

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, was sentenced on 29 July to 12 years imprisonment following a secret trial in January 2019. The severity of the sentence is believed to be intended as a warning to other activists to stop work documenting human rights violations. Huang Qi continues to suffer from serious health concerns and without access to a lawyer of his choice or his family, he is at real risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping
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People’s Republic of China
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Dear President Xi,

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for the charges of “intentionally leaking state secrets” and “providing state secrets to a foreign entity” by the Mianyang City Intermediate People’s Court on 29 July 2019. In addition to being held under tight surveillance, Huang Qi’s 86-year-old mother Pu Wenqing is still unable to meet him and was not even informed about the sentencing.

Huang Qi had been detained for over two years before he was secretly tried on 14 January 2019. He was formally arrested in December 2016. It is currently unclear whether Huang Qi has filed an appeal against his conviction and sentence, however it is of great concern to me that he does not have access to a lawyer of his choice or his family as it increases his risk of torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.

In addition, Huang Qi suffers from chronic kidney disease, hydrocephalus as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs. Without proper access to medical attention, I fear that he might die in custody due to his poor health and lack of appropriate and adequate treatment.

I call on you to:

- ***Release Huang Qi immediately and unconditionally unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards.***
- ***Ensure that he has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice, and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.***
- ***Allow him prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request or as necessary.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

“64 Tianwang”, founded by Huang Qi and his wife Zeng Li in 1998, is one of the few major mainland-based websites that report and document petitioners’ protests in China. Most of the website’s contributors were petitioners before becoming citizen journalists to report on other petitioners’ protests and arrests.

Incidents of ill-treatment have been reported throughout his detention. Most recently, Huang Qi told his lawyer on 23 October 2018 that doctors and detention centre officers provided false reports of his blood pressure and understated the extent of his critical medical conditions. Previously on 28 July 2017, Huang Qi told his lawyer that he was made to stand for hours at a time and repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. Then on 3 November 2017 he said he had been beaten up by other detainees at the Mianyang City Detention Centre, Sichuan Province, on 24-26 October, with knowledge of at least one of the detention centre’s officers.

Over the years, Huang Qi and other “64 Tianwang” contributors have been frequently detained or harassed by the Chinese authorities. Huang Qi has been imprisoned twice. He was first detained in June 2000 – the 11th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown – before being convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to five years in prison in May 2003. He was again imprisoned for three years after exposing the substandard building scandal following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan.

According to “64 Tianwang”, the website’s citizen journalists have been questioned or placed under brief detention more than 100 times since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, and at least 30 have been imprisoned or placed under criminal detention. Ten “64 Tianwang” journalists are currently in prison, including Wang Jing, Zhang Jixin, Li Min, Sun Enwei, Li Chunhua, Wei Wenyuan, Xiao Jianfang, Li Zhaoxiu, Chen Mingyan and Wang Shurong.

Huang Qi’s lawyers have also faced retaliation by the authorities. In February 2018, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice notified Guangzhou-based lawyer Sui Muqing that he was being disbarred. The lawyer, who had previously represented Huang Qi, believes his disbarment was related to his legal representation of human rights defenders. Another of Huang Qi’s lawyers, Liu Zhengqing, was also disbarred in January 2019.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 13 September 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Huang Qi (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/9719/2019/en/>

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

HIS EXCELLENCY MR LIU XIAOMING Embassy of the People's Republic of China 49-51 Portland Place
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Please check with your section before sending appeals after the above date.