

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Name
2017		86	Iran	Xiyue Wang
	2017			
	2018			

Announcement

On 29 August 2018, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) concluded that Iran had no legal basis for the arrest and detention of imprisoned Chinese-born American history student Xiyue Wang, and that he should be released immediately. In April 2017, Chinese-born American history student Xiyue Wang 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).

Please publicize the [UNWGAD Opinion](#) as much as possible.

**For the UNWGAD Opinion, click [here](#).

**For a reaction of Xiyue Wang's wife Hua Qu to the Opinion, click [here](#).

**For a reaction of Princeton University to the Opinion, click [here](#).

**For an appeal letter of the Middle East Studies Association, click [here](#).

**For a link to the three NCH circulars in the case, click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Please find below a NCH summary of the case

You are kindly asked to distribute the UNWGAD Opinion and the other documents as widely as possible.

With best wishes,

Antoon De Baets

(Network of Concerned Historians)

NCH SUMMARY OF THE CASE (as of 10 September 2018)

On 7 August 2016, **Xiyue Wang** ([1980–]), a fourth-year graduate student in the Department of History at Princeton University 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 do Ph.D. research into late 19th and early 20th century Eurasian history, particularly regional governance practices across multiple countries. 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 eighteen 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 University to "infiltrate" Iran, that he had connections to American and British intelligence agencies. The agency also declared that Wang had illicitly scanned 4,500 pages of digital documents and had done "highly confidential research for the U.S. Department of State, Harvard Kennedy School and British Institute of Persian Studies." Wang's appeal of his sentence was denied later in August 2017; a court upheld his conviction and ten years' imprisonment. On 5 December 2017, Wang was transferred to Ward 7; he was told that he would be with Taliban and other prisoners who have badly beaten him in the past. On 29 August 2018, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Iran had no legal basis for the arrest and detention of Xiyue Wang, and that he should be released immediately.

[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); "[Iran Denies Graduate Student's Appeal of 10-Year Sentence](#)," *Town Topics* (23 August 2017); "[Iran Court Upholds 10-year Jail Sentence of US 'Spy'](#),"

BBC News (3 September 2017); Hua Qu (Xiyue Wang's wife), "Xiyue Wang Transferred to More Extreme Prison" (5 December 2017); United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, [Opinion No. 52/2018 concerning Xiyue Wang \(Islamic Republic of Iran\)](#) (29 August 2018); Middle East Studies Association, [Letter to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei re Xiyue Wang](#) (5 September 2018); Princeton University, ["U.N. Committee Calls for Immediate Release of Princeton Graduate Student Imprisoned in Iran"](#) (10 September 2018); ["Statement from Wife of Xiyue Wang in Response to UN Committee Opinion Letter,"](#) *Facebook* (10 September 2018).]