation by authorities and are unable to share detailed updates about her situation. As a result, very little is known about her current health condition and other aspects of her case.

Zhang Zhan was previously jailed on the same charge for reporting on the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan. A former lawyer, she travelled to Wuhan in February 2020 to provide on-the-ground information about what was happening there. She posted on social media about how government officials had detained independent reporters and harassed families of Covid-19 patients.

She went missing in Wuhan in May 2020. It later emerged that she had been taken by the Chinese authorities and detained in Shanghai, where she was convicted of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after a sham trial. Zhang Zhan was released on 13 May 2024 after completing a four-year prison sentence.

However, she was subjected to strict surveillance and continuous harassment by the authorities after her release, and she was detained again less than four months later. Her second arrest (in September 2024) came shortly after she reportedly travelled to the northwestern province of Gansu to show solidarity with other human rights defenders.

Zhang Zhan has spent more than five and a half years deprived of her liberty, solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression. During her previous imprisonment, she went on a hunger strike that led to multiple hospitalizations and her weight dropped drastically to just 37 kilograms — half of what she weighed prior to her deprivation of liberty.

Zhang Zhan was featured in Amnesty International’s [2021 Write for Rights campaign](#).

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of independent journalists and activists who were sentenced for reporting on the truth of the pandemic, with Zhang Zhan being a notable example. These repressive measures intensified after the 2022 “White Paper Movement,” leading to further restrictions on civil society. More information on the misuse of national security- and public order-related criminal provisions to target human rights activism, covering cases of 64 individuals over the last ten years, is available in our October 2025 report, [How could this verdict be ‘legal’?](#)

**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 May 2026. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Zhang Zhan (She/her - Zhang is her surname, Zhan is her given name)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** [China: Further Information: Journalist risks re-detention for baseless charges: Zhang Zhan - Amnesty International](#)