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China: Call for release of Hu Jia as he receives European Parliament Sakharov prize

The awarding of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought is a significant acknowledgement of the work of Hu Jia, said Amnesty International as the prize was announced today by the European Parliament.

The organization, which has worked with Hu Jia and his family in campaigning for human rights in China, repeated its call on the Chinese authorities to release him from prison immediately and stop the harassment of his wife Zeng Jinyan and the couple's 11 month old daughter.

The award highlights the work of all activists in China who stand up against human rights abuses.

Background

Hu Jia is one of China's best-known environment and human rights activists. He was one of the founders of the Beijing-based HIV/AIDS NGO Loving Source, a grassroots organization dedicated to helping children from AIDS families. Together with his wife, Zeng Jinyan, he regularly informed overseas journalists and human rights organisations of abuses taking place in China.

Hu Jia was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison on 3 April 2008 for "inciting subversion". Amnesty International considers Hu Jia a prisoner of conscience and has demanded his immediate and unconditional release.

Hu Jia is serving his sentence in Beijing City prison. His family is concerned that he is not receiving adequate treatment in prison for his liver disease but the authorities rejected an application for his release on medical parole. Zeng Jinyan and the couple's daughter remain under tight police surveillance with officers stationed outside their home, limiting their visitors and following them when they go out. For the duration of the Olympic Games, they were moved outside Beijing.

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