

CHINA

POET DETAINED AFTER COMMEMORATING LIU XIAOBO

Poet Wu Mingliang has been criminally detained on suspicion of “illegal business operations”. Previously held for questioning after co-signing a letter in support of Liu Xiaobo, Amnesty International believes he is being targeted for helping publish an anthology of poems commemorating the late Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Authorities have 37 days to decide whether to lay formal charges.

Wu Mingliang, better known as “Langzi” (literally “Wanderer”), is a well-known poet in Guangzhou and a member of Independent Chinese PEN Centre. Police officers took him away from his home and criminally detained him on 18 August 2017 on suspicion of “illegal business operations”. His home was also raided and the police took away his computers and other personal belongings. Wu Mingliang is currently detained in Haizhu District Detention Centre in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.



Wu Mingliang’s lawyer and friends believe that he is currently being detained due to his involvement in producing an anthology of poems in memory of Liu Xiaobo, who had passed away on 13 July 2017. Wu Mingliang was administratively detained for 10 days on 1 July 2017 after co-signing a letter of support of the detained Liu Xiaobo. During that time he was repeatedly asked by the police about an anthology of poems he took part in writing, editing and compiling to commemorate Liu Xiaobo, the late Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

During a visit to the detention centre by his lawyer on 23 August 2017, Wu Mingliang said that the police officers in the detention centre repeatedly questioned him about an exhibition catalogue of his work that he published without receiving the explicit permission from the authorities. According to Wu Mingliang’s friends, **Peng Heping**, who printed Wu Mingliang’s exhibition catalogue, was also criminally detained on suspicion of “illegal business operations” on 29 August at the same detention centre. There are no further details about his detention.

As the men are being criminally detained, the Public Security Bureau will need to decide within 37 days whether they will formally arrest Wu Mingliang and Peng Heping. Chinese authorities have often detained activists and civil society actors using charges of economic crimes.

Please send an email or letter without delay. (Postage is \$2.50.)

* Urge the authorities to release Wu Mingliang and Peng Heping unconditionally and immediately unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offence. If that is the case, they must be granted a fair trial in line with international standards.

* Seek guarantees that both men are fully protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

* Insist that they be allowed prompt and regular access to their family, a lawyer of their choice and adequate medical care.

* Call on the authorities to end the use of politically motivated criminal charges against writers, journalists and human rights, trade union and other civil society activists, in an attempt to harass, intimidate and punish them.

Here is the contact information you need:

Director
Haizhu District Detention Centre
No. 655 Nanzhoulu
Haizhuqu, Guangzhou Shi
Guangdong Sheng
People's Republic of China
Tel: 011 86 20 8417 6963 (Chinese only)
Salutation: Dear Director

Director Li Chunsheng
Guangdong Provincial Public Security Department
No. 97 Huanghualu, Guangzhou Shi
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People's Republic of China
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Salutation: Dear Director

Please send a copy to

His Excellency Shaye Lu
Ambassador for the People's Republic of China
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Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5H3
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Minister of Public Security
Guo Shengkun
14 Dong Chang'an Jie
Dongcheng Qu
Beijing Shi 100741
People's Republic of China
Tel: 011 86 10 6626 2114 (Chinese only)
Email: gabzfwz@mps.gov.cn

Additional information

Wu Mingliang, 48, is a well-known poet in China and a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, an affiliate of PEN International, an international writers' organization. The late Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo was a former president of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre. Wu Mingliang previously worked in newspapers and magazines in Guangdong. He started writing in 1985 and has authored and edited a number of poetry anthologies.

Wu Mingliang was detained for two weeks after taking part in the Chinese "Jasmine Revolution" in China, a series of pro-democracy protests in 2011. After 17 February 2011 when an anonymous call for a 'Jasmine Revolution' was posted online, more than a hundred activists were detained, put under surveillance or illegal house arrest, or simply went missing. In addition, at least a dozen lawyers were briefly detained and pressured by the authorities not to take up cases defending the activists, and even told by police to stop tweeting about those detained.

In June 2017, Wu Mingliang co-signed a statement to support Liu Xiaobo, who was then critically ill in detention, and gave interviews to the Hong Kong Cable TV. Likely as a result, on 1 July 2017, he was administratively detained for 10 days.

China has frequently detained human rights defenders and dissidents on charges that are economic in nature, as a means to avoid criticism that would otherwise arise with charges more commonly used in cases the government considers "sensitive". Human rights campaigner Guo Feixiong was detained in February 2006 and sentenced to five years in prison in November 2007 after being convicted of the crime of "illegal business activity" after he published a book entitled *Shenyang Political Earthquake*. Artist Ai Weiwei was detained in April 2011 and held without charges in arbitrary detention for 81 days, until he was eventually charged with tax evasion. Two activists associated with prominent anti-discrimination NGO Yirenping, Guo Bin and Yang Zhanqing, as well as Guo Yushan and He Zhengjun of the non-profit think tank Transition Institute were detained in 2015 on suspicion of "illegal business operations", as part of a wider crackdown on civil society groups in China.

At least nine activists were detained in late July after they participated in seaside memorials for Liu Xiaobo in Jiangmen, Guangdong, to mark the seventh day after the Nobel laureate's death. Wei Xiaobing, He Lin, Liu Guangxiao, Li Shujia, Wang Meiju and Qin Mingxin were released about a month later (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/7001/2017/en/> for more information).

Another activist, Ma Qiang, was first detained in Sichuan when he was travelling in a Tibetan area there and was later transferred to the detention centre in Jiangmen. In addition, Jiang Jianjun and Wang Chenggang, who went to Laohutan (Tiger Beach) in Dalian (very close to where Liu Xiaobo's ashes were scattered) on 17 July 2017 to pay tribute to Liu Xiaobo, were administratively detained for 10 days before being released on 29 July and 30 July respectively.

Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in 2009 for "inciting subversion of state power" for co-drafting "Charter 08" -- a manifesto asking the Chinese government to respect universal human rights values and democratic development -- and writing other articles criticizing the Chinese government.