



PETITION

FREEDOM FROM CENSORSHIP! FREE SHI TAO

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China
WU Aiyong Buzhang
Sifabu
10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020
People's Republic of China

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned for the safety of Shi Tao, a journalist who has been imprisoned for exercising his right to freedom of expression. In April 2004, Shi Tao used his Yahoo! email account to send a message to a website based in the USA in which he summarized a government communiqué concerning the 15th anniversary of the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 1989. In April 2005, a court sentenced him to 10 years in prison on charges of "illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities". He is currently serving his sentence in Deshan prison, Changde city, Hunan province.

We are troubled by the role the Yahoo! company played in providing personal email account-holder information which was later used as evidence to convict him. The pervasive system of internet censorship in China contravenes guarantees of freedom of expression embodied in international human rights standards and the Chinese Constitution. We consider Shi Tao to be a prisoner of conscience imprisoned in violation of his human right to freedom of expression. We urge you to secure his immediate and unconditional release and ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated pending this outcome.

The ongoing imprisonment of Shi Tao and others for legitimate use of the internet in China runs counter to commitments made by numerous Chinese officials that human rights would improve in the run-up to the Olympic Games in Beijing and that there would be "complete media freedom" in China for the Games. Such abuses also contravene fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter relating to the preservation of human dignity and respect for universal, fundamental, ethical principles. We urge your administration to address such abuses with a view to ensuring a positive human rights legacy for the Olympic Games in August 2008.

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