

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 17/05/95  
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Date: 4 February 1995

*MEDICAL CONCERN*

**Gao Yu**  
**People's Republic of China**

Gao Yu is a 50-year-old journalist serving a sentence of six years' imprisonment who is adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. She suffers from angina and from Menière's disease, a disorder consisting of recurrent bouts of vertigo associated with hearing loss and tinnitus.

Gao Yu is the former deputy editor-in-chief of the now-defunct influential reformist newspaper *Economics Weekly*, which was banned during the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests. She was imprisoned for nearly 15 months after the June 1989 crackdown and released without charge in 1990. Upon release, she continued to work as a freelance journalist.

In October 1993 Gao Yu was due to leave China to take up a position as a visiting scholar at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in the USA. On 2 October, however, two days before she was due to leave, she was arrested by Beijing State Security officials and charged eleven days later with "leaking state secrets to persons across the border". Her arrest is thought to be part of a campaign by the Chinese authorities to stem the increasing flow of politically sensitive information from China to the foreign media.

Gao Yu was twice tried - in May and June 1994 - and had her case returned to the Beijing procuracy for further investigation due to lack of evidence to support the charges. This procedure of returning cases to the prosecution for "further investigation" if the court finds the evidence to be incomplete is legal under the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law and is a major factor in contributing to the unfairness of trials in China. On 11 November 1994 Gao Yu's husband was informed that his wife had been tried and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Neither Gao Yu's husband or lawyers had been informed of the trial beforehand and she was sentenced after an unfair trial during which she had no legal representation.

According to the court verdict, Gao Yu was sentenced for "disclosing important state secrets" which she was reported to have obtained from a friend working for the general office of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee. The information is said to have been published in articles she wrote for a Hong Kong magazine in early 1993 and was said to have concerned structural reforms and other matters within state bodies which had been contained in two classified documents.

While the information she is reported to have obtained may have been confidential, there is no indication in the court verdict that it concerned matters of national security. Amnesty International is concerned that the very broad definition of "state secrets" used in China covers

matters which should be the subject of public debate and scrutiny, and goes far beyond what is needed to protect national security. Gao Yu's appeal against her sentence was rejected by the Beijing Municipal High People's Court in December 1994.

Gao Yu was transferred on 6 January 1995 to Yanqing Prison, located about 80 km north of Beijing. In a recent letter, she commented on the state of her health: "In the year and four months I was held in the Beijing State Security Bureau I suffered from angina pectoris, the Ménière's disease worsened considerably... My calves have swollen up like bread and when I had my physical exam on entering the prison, my blood pressure was rather high.". Medicines are being provided by her family.

Amnesty International is seeking assurances that Gao Yu has access to all the medical attention she requires and is calling for her unconditional release from prison on the grounds that it considers her to be a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression.

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Asia  
Date: 4 February 1995

*MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Gao Yu**  
**People's Republic of China**

**Keywords**

Theme: POC/ill-health

Profession/association: Journalist

**Summary**

Gao Yu is a 50-year-old journalist adopted as a prisoner of conscience by AI who is serving a six-year sentence. AI is seeking assurances that she will receive proper medical attention for her health problems and is seeking her release. Please see the details attached.

**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- expressing concern at the imprisonment of Gao Yu solely for writing articles for a Hong Kong newspaper, noting that she has neither committed nor advocated any act of violence and is imprisoned for exercising her right to freedom of expression
- expressing concern at the conduct of her trial which was held in camera and during which she was without legal representation
- urging her unconditional release from prison
- noting that she suffers medical problems, seeking information on the medical attention available to her in prison and seeking assurances that she will receive all the medical care she requires while she remains in prison

**Addresses**

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(Minister of Justice)