



CHINA: HEALTH FEARS FOR POET UNDER ILLEGAL HOUSE ARREST

Liu Xia, a poet, an artist and the widow of late Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, wrote a letter expressing her deep depression and loneliness under house arrest. According to reports, she received surgery in recent months to remove uterine fibroids. No direct contact with her has been allowed, nor confirmation of her whereabouts, since her husband's death in July.

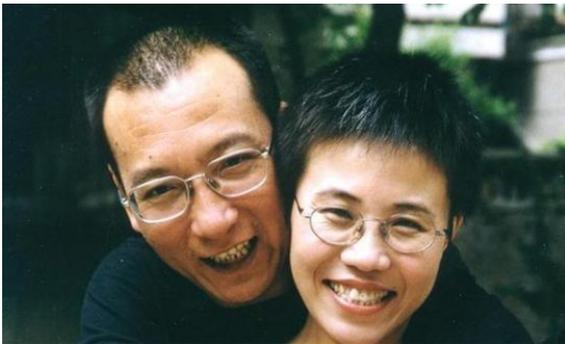


Photo: Liu Xia and her husband Liu Xiaobo © Private

Xia's letter to Herta Müller, the 2009 Nobel Literature Prize laureate, was posted online on 9 December 2017 by dissident poet and writer Liao Yiwu who lives in Germany. Presented in verses like a poem, Liu Xia wrote in the undated letter that she felt so nervous that she curled up and her neck was stiff whenever she heard someone knocking on her door: "I can't leave. I talk to myself. I'm going to be insane".

Since Liu Xiaobo passed away on 13 July 2017, several unverified YouTube video clips have supposedly shown Liu Xia in various locations in Yunnan province and Beijing. Despite this, none of her close friends have been able to get in touch with her directly to confirm her whereabouts and wellbeing.

Artist and poet Liu Xia has been placed under illegal "house arrest" since her late husband, Liu Xiaobo, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. Immediately following the announcement on 8 October 2010, police took her to Liaoning province to keep her away from the media.

According to reports from Radio Free Asia, Liu Xia received surgery to remove uterine fibroids (noncancerous growths in the uterus) in recent months. In addition to her physical health, there are continued concerns for her mental well-being as her depression is now regarded as "extremely severe". This is reflected at the end of the letter to Herta Müller where Liu Xia writes "I have no right to speak, speak loudly. I live like a plant. I lie like a corpse."

Please send an urgent letter, email or fax without delay! Call on authorities to:

* End the illegal house arrest and surveillance of Liu Xia, stop her harassment and allow her to travel freely.

* Take effective measures to ensure that all human rights defenders and their families, including Liu Xia, can carry out their peaceful activities without fear of hindrance, intimidation, arbitrary detention or imprisonment, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

* Take effective measures to ensure the right to freedom of expression is upheld and in line with Chinese constitutional guarantees and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China has signed and repeatedly stated its intention to ratify.

Here are the contact details you will require:

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Salutation: Dear President

Premier

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Please send a copy to:

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It was publicly announced in June 2017 that Liu Xiaobo had been diagnosed with late-stage liver cancer. He was granted medical parole and taken for medical treatment to a hospital in Shenyang, Liaoning. While Liu Xia was allowed to stay with Liu Xiaobo in the hospital, they were subjected to surveillance and no friends were allowed to visit them.

Liu Xiaobo passed away on 13 July 2017 due to organ failure. His funeral and the sea burial were hastily held two days later on 15 July. They were attended by Liu Xia and other family

members. However she was absent from the press briefing organized by the authorities later that same day.

Amnesty International later confirmed that Liu Xia was taken on a forced “vacation” by state security agents to Yunnan, south-west China. While she did know people there, authorities would not allow her to talk to anyone. Liu Xia has since been taken back to Beijing but continues to be closely monitored by state security officials and is unable to be reached by her closest friends.

On 18 August, a short video was posted on YouTube, in which Liu Xia said she was recuperating and asked for time to mourn. Another video with a partially obscured person dressed like Liu Xia appeared later only further raising questions as to whether the videos were made under duress or were otherwise coerced.

Liu Xia tweeted that during a meeting with Liu Xiaobo on 10 October 2010, Liu Xiaobo had broken into tears and dedicated the Nobel Peace Prize to all those who have sacrificed their lives in non-violent struggle for peace, democracy and freedom. Liu Xia was returned to Beijing the same day and since then has been kept as a prisoner in their home, or in other locations under round the clock surveillance.

Four years ago on 12 June 2013, Liu Xia sent an open letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping protesting against her illegal house arrest and the sentencing of her brother, Liu Hui, to 11 years imprisonment on fraud charges earlier that month - charges seen by some as further persecution of Liu Xiaobo's family. Both Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia's families have also been consistently under surveillance.

Liu Xia had a heart attack in January 2014 and was diagnosed with a heart condition, but authorities prevented her from receiving the treatment she needed. Liu Xia also suffers from severe depression and in addition to her ongoing imprisonment, in light of the death of her father in September 2016, her mother in April 2017 and now her husband, there are fears that it has worsened.

Family members of detained human rights defenders are often subject to police surveillance, harassment and restriction of their freedom of movement.