

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

Wen Jiabao Guojia Zongli

The State Council General Office

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Beijingshi 100017

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Your Excellency:

I am writing to express my grave concern over the imprisonment of **Shi Tao**, a poet and journalist who has been imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and his rights to seek, receive and impart information. I urge you to bring about his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

In April 2004, Mr. Shi sent an e-mail from his Yahoo! account to a US-based pro-democracy website in which he summarized a government order directing media organizations in China to downplay the upcoming 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown. On the basis of this e-mail, police arrested Mr. Tao six months later in November 2004, charging him with "illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities." Using email account holder information supplied by Yahoo!, authorities sentenced Shi Tao to 10 years in prison in April 2005.

The right to freedom of expression is protected under China's constitution and under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed. Shi Tao's imprisonment appears to be a violation of both of these legal instruments. The pervasive system of Internet censorship in China contradicts the guarantees of freedom of expression that are embodied in the nation's constitution and international law. I am alarmed that authorities continue to use vaguely-worded laws to detain journalists, dissidents and others engaged in the peaceful exercise of their right to free expression.

Amnesty International considers Shi Tao to be a prisoner of conscience. I respectfully call upon you to bring about his immediate and unconditional release from prison. I urge you to amend or repeal vaguely-worded laws or regulations that can be used to persecute individuals who exercise their right to freedom of expression.

Sincerely,