

FREEDOM HEROES



HADA

AGE: mid 50s

SUMMARY: Defender of Cultural Rights and Political Participation for Mongols

CHARGE: Specifics currently unknown

SENTENCE: 15-years

PRISON: Hada was scheduled for release from prison in December 2010, after serving 15 years on politicised charges. He is believed to be under house arrest, but his whereabouts are unknown.

Hada [1], in his mid-50s, is a writer from Southern Mongolia and is being held under de facto house arrest after serving a 15-year prison sentence on charges of “separatism” and “espionage.” Hada’s wife Xinna made a recent plea to Chinese president Xi Jinping calling for her husband’s immediate release and her fears for her husband’s health and safety. [2]

Hada was an active defender of indigenous Mongol culture and language for many years and in 1992, he and fellow activist Tegexi established what would later become the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance (SMDA). Due to their involvement with the group, Hada and Tegexi were both detained by the police in 1995 and tried in a closed hearing in 1996 on charges of “separatism” and “espionage.” Hada is known to have been tortured and to have received very poor care during his long imprisonment. He is known to have serious health problems including a stomach ulcer, coronary heart disease and rheum arthritis. Despite Hada family’s continuous demand to give him appropriate medical treatment, his illness remains untreated and his health is deteriorating.

In early 1981, he became an active participant in the growing Inner Mongolian student movement, which sought to develop mechanisms that would help preserve Mongolian ethnic identity in Chinese-controlled Inner Mongolia. After graduating from university in 1983, Hada published a number of articles on political theory in the Mongolian language. In 1996, he became a research student in the political theory department of Inner Mongolian Normal University, and upon completing his MA, devoted his energy to promoting indigenous Mongolian culture. As an outlet for his activism, Hada and his wife, Xinna, later opened a Mongolian studies bookstore in the capital of Inner Mongolia, Hohhot.

In 1995, he and the SMDA organized several peaceful demonstrations in the capital city of Inner Mongolia to demand the Chinese government to materialize the rights of the Mongols written in the constitution of the P.R.China as well as in the self-government Constitution of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

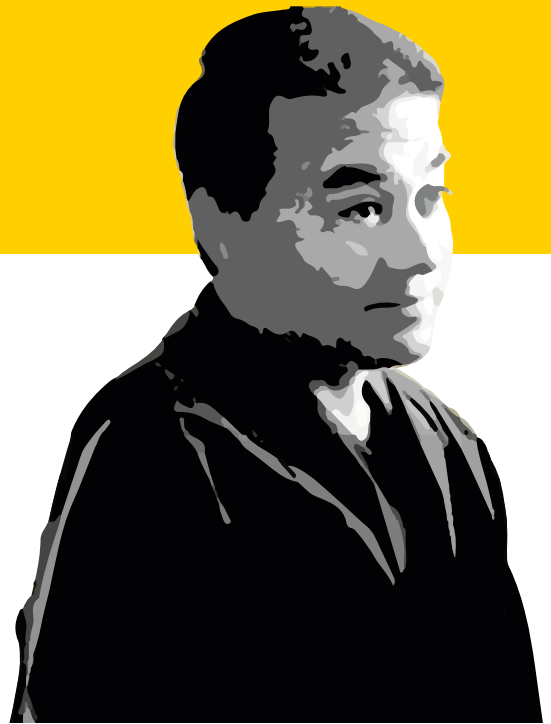
After organizing a demonstration and school strike among the teachers and students in the universities and colleges of Hohhot in Dec. 1995, Hada and dozens other Mongols, including his wife Xinna and his brother Has, were arrested by the authorities.

Hada’s family has been under constant surveillance and harassment, and requests to have him transferred to a prison closer to home, or to improve his living conditions, have been ignored.

NOTES:

1. Hada was born into a Mongolian family on 29 November 1955. For more background information please visit <http://www.smhric.org/Hada/Hada.htm>
2. Radio Free Asia: ‘I Have Three Demands For Xi Jinping’, 20 October 2014 <http://www.rfa.org/english/women/demands-10202014101643.html>

FREEDOM HEROES



ILHAM TOHTI

AGE: 45

SUMMARY: Renowned Uyghur scholar and promoter of social and cultural rights for Uyghurs

SENTENCE: Life sentence

PRISON: Unknown

STATUS: Serving a life sentence on separatism-related charges

Professor Ilham Tohti is a renowned Uyghur scholar and Professor of Economics at Minzu University in Beijing. Professor Tohti, winner of the 2014 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award, is also a prominent human rights defender and advocate for Uyghur economic, social and cultural rights. He is best known for promoting an understanding between Uyghurs and Han-Chinese towards a peaceful co-existence.

On 15 January 2014, Professor Ilham Tohti was detained along with his mother in Beijing by both Xinjiang and Beijing police for ambiguous charges of “violating the law and committing a crime,” whereby the Xinjiang police acted outside of its jurisdiction. Professor Tohti’s mother was released later; however several of Professor Tohti’s Uyghur students and website administrators have also been detained for questioning.

On 25 January 2014, the Chinese media revealed that Professor Tohti was under investigation for having “formed a separatist group headed by him and undertook separatist activities under the disguise of his identity” in Xinjiang, after which the Chinese media began an online smear campaign against him. Whilst Professor Tohti has never advocated for violence or promoted a political agenda, he was accused of holding aggressive lectures, “instigating ethnic violence” on 5 July 2009, and having ties with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement.

Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life imprisonment in September 2014. During his detention Ilham Tohti is believed to have been tortured, denied food for 10 days, and shackled for more than 20 days. His trial has been marked by a series of legal shortcomings including his legal team being refused access to evidence and unable to meet Tohti for six months. One of Tohti’s lawyers was also forced to quit the case following political pressure.

Seven Uighur students, arrested alongside Ilham Tohti, face similar charges of “separatism”, although it is unclear when their trials will take place or whether they have been allowed legal representation.

FREEDOM HEROES



JOSHUA WONG

AGE: 17

SUMMARY: A Hong Kong student activist who is the convenor and founder of the Hong Kong student activist group Scholarism.

Joshua Wong (Chinese: 黃之鋒, born 13 October 1996) is a Hong Kong student activist who is the convenor and founder of the Hong Kong student activist group Scholarism. He was a student at the United Christian College (Kowloon East), and is now a college student of the Open University of Hong Kong. Wong is most notable for leading fellow Hong Kong students in a massive protest in 2014 that demanded genuine universal suffrage. He took an active role in society in Hong Kong at a young age, and the 2010 anti-High Speed Rail protests was one of the first protests he took part in.

In 29 May 2011, Wong and schoolmate Ivan Lam established Scholarism, a student activist group. Wong received widespread attention in 2012 when he led the organization to protest against moral and national education. On 27 September 2014, Wong was one of the 78 people arrested by the Hong Kong Police during a massive pro-democracy protest, after hundreds of students stormed the HKSAR government headquarters in a push for political rights and as a sign of protest against Beijing's decision on the 2014 Hong Kong electoral reform. However, unlike most of those arrested who were freed soon afterwards, Wong remained in custody for about two days, until his release on Sunday evening.

Wong is regarded as a symbol of anti-national education body's energy as well as a symbol of defiance against the government, Wong is involved in the movement for the inclusion of civic nomination in the 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive Election.

ROLE IN THE 2014 HONG KONG PROTESTS

In June 2014, Scholarism drafted a plan to reform Hong Kong's electoral system to push for universal suffrage, under one country, two systems. Joshua Wong as a student leader was to start a movement of civil disobedience among Hong Kong's students, which was to send a pro-democracy message to Beijing.

According to Joshua Steimle, CEO of MWI, a digital marketing agency with offices in the U.S. and Hong Kong, Wong is a competent and experienced leader. During the protests, Wong stated: "Among all the people in Hong Kong, there is only one person who can decide whether the current movement will last and he is Leung. If Leung can accept our demands ... (the) movement will naturally come to an end."

Chinese state-run media and pro-government Hong Kong newspaper alleged that three years prior to the Democratic movement incident, Wong "received donations" and "met with US consulate personnel", and regard him as opposing the government for no apparent reason, and consider him as an extremist. Wong has dismissed the allegations as baseless. Wong states that the principle leading the protest is non-violence.

Wong was charged on 27 November 2014 with obstructing a bailiff clearing one of Hong Kong's three protest areas. His lawyer accused the charge as politically motivated. On 2 December 2014, Wong and two other students began a hunger strike to demand renewed talks with the Hong Kong government.

FREEDOM HEROES

LIU XIAOBO

AGE: 59

SUMMARY: Chinese literary critic, writer, professor, and human rights activist who called for political reforms and the end of communist single-party rule and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010.

SENTENCE: 11 years and deprived of all political rights for two years.

PRISON: Jinzhou, Liaoning

STATUS: Liu Xiaobo's wife, Liu Xia, has been under defacto house arrest since 8 October 2010 and she is deprived of basic human rights, freedom of movement, communication and speech.



Liu Xiaobo was born on the 28th of December 1955. As a young man he studied literature and philosophy, and worked as a literary critic and university lecturer in Beijing. He took a doctorate in 1988, after which he was a guest lecturer at universities in Europe and the USA.

Liu Xiaobo took part in the student protests on Tiananmen Square in 1989. For that he was sentenced to two years in prison. Later he served three years in a labour camp for having criticised China's one-party system. For over twenty years, Liu has fought for a more open and democratic China. He demands that the Chinese authorities comply with Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution, which lays down that the country's citizens enjoy "freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration".

In 2008, Liu was a co-author of Charter 08, a direct appeal for political liberalization in China that mapped a gradual shifting of China's political and legal system in the direction of democracy. More than 350 Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists signed the Charter, including Tibetan poet and blogger Tsering Wooser and Bao Tong, a former senior Communist Party official

He was arrested in December 2008, and sentenced a year later to eleven years' imprisonment for undermining the state authorities. Liu has constantly denied the charges. "Opposition is not the same as undermining", he points out.

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TENZIN DELEK

SUMMARY: Highly respected community leader and advocate of Tibetan identity and culture

CHARGE: “causing explosions” and “inciting separatism”

SENTENCE: Life sentence, reduced to a term of 20 years
Prison: Chuandong Prison, Sichuan Province

STATUS: Known to be in serious ill health and in need of URGENT medical assistance

Highly respected Tibetan religious leader Tenzin Delek Rinpoche has been in prison for over 12 years, charged with “causing explosions” and “inciting separatism”, charges for which no evidence has ever been provided and he has steadfastly maintained his innocence. Recent news indicates that Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is in very ill-health, with a heart condition, high blood pressure, and other worrying medical issues.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche’s original trial (December 2002) was not held in accordance with international fair trial standards and he was denied the right to be represented by lawyers hired by his family. His second hearing (January 2003) was held in secret without due process. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was given a suspended death sentence, which was later commuted to a life sentence.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche has been wrongly imprisoned. His “crime” has been to devote his life to helping his community, working tirelessly to preserve the Tibetan identity, culture and Tibet’s environment. He has been persecuted for his support for the Dalai Lama, his promotion of Tibetan Buddhism and for his cultural and social development work in Tibet.