



Brussels, 13 May 2009

HE Jan Kohout

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union
15, Rue Caroly
B-1050 Brussels

Dear Foreign Minister,

Before the next meeting in the European Union's human rights dialogue with the People's Republic of China on 20 May, we would like to draw your attention to the grave state of free expression in China and, in particular, the fate of Hu Jia, a journalist and activist who was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in December 2008.

Arrested on 27 December 2007 on a charge of "inciting subversion of state authority," Hu was tried on 18 March 2008 before a Beijing intermediate court for posting information about "matters of state" on websites based abroad. The court sentenced him on 3 April 2008 to three and a half years in prison. He is currently serving his sentence in a Beijing jail while his wife and their young daughter are under house arrest in Beijing.

A humanitarian activist since the start of the 1990s, Hu was involved not only in HIV prevention and helping HIV/AIDS sufferers, but also in protecting the environment and defending prisoners of conscience. He used the Internet, especially his blog and videos, to expose the regime's repression of those who defend human rights.

He was arrested and held incommunicado for 40 days in the spring of 2006 and, on his release, he was placed under house arrest. Police stationed around the couple's apartment building prevented him from going out while his wife, Zeng Jinyan, was followed whenever she left the apartment.

The Sakharov Network of former Sakharov Prize winners believes that the European Union should, in its dialogue with the Chinese authorities, stress the need to release prisoners of conscience or at least seek detailed information about the situation of these detainees.

We trust you will give this matter your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

Signatories:

- Adem Demaçi (1991 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (1992 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Oslobodjenje (1993 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Taslima Nasreen (1994 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Leyla Zana (1995 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Wei Jingsheng (1996 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Dom Zacarias Kamwenho (2001 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2001 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Oswaldo José Payá Sardinias (2002 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Belarus Association of Journalists – BAJ (2004 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Women in White (2005 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Hauwa Ibrahim (2005 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Reporters Without Borders (2005 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Alexander Milinkevich (2006 Sakharov Prize winner)
- Salih Mahmoud Mohamed Osman (2007 Sakharov Prize winner)

Sakharov Network – C/o Reporters sans frontières – Belgique a.s.b.l.

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