

HRIC Condemns the Criminalization of Free Speech and Urges Chinese Authorities to Release Guo Feixiong Immediately

HRIC Statement

May 11, 2023

On May 11, 2023, well-known Chinese human rights activist [Guo Feixiong](#) (also known as Yang Maodong) received an eight-year prison sentence and was deprived of his political rights for three years, on charges of “inciting subversion of state power.” Guo would be appealing against his verdict. According to information from Yang Maoquan, Guo’s brother, Guo’s trial was heard by the Guangzhou Intermediate People’s Court on May 11 from 9.30 to 11.50 in the morning. Guo pleaded not guilty. After a one-hour adjournment, Guo was found guilty of “inciting subversion of state power” for the following reasons: Guo had allegedly been writing “provocative” articles on the internet for a long time; he had been continuously publishing “inflammatory” articles, whether written by himself or others, through the World Constitutional Democracy Forum Guo established in 2020; and that he made statements that defamed the Chinese political system in his interview with Radio Free Asia on January 27, 2021. Diplomats from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and many other countries were prevented from attending the trial.

HRIC condemns the criminalization of free speech by the Chinese authorities. Freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, protected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” In addition, Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution also recognizes the right of citizens to freedom of speech. **HRIC urges Chinese authorities to revoke their verdict against Guo Feixiong, which disregards international human rights standards and their own established laws, and calls upon Chinese authorities to release Guo Feixiong immediately and unconditionally.**

This is already Guo’s third time in prison. He was previously charged with “illegal business activity” in connection with the publishing of a book, as well as for “gathering crowds to disturb public order.” Guo’s latest sentence came about due to his request to travel to the United States to care for his late wife, Zhang Qing, who was then suffering from cancer. On January 28, 2021, [Guo was barred from leaving China by Chinese authorities, citing "suspicion of endangering national security."](#) He wrote [an open letter to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi](#) but was subsequently detained on December 5, 2021. Unfortunately, Zhang passed away on January 10, 2022, and Guo was officially arrested on charges of “inciting subversion of state power” just two days later, on January 12, 2022.

Guo is now 56 years old. He was only 22 when he was involved in the 1989 student movement. Guo was an important participant and leader of the “New Citizens’ Movement” and the

"Southern Street Movement" in China, as well as a leading figure in promoting constitutional reform in China. Guo had already been detained four times and sentenced twice for his efforts to advocate for Chinese citizens' fundamental rights and for the public disclosure of Chinese Communist Party officials' assets. From 2005 to 2019, he was imprisoned for 11 years and 123 days. During this period, he engaged in six hunger strikes which lasted a total of 297 days that already [severely impacted his health](#).

For more information on **Guo Feixiong**, please visit: <https://www.hrichina.org/en/defenders/guo-feixiong>.
