

Swedish publisher Gui Minhai now held by China for over 1000 days. X-post of update from H-Asia, Aug. 5, 2018

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Gui Minhai, the Swedish citizen, publisher and poet kidnapped from Thailand and detained by China since October 2015, has now been held for more than 1000 days.

Recent developments are a mix of good news, and disheartening news:

The good news is that many people in Sweden and around the world now seem to have understood that the forced confessions we've seen are cruel, fake, spectacles; that Chinese authorities in fact are targeting Gui because of his publishing and his bookstore (from which four colleagues were also kidnapped in 2015 and also forced to make extralegal "confessions" of wrongdoing); and that the fake confessions represent a government-orchestrated tactic of fake smokescreens, meant to distract and muddle the picture (similar to how state authorities have often treated their own citizens, in China, who may themselves be tortured, or their families may be threatened, if they try to refuse to do the fake show demanded of them: <http://news.rthk.hk/rthk/en/component/k2/1405203-20180704.htm>).

The Chinese regime continues to hold Gui Minhai, and also, to move the goalposts with new accusations. Moreover, alarmingly, this June and July the Chinese embassy in Stockholm started a campaign contacting private Swedish citizens who've spoken up for Gui, and try to stop them from doing so. It tries to malign Gui for new, purported wrongdoings in Sweden that it claims to have dug up from many years ago. Astonishingly, it also threatened Sweden the country with punishment, if we keep talking about human rights in this case. And, it is attacking Swedish media: its website now features copies of a series of menacing "corrections" mailed to Swedish mass media writing about the case -- even daring to give lessons in press ethics to Sweden's most venerable news agency, the TT. (Especially since China is at the bottom of the RSF world index of press freedom, barely above North Korea, this makes the embassy folks look like Stalinist party-hacks). On these issues, in English see: <https://www.mhpbooks.com/chinas-embassy-in-stockholm-has-been-harrasing-those--ho-speak-in-defense-of-gui-minhai-the-swedish-publisher-illegally-detained-in-china/>

For many, the embassy campaign confirms the worst suspicions about China today. In Sweden, it has prompted demands for corrective measures against the embassy -- which may itself be breaking the law (<https://www.svd.se/wallstrom-bor-varna-kinas-ambassador>). So far, our foreign ministry has publicly revealed it "repeatedly" reminded the Chinese embassy that in Sweden, the constitution guarantees press freedom.

On July 13, to mark the 1000 days of unjust Chinese custody of our citizen, and repeat the call for his freedom, a rally was held outside the Chinese embassy in Stockholm, sponsored by Sweden's Writers' Association as well as by Sweden's Publishers' Association. I was one of seven speakers.

Earlier, on June 6, Sweden's national day, 45 public figures from publishing, media, politics and

culture, including myself, co-signed an appeal for the freedom of Gui Minhai that appeared in about forty media outlets, including the website of our national TV (for an English translation see: <https://twitter.com/KongTsungGan/status/1004179576988131328>; for my Chinese translation of the appeal, see: https://twitter.com/Magnus_Fiskesjo/status/1004352122924740608). In the appeal we said that "fundamental principles of law and human rights do not make a halt at the borders of any country, China or otherwise."

Before this -- and perhaps even more significant -- in May, the Swedish Parliament's all-party Foreign affairs committee also demanded the release of Gui, and asked our government to keep up the work on this case. I made a Chinese translation of the relevant passage (https://twitter.com/Magnus_Fiskesjo/status/1004358932364701696), as well as an English translation (https://twitter.com/Magnus_Fiskesjo/status/1004360317143535616). Also in May, in Parliament, Sweden's foreign minister reiterated our government's demand for Gui's release.

In addition, the European Union has formally repeated its demand for the freedom of its citizen (Gui is a Swedish citizen and therefore a Union citizen too; he is not a Chinese citizen). The EU last took up the case at the EU-China human rights dialogue in Beijing in early July.

So far, the only sign of accomodation from China is that the same embassy in Stockholm now has said it may "in principle" agree to a consular visit -- which China is, of course, already obligated by international law to accept and arrange, but which they have been continuously delaying and blocking.

It is now already more than six months since the Chinese authorities in China brutally and with no prior notice re-arrested Gui while he was traveling to such a visit, with Swedish diplomats, who had arranged for him to see a specially flown-in Swedish doctor. This was after Chinese authorities told Sweden's foreign ministry that Gui was "free". (Naturally there is suspicion that the Chinese foreign ministry and its embassies actually may have no clue what is going on. Still, we hope they will indeed comply with such visits, as we hope they will release out citizen and let him go -- now).

Finally, several days ago, 2 new poems by Gui Minhai were published in the Washington Post ("Why is China afraid of this man?" https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/china--s-trying-to-muzzle-gui-minhai-these-poems-tell-his-story/2018/07/29/c75b18dc-9bc-11e8-b769-e3fff17f0689_story.html).

Magnus Fiskesjö, nf42@cornell.edu