

Open Letter

To Mr Hu Jintao

President of the People's Republic of China

## **An Appeal about China**

Your Excellency, Mr President,

We, undersigned organizations and individuals, welcome your visit to Sweden, whose purpose, we understand, is to reinforce economic and political cooperation between China and Sweden. We also realize that you want to contribute to a fruitful exchange of cultural activities and ideas between our countries. In this context we wish to express our sincere desire for the development of a vivid cooperation concerning thoughts, values, art, theatre, music, all kinds of creative human contacts between Sweden and China, the world's largest nation, with an unbroken history and culture of many thousand years.

We are convinced that economic cooperation between countries and people cannot be successful in the long run unless there is a deeper understanding, involving a free flow of information and thought between the countries and within them.

In this regard we must draw attention to an imbalance. We are worried by the information that reaches us concerning the rule of law and human rights in your country. What particularly concerns us is the actual lack of freedom of expression, publication, association, religion and information in China.

Despite a well-conceived Constitution and several special regulations concerning media, religion and civil law, the factual rule of law in your country does not seem to be ensured in a satisfactory manner. The authorities themselves do not follow the laws properly, according to many reports. Numerous citizens are exposed to legal abuses of different kinds.

Full and detailed reports about these serious conditions have been spread inside as well as outside China. We ask you to listen to these complaints about the

human and legal conditions in your country, which you want develop into “a harmonious socialist society” with decreasing social differences.

Rule of law and individual freedom are the most powerful means for creating mutual understanding and cooperation in a society aiming at development. For this reason there are some very alarming circumstances, to which we want to draw your attention:

- We are worried by the extensive supervision and control of the content of books (through abuse of the ISBN-system), press, television, radio and the Internet and by the fact that many writers and journalists are imprisoned for practising their profession. We therefore appeal for the immediate release of YANG Maodong and CAI Zhuohua, who have been imprisoned for “illegal business” concerning free publication. Yang was arrested eight months ago for his publication of one book, while Cai has been sentenced to three years in prison for publishing the Bible and a number of Christian publications.
- We are alarmed by unjustified and harmful bans on the free cultural and intellectual development including open research, presentation and discussion of China’s history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, comprising the purges of “rightists” in the 1950s, the cultural revolution of the 60s and 70s, the pro-democratic movements in the 70s, 80s and 90s, particularly the massacre on the Tiananmen Square in 1989, the status of Tibet and Taiwan etc.
- We are concerned by the fact that protection of religious freedom, which is stipulated in the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, has not been satisfyingly upheld. Therefore we ask you to ensure that persecution of different groups of faith will be stopped soon.
- We are deeply worried by the fact that legal security and economic justice obviously cannot be guaranteed for farmers whose land-leases are cancelled, as well as for “migrants” and innumerable applicants for justice. We appeal to you to make sure to repeal the persecution of those who assist these wronged citizens, including lawyers like CHEN Guangshen, GAO Zhisheng and CHEN Shuqing, who have been imprisoned since last year.

- We are seriously concerned about the difficulties and suppressions that members of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC) are exposed to, including house arrest of ICPC's president Dr. LIU Xiaobo and imprisonment of SHI Tao (10 years), YANG Tongyan (12 years), ZHANG Lin (5 years), ZHANG Jianhong (6 years) and YAN Zhengzue (3 years).
- We appeal to you to work for the freeing of imprisoned writers and journalists in China.

A list of incarcerated and persecuted persons is attached to this letter.

Stockholm, 8 June 2007

Swedish PEN, Björn Linnell president, Maria Modig Writers in Prison  
Committee, Lars Grahn member  
Independent Chinese PEN Centre (ICPC), Zhang Yu Secretary General, Chen  
Maiping Press Secretary  
International PEN, Sara Whyatt Writers in Prison Committee  
International Publishers Association (IPA), Ana Maria Cabanellas President  
Federation of European Publishers (FEP), Jonas Modig President  
Swedish Publishers Association, Kjell Bohlund President  
Sture Allén  
Horace Engdahl  
Peter Englund  
Kjell Espmark  
Lars Forssell  
Katarina Frostenson  
Ulf Linde  
Torgny Lindgren  
Kristina Lugn  
Göran Malmqvist  
Bo Ralph  
Birgitta Trotzig  
Per Wästberg