

# URGENT ACTION

## IMPRISONED BOOKSELLER AT RISK OF ILL-TREATMENT

Bookseller Gui Minhái was sentenced on 24 February 2020 to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for five years, on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence to foreign entities". Since then, he has been denied access to his family and, having obtained Swedish citizenship in 1996, to Swedish consular assistance. There are grave concerns over Gui Minhái's poor health, and that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The Chinese government must release Gui Minhái immediately; pending his release, he must be granted access to his family, lawyers of his choice, consular support, and adequate medical care.

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

*President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping*

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*Dear President Xi,*

*I am writing to express my concern for **Gui Minhái**, who was sentenced on 24 February 2020 to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for five years, on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence to foreign entities".*

*Since his imprisonment, the authorities have rejected the Swedish consulate's request to read the verdict and meet Gui Minhái, who obtained Swedish citizenship in 1996. It is distressing to learn that he has not been able to see his family members and consular officials, or even speak to a lawyer of his own choice since 2018. There is no way to verify his wishes or conditions. Given his poor health, which requires regular and urgent medical care, his family is particularly concerned about his wellbeing. Gui Minhái was tried and convicted in secret. Despite the authorities' claim that he was prosecuted for handing over 'intelligence' to overseas parties, it appears that his conviction is primarily based on his attempted trip with two Swedish diplomats in January 2018. Gui Minhái was suddenly taken away by approximately ten plainclothes officers whilst travelling on a train with two Swedish diplomats to Beijing for urgent diagnosis of what is believed to be ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease).*

*Without any further information provided, a court notice announcing Gui Minhái's conviction and sentence in 2020 stated that he had reapplied for Chinese citizenship in 2018, which would nullify his Swedish citizenship under Chinese law. As he has been held in custody since 2018 without access to his family or lawyers, the veracity of this information is highly questionable.*

***I therefore call on you to:***

- ***Release Gui Minhái and drop the charges against him, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;***
- ***Grant Gui Minhái prompt, regular and unrestricted access to lawyers of his choice and to his family***
- ***Grant Gui Minhái access to medical care on request or as necessary; and***
- ***Grant the Swedish consulate access to Gui Minhái.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gui Minhai was one of the five Hong Kong-based publishers and booksellers who disappeared in 2015 after printing books critical of the Chinese government. *Mighty Current Media* and the Causeway Bay Bookstore that Gui Minhai led were known for their books on Chinese leaders and political scandals, which are banned in mainland China but are popular with mainland Chinese tourists visiting Hong Kong. The detention and disappearance of Gui Minhai and the other booksellers had a chilling effect on the climate for freedom of expression and publishing in Hong Kong and the Chinese-speaking world.

Gui Minhai's case drew international attention after he first went missing in Thailand on 17 October 2015, about the same time that three of his company colleagues also went missing. Another associate, Lee Bo, was taken away from Hong Kong on 30 December 2015. Gui Minhai later appeared on Chinese state television in January 2016 to give a choreographed "confession" regarding an alleged traffic incident that took place in 2003. Many believe that the drunk driving charge was simply a pretence to detain Gui Minhai and shut down his publishing business.

In October 2017, Gui Minhai was "released" after he had, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "completely served the sentence imposed for a traffic offence"; however, his daughter Angela Gui has since raised concerns that Gui Minhai remained under state surveillance and monitoring after his supposed release. On 20 January 2018 while on a train from Ningbo to Beijing and accompanied by two Swedish diplomats helping him to get medical care, Gui Minhai was suddenly taken away by approximately 10 plainclothes officers. He has not been seen since. On 25 February 2022, Angela renewed her call for the immediate release of her father after Olympic speed skating champion Niels van der Poel handed her his Beijing 2022 gold medal in protest of human rights violations in China.

In China, dissidents including writers, academics and journalists are systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest, and prosecution. The Hong Kong National Security Law enacted on 1 July 2020 has also given the Hong Kong government free rein to crack down on freedom of expression in an unprecedented manner. Numerous [or give the figure] activists have been charged under the law for their peaceful activities. Many civil society organizations, trade unions and news organizations have closed under the threat of the NSL. In a major censorship purge, numerous books were removed from the city's public libraries. Three speech therapists were charged with conspiring to publish and circulate seditious material after publishing children's books mocking the government.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Chinese or English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 22 April 2022

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Gui Minhai (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/1884/2020/en/>