

DANA ROHRBACHER
46th District, California



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2300 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0546
(202) 225-2415 FAX: (202) 225-0145

DISTRICT OFFICE:
101 Main Street, Suite 380
Huntington Beach, CA 92648-8118
(714) 960-6483 FAX: (714) 960-7806

South Bay: (310) 377-9493
<http://rohrbacher.house.gov>

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 27, 2008

**ASK SECRETARY RICE TO URGE CHINA'S LEADERS TO
RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Dear Colleague:

I encourage you to review the attached letter to Secretary Rice and to add your name requesting her to press for the release of 38-year-old journalist and poet **Shi Tao of China** and other individuals imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Mr. Shi is serving a 10 year prison sentence for sending an email.

In April 2004, Mr. Shi Tao used his Yahoo! email account to send a message to a U.S.-based pro-democracy website. In his email, he summarized a government order directing media organizations in China to downplay the upcoming 15th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy activists. Police arrested him in November 2004, charging him with "illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities." Authorities used email account holder information supplied by Yahoo! to convict Shi Tao in April 2005 and sentence him to 10 years in prison. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing his views.

China has constructed an extensive system of Internet censorship to silence activists and journalists like Shi Tao. All Internet communications pass through government-controlled routers, and authorities are able to block access to many sites, to filter content, and to delete links or web pages considered "dangerous" or "subversive." No list identifying what information is filtered or blocked is publicly available, but a study done by Harvard Law School in 2002 found that more than 50,000 of 204,000 websites tested were inaccessible from at least one location in China. Websites using banned words such as "democracy," "freedom," and "human rights" are regularly blocked, as are the websites of international human rights groups (including Amnesty International) and several foreign news services.

The human rights situation in China is appalling. According to the State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices from March 2007, "Many political prisoners [remain] in prison or under other forms of detention... including journalists Zhao Yan, Shi Tao, and Jiang Weiping; Internet writers Yang Zili and Xu Wei; labor activist Yao Fuxin; China Democracy Party cofounder Qin Yongmin; political dissident Yang Jianli; family planning whistleblower Chen Guangcheng; Su Zhimin and other underground Catholic bishops; house Christian activists Zhang Rongliang, Cai Zhuohua, and Liu Fenggang; Uighurs Tohti Tunyaz and Dilkex Tilivaldi; Tibetans Jigme Gyatso, Tenzin Deleg, and Gendun Choekyi Nyima; and Inner Mongolian cultural activist Hada."

We urge you to join this letter asking Secretary Rice to press for Mr. Shi's immediate and unconditional release and for the release of others who have been jailed as a result of their peaceful expression of their views.

If you would like to sign this letter, please have your staff contact jeff.vanderslice@mail.house.gov (5-2415). The *deadline* for signatures is **Noon on March 12**.

Sincerely,

Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress