Mr. Xi Jinping  
State Chairman  
People’s Republic of China  
The State Council General Office  
2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu  
Beijingshi 100017

Paris, 17 September, 2021

Mr. Chairman,

As a collective of non-governmental organisations defending human rights and freedom of the press, we urge you to exonerate and release human rights defender, journalist, and former lawyer Zhang Zhan, who is suffering from a critical health condition and may die soon if she remains in detention.

In February 2020, Zhang was among several Chinese journalists who travelled to the city of Wuhan to report on the first days of the coronavirus pandemic. Zhang Zhan has done remarkable work in informing the public about the health crisis, in accordance with the principle of press freedom enshrined in Article 35 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China.
On 28th December 2020, Zhang Zhan was sentenced to four years in prison by Shanghai Pudong New Area Court on the charge of ‘picking quarrels and provoking trouble’ following a mere three-hour proceeding that did not meet international fair trial standards.

In her indictment, prosecutors accused her, without providing any evidence, of publishing large amounts of ‘fake information’ and reproached her for accepting interviews from overseas media outlets, which is in no way a reprehensible action. Zhang Zhan has not pleaded guilty to any alleged crimes and demonstrated her innocence through a hunger strike which has led to the deterioration of her health.

Zhang Zhan has lost significant weight in recent weeks and is now seriously ill. Zhang Zhan was subsequently hospitalised for 11 days in early August but has since been returned to prison, where she may die if not immediately released. Zhang Zhan has also been the victim of ill treatment, which clearly goes against the United Nations Convention against Torture that China ratified in 1988.

On the grounds of basic human dignity, we appeal to you, Mr. Chairman, to grant Zhang Zhan the opportunity to meet her parents again by exercising the power granted to you by Article 80 of the Chinese Constitution and ensuring that she is released before it is too late.

Yours sincerely,

Amnesty International
Article 19
Association of Taiwan Journalists
Association of the New School for Democracy
Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia
China Aid Association
China Change
China Political Prisoner Concern
Chinese Democracy Education Foundation
Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Consumer Foundation, Mongolia
CSW, UK
FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
Freedom House
Front Line Defenders
Globe International Center, Mongolia
Government Citizen Partnership, Mongolia
Humanitarian China
Human Rights in China (HRIC)
Human Rights Now
Human Rights Foundation
IFEX
Index on Censorship
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
Judicial Reform Foundation
LGBT Centre, Mongolia
Mongolian Men’s Union
Mongolian Women’s Employment Support Federation
PEN International
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Safeguard Defenders
Steps Without Borders, Mongolia
Taiwan Forever Association
Taiwan Media Watch Foundation
Taiwan Media Workers Union
Tuva Women’s AVAM Union, Mongolia
The Coalition For Women In Journalism (CFWIJ)
The Taiwan Foreign Correspondents’ Club
The Rights Practice
Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP)
Women for Change NGO, Mongolia
Women’s Rights in China
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Copy to:
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