



Amnesty International

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1-800-266-3789

www.amnesty.ca

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The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing this open letter to urge you to intensify the Canadian government's efforts to defend the human rights of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen imprisoned in China, including by appointing a high-level personal envoy to lead those efforts.

Yesterday marked a dismal anniversary for Mr. Celil. It was two years ago, on March 27, 2006, that he was unexpectedly arrested in Uzbekistan in the midst of a visit with his wife's family. Three months later he was summarily handed over to officials in his native China, a country he had fled from as a refugee a decade earlier. Two years later Mr. Celil remains in a Chinese jail. At the current time, it is not known where he is being held. On March 7th his family in China attempted to visit him at the jail in which he was previously imprisoned, but were told that he is no longer there. They were told to return in three months time.

Mr. Celil has met the same fate that so many of his fellow Uyghurs in China's western Xinjiang District have endured for many decades now. He has strived to speak out for the basic rights of the Uyghur people. He has been accused of terrorism and "splitism" and finds himself languishing now in detention. Amnesty International's reports amply demonstrate this widespread and longstanding pattern of human rights violations against the Uyghur community in China.

Throughout the course of the past two years, Mr. Celil has endured a range of very serious violations of a number of human rights, including those meant to protect him from torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest, and unfair trials. Following a trial that in no way met minimal international fair trial standards, he has been sentenced to a life prison term. In Canada, his wife and four young children agonize about his safety and wonder if they will ever see him again.

National Office

312 Laurier Avenue East
Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9
Telephone: 613.744.7667
Fax: 613.746.2411
Email: info@amnesty.ca

Toronto Office

14 Dundonald Street
Toronto, ON M4Y 1K2
Telephone: 416.363.9933
Fax: 416.363.3103
Email: toronto@amnesty.ca

Pacific Regional Office

430-319 W. Pender St.
Vancouver, BC V6B 1T4
Telephone: 604.294.5160
Fax: 604.294.5130
Email: pro@amnesty.ca

Prime Minister, we call on you to renew and fortify Canada's efforts to ensure Mr. Celil's human rights are protected. We appreciated the concern and action demonstrated by the government in the past, including by you personally, but are concerned that Canada's attention to Mr. Celil's fate appears to have waned.

Recent developments underscore how important it is that steps be taken to intensify those efforts. The crackdown against protesters in Tibet has been a stark reminder to the international community that China still has long to go in establishing a firm commitment to upholding human rights. That the crackdown has come under the spotlight of greater international scrutiny in the run up to this year's Olympics is doubly worrying. All the more reason for Canada to press harder on Mr. Celil's behalf.

There has been considerable recent public attention to a number of other cases involving Canadians imprisoned abroad, including Brenda Martin still imprisoned in Mexico, Mohamed Kohail facing possible execution in Saudi Arabia, and Saul Itzhayek just released from prison in India. We have noted that Secretary of State Jason Kenney has traveled to Mexico to press Ms. Martin's case and that Minister Day has raised Mr. Kohail's case in a visit this week to Saudi Arabia.

We have previously urged that you name a personal high-level envoy to lead Canada's efforts on Mr. Celil's case. Two years on, with no sign of improvement and instead the worrying current reality that Mr. Celil's whereabouts are unknown, the need for such a step is obvious. The heightened attention to human rights concerns in China associated with the situation in Tibet and the lead-up to the Olympics makes the timing particularly opportune.

Marking two years of human rights violations is a somber anniversary indeed. Prime Minister, let there be no further anniversaries of abuse for Mr. Celil.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve, on behalf of

Kamila Celil
Wife of Huseyin Celil

Chris MacLeod
Lawyer for Celil family

Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International Canada