

Action Page

BY EMMA MCGOWAN

The very different cases of these three political prisoners all illustrate the extent to which the Chinese government cracks down on those it perceives to be voicing opposition. Two of these individuals are Uyghur, an ethnic group that China is suppressing in the name of the U.S.-led “war on terror.”

Huseyin Celil (b. 1969) was arrested in the mid 1990s for advocating for the rights of the Uyghur people, but he escaped and made his way to Canada, where he obtained citizenship in 2001. After establishing himself in Canada, Celil was arrested on March 27, 2006, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and subsequently turned over to the Chinese government. By then, the Chinese government had sentenced him to death in absentia. Celil's family called for the Canadian government to intervene on his behalf, but the Chinese government does not recognize dual citizenship, and has denied Celil access to Canadian embassy officials. The Canadian government sent a hand-delivered diplomatic note to Beijing enquiring about Celil's situation, but has received no reply. Celil's family quote a police source as saying that Celil has been sentenced to 15 years in prison, but there has been no official confirmation of this report.

Nurmuhammet Yasin (b. 1974), a freelance Uyghur journalist, was arrested in Kashgar on November 29, 2004 and subsequently charged with “inciting racial hatred.” The charges are directly related to the publication of his short story “Wild Pigeon,” which was widely circulated and recommended for a literary award, but which the Chinese authorities apparently consider critical of the government of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Yasin was tried in February 2005 at a closed trial by the Maralbesh County Court. He was found guilty of inciting separatism, and sentenced to 10 years in prison. (Korash Huseyin, the editor of the *Kashgar Literary Journal*, was sentenced to three years in prison for publishing Yasin's story.) Yasin's appeal was denied. He is currently detained at Urumqi No. 1 Prison, where he has not been allowed any visitors since his he was transferred there on May 19, 2005.

Chen Guangcheng (b. 1971), blind since childhood, is a self-taught lawyer and activist who has fought for multiple rural causes, the most famous of which was a class-action lawsuit he filed against the city of Linyi over an official policy of forced abortions and sterilizations. After multiple arrests and beatings, Chen was taken into custody on March 11, 2006, but was not brought to trial until August 24, when he was found guilty of destruction of property and assembling a crowd to disrupt traffic. Chen was represented by a court-appointed lawyer for the two-hour trial because his own lawyers had been detained the night before. He was sentenced to four years and three months in prison, and was last reported held at the Yinan County Public Security Bureau Detention Center. On October 31, a provincial appeals court ordered a retrial for Chen. No date has yet been announced.

Join the international community in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of these and other democracy activists. Please send letters to the designated addresses below, emphasizing the need for the rule of law, free flow of information and the right to exercise freedom of expression. Where necessary, express concern for medical conditions and demand immediate and appropriate treatment.

Huseyin Celil: held at an undisclosed location

Nurmuhammet Yasin: held at Urumqi No. 1 Prison

Chen Guangcheng: held at Yinan County Detention Center

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Send copies of above appeals to:

**Permanent Mission of the People's
Republic of China to the United Nations**
New York, NY 10017
Fax: (212) 634 7626
E-mail: chinamission_un@mfa.gov.cn

Minister of Justice Wu Aiyang
Sifaju (Ministry of Justice)
10 Nandajie Chaoyangmen
Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020, PRC
Fax: 011 86 10 65 292345
Email: minister@legalinfo.gov.cn

President Hu Jintao
Chinese Communist Party
Yongdingmenjie
Beijing 100032, PRC

In addition, send copies of letters expressing concern for prisoners' medical conditions to:

Chinese Medical Association
42 Dongsi Xidajie
Beijing 100710, PRC
Fax: 86-10-6512-3754
E-mail: cmafrd@public3.bta.net.cn