

September 2, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

We are writing as your fellow Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to ask that you call publicly on the Government of China to release from house arrest Liu Xia, the wife our imprisoned fellow Laureate Dr. Liu Xiaobo, and to allow her to travel abroad for medical treatment as she has requested. We also ask that you urge his immediate release as well.

On December 25, 2009, Liu Xiaobo, a highly-respected intellectual and advocate for democracy, was sentenced to 11 years in prison for “inciting subversion.” The charges were based on his political essays and co-authorship of Charter 08, which called for peaceful political reform in China. Citing those same works, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded Dr. Liu its Peace Prize in 2010. Shortly thereafter, Liu Xia, Dr. Liu’s wife, was placed under house arrest. Liu Xia has been stripped of all personal freedoms for nearly five years without charge or trial and her health has deteriorated precipitously in the last year.

Although the Chinese Government claims Liu Xia is under “no legal restriction,” her apartment is under 24-hour police supervision and her movement and accessibility completely restricted. She suffered from a heart attack in 2014 and has severe back pain. She is also battling severe depression and anxiety amid her isolation and uncertainty. Doctors have warned that such severe mental health problems will worsen unless there is a change in her living conditions. The government has rejected repeated requests to allow Liu Xia to go overseas and seek the medical care she needs. We believe there are strong humanitarian grounds for you to urge her release. And if the Chinese government responds she is under no restriction, then you are in a position to ask it to facilitate a meeting for your Ambassador in Beijing to see her and arrange her travel abroad.

Four years have passed since the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, an independent and impartial body of experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council, found the respective detentions of Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia to be in violation of international law. All attempts to resolve their detentions through private diplomacy have failed. We believe that unless leaders like you take urgent action, both publicly and privately, that China will continue to believe it can act with impunity and without consequence for its behavior.

Sincerely,

Desmond M. Tutu
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1984

The 14th Dalai Lama
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1989

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1996

Shirin Ebadi
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2003

Leymah Gbowee
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2011

Tawakkol Karman
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 2011

Máiread Maguire
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1976

Rigoberta Menchú Tum
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1992

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1980

David Trimble
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1998

Lech Wałęsa
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1983

Jody Williams
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1997