

Human Rights Updates: November 2010 **(There are 5 updates)**

Detention of China dissident Liu Xiaobo extended

(AP) – 25 Nov 2009

BEIJING — Chinese authorities have extended the detention of a jailed dissident writer for another two months, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Police took Liu Xiaobo away on Dec. 8, 2008, one day before the publication of a document he co-authored that called for more civil rights in China and an end to the Communist Party's political dominance.

Liu was held at a secret location for six months, then formally arrested in June on suspicion of "inciting to subvert state power" — a loosely defined charge that carries a maximum sentence of 15 years.

Lawyer Mo Shaoping said police gave no reason for Wednesday's extension other than that the case was complicated.

Under Chinese law, no more extensions are allowed without issuing an indictment and sending the case to trial.

Liu, 53, is a former university professor who spent 20 months in jail for joining the 1989 student-led protests in Tiananmen Square.

He was one of the chief architects of "Charter 08," an unusually direct call for a new constitution guaranteeing human rights, the open election of public officials, and freedom of religion and expression. The document, released in December 2008, demanded an end to the Communist Party's overarching control of the military, courts and government bodies, and a new criminal code eliminating overtly political crimes such as incitement to subvert state power.

More than 300 lawyers, writers, artists and intellectuals signed the charter when it was released, although Liu is the only one who has been arrested — seen as a move by authorities to scare other signatories into backing off.

China's communist leaders have tolerated no political challenges to their authority since the crushing of the 1989 protests by the military. Most dissidents have been harassed into inactivity, imprisoned or exiled. Hopes that last year's Beijing Olympic Games would foster greater moderation proved unfounded.

Dalai Lama says Obama 'not soft on China'

- From ANI

Washington, Nov.23 : The Dalai Lama has defended US President Barack Obama on Sunday, dismissing complaints that the U.S. leader was too soft on China during his visit there last week.

"Obama is not soft on China; just has a different style," he said in a interview aired on Indian television.

The Dalai Lama, who heads a Tibetan government-in-exile based in India, also said he was "not disappointed Obama has not met me yet," referring to his visit to Washington in October, Politco reported.

Previous presidents have met with the Tibetan spiritual leader in his visits there, despite complaints from the Chinese government, which has occupied Tibet since 1951.

"Actually publicly, as well as behind the scenes, [Obama] has really taken up the issue of Tibet with Chinese leaders very seriously," he told reporters on Saturday. In the television nterview, he said that he expected the issue would also come up when the American president meets privately with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday.

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CHINA - USA

Barack Obama talks about human rights, the police arrests 20 dissidents and activists

by Wang Zhicheng

The U.S. president is speaking to a select group of "future leaders" and students on the value of China, cooperation with the U.S., human rights. Meanwhile in Shanghai, Beijing and other parts of the country's dissidents and activists under house arrest or forced "vacation" to "guarantee the success of the Obama visit".

Shanghai (AsiaNews) - While Barack Obama talks about human rights in Shanghai, the Chinese police has clamped down on at least 20 dissidents and activists from across the country to ensure that they do not meet the U.S. president.

Obama arrived in Shanghai last night at midnight and this morning has begun a series of meetings with a speech at the Science and Technology Museum with a group of "China's future leaders," followed by a conversation and a series of questions and answers with students chosen by the heads of university faculties of the metropolis.

In his speech at the Museum, the U.S. president praised China's efforts in wresting millions out of poverty and suggested a new style of relations between the two superpowers. "The notion that we must be enemies - he said - is not predestined".

He also mentioned with a certain sensitivity the issue of human rights: "These freedoms of expression and worship, of access to information and political participation - we believe are universal rights. They should be available to all people, including ethnic and religious minorities".

In recent days both at home and abroad Barack Obama has received many calls as well as open letters asking him to clearly highlight the issue of human rights in China.

A month ago, during a visit of the Dalai Lama to the U.S., he declined to meet with the Tibetan leader for fear of arousing the ire of Beijing, breaking a tradition maintained for years by all the former U.S. presidents.

It is not clear whether the speech at the Museum and his conversation with the students was broadcast throughout the country or whether there was some censorship. Neither is it clear the criteria by which participants at the two meetings, at the museum and with students, were selected.

One thing is clear however, that during the past few days dozens of activists and dissidents have been taken from their homes and forced to travel out of town under police escort, or kept under house arrest, monitored day and night to ensure that they will not meet the president of the United States.

Jiang Yingying, of CHRD (Chinese Human Rights Defenders) says: "While the [Chinese] government announced the meeting between President Obama and 'future leaders' and a few selected students, they gagged the real leaders who are crying for justice, human rights and the rule of law".

In Shanghai alone, where Obama began his tour of China, 7 activists are currently detained. Among them, the most famous is Zheng Enchong, who is being strictly controlled by more than 20 policemen. In the past Zheng has defended the victims of expropriations, has spent years in prison and has lived under house arrest for the past three years.

Another thing figure is Jin Yuehua, a victim of forced expropriations and petitions activist, detained in the Haofeng hostel, which functions as a "black prison", that is illegal and unregistered, controlled by 6 guards.

In Beijing, another stop Obama's itinerary, 5 dissidents have been forced to leave the city so as "not to create trouble" during the visit of U.S. president. Wang Debang, an activist for human rights, was brought to Qingdao by police who ordered him to return to Beijing only after Obama's visit.

Hu Shigen, another human rights activist, is under strict police control and was

warned "not to create problems." Li Hai, a former student of Tiananmen disappeared on 12 November; Liu Di, an activist in custody, is on a forced vacation outside Beijing.

Among the other detainees are: Lianhai Zhao, head of a group of parents whose children have been poisoned by melamine-tainted milk, arrested on 13 November, Qi Zhiyong, a dissident who lost his legs because of tanks in the Tiananmen protest of '89, detained for trying to organize a seminar on human rights, Zhang Hui, director of the research institute "Mr. Democracy" and subject to close scrutiny. The police have explained that these measures are necessary "to ensure the success of the visit by Obama."

Human Rights Watch

US/China: Obama Should Raise Human Rights in China

November 9, 2009

(New York) - United States President Barack Obama should raise key human rights concerns publicly on his first official visit to China, Human Rights Watch said in a letter released today.

"President Obama has spoken forcefully about the importance of defending human rights globally in speeches in Egypt, Ghana, Turkey, and at the United Nations," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "The test now is whether he will do so in a country where the government remains profoundly hostile to these concepts."

The letter urges Obama to raise three key issues, including:

- * Freedom of expression, including internet censorship and the imprisonment of peaceful government critics;
- * Rule of law, especially the disbarment of China's fledgling "rights protection" lawyers;
- * Tibet and Xinjiang, particularly the executions of Tibetans alleged to have been involved in the March 2008 protests there, and of Uighurs for involvement in the July 2009 protests in that region.

The letter acknowledges some of the administration's steps to promote human rights in China, such as issuing a statement on the 20th anniversary of Tiananmen Square and raising some individual cases. But the lack of more visible, consistent action on human rights, coupled with Secretary Clinton's February 2009 comments en route to Beijing that human rights "shouldn't interfere" with other issues in the US-China relationship, and the decision not to meet the Dalai Lama prior to the November summit, has raised expectations within the Chinese government that Obama will not press these concerns.

"The Chinese government is now betting that President Obama won't raise human rights, while Chinese civil society activists, lawyers, and peaceful critics - the kind of people with whom the President typically aligns himself - are

ferverently hoping he will," said Kenneth Roth.

Obama says not soft-pedaling China rights issue

Mon Nov 9, 2009 11:39pm EST

By Caren Bohan

WASHINGTON, Nov 9 (Reuters) - U.S. President Barack Obama on Monday rejected criticism that he was giving short shrift to human rights issues in his approach toward China.

"I don't find the critics credible," Obama told Reuters in an interview. "If you look at my statements, they have been entirely consistent. We believe in the values of freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion, that are not just core American values but we believe are universal values."

Obama heads to Asia this week for a nine-day trip that will include visits to Shanghai and Beijing.

Critics have cited his decision last month not to meet with the Dalai Lama as a sign he was willing to play down human rights concerns to try to curry favor with the Chinese on other issues, such as the global economy and the Iranian and North Korean nuclear disputes.

Obama said he had brought up the subject of human rights in past meetings with Chinese officials and would do so again during the upcoming visit.

"There has not been a meeting with the Chinese delegation in which we didn't bring these issues up. That will continue," Obama said.

(Reporting by Caren Bohan; Editing by Anthony Boadle and Peter Cooney)
