

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
1996		4	China	Wang Dan, history student

Announcement:

The American Association for the Advancement of Science is sending an urgent invitation to sign a petition on behalf of Wang Dan, a former history student at Beijing University. For some details about him, see circular NCH #2, under China. I hope that you can react before 30 October 1996.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK (AAASHRAN)

28 October 1996

CHINA--STUDENT/HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IMPRISONED

Case Number: 9621.dan

SIGN ON FOR A CHINESE COLLEAGUE IN DISTRESS

The New York Academy of Sciences' Committee on Human Rights, the Committee of Concerned Scientists, the Science and Human Rights Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Human Rights in China are co-sponsoring a petition, which we ask you to sign NOW, as the situation of a jailed colleague has taken a grave turn. We plan to mail this petition subscribed by a good number of concerned scientists to the designated high-level authorities of the People's Republic of China on Wednesday, October 30.

Background information follows the text of our petition.

To: Jiang Zemin, President, People's Republic of China; Li Peng, Premier, People's Republic of China

I am distressed at reports that Wang Dan, a former student at Beijing University is to stand trial on a

charge of “conspiring to subvert the government,” based on his accepting a scholarship to fund his correspondence course at our University of California at Berkeley, his publishing articles abroad on human rights issues, and his raising funds to help people suffering repression.

All his activities were peaceful and hardly intended to subvert your Government. I therefore call upon you to drop the charges and set Wang Dan free immediately and unconditionally. By doing so, you will enhance the stature of the People’s Republic of China in the eyes of the world.

PLEASE ENDORSE THIS PETITION BY VISITING THE WANG DAN HOME PAGE AT THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCE SITE <http://www.nyas.org/> OR BY SENDING EMAIL TO SVETLANA KOSIC-STONE, NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, EMAIL: HUMANRIGHTS@NYAS.ORG, INDICATING YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION AND HELP COMPOUND ITS EFFECTIVENESS BY ENCOURAGING COLLEAGUES TO SIGN ON AS WELL.

THE SITUATION OF WANG DAN

Wang Dan, now 27, was among the most prominent student leaders in the 1989 democracy movement when he was a student at Beijing University. After the military crackdown, he was number 1 on the government’s “most want list.” He was arrested in June 1989 in Beijing and charged with “counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement.” He was sentenced to four years in prison - a relatively light sentence in comparison with those of other leaders and participants in the movement - thanks to his international repute. Also due to international pressure, he was released six months early in February 1993, four months before the U.S. decision to renew China’s Most Favored Nation trading status.

After Wang Dan was released, he resumed his activities to promote human rights via open, peaceful and legal means. Living under constant police surveillance, Wang Dan contributed articles on democracy and human rights to domestic and overseas Chinese media, as well as to international media. He also called on the Chinese leadership through open letters to address current human rights issues in China. After he received death threats from the police in December 1994, he filed a lawsuit against the Public Security Bureau to protest police harassment. However even these lawful activities were not tolerated by the Chinese government, which used them as the grounds for the “criminal charges” leveled against him. After holding him in incommunicado detention for 17 months, the authorities have now indicted Wang Dan for “conspiring to subvert the government.” The three charges against him are “accepting a scholarship from the University of California,” “publishing anti-government articles abroad,” and

“joining other dissidents to set up a mutual aid plan.”

We fear that Wang Dan’s trial will not respect the minimum guarantees of a fair trial. Among the numerous precedents which justify this fear is the trial of Wei Jinsheng, who received a 14-year prison sentence in December 1995. Wei’s verdict - guilty of “conspiring to subvert the government” - implicated Wang Dan.

On October 11, the day when the indictment was announced, Wang Dan’s parents were given only one day to choose a lawyer. It is not known whether witnesses on his behalf will be allowed to attend. Under Chinese law, “conspiring to subvert the government” is a capital offense and entails a sentence of at least 10 years in prison.