

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2001		22	China	Tohti Tunyaz, historian
	2002			<i>follow-up 1</i>

Announcement

In October 2001 we circulated an urgent appeal from the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN for Uighur historian Tohti Tunyaz, sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment for his research into Uighur history (see NCH #22; first news in NCH #17). Last month, Amnesty International has launched a worldwide appeal for him. We present a summary of the case and the text of Amnesty International's appeal. We hope that you can send the recommended appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

TOHTI TUNYAZ (pen name: Tohti Muzart)

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

In February 1998 Tohti Tunyaz (pen name: Tohti Muzart) (?1960-), an Uighur historian and writer graduated from the Central Institute of Nationalities history department, Beijing (1984), later assigned to work for the China National Standing Committee, and studying for a Ph.D. in Uighur history and ethnic relations in nineteenth- and twentieth-century China at Tokyo University, Japan (1995-), was arrested in Urumqi, Xinjiang, when returning to China to visit his relatives and do research. His historical research on Uighur history included one book published in China and several papers published in Japan. In April 1998 he was charged with "inciting separatism" because he had allegedly published a book in Japan in 1998, entitled *The Inside Story of the Silk Road*, advocating "ethnic separatism" -- although Japanese scholars insisted that no such book exists -- and "illegally acquiring state secrets for foreign persons", because he had copied a list of 50-year old documents provided by an official librarian. In March 1999 Tohti was tried and sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment and two years' deprivation of political rights, a sentence confirmed on appeal in March 2000.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WORLDWIDE APPEAL AUGUST 2002

Source: <<http://web.amnesty.org/web/wwa.nsf>>

UIGHUR HISTORIAN BEHIND BARS

Tohti Tunyaz, an ethnic Uighur from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the northwest of China, is serving an eleven-year prison sentence because of his research into Uighur history. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Tohti Tunyaz (who writes as Tohti Muzart) is a postgraduate student in Japan specializing in the history of Chinese government policy towards minority groups. He was arrested in February 1998 during a visit to the XUAR to research his thesis. He was charged with “inciting separatism” and “illegally acquiring state secrets”. Tohti Tunyaz was convicted in March 1999 by the Urumqi Intermediate People’s Court, and his conviction and sentence were confirmed on appeal in March 2000.

During his trial the court referred to documents he obtained in the XUAR, and to a book advocating “ethnic separatism” which he was accused of publishing in Japan. His professor in Japan, Sato Tsugitaka, has asserted strongly that the so-called “state secrets” consisted of a list of 50-year-old documents provided by an official librarian, and that Tohti Tunyaz has not published any books advocating “ethnic separatism”.

The imprisonment of Tohti Tunyaz comes at a time of increased government repression in the XUAR, particularly affecting the mainly Muslim Uighur population. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, China has intensified its political crack-down by closing down mosques, burning Uighur books and branding those in favour of independence for the region as “ethnic separatists” or “terrorists”. In May 2001, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Tohti Tunyaz’ imprisonment was arbitrary and in violation of his right to freedom of thought, expression and opinion.

Please write, urging the Chinese authorities to release Tohti Tunyaz immediately and unconditionally, and to ensure that everyone in the XUAR has the right to freedom of expression regardless of race, religion or political opinion.

SEND APPEALS TO:

Abdulahat Abdurixit

Chair of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region People’s Government

Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu

2 Zhongshanlu

Wulumuqishi 830041

Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu

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