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FOR FREE EXPRESSION IN CHINA

Letter to His Excellency Hu Jintao

A Poetic Petition Carrying the Torch for Freedom of Expression in China

His Excellency Hu Jintao
President of the People's Republic of China
State Council
Beijing 100032
People's Republic of China

Your Excellency,

Over the past several months, centres of International PEN have arranged translation, recording and video performances of the poem "June" (六月) by the imprisoned Chinese poet and journalist SHI Tao (师涛), into as many of the world's languages as possible.

On a map of the world on the website "PEN Poem Relay" (www.penpoemrelay.org) the poem travelled virtually around the world, in the spirit of the Olympic Torch Relay with its own appeal for China to honour the right to free expression.

International PEN believes there are currently 44 writers and journalists, including Shi Tao, imprisoned in China for exercising their right to speak and write freely, as guaranteed under Chinese and international law.

These translations represent the solidarity writers and poets around the world have with Shi Tao and all of the writers in prison in China. Each act of translation is a call for freedom of expression in China.

Through these translations, we express our deep concern that despite official pledges to respect essential rights in this Olympic year, Chinese authorities continue to harass and detain writers in violation of their right to freedom of expression.

Through these translations, we call for Chinese authorities to:

- immediately and unconditionally release all writers and journalists currently imprisoned and end the practice of detaining, harassing, and censoring writers and journalists in China
- end Internet censorship and reform laws that are used to imprison writers and journalists and suppress the free exchange of information and ideas on the internet

- abide by China's pledge that "there will be no restrictions on media reporting and movement of journalists up to and including the Olympic Games"

On behalf of International PEN and its China Campaign

Chip Rolley, PEN Sydney Centre

Zhang Yu, Independent Chinese PEN Centre

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