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Nobel peace laureate Liu Xiaobo and other Chinese activists must be released

China must release jailed Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo along with others imprisoned for dissent, Amnesty International said today - one year after the Chinese activist won the award.

Liu Xiaobo has remained in prison since he was awarded the prize in absentia on 10 December 2010, while his wife Liu Xia has been under illegal house arrest.

Meanwhile, other government critics, such as veteran democracy activist Liu Xianbin, have also received long jail terms for speaking out on the same spurious charge of "inciting subversion of state power".

"The plight of Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia is symptomatic of the Chinese government's increasing zeal for stamping out dissent by any means necessary," said Catherine Baber, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Deputy Director.

"The increasingly powerful police and security forces act with impunity as they hold individuals beyond legal supervision, often torturing and ill-treating them," she said.

In August, the Chinese government proposed revisions to the criminal procedure law which would extend police powers to detain people in secret incommunicado detention.

Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2009 for "inciting subversion of state power" following an unfair trial.

His wife Liu Xia, an artist and poet, has been living in enforced isolation at her Beijing home since October 2010 with all forms of communication, including phone and internet, cut off.

Activist Liu Xianbin was sentenced in March to 10 years in prison [delete: on the charge of "inciting subversion of state power"] for his democracy activism, support of the Charter 08 petition movement and his writings on political reform. It is the third time he has been jailed.

"With government authorities showing signs of increasing anxiety and insecurity in the lead up to important leadership changes, individuals are at risk of being accused of 'inciting subversion of state power' for merely advocating for democracy, or calling for respect for human rights," said Catherine Baber.

"Chinese citizens are living in a straitjacket as the authorities imprison and 'forcibly disappear' those who speak out for political reform, democracy and human rights, critique corrupt officials or believing in the 'wrong' religion," she said.

Liu Xianbin has published articles on human rights and democracy and worked to increase public awareness of other persecuted activists.

He supported Charter 08, a proposal for fundamental legal and political reform in China, which was co-authored by Liu Xiaobo.

Liu Xiaobo was convicted for his writings on human rights and democracy as well as devising Charter 08, soliciting signatures to it and publishing it online.

Liu Xia was last heard from in February 2011 when she briefly managed to be in touch with a friend. In March 2011, the Chinese authorities told the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which is investigating her case, that “no legal enforcement measure” had been taken against her.

According to unofficial reports, Liu Xia and Liu Xiaobo have been allowed to meet twice since January this year.