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CHINA IMPRISONED BOOKSELLER AT RISK OF ILL-TREATMENT

Bookseller Gui Minhui was sentenced on 24 February 2020 to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for five years, on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence to foreign entities". Since then, he has been denied access to his family and, having obtained Swedish citizenship in 1996, to Swedish consular assistance. There are grave concerns over Gui Minhui's poor health, and that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The Chinese government must release Gui Minhui immediately; pending his release, he must be granted access to his family, lawyers of his choice, consular support, and adequate medical care.

Since his imprisonment, the authorities have rejected the Swedish consulate's request to read the verdict and meet Gui Minhui. He has not been able to see his family members and consular officials, or even speak to a lawyer of his own choice since 2018. There is no way to verify his wishes or conditions. Given his poor health, which requires regular and urgent medical care, his family is particularly concerned about his wellbeing. Gui Minhui was tried and convicted in secret. Despite the authorities' claim that he was prosecuted for handing over 'intelligence' to overseas parties, it appears that his conviction is primarily based on his attempted trip with two Swedish diplomats in January 2018 to help him get medical care.

Without any further information provided, a court notice announcing Gui Minhui's conviction and sentence in 2020 stated that he had reapplied for Chinese citizenship in 2018, which would nullify his Swedish citizenship under Chinese law. As he has been held in custody since 2018 without access to his family or lawyers, the veracity of this information is highly questionable.

Write to the President urging him to:

- Release Gui Minhui and drop the charges against him, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;
- Grant Gui Minhui prompt, regular and unrestricted access to lawyers of his choice and to his family
- Grant Gui Minhui access to medical care on request or as necessary; and
- Grant the Swedish consulate access to Gui Minhui.

Write to:

President of the People's Republic of China
Xi Jinping
Zhongnanhai
Xichangan'jie
Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017
People's Republic of China
Fax: 011 86 10 6238 1025
Email: english@mail.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear President Xi:

And copy:

His Excellency Peiwu Cong
Ambassador
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
515 St. Patrick Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 5H3
Phone: 613 789-3434
Fax: 613 789-1911
Email: chineseembassy.ca@gmail.com

Additional Information

Gui Minhai was one of the five Hong Kong-based publishers and booksellers who disappeared in 2015 after printing books critical of the Chinese government. *Mighty Current Media* and the Causeway Bay Bookstore that Gui Minhai led were known for their books on Chinese leaders and political scandals, which are banned in mainland China but are popular with mainland Chinese tourists visiting Hong Kong. The detention and disappearance of Gui Minhai and the other booksellers had a chilling effect on the climate for freedom of expression and publishing in Hong Kong and the Chinese-speaking world.

Gui Minhai's case drew international attention after he first went missing in Thailand on 17 October 2015, about the same time that three of his company colleagues also went missing. Another associate, Lee Bo, was taken away from Hong Kong on 30 December 2015. Gui Minhai later appeared on Chinese state television in January 2016 to give a choreographed "confession" regarding an alleged traffic incident that took place in 2003. Many believe that the drunk driving charge was simply a pretence to detain Gui Minhai and shut down his publishing business.

In October 2017, Gui Minhai was "released" after he had, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "completely served the sentence imposed for a traffic offence"; however, his daughter Angela Gui has since raised concerns that Gui Minhai remained under state surveillance and monitoring after his supposed release. On 20 January 2018 while on a train from Ningbo to Beijing and accompanied by two Swedish diplomats helping him to get medical care, Gui Minhai was suddenly taken away by approximately 10 plainclothes officers. He has not been seen since. On 25 February 2022, Angela renewed her call for the immediate release of her father after Olympic speed skating champion Nils van der Poel handed her his Beijing 2022 gold medal in protest of human rights violations in China.

In China, dissidents including writers, academics and journalists are systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest, and prosecution. The Hong Kong National Security Law enacted on 1 July 2020 has also given the Hong Kong government free rein to crack down on freedom of expression in an unprecedented manner. Numerous [or give the figure] activists have been charged under the law for their peaceful activities. Many civil society organizations, trade unions and news organizations have closed under the threat of the NSL. In a major censorship purge, numerous books were removed from the city's public libraries. Three speech therapists were charged with conspiring to publish and circulate seditious material after publishing children's books mocking the government.