

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Name
2017		86	Iran	Xiyue Wang

Announcement

In April 2017, Chinese-born American history student Xiyue Wang from Princeton University (United States) was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in Iran on trumped-up charges of espionage. He was doing archival research about the history of the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925). Wang's appeal of his sentence is scheduled to be heard this summer.

Please urgently sign a petition in his support at this [link](#).

[Also accessible via <https://goo.gl/forms/jS6ahnmr673ijQF12>]

NCH SUMMARY OF THE CASE (as of 8 August 2017)

On 7 August 2016, Xiyue Wang ([1980–]), a fourth-year graduate student in the Department of History at Princeton University (United States) and a China-born naturalized United States citizen since 2009, was detained and confined to Evin Prison in Tehran while in Iran to study Farsi and to do scholarly research in connection with his Ph.D. dissertation in late 19th and early 20th century Eurasian history. His dissertation concerned regional governance practices across multiple countries during that time period, and after he left Iran he was planning to continue his research in Russia. Wang was interested in archives about the administrative and cultural history of the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925) in Tehran and Mashhad. He spent his first 18 days in solitary confinement. In February 2017, Wang was charged with two counts of espionage, widely believed to be fabricated. In April 2017 he was convicted and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. On 16 July 2017, the Iranian judiciary's Mizan News Agency said that he was "sent" by Princeton to "infiltrate" Iran, that he had connections to American and British intelligence agencies. It also declared that Wang had digitally archived 4,500 pages of Iranian documents and had done "super confidential research for the U.S. Department of State, Harvard Kennedy School and British Institute of Persian Studies." Wang's appeal of his

sentence is scheduled to be heard this summer.

[**Sources:** “[Academic Statement for the Release of Xiyue Wang](#)” (petition); personal communication Trudy Peterson (18 July 2017); personal communication Eleanor Hubbard (24–25 July 2017); Princeton University, “[Frequently Asked Questions about Xiyue Wang](#)” (20 July 2017; updated 28 July 2017); Rick Gladstone, “[Iran Sentences U.S. Graduate Student to 10 Years on Spying Charges](#),” *New York Times* (16 July 2017); Carly Baldwin, “[Iran Convicts Princeton Grad Student Of Spying](#),” *Princeton Patch* (16 July 2017); Mitch Gerber, “[Iran Sentences Princeton Ph.D. Student to 10 Years in Prison](#),” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (16 July 2017); Saeed Kamali Dehghan, “[Iran Sentences Chinese-born American to 10 years in Jail on Spying Charges](#),” *Guardian* (16 July 2017); AFP, “[Iran Sentences Chinese-American Princeton Historian Xiyue Wang to 10 years for Espionage](#),” *South China Morning Post* (17 July 2017).]

TEXT OF PETITION

<https://goo.gl/forms/jS6ahnmr673jjQFI2>

or

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd3vyIji9Uc_bEakKkPOhi0jsL3l-zRGgZjFE-iyX8e9IDFyA/viewform

Academic Statement for the Release of Xiyue Wang

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our support for the safe recovery of Xiyue Wang, a Ph.D. student from Princeton University who has been detained in Iran since August 7, 2016. As members of the academic research community, we are profoundly concerned about his well-being and urge Iran to release him.

Wang is an exceptionally hard-working and gifted scholar of history who was in Iran conducting archival research on the Qajar dynasty during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Visiting archives and libraries to examine historical documents and to copy them for further study is an essential part of and a common practice in historians' training, and is expected of graduate students who hope to receive a doctorate in history. Historians all around the world are engaged in similar archival research in the pursuit of historical knowledge.

Scholarly exchange is a mainstay of intellectual freedom and a benefit to all of humanity, including the people of Iran and the United States. Widespread expressions of grief for the passing of the talented Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani in recent days have reminded us all that scholars are valued all over the world. Wang's imprisonment may discourage scholarly exchange everywhere and sets an unfortunate example. Scholars should never be imprisoned for peacefully conducting their studies within the rule of law.

Wang's wife and young son in New Jersey await his safe return. As members of the academic research community, we encourage the Iranian authorities to set aside political differences and free Wang so that he can return home to his family and his studies.

Organized by:

Dr. Malin Pinsky, Rutgers University

Dr. Eleanor Hubbard, Princeton University