

PUBLIC

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UA 172/08 Incommunicado detention/fear of torture and ill-treatment

CHINA Huang Qi (m), aged 45, human rights activist

Huang Qi, a human rights activist based in the southwestern city of Chengdu, was detained by plainclothed police officers on 10 June. He is held on suspicion of “illegally acquiring state secrets”. No one has been able to visit him in detention, and Amnesty International believes he is at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Huang Qi, director of the Tianwang Human Rights Center, was having a dinner at a Chengdu restaurant with two volunteers from his organization, Pu Fei and Zuo Xiaohun, when several men forced them into a vehicle and took them away. After the incident, Huang Qi’s mother and a colleague from the Tianwang Human Rights Center tried locating them. There was no information concerning their whereabouts until 16 June, when Huang Qi’s mother received a notice from the Wuhou Branch of Chengdu City Public Security Bureau, dated 10 June, which said Huang Qi is held on suspicion of “illegally acquiring state secrets”. Pu Fei and Zuo Xiaohun are believed to have been released. The notice stated that Huang Qi is now held at Chengdu Public Security Bureau in Anjing Township, Bei County, Sichuan Province. Neither his family nor his legal advisor has been allowed to meet him.

Police have searched Huang Qi’s house and confiscated his computer and bank book, in which all his transactions were recorded.

According to local sources, Huang Qi’s detention was prompted by his work in assisting the families of five primary school pupils to bring a legal case against the local authorities. The five pupils died when the school buildings collapsed in the earthquake in Sichuan in May. Their families believe that corruption – involving local authorities – resulted in poor standards of construction of some of the public buildings that collapsed in the quake. They are demanding compensation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Huang Qi set up his website www.64tianwang.com in 1998 to help family members trace missing relatives who remained unaccounted for following the crackdown on 4 June 1989 on the democracy movement. The website also included reports about the independence movement in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement. In January 2001, Huang Qi was charged with “incitement of subversion” and tried in secret by the Chengdu Intermediate People’s Court in August 2001. According to the court verdict, the prosecution cited evidence which included reference to the posting of an Amnesty International report on Huang Qi’s website: *The People’s Republic of China, Tiananmen – Eleven Years on – Forgotten Prisoners* (ASA 17/017/2000, May 2000). Amnesty International believes that merely publishing names of individuals imprisoned following the 1989 pro-democracy movement on the Internet can never amount to “inciting subversion” and campaigned for his immediate and unconditional release.

Huang Qi was beaten in prison. He was released on 4 June 2005. Following his release, he has continued to maintain his website and has also advocate for government accountability.

The Chinese authorities keep a tight rein on freedom of expression so as to suppress dissent and have used brutal crackdowns to suppress real or perceived dissent in the media. Broad and vaguely defined "stealing and revealing state secrets" and "subversion" charges in the Criminal Law are used to arbitrarily detain and prosecute activists, journalists and internet users, and have discouraged reporting of sensitive issues, such as

human rights concerns or disagreement with the government. In the wake of the Sichuan earthquake, China initially allowed unprecedented and widely praised reporting freedoms in the quake zone. However, in recent weeks, this has been curtailed and at least four foreign journalists have been barred from entry to or escorted out of some towns in affected areas.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Chinese or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Huang Qi;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that he is not tortured or ill-treated while he remains in custody;
- urging the authorities to ensure Huang Qi has access to his family and lawyers and any necessary medical treatment;
- calling on the authorities to end use of very vaguely defined crimes such as “illegally acquiring state secrets” to clamp down on human rights defenders
- expressing deep concern that detention of peaceful human rights activists runs counter to promises made by Chinese officials that human rights would improve in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics

APPEALS 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)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the Sichuan Provincial Department of Public Security
ZENG Shengquan Tingzhang
Sichuansheng Gong'anting
9 Jindunlu
Chengdushi 610041
Sichuansheng
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 28 86301177
Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China
MENG Jianzhu Buzhang
Gong'anbu
14 Dongchang'anjie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100741
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 July 2008.