

EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**Zhou Guoqiang
CHINA**

Zhou Guoqiang, a prisoner of conscience, has for some time now been in poor health with unspecified heart and lung problems, but recently there are concerns that he may have developed tuberculosis. Zhou Guoqiang is being held at the Shuanghe Labour Farm in Heilongjiang Province where he is reportedly receiving no medical treatment and he is being forced to perform hard labour. A 41-year-old lawyer, poet and labour rights activist, Zhou Guoqiang is serving a four year sentence for his dissident activities. He was originally sentenced to three years' re-education through labour in 1994 but was sentenced to an additional year for allegedly trying to escape from the labour camp. He is now not due for release until March 1998.

Zhou Guoqiang was involved in the founding of a number of influential dissident groups, including the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation in 1989, the Peace Charter in 1993 and an independent labour organization, the League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People (LPRWP) in 1994. The League's founders intended to establish a nationwide information network and a mediation body to help negotiate in labour disputes. Its founders intended to begin the process of obtaining legal registration on 9 March 1994. However, days before their planned visit to the Ministry of Civil Administration, several members of the LPRWP were detained. At least nine people associated with the League were detained, including Zhou Guoqiang.

Zhou and his wife, Wang Hui, were arrested together in Beijing on 3 March 1994. His wife was held for a week before being released. Zhou Guoqiang was accused of "collaborating with hostile organizations and elements both inside and outside the country to carry out anti-government activities". According to information published by the official Hong Kong-based China News Service, these accusations resulted from his activities to promote the Peace Charter, his contacts with foreign journalists, his "illegal installation of a fax machine" and "his plans to distribute T-shirts bearing provocative slogans".

Zhou Guoqiang was held in incommunicado detention for six months and then, in September 1994, assigned to three years' "re-education through labour". His wife learned of his sentence only after he had been transferred to the labour camp. Zhou Guoqiang appealed against his sentence, arguing that the police had held him longer than allowed by administrative regulations, and had failed to give a clear reason for his detention. The appeal is known to have been heard, but no information is available on the outcome of the hearing. No political cases have ever been overturned on appeal.

In July 1995 an additional year was added to Zhou Guoqiang's sentence after he was accused of attempting to escape from the camp. Also in 1995 he developed chest problems manifested by severe coughing, general debility and night sweats; these symptoms have persisted for several months. He is known to have been given a chest X-ray, but the results are not known. Neither is it known whether he will be provided with treatment by the camp authorities as very little medical treatment is generally provided in the labour camps. This was confirmed recently by his wife who said: "There are 12 prisoners to each very dirty and badly heated room; they are underfed and receive practically no care when they are sick.". Wang Hui said that Zhou Guoqiang is very weak and she is appealing for his release on bail on medical grounds.

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From: Medical Office / Asia Regional Program
Date: 27 February 1996

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Zhou Guoqiang
CHINA**

Keywords

Theme: POC/ill-health

Summary

Zhou Guoqiang is a prisoner of conscience who has been involved in the creation of a number of dissident groups seeking reform in China and has been detained on previous occasions. He is now serving a sentence of four years and is reported to suffer from unspecified heart problems and to have developed pulmonary problems in 1995.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

appealing for Zhou Guoqiang's prompt and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience

noting with grave concern his reported medical problems; seeking information on his current state of health and asking whether he is receiving proper medical treatment

urging that Zhou Guoqiang receive all necessary medical care in accordance with provisions set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

Addresses

Governor of the Heilongjiang Provincial People's Government

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