

## Joint Statement

### **China: Ensure Sophia Huang Xueqin's release and guarantee her freedom from arbitrary restrictions**

As journalist and prominent #MeToo activist Sophia Huang Xueqin approaches the end of her unjust five-year prison sentence, we, the undersigned civil society organizations, call on the Chinese authorities to ensure her immediate release and guarantee that, once released, she can carry out her journalism and human rights work without surveillance, harassment, retaliation or other [restrictions](#).

Sophia Huang Xueqin is widely recognized for her work on human rights and [commitment to press freedom](#). She is a journalist and one of the most prominent figures associated with China's #MeToo movement. For years, she reported on and advocated for gender equality and supported survivors of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

In September 2021, Sophia was preparing to start graduate studies in the UK. However, she and a friend, human and labour rights activist Wang Jianbing, were arrested in Guangzhou, China on 19 September, and detained incommunicado for more than five months. While in detention, both Sophia and Jianbing were reportedly subjected to ill-treatment, with negative impacts on their health.

During their trial in September 2023, the prosecution focused on their role in co-organizing weekly gatherings with fellow activists, as well as their participation in an online course on non-violence and online posts they had published or shared on issues deemed "sensitive" by the Chinese government.

Their convictions in June 2024 for "inciting subversion of state power" were based solely on the permissible exercise of their human rights, including the rights to freedom of the press and expression as well as association. Their case is emblematic of the Chinese government's ongoing crackdown on journalists, human rights defenders, feminist activists and civil society voices calling for social justice and respect for human rights.

Wang, who was sentenced to three and a half years, was released in March 2025.

While Sophia Huang Xueqin is expected to be released on 18 September, we are concerned that she will face restrictions after leaving prison. She was subject to a "supplemental sentence" of four years' deprivation of political rights, a punishment that is [routinely imposed on human rights defenders](#) and [journalists](#) to restrict their ability to speak, publish and organise long after their prison terms end. The legal provisions permitting this punishment are incompatible with international human rights standards,

not to mention the fact that no one should be punished simply for exercising their human rights.

We call on the Chinese authorities to:

- Ensure Sophia Huang Xueqin is released immediately and is not subjected to any further arbitrary detention and allowed to move freely;
- Guarantee her rights to freedom of expression, press, association and peaceful assembly, alongside her right to participate in public life, including her ability to communicate freely with family, friends, supporters and civil society groups;
- Ensure she is not subjected to surveillance, harassment, intimidation, retaliation or restrictions on her movement and communications; and
- Amend domestic laws, notably the Criminal Law, to ensure their compliance with international law and standards, and prevent the misuse of legal provisions to restrict the rights of human rights defenders and others.

Sophia Huang Xueqin's journalism and advocacy have inspired countless people both inside and outside China. Sophia Huang Xueqin should never have been imprisoned for her human rights and journalism work. As she approaches the end of her sentence, she deserves not only release, but freedom from any and all undue restrictions on her rights.

**Signatory organizations:**

1. Alliance for Citizens Rights
2. Amnesty International
3. ARTICLE 19
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. Bay Area Friends of Tibet
6. Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM)
7. Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)
8. Center for Uyghur Studies (CUS)
9. China Deviants
10. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
11. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
12. Dandelion Solidarity
13. European Values Center for Security Policy (EVC)
14. Fortify Rights
15. Freedom House

16. Front Line Defenders
17. Georgetown Center for Asian Law
18. Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities
19. GreatFire
20. Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete-Portugal
21. Hong Kong Committee in Norway
22. Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor
23. Hong Kong Media Overseas
24. Hong Kong Watch
25. Hongkonger in Deutschland e.V. 香港人在德國協會
26. Hongkongers in Britain (HKB)
27. Hongkongers in Lothians
28. Human Rights Foundation (HRF)
29. Human Rights in China (HRIC)
30. Human Rights Watch
31. Humanitarian China
32. Independent Chinese PEN Center (ICPC)
33. Index on Censorship
34. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the  
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
35. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
36. International Tibet Network
37. International Women's Media Foundation
38. Legal Initiatives for Vietnam (LIV)
39. Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
40. No Business With Genocide
41. Northern California Hong Kong Club
42. PEN America
43. PEN Nederland
44. PEN Sweden
45. Reading UK Stands with HK
46. Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
47. Safeguard Defenders (SD)
48. Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet
49. Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center
50. Students for a free Tibet -India
51. Students for A Free Tibet Oslo
52. Students For a Free Tibet, Japan

- 53. Swedish Tibet Committee
- 54. Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR)
- 55. The Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong (CFHK) Foundation
- 56. The Rights Practice
- 57. Tibet Initiative Deutschland e.V.
- 58. Viet Tan
- 59. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the  
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- 60. World Uyghur Congress (WUC)