

# Bulletin

March-April 2004

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## **INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF POLITICAL PRISONERS**

### **SUPPORT TO POLITICAL PRISONERS**

On March 25, HRIC hosted a roundtable briefing by Wang Youcai, one of the founders of the China Democracy Party, who was convicted of conspiracy to subvert state power and sentenced to 11 years in prison by the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court on December 21, 1998. Wang Youcai expressed his thoughts on the human rights situation in China and the possibilities for a future democratic China. Wang also spoke about his experiences in prison and his hopes for his new life in the United States. Following negotiations between the Chinese and U.S. governments, Wang Youcai was released on "medical parole" to the United States, and arrived in Rhode Island on March 4, 2004.

Also in March, HRIC convened a legal strategy meeting to discuss and coordinate approaches for securing the unconditional release of imprisoned Shanghai lawyer Zheng Enchong. Zheng was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and one year's subsequent deprivation of political rights on October 28, 2003 for "illegally providing state secrets to entities outside of China." Prior to his arrest on June 6, Zheng was one of the most important sources of legal advice to Shanghai families affected by redevelopment projects.

### **INCORPORATING RESPONSIBILITY 2008**

HRIC's expansive multi-year research and monitoring campaign, *Incorporating Responsibility 2008* (IR 2008), seeks to identify various intervention points for promoting human rights as China continues its integration into the global community. This quarter HRIC participated in the following multilateral arenas to promote components of the campaign:

### **INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY AT THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

From March 29–April 7, HRIC sent a delegation to attend the 60th Session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva and participated in a range of parallel NGO briefings. These included a briefing on the human rights situation in China, with a focus on Tibet and Xinjiang, organized by the Society for Threatened Peoples; a briefing focused on education in China and Tibet, organized by the International Fellowship for Reconciliation; a briefing on counterterrorism co-sponsored by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the International Court of Justice, Human Rights Watch and the International Service for Human Rights; a roundtable discussion on bilateral human rights dialogues with China, convened by FIDH and in cooperation with HRIC and the International Campaign for Tibet, which was attended by representatives of more than 11 governments; and a roundtable discussion organized by FIDH in cooperation with HRIC and China Labour Bulletin on methods for advancing human rights through communication technologies and trade in China.

In addition to these activities, HRIC encouraged governments to support the China resolution tabled by the United States, which was eventually blocked by a "no-action" motion initiated by China. HRIC also urged governments to pressure the Chinese government for the release of Ding Zilin and two other representatives of the Tiananmen Mothers, who were detained by National Security Police at the end of March. The three women, who have headed the Tiananmen Mothers' calls for reassessment and official accountability in relation to the Tiananmen Square massacre, were released a few days later.

### **BILATERAL ADVOCACY**

In February HRIC and FIDH submitted a joint open letter to the EU-China Dialogue presenting a preliminary assessment of the EU-China human rights dialogue. Taking as its basis the EU-China dialogue benchmarks announced in 2001, the assessment integrated a number of indicators developed by the UN and other multilateral bodies and international NGOs that focus on various areas, including governance, human development, poverty, press freedom and health. HRIC and FIDH concluded

that based on the preliminary assessment, only limited human rights progress has been achieved by China since 1998.

### **ELECTRONIC ADVOCACY**

On April 2, HRIC representatives attended a seminar at American University in Paris entitled, *The Other Internet: Exploring Digital Resistance*, which brought together Internet scholars, activists, artists and students to explore new forms of collaboration and activism emerging online. HRIC presented its E-Activism Project as an example of using technology to build and amplify human networks and promote the expansion of civil society within China.

At the end of April, HRIC staff attended a two-day conference at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism entitled, "China's Digital Future: Advancing the Understanding of China's Information Revolution." The conference, hosted by UC Berkeley and the USC Annenberg School for Communication, facilitated HRIC's programmatic networking with journalists, lawyers, IT experts, CEOs and Internet activists, as well as discussion on the impact of the Internet and other new media on the development of China.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

As part of HRIC's efforts to collaborate with other international human rights NGOs, from March 2–4 Executive Director Sharon Hom participated in the World Congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), of which HRIC is a partner organization, held in Quito, Ecuador. Approximately 400 human rights activists from all parts of the world attended the plenary session of the forum "Democratizing Globalization" on March 3 to discuss how to implement the slogan of the recently created World Social Forum, "Another World is Possible." HRIC made a China intervention during a workshop on Cultural Diversity and Subordinated Minorities, and drafted and proposed a resolution on China, which was passed by the Congress of more than 140 NGOs from more than 90 countries.

On March 10 Sharon delivered a statement on behalf of HRIC at an event commemorating the 45th anniversary of Tibetan Uprising Day, which in 1959 culminated with the massacre of tens of thousands of unarmed Tibetan men, women, and children by Chinese forces in Lhasa.

Sharon addressed an audience of several hundred Tibetans and their supporters gathered outside of the United Nations to show HRIC's solidarity and support for Tibetans who suffer religious and political persecution and do not enjoy freedom of speech, worship or assembly.

On March 29, Christine Loh, CEO of the Hong Kong-based organization Civic Exchange and a former member of Hong Kong's Legislative Council, briefed HRIC's New York staff on the ramifications of the Chinese government's recent announcement that the National People's Congress would interpret provisions of Hong Kong's Basic Law regarding electoral reform. HRIC and Civic Exchange will also collaborate on an education and outreach project.

Outreach also extended to the legal and business communities with China interests. As part of HRIC's corporate social responsibility strategy, from March 30–31 Sharon attended a business conference in London convened by the journal *Ethical Corporation*, where she made two presentations addressing how corporate managers can overcome the difficulties of doing business responsibly in a variety of sectors in China. Sharon briefed the audience of corporate and legal experts, government officials and NGO representatives on the human rights violations for which businesses could be held accountable in China, and the legal issues and challenges presented by economic reforms and restructuring for the protection of labor and human rights. Other conference speakers included experts, senior managers and CEOs from international corporations such as Intel, JP Morgan, B & Q, BT, Manpower, Marks & Spencer, Novozymes, H & M, Shell and Toys 'R' Us.

On April 14 Sharon spoke at a continuing legal education (CLE) program at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York on "Critical Issues in Post-WTO China." Sharon's presentation, entitled "Corporate and social responsibility and human rights: Issues for foreign capital," described the linkages between human rights, trade and investment with a focus on China and multi-lateral codes and frameworks, and drew upon HRIC's experience as an accredited NGO observer at the WTO Fifth Ministerial in September 2003 and HRIC's work on trade and human rights.

On April 16, Sharon participated in New

York University School of Law's Root-Tilden-Kern 50th Anniversary Celebration CLE Program, "The Challenges Globalization Poses for Public Service Law," which focused on the need for students and graduates of U.S. law schools to become involved in public service activities around the world, and the special challenges of practicing public service law in other cultures and jurisdictions. Alex Borrairie, former co-chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was the keynote speaker. Sharon presented her views on the major global trends and challenges that make international public service work so necessary and demanding today. She tied macro trends to the specific example of human rights work in China, talked about the need for more creative cross-sectoral lawyering, and highlighted the important role of pro-bono legal services in international human rights work.

#### **MEDIA ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH**

On March 11, Executive Director Sharon Hom debated John J. Tkacik, Jr., Research Fellow in China Policy at the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation, on CNN's program "Tough Call." The interview focused on the introduction of "human rights" into the Chinese Constitution, versus the U.S. government's accusations of backsliding on human rights in its 2003 country report on China. Sharon argued that persistent human rights abuses documented by the U.S. State Department's report and by HRIC's press releases, reports and briefings indicate that human rights are not improving in China, and that the amendment to the Constitution has limited value if not accompanied by structural reforms and implementation measures.

HRIC President Liu Qing participated in weekly interviews with Radio Free Asia, and accepted interviews from the New York Times and Spain's El Mundo regarding China's human rights situation, as well as frequent interviews with the BBC on a variety of topics. Executive Director Sharon Hom and Research Director Nicolas Becquelin also fielded print and radio interviews on a range of issues, and the New York and Hong Kong offices handled additional media inquiries on topics such as urban redevelopment projects and related protests; censorship and surveillance; reli-

gious freedom (including Falungong and Christians); Xinjiang; political prisoners, including imprisoned Shanghai lawyer Zheng Enchong and the release of Democracy Party founder Wang Youcai; labor issues; China's Constitutional amendment to include the phrase "human rights"; the discussion over lifting the EU arms embargo on China; the U.S. State Department's report on China's human rights practices in 2003; the China resolution tabled by the United States at the 60th session of the Human Rights Commission; and the arrest and release of the three Tiananmen Mothers.