

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **China: Free thwarted Olympics petitioner Ji Sizun**

Chinese authorities should immediately release Fujian-based legal activist Ji Sizun who was originally detained while trying to submit an application to demonstrate during the Beijing Olympics, yet the alleged crimes he committed are seemingly unrelated to this application.

Ji Sizun's detention effectively silenced him at a time of intense international scrutiny which, combined with the unrelated circumstances, raises questions of motivation in this case.

According to US-based Radio Free Asia, on 4 May, without an open court session, Fujian Intermediate People's Court upheld the original verdict which convicted Ji Sizun to three years' imprisonment for "forging official documents and seals" on 7 January. This is the longest sentence possible for this crime for normal circumstances under article 280 of China's Criminal Law.

Beijing police detained Ji Sizun on 11 August 2008 when he was trying to submit his application to protest against corruption and to call for greater participation of the Chinese people in the political processes. Prior to his detention, Ji Sizun had been assisting petitioners to sue the government authorities.

According to the original verdict, the authorities placed Ji Sizun under criminal detention only on 18 September 2008. This means the authorities detained Ji Sizun without charge for more than a month.

The Chinese authorities have again used the criminal law to silence human rights defenders like Ji Sizun. While the recently published National Human Rights Action Plan has not mentioned the protection of human rights defenders, or the safeguards of Chinese citizens' rights to free speech and assembly, it has repeated the authorities' intention to ratify the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which includes these rights. Amnesty International reiterates its call for the Chinese authorities to ratify the ICCPR.

#### **Background**

On 23 July, the Chinese authorities announced the set up of Olympic protest zones in three Beijing parks where individuals would express their grievances. However, all applications required advance permission from the police. No applications were approved and the protest zones remained empty.

Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on 5 December 2008 and an update on 21 January 2009 urging its members to appeal to the Chinese authorities to release Ji Sizun immediately and unconditionally, and to guarantee that he is not tortured or ill-treated while in custody. The Urgent Action and the update are available here:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/112/2008/en> and  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/003/2009/en>.

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