

LETTERS

LIU IN PRISON

In what amounts to a show trial, after weeks of courageous solidarity shown by hundreds of Chinese writers, intellectuals, and citizens, Dr Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years in prison and two years deprivation of political rights on charges of "incitement to subversion of state power," for his role in writing and publishing Charter 08, a document calling for political reform and human rights.

"Liu Xiaobo's case is about agreed international human rights standards, not merely the internal affairs of China," said John Ralston Saul, President of International PEN. "China is signatory to international treaties and conventions, and cannot be given a free pass when it acts against its own and international standards."

On December 23, 2009, Liu Xiaobo was tried by the Beijing First Intermediate People's Court. Lawyers for the defence attended the two-hour trial but were prohibited from disclosing details. Liu's wife and foreign diplomats were barred from the trial, probably held to coincide with an international holiday to diminish press coverage.

That morning, writer Liu Di (aka Stainless Steel Mouse on the Internet) declared her intention to give herself up as one of the "signatories and organizing plotters" of Charter 08. Liu wrote, "For the dignity of Constitution and laws, and for no more imprisonment of the people for their independent opinions, I would prefer to share with Mr Liu Xiaobo the same case with the same penalty." She was taken away outside the courthouse before the trial began and has reportedly been held by police, to be released later.

On 10 December 2009 (Inter-national Human Rights Day), more than 300 other signatories of the Charter released an open letter supporting Liu entitled 'We Are Willing to Share Responsibility with Liu Xiaobo'. Liu Xiaobo was formally indicted the following day.

"International PEN applauds the courage of all those in the Peoples' Republic of China who risk their freedom for speaking and writing their minds," said Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN. "We join our Chinese colleagues in their steadfast conviction that Charter 08 will be judged by history as the just act of citizens fighting for human rights, freedom and democracy."

Charter 08 was initially signed by over 300 scholars, journalists, freelance writers and activists and now has over 10,000 signatories from throughout China.

International PEN

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TO THE BRINK

The environment and human destiny itself is being taken to the brink of disaster.

All this because of the dictates of this system—because of its strangle-hold on humanity. All this while technology and wealth exist on a scale and in forms

never before imagined—technology and wealth produced by millions, billions, throughout the world who are nameless and faceless to the powers that be—technology and wealth that could and should be a resource belonging to humanity as a whole and used to meet the needs of people everywhere for a decent and ever-enriched material, intellectual and cultural life.

RCP, USA