

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2002		25	China	Xu Zerong, historian

### *Announcement*

International PEN's Writers in Prison Committee has issued an action alert for Chinese historian Xu Zerong, a specialist in the Chinese military intervention in the Korean War (1950–53). On 10 January 2002, he was sentenced to thirteen years' imprisonment on charges of "leaking state secrets" by sending photocopies of confidential government documents related to the Korean War to unknown parties overseas, and of "economic crimes" by illegally publishing books and periodicals and selling book authorization numbers in China. Also Human Rights Watch's Academic Freedom Program has reported about the case. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

### **Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN—RAPID ACTION NETWORK—20 February 2002—RAN 7/02**

#### **CHINA: Serious concerns about the lengthy prison sentence handed down to historian Xu Zerong.**

The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN is seriously concerned about the lengthy prison sentence handed down to historian Xu Zerong, apparently solely for his legitimate academic research. International PEN fears that historian Xu Zerong may be detained in violation of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and if this is the case, calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

According to our information, Xu Zerong, Research Associate Professor at the Southeast Asia Institute, Zhongshan University, Guangzhou, was arrested in Guangzhou, South China, on 24 June 2000, and formally charged on 25 July 2000 in connection with "the illegal publication of books and periodicals...since 1993". He was sentenced in January 2002 by a Shenzhen court to 13 years in prison, three years for "economic crimes" and ten years on charges of "leaking state secrets". It appears that the first set of charges relate to the allegedly illegal publication of books and periodicals and the sale of book authorisation numbers since 1993; the second set of charges are thought to relate to his use of allegedly

classified documents concerning Chinese military operations in the Korean War (1950-53), gathered in the course of his research. Xu is appealing his sentence.

Xu's research specialised in Chinese Communist Party history, military history and China's relations with Southeast Asia. He received his doctorate from St. Anthony's College, Oxford University, in 1999, and wrote his doctoral thesis on the Chinese military intervention into the Korean War. Xu Zerong, aged 47, is from Guangzhou, South China. In 1985, he moved to Hong Kong where he gained permanent residency. Whilst there he reportedly set up a publishing house and helped set up the Chinese-language academic journal *Chinese Social Sciences Quarterly*. He was also reportedly an assistant researcher for the official Xinhua News Agency.

Xu was detained incommunicado for the eighteen months leading up to his trial. His current place of detention is not known.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS:**

expressing serious concern that the sentence handed down to historian Xu Zerong may violate Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and if this is the case, calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Jiang Zemin  
State Council  
Beijing 100032  
P.R.China.

His Excellency Xiao Yang Buzhang  
Minister of Justice  
Sifabu  
Xianguangli  
Beijing 100016  
P.R.China.

Please note that fax numbers are no longer available for the Chinese authorities, so you may wish to ask the diplomatic representative for China in your country to forward your appeals.

Please copy appeals to the diplomatic representative for China in your country if possible.

For further information, please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN WiPC, 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AT, U.K. Tel: +44 (0)207 253 3226, fax: +44 (0)207 253 5711, email: [cathy@wipcpn.org](mailto:cathy@wipcpn.org)