

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2001		22	China	Tohti Tunyaz, historian

Announcement

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN has received new information about the detention of Uighur historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz (pen-name: Tohti Muzart). NCH reported earlier on our colleague Tohti (see NCH #17 under “China”). We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL PEN RAPID ACTION NETWORK

3 October 2001

[Update #1 to RAN 15/01]

CHINA (Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region): New information about the detention of Uighur historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz (pen-name: Tohti Muzart). The information in this alert replaces that of the original 9 May 2001 alert.

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN has received new information about the detention of Uighur historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz (pen-name: Tohti Muzart). According to new sources, he has been sentenced to eleven years’ imprisonment and two years’ deprivation of political rights, not fourteen years as first reported. International PEN fears that Tohti Tunyaz may be detained solely for his peaceful and legitimate activities as a researcher and writer, and if this is the case urges his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Further to our 9 May 2001 alert on the detention of Uighur historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz (pen-name: Tohti Muzart), International PEN has received new information on his case. According to new sources, Tohti Tunyaz was arrested in February 1998, not the summer of 1999 as first reported. He was charged in April 1998 with “inciting national disunity” and “stealing state secrets for foreign persons” (later

amended by the Supreme Court to “illegally acquiring state secrets”). He was arrested whilst on vacation in Urumchi, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), north-west China. Tohti Tunyaz was studying for a Ph.D in Uighur history and ethnic relations at Tokyo University, Japan, at the time of his arrest, and it is thought the charges against him may be linked to his research. He was reportedly convicted in March 1999 by the lower court and, following an appeal, sentenced by the Supreme Court in February 2000 to eleven years’ imprisonment and two years’ deprivation of political rights. He is believed to be detained in Urumchi.

Tohti Tunyaz graduated from the history department of the Central Institute of Nationalities, Beijing, in 1984 and was assigned to work for the China National Standing Committee. During this time he reportedly formed a close relationship with former Xinjiang governors Seyfudin Eziz and Ismail Emet, and was involved in the translation of Eziz’s works. He started a Ph.D programme at Tokyo University in 1996 specialising in Uighur history and ethnic relations, and was still completing this at the time of his arrest. He has reportedly published several papers on Uighur history in Japan, and has published a book in Beijing.

Tohti Tunyaz has a wife and children in Japan, and is from Bay County, Aksu prefecture, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, north-west China. He adopted the name of the biggest river ‘Muzart’ in Bay County as his pen-name.

International PEN is seriously concerned about the lengthy prison sentence handed to historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz, and fears that he may be detained solely for his peaceful and legitimate activities as a researcher and writer. If he is detained in violation of his right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International PEN is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Please send appeals:

Expressing serious concern about the lengthy sentence handed down to historian and writer Tohti Tunyaz (pen-name: Tohti Muzart), apparently solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to free expression;

Seeking further details of the charges against him, and urging that he is immediately and unconditionally released if detained in violation of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Appeals to:

His Excellency Jiang Zemin
State Council
Beijing 100032
P.R.China.

His Excellency Xiao Yang Buzhang
Minister of Justice
Sifabu
Xiaguangli
Beijing 100016
P.R.China.

Chairman of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional People's Government
(Salutation: Dear Chairman)
ABDULAHAT Abdurixit Zhuxi
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu
2 Zhongshanlu
Wulumuqishi 830041
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China.

Please note that fax numbers are no longer available for the Chinese authorities, so you may wish to ask the diplomatic representative for China in your country to forward your appeals.

Please copy appeals to the diplomatic representative for China in your country if possible.

For further information, please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN WiPC, 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AT, U.K. Tel: +44 (0)207 253 3226, fax: +44 (0)207 253 5711, email: cathy@wipcpn.org