



China: Human rights defender Hu Jia released, but still under surveillance, while others remain detained

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: Human rights defender Hu Jia released, but still under surveillance, while others remain detained

Geneva-Paris, June 28, 2011. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), welcomes the release of Mr. Hu Jia, an HIV/AIDS activist and former Director of the Beijing Aizhixing Institute for Health Education as well as laureate of the 2008 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. Yet, it expresses its concern about his continuing surveillance and the ongoing detention of other human rights defenders.*

On June 26, 2011, Mr. **Hu Jia** was released from Beijing Municipal Prison, after completing a three-and-a-half-year sentence. Yet, he is now subjected to a one-year deprivation of his political rights. Moreover, the police have reportedly blocked the entrance to his home, and other human rights defenders would have been warned by the authorities not to attempt to contact him.

Mr. Hu Jia had been arrested on December 27, 2007 and was sentenced in April 2008 to three years and six months' imprisonment and one year of deprivation of his political rights for "inciting subversion of State power" by the Beijing Municipal No. 1 Intermediate People's Court. The court's only ground for convicting Mr. Hu consisted of his articles, press interviews, personal letters, testimony to European Parliament through Internet, and an open letter he signed, demanding to end the pre-Olympics human rights abuses. While in detention, Mr. Hu Jia's health condition seriously deteriorated. However, several applications for release on medical parole were all denied.

The Observatory was also informed of the release from a prison in Chengdu of Mr. **Huang Qi**, Director of the Tianwang Human Rights Centre, on June 10, 2011, after completing a three-year term for "illegal possession of State secrets". Mr. Huang had been arrested on June 10, 2008 after he provided aid to victims of the Sichuan earthquake and published information on his website about the plight of parents who had lost their children. In August 2009, Mr. Huang Qi had been tried

in a closed trial before the Wuhou District Court, Chengdu city, which did issued its verdict only in November.

The Observatory welcomes Messrs. Hu Jia and Huang Qi's release, but remains deeply concerned by Mr. Hu's ongoing surveillance, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities.

The Observatory further recalls that several human rights defenders currently remain detained, including Mr. **Qi Chonghuai**, a reporter and former Shandong Bureau Chief for the *Fazhi Morning Post*, who was sentenced on June 9, 2011 to eight additional years in prison for "extortion and blackmail and embezzlement". Mr. Qi, who had been arrested on June 25, 2007 and sentenced to four years in prison in May 2008 for "extortion and blackmail" after reporting on corruption in Tengzhou city, Shandong province, was to complete his four-year term on June 25, 2011. He remains detained in Zaozhuang prison, in Tengzhou.

Moreover, as of today, the whereabouts of Mr. **Gao Zhisheng**, Director of the Beijing-based Shengzhi Law Office, who took on high-profile human rights cases, remain unknown. Mr. Gao, who had been under constant police surveillance, along with his family, since receiving a suspended sentence for "inciting subversion" in 2006, was last heard on April 20, 2010. He had just reappeared on March 28, 2010, when he had detailed the torture he had been subjected to during the 14 months of detention he had just spent.

Accordingly, the Observatory urges the Chinese authorities to guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. **Qi Chonghuai and Gao Zhisheng** as well as of all human rights defenders arbitrarily detained and to release them immediately and unconditionally since their detention is arbitrary as it only aims at sanctioning their human rights activities.


The Observatory also urges the Chinese authorities to put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Messrs. **Qi Chonghuai**, Gao Zhisheng, Hu Jia and Huang Qi and more generally against all human rights defenders in the People's Republic of China.

More generally, the Observatory calls upon the Chinese authorities to comply with the relevant international norms and standards, in particular the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, and international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the People's Republic of China. The Observatory also urges the European Commission Delegation as well as European Union (EU) Member-States embassies in the People's Republic of China to call upon the Chinese authorities to comply with the relevant international norms and standards and take action on this situation, in line with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

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Attachments

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