



PRESS RELEASE

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Liu Xiaobo one year on: PEN International renews calls for the writer's release from detention in China

A year ago today, on International Human Rights Day, our colleague Liu Xiaobo, former president of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. One year on, he and over thirty other writers remain in prison in China. PEN International demands their immediate and unconditional release, and calls upon its members to take action to publicise the deteriorating human rights climate in the People's Republic of China.

John Ralston Saul, President of PEN International, says, *'Liu Xiaobo's words will not disappear whether he is isolated in prison or released. These are Chinese ideas that will continue to spread of their own volition. However, by keeping him in jail, the Chinese authorities are putting a loud speaker to his words. They should free him and let ideas take their natural course.'*

Liu Xiaobo was arrested on 8 December 2008 and held under 'residential surveillance', a form of pre-trial detention, at an undisclosed location in Beijing until he was formally charged on 23 June 2009 with 'spreading rumours and defaming the government, aimed at subversion of the state and overthrowing the socialism system in recent years'. He was sentenced to eleven years in prison on 25 December 2009 for his critical writings and his role in launching Charter 08, a declaration calling for political reforms and human rights published on 9 December 2008, which now has over 10,000 signatories from throughout China.

Since 22 October 2010, two weeks after the Nobel announcement was made, his wife Liu Xia, a poet and photographer, has been held incommunicado under strict house arrest at her home in Beijing and is denied any contact with the outside world. At the December 2010 Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony in Oslo, Liu Xiaobo's medal and diploma were presented to an empty chair.

'The PEN community stands with Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia,' said Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of PEN International's Writers in Prison Committee. *'We salute their courage. We will work indefatigably for the release of Liu and over thirty other writers and dissidents imprisoned in China.'*

Liu Xiaobo first received support from PEN International in 1989, when he was one of a group of writers and intellectuals given the label the *'Black Hands of Beijing'* by the government and arrested for their part in the Tiananmen Square protests. Prior to his current arrest, Liu has spent a total of five years in prison, including a three year sentence passed in 1996, and has suffered frequent short arrests, harassment and censorship.

Notes to editors:

PEN International celebrates literature and promotes freedom of expression. Founded in 1921, our global community of writers now comprises 144 Centres spanning more than 100 countries. Our programmes, campaigns, events and publications connect writers and readers for global solidarity and cooperation. PEN International is a non-political organization and holds consultative status at the United Nations and UNESCO. For more information contact our press office

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