

BACKGROUND

The Chinese authorities have recently intensified their controls over media outlets, including newspapers, magazines and websites. Journalists who report on sensitive issues or who challenge the status quo are at risk of dismissal, arbitrary detention or imprisonment. Such patterns of repression cast doubts on Chinese authorities' commitment to ensure "complete media freedom" during the Beijing Olympics in August 2008.

A key factor which facilitates the detention or imprisonment of political dissidents in China is the Criminal Law itself, which continues to be used as a political tool to suppress dissent.

The control the Chinese authorities maintain over their citizens' internet use has put the spotlight on global internet companies such as Yahoo!, Microsoft and Google which have invested in China. By complying with official censorship demands, such companies are facilitating or sanctioning the Chinese government's efforts to control the free flow of information. They are contravening established international norms and values, and compromise their own stated principles.

ACT NOW

Please use your voice and send polite letters to Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China, calling for Shi Tao's immediate and unconditional release.

- Urge President Hu Jintao to ensure that Shi Tao is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in custody and that he is given adequate medical treatment.
- Also call on his administration to ensure that no one is arrested and/or tried for the legitimate use of the internet in China, including human rights defenders and journalists.

WRITE TO:

President of the People's Republic of China
HU Jintao Guojia Zhuxi
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Amnesty International,
International Secretariat,
Peter Benenson House,
1 Easton Street,
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www.amnesty.org/thechinadebate

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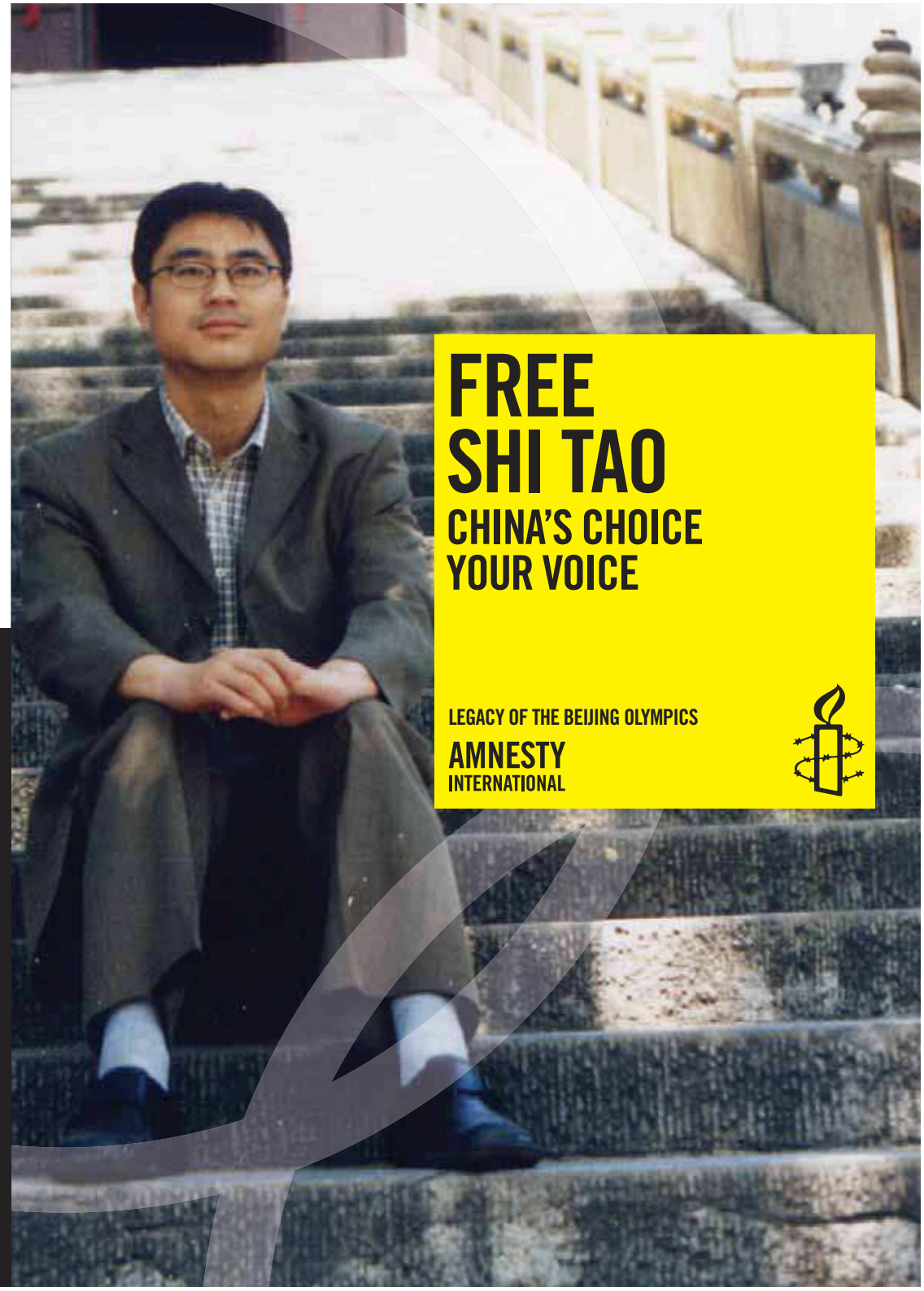
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**FREE
SHI TAO
CHINA'S CHOICE
YOUR VOICE**

LEGACY OF THE BEIJING OLYMPICS

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



SHI TAO JOURNALIST

On 20 April 2004, while working for the Dangdai Shangbao (Contemporary Trade News) in Changsha, Hunan Province, Shi Tao (师涛) attended a meeting about a Central Propaganda Department communiqué. Seven months later he was in detention for “illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities”.

The communiqué had been sent to all major public institutions, including the media, concerning the 15th anniversary of the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 1989 and warned about the possibility of unrest during the anniversary period. It talked of the dangers of infiltration by “democratic elements” and other hostile foreign elements from abroad, “sabotage” activities by the Falun Gong, and “mass crowd incidents”.

Media workers were instructed to “correctly direct public opinion” and to “never release any opinions that are inconsistent with central policies”. Shi Tao took notes during the meeting, and then sent an abstract of these, by email, to a contact in the USA who runs a well-known Chinese pro-democracy website. The article was published the same day using the pseudonym of “198964”.

On the basis of his email, he was detained on 24 November 2004 and officially arrested on 14 December 2004. He was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment on 27 April 2005 and is being held in Deshan prison, Changde city, Hunan province, where he was transferred at the end of June 2007.

The internet company Yahoo! provided the authorities with Shi Tao’s personal email account-holder information which helped to secure his conviction. Spokespersons for Yahoo! later claimed the company was simply following local laws and had no information about the nature of the investigation at the time. However, a Chinese police document which became available in the summer of 2007 suggests that Yahoo! was at least aware of the general nature of the ‘crime’, before it decided to hand over Shi Tao’s account-holder information. The April 2004 police notice to Yahoo! states that the police were seeking evidence in a suspected case of “illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities”. On 14 November 2007, Yahoo Inc. settled a lawsuit filed in Southern California under two US federal statutes by families of Wang Xiaoning and Shi Tao. The lawsuit alleged that Yahoo! handed over information on their online activities, thereby ‘aiding and abetting’ human rights violations. The terms of the settlement are not public.

Yahoo provided
the authorities with
Shi Tao’s personal
information



Amnesty International considers Shi Tao to have been detained for peacefully exercising his human right to freedom of expression. The organization considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.