



May 2022

Our Next Meeting:
May 12th on Zoom

Urgent Action: China **NO ACCESS TO FAMILY AND PROPER MEDICAL CARE**

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Huang Qi (He/Him)

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang”, has had no access to his family since 2020, and his health has significantly deteriorated and is at risk of worsening further. It has been reported that Huang has not been able to access proper medical care recently especially during the period when the pandemic has intensified in China. He has also been unable to access the account where his friends and family deposited money for him to purchase additional supplies. Detained since 2016, Huang was able to see his mother only once on September 17th, 2020 through a video call. The authorities must ensure that Huang has access to immediate and proper medical care and allow him to speak with his family and lawyers of his choice.



Huang Qi founded “64 Tianwang” together with his then wife, Zeng Li, in 1998, and the website continues to publish reports of the human right violations investigated by citizen journalists in China. Huang Qi was charged with “intentionally leaking state secrets” and “providing state secrets to a foreign entity” by the Mianyang City Intermediate People’s Court on July 29th, 2019.

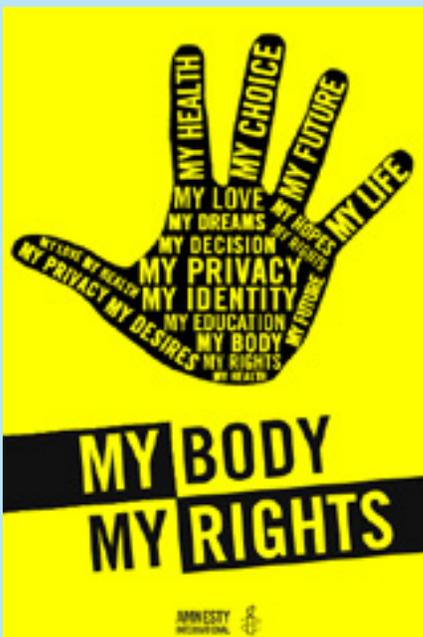
Huang Qi was first taken away in 2016 and has reported incidents of ill-treatment throughout his detention. On October 23rd, 2018, he told his lawyer that doctors and detention centre officers provided false reports of his blood pressure and understated the extent of his critical medical conditions. Prior to that, on July 28th, 2017, Huang Qi told his lawyer that he was made to stand for hours at a time and was repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. On 3 November 3rd, 2017 he also shared that he had been beaten up by other detainees at the Mianyang City Detention Centre, Sichuan Province, on October 24-26th, with the knowledge of at least one of the detention centre’s officers.

Over the years, Huang Qi and other “64 Tianwang” contributors have been frequently detained or harassed by the Chinese authorities. Huang Qi has been put on trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment twice. He was detained in June 2000 – the 11th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown – before being convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to five years in prison in May 2003. He was again imprisoned for three years after exposing the substandard

AISUA Statement on Women’s Health Protection Act

Responding to news that the U.S. Senate will vote on the Women’s Health Protection Act on Wednesday, May 11, Tarah Demant, Interim National Director for Programs, Advocacy and Government Affairs, said:

“Abortion is a basic healthcare need for millions of women, girls, and people who can become pregnant. If this legislation fails, it is a massive step back in time, putting the lives of millions of people at risk. While we are navigating dangerous waters, there is something each and every one of us can do: call your Senators and let them know that forcing someone to carry a pregnancy, for whatever reason, is a grotesque violation of human rights.”



building scandal following the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan.

In addition, lawyers who have worked on Huang Qi's case have also faced harassment and intimidation by the authorities. In February 2018, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice notified Guangzhou-based lawyer Sui Muqing that he was being disbarred. The lawyer, who had previously represented Huang Qi, believes his disbarment was related to his legal representation of human rights defenders. Another of Huang Qi's lawyers, Liu Zhengqing, was also disbarred in January 2019.

In addition to concerns about Huang Qi's health and lack of access to a fair trial, I raise the urgent issue that Huang's 85-year-old mother, Pu Wenqing, was taken away by Sichuan police in early December 2018 while travelling from Sichuan province to Beijing to seek help from diplomats for her son. According to sources, she was repeatedly threatened by the police during detention before being released on January 21st, 2019.

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There is an alarming pattern of deaths of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. In July 2017, human rights activist and Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo died in custody after the authorities refused his and his family's requests to receive treatment

abroad for his cancer. The same year, Chinese writer and government critic Yang Tongyan (pen name Yang Tianshui) died three months after being released on medical parole and undergoing an operation to remove a brain tumour. Beijing activist and prominent campaigner Cao Shunli died from organ failure after months in custody in March 2014. She was denied appropriate medical treatment while in jail.

Sample Letter

Dear Director Su:

I am writing to express my grave concern for the health and wellbeing of Huang Qi, a human rights defender who is currently serving a 12-year sentence in Sichuan Bazhong Prison for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. It is distressing to learn that Huang Qi's health has further deteriorated and is at risk of worsening further. The prison authorities must ensure that he has access to immediate and proper medical care.

For your information, Huang was known to suffer from chronic kidney disease and hydrocephalus, as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs, before being detained. It has been reported that Huang has not had access to proper medical care in prison. It is further worrying that Huang is not able to access the account where his friends and family members have deposited money for him to purchase additional supplies in the prison.

It is also distressing to learn that Huang's mother Pu Wenqing is currently under heavy surveillance and cannot meet with her son. Pu, 89 years old, has repeatedly requested the authorities to allow her to visit Huang, but none of these requests have been granted. The last time she spoke with Huang was through a video call on September 17th, 2020. Pu's health has also been deteriorating rapidly, and she fears she might not be able to speak to Huang again.

Huang Qi should not have spent even a day in prison simply for exercising his rights to freedom of expression. He should be released immediately. Furthermore, there is an alarming pattern of deaths



of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. Therefore, pending his release and also to ensure that no one else dies while in your detention facilities, I urge you to:

- Ensure that Huang Qi receives urgent, regular, and adequate medical care,*
- Ensure that he has regular and unrestricted access to his family and to lawyers of his choice, and that he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.*

Yours sincerely,

Take Action:

Write an appeal in your own words or use the model letter.

Director Su Yuanliang

Sichuan Bazhong Prison
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Please take action as soon as possible until June 24th, 2022. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

One Year On, “State of Siege” Used as a Tool to Crush Dissent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

May 9, 2022 -- New briefing reveals how dozens of critics of the State of Siege have been arbitrarily detained in North Kivu and Ituri province. Despite the State of Siege being extended 22 times, the number of civilians killed by armed groups has doubled over the last year, according to the United Nations.

Amnesty calls for the lifting of abusive restrictions and the release of all arbitrarily detained individuals.

A State of Siege, which is similar to a state of emergency, enforced in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) authorities since May 2021 has been used as a tool to crush dissent, with two human rights activists killed by security forces and dozens of activists arbitrarily detained on trumped-up charges, Amnesty International said today in a new briefing.

The briefing, ‘Justice and freedoms under siege in North Kivu and Ituri’, details how military and police authorities have used sweeping powers to silence individuals deemed critical of the State of Siege, including members of parliament, pro-democracy activists and human rights workers, since the state of siege was first put in place on May 3, 2021. It also shows how the authorities are using military courts to prosecute state

critics in unfair trials.

“In total disregard of the law, defense and security forces have been given broad powers that are not justified by the stated purpose of the state of siege, which they have used to silence anyone who demands accountability for the state’s actions in the conflict-stricken provinces of North Kivu and Ituri,” said Deprose Muchena, Amnesty International’s Director for East and Southern Africa.

“President Felix Tshisekedi must lift all human rights restrictions and ensure that the State of Siege does not become a permanent regime by outlining a clear schedule for ending the restrictions.”

President Tshisekedi declared that he introduced the State of Siege with the aim to combat armed groups and protect civilians. The number of civilian casualties from armed conflict in the region, however, has more than doubled in the past year.

Between June 2020 and March 2021, 559 civilians were killed amid armed conflict in North-Kivu and Ituri. According to the United Nations, the number of civilian deaths between June 2021 and March 2022 rose to at least 1,261.

In a report released in August 2021, the National Assembly’s Defence and Security Committee said

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that “killings, massacres, rapes, robberies... have intensified in the areas concerned.”

Military authorities in North Kivu and Ituri have used broad powers given to them under the State of Siege to suppress any form of protest or criticism. Human rights activists and MPs who have criticized the measure’s legality, duration or effectiveness have been labelled “enemies of the state” and subjected to arbitrary arrest and prosecution — and in two cases documented killed.

At least two peaceful activists have died as a result of authorities’ crackdown on critics, including 22-year-old Mumbere Ushindi, who was shot by police during a protest against state of siege’s failure to stop the killing of civilians. He died of his gunshot wounds on January 24, 2022. Before the demonstration, a police commander threatened to “crush” anyone who dared to protest.

La Fontaine Katsaruhande, a 21-year-old activist working with the Fight for Change (LUCHA) movement, had his right leg amputated after being shot by a policeman on September 21, 2021 at a peaceful protest also denouncing the continuation of civilian deaths despite the state of siege.

Four provincial MPs and one national MP have been arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted simply for speaking out against the deteriorating security situation and abuses of power by military and police authorities.

In addition, journalists have faced repeated attacks for doing their work, including by non-state actors, which the authorities have failed to investigate. At least three journalists have been killed in North Kivu and Ituri since the State of Siege was declared, according to Journalistes En Danger (JED), an organization working to protect journalists in the country.

President Tshisekedi’s decision to order military courts to prosecute criminal cases against civilians, has drastically undermined the right to a fair trial. Military courts did not have the capacity to deal with such a significant increase in the number of cases coming to them. This has led to a drastic increase of the number of people in provisional detention waiting for their day in court and further deterioration of prison conditions. Military courts prosecuting and judging civilians is also contrary to international law.

Dozens of human rights activists have been arbitrarily detained on trumped-up charges, including 12 LUCHA activists arrested in Beni in November 2021, and all of whom were sentenced to one year in prison by a military court in April this year for “provocation to disobey the laws.”

The activists had staged a peaceful protest that called for an assessment of the State of Siege, which they said had failed to improve security for civilians. At least eight of the activists have suffered from sickness in prison due to poor detention conditions and ill-treatment.

“The increasing use of military courts has severely undermined fair trial rights,” said Deprese Muchena.

“The DRC authorities must immediately release all those who have been arbitrarily detained. It is shocking that the people of North Kivu and Ituri fear not only deadly attacks by armed groups, but also being prosecuted for speaking out to demand effective protection and accountability

for these crimes.”

North Kivu and Ituri represent two of the five provinces that make up eastern DRC. Eastern DRC (including North Kivu and Ituri) is rich in natural resources including gold, Coltan, tin, wolframite, tungsten, oil, timber. The region has suffered from armed conflict since the 1990s. The violence has intensified in recent years, with more than 7,380 civilians killed between 2017 and April 2022, according to the Kivu Security Tracker.

On May 3, 2021, the President adopted a decree introducing a state of siege under the guise of protecting civilians. Under the state of siege, all local authorities and ordinary courts have been replaced

by military and police officers, and given powers to restrict freedoms of expression, peaceful association, assembly and movement to the extent they deem them necessary.

The State of Siege was initially for a period of 30 days, with the possibility for the parliament to extend it for periods of two weeks at the request of the government. However, it has since been extended 22 times and is still in force until today.

Amnesty International has conducted 44 interviews with victims of abuses, lawyers, human rights activists and local MPs between August 2021 and April 2022 for this briefing. The organization also analyzed official documents and reports.

Russian Forces Must Face Justice for War Crimes in Kyiv Oblast -- New Investigation

May 6, 2022 --Russian forces must face justice for a series of war crimes committed in the region northwest of Kyiv, Amnesty International said today in a new briefing following an extensive on-the-ground investigation.

The briefing, ‘He’s Not Coming Back’: War Crimes in Northwest Areas of Kyiv Oblast, is based on dozens of interviews and extensive review of material evidence. Amnesty International documented unlawful air strikes on Borodyanka, and extrajudicial executions in other towns and villages including Bucha, Andriivka, Zdvyzhivka and Vorzel.

An Amnesty International delegation, led by the organization’s Secretary General, has been visiting the region in recent days, speaking with survivors and families of victims, and meeting with senior Ukrainian officials.

“The pattern of crimes committed by Russian forces that we have documented includes both unlawful attacks and willful killings of civilians,” said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“We have met families whose loved ones were killed in horrific attacks, and whose lives have changed forever because of the Russian invasion. We support their demands for justice, and call on the Ukrainian authorities, the International Criminal Court and others to ensure evidence is preserved that could support future war crime prosecutions. It is vital that all those responsible, including up the chain of command, are brought to justice.”

In Borodyanka, Amnesty International found that at least 40 civilians were killed in disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks, which devastated an entire neighborhood and left thousands of people homeless.

In Bucha and several other towns and villages located northwest of Kyiv, Amnesty International documented 22 cases of unlawful killings by Russian forces, most of which were apparent extrajudicial executions.

During 12 days of investigations, Amnesty International researchers interviewed residents of Bucha, Borodyanka, Novyi Korohod, Andriivka, Zdvyzhivka, Vorzel, Makariv and Dmytrivka, and visited sites of numerous killings.

In total, they interviewed 45 people who witnessed or had first-hand knowledge of unlawful killings of their relatives and neighbors by Russian soldiers, and 39 others who witnessed or had first-hand knowledge of the air strikes that targeted eight residential buildings.

On March 1 and 2, a series of Russian air strikes hit eight residential buildings in the town of Borodyanka, approximately 60 kilometres northwest of Kyiv, which were home to more than 600 families.

The strikes killed at least 40 residents and destroyed the buildings, as well as dozens of surrounding buildings and houses. Most of the victims were killed in the buildings’ basements, where they had sought shelter. Others died in their apartments.

On the morning of March 2, a single strike killed

at least 23 people in Building 359 on Tsentralna Street. The victims included five of Vadim Zahrebelny's relatives: his mother Lydia, his brother Volodymyr and wife Yulia, and her parents Lubov and Leonid Hurbanov.

Vadim told Amnesty International: "We [Vadim and his son] left Building 359 just after 7am. However, my mother and my brother and his wife and her parents insisted on staying in the basement because they were afraid of getting shot by Russian soldiers if they went out on the streets. About 20 minutes after we left, Building 359 was bombed and they were all killed, together with other neighbors."

Vasyl Yaroshenko was close to one of the buildings when it was hit. He said: "I left my apartment to go do some work in the garage, as my wife was about to take a couple of older neighbors down to the basement. When I reached the garage, about 150 meters from the building, there was a huge explosion. I ducked behind the garage. When I looked, I saw a large gap in the building. The whole middle section of the building had collapsed – exactly where residents were sheltering in the basement. My wife Halina was among those killed. I still see her by the door of our apartment, the home where we lived for 40 years."

On March 1, a series of air strikes targeted six other buildings nearby. At least seven people were killed in Building 371 on Tsentralna Street, including Vitali Smishchuk, a 39-year-old surgeon, his wife Tetiana, and their four-year-old daughter Yeva.

Vitali's mother Ludmila told Amnesty International: "As the situation deteriorated, it became too dangerous to move from one part of the town to another. There were tanks on the streets... People were frightened to be outside.

"I was speaking to my son and telling him to leave, but he was worried about going outside. They sheltered in the basement for safety – but the bomb destroyed the middle section of the building, where the basement was."

No fixed Ukrainian military targets are known to have been located at or around any of the buildings which were struck, though at times armed individu-

als supporting Ukrainian forces reportedly fired on passing Russian military vehicles from or near some of those buildings. Knowingly launching direct attacks on civilian objects or disproportionate attacks constitute war crimes.

Amnesty International has created a new interactive 360-degree representation of the extensive damage caused by the air strikes in Borodyanka, which can be viewed here.

The town of Bucha, approximately 30 kilometers northwest of Kyiv, was occupied by Russian forces in late February. Five men were killed in apparent extrajudicial executions by Russian forces in a compound of five buildings set around a courtyard close to the intersection of Yablunska and Vodoprovodna streets, all between March 4 and 19.

Yevhen Petrashenko, a 43-year-old sales manager and father-of-two, was shot dead in his apartment on Yablunska Street on March 4.

Yevhen's wife Tatiana told Amnesty International that she was in their building's basement, while Yevhen had remained in their apartment. He had gone to help a neighbor when Russian soldiers were conducting door-to-door searches. Tatiana lost contact with Yevhen, whose body was then found in his apartment by a neighbor the next day.

At her request, Russian soldiers allowed Tatiana to visit the apartment. She said: "Yevhen was lying dead in the kitchen. He had been shot in the back, [near his] lungs and liver. His body remained in the apartment until March 10, when we were able to bury him in a shallow grave in the courtyard."

Amnesty International researchers found two bullets and three cartridge cases at the scene of the killing. The organization's weapons investigator identified the bullets as black-tipped 7N12 armor-piercing 9x39mm rounds that can only be fired by specialized rifles used by some elite Russian units, including units reported to have been operating in Bucha during this time.

A collection of Russian military papers recovered in Bucha, which Amnesty International researchers analyzed, gives further indications as to the units



involved. They included conscription and training records belonging to a driver-mechanic of the 104th Regiment of the VDV, the Russian Airborne Forces. Notably, some VDV units are equipped with specialized rifles that fire the armor-piercing 9x39mm round.

On March 22 or 23, Leonid Bodnarchuk, a 44-year-old construction worker who lived in the same building as Yevhen Petrashenko, was also killed. Residents who were sheltering in the basement told Amnesty International that Russian soldiers shot Leonid as he was walking up the stairs, then threw a grenade into the stairwell. They later found his maimed body slumped in a pool of blood on the stairs.

Amnesty International researchers found large blood stains over several steps on the stairs leading to the basement, as well as burn marks and a pattern of damage on the wall consistent with a grenade explosion.

In neighboring towns and villages, Amnesty International collected further evidence and testimony of unlawful killings, including apparent extrajudicial executions: some victims had their hands tied behind their back, while others showed signs of being tortured.

In the village of Novyi Koro-hod, Viktor Klokun, a 46-year-old construction worker, was killed. Olena Sakhno, his partner, told Amnesty International that some villagers brought her Viktor's body on March 6. She said: "His hands were tied behind his back with a piece of white plastic, and he had been shot in the head."

Oleksii Sychevky's wife Olha, 32, and father Olexandr, 62, were killed when the car convoy they were traveling in was fired upon by what they believed were Russian forces.

Oleksii told Amnesty International: "The convoy was all fleeing civilians. Almost all of the cars had kids inside. When our car had just reached a line of trees, I heard shots – first single shots, then a burst of gunfire.

"The shots hit the first vehicle in the convoy, and it stopped. We were the second vehicle and we had to stop, too. Then we were hit. At least six or seven shots hit our car. My dad was killed instantly by a bullet to the head. My wife was hit by metal shrapnel, and my

kid [son] was also hit."

Amnesty International researchers who visited Bucha, Borodyanka and other nearby towns and villages in April, after victims had been exhumed (either from the rubble of collapsed buildings, or from the shallow, temporary graves in which many had been buried), found that many family members were unhappy with treatment of victims' remains. Family members were concerned that the processing of remains was chaotic, that they were not kept properly informed, and that remains in some cases were not being correctly identified.

Extrajudicial executions committed in international armed conflicts constitute willful killings, which are war crimes. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks carried out with criminal intent are also war crimes.

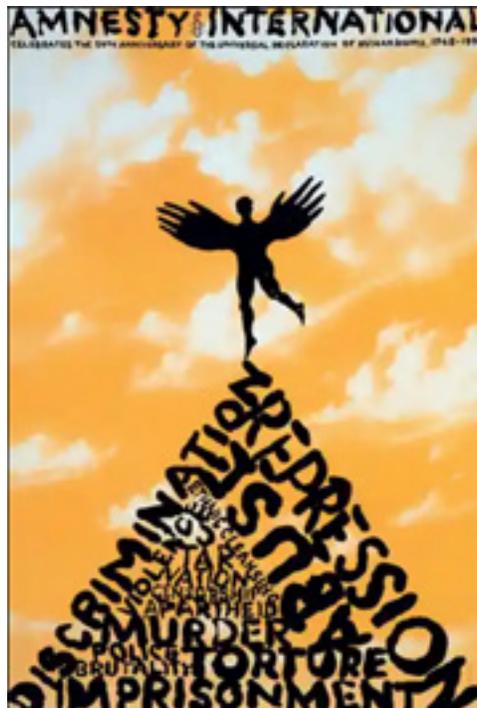
All those responsible for war crimes should be held criminally responsible for their actions. Under

the doctrine of command responsibility, hierarchal superiors – including commanders and civilian leaders, such as ministers and heads of state – who knew or had reason to know about war crimes committed by their forces, but did not attempt to stop them or punish those responsible, should also be held criminally responsible.

Any justice processes or mechanisms should be as comprehensive as possible, and ensure that all perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and the crime of aggression in Ukraine, from all parties to the conflict, are brought to justice in fair trials, without recourse to the death penalty. In addition, the rights of

victims must be at the forefront of investigating and prosecuting international crimes, and all justice mechanisms should adopt a survivor-centered approach.

Amnesty International's documentation of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the war in Ukraine is available [here](#).



Urgent Action: Turkey

Free the Gezi Defendants

April 29, 2022 -- On April 25, 2022, civil society leader Osman Kavala who has been imprisoned on pretrial detention since November 2017, was convicted for “attempting to overthrow the government” and sentenced to aggravated life in prison; his seven co-defendants each received a sentence of 18 years, allegedly for aiding Osman Kavala and were immediately remanded in prison. Amnesty International calls on the Chief Prosecutor for the Istanbul Regional Appeals Court to support and not to oppose any application or request of Osman Kavala, Mücella Yapıcı, Çiğdem Mater, Mine Özerden, Can Atalay, Tayfun Kahraman, and Hakan Altınay all currently in prison while they appeal their unjust convictions.

Sample Letter

Dear Chief Prosecutor,

I am writing to urge you to support and not to oppose any application for the release of Osman Kavala, Mücella Yapıcı, Çiğdem Mater, Mine Özerden, Can Atalay, Tayfun Kahraman, and Hakan Altınay who were convicted on April 25, 2022, in the prosecution dubbed the ‘Gezi trial’. Osman Kavala has spent more than 4.5 years in pre-trial detention. In handing down the guilty verdicts, the court also ordered the remand of six other defendants. A warrant for the arrest of Yigit Ali Ekmekçi, the eighth defendant, has been issued.

Osman Kavala received an aggravated life sentence for ‘attempting to overthrow the government’ but was acquitted of the ‘political and military espionage’ charge for which he has been in pre-trial detention since February 2020. The acquittal was due to ‘lack of evidence’ after, along with the other seven defendants, he had already been acquitted in the first trial.

The other seven defendants were convicted for allegedly aiding Osman Kavala and sentenced to 18 years in prison each. The Court ordered their immediate remand on grounds that they are a flight risk.

Throughout the first and the second trial, the prosecuting authorities failed to present any evidence that would prove the defendants’ guilt of the alleged charges, a fact that was acknowledged in the verdict by one of the three judges who stated in his dissenting opinion that ‘because there is no concrete, certain and believable evidence that would prove their guilt

Take Action:

Please take action as soon as possible. This Urgent Action expires on June 24, 2022.

Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 37.22. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Metin Sarıhan

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beyond reasonable doubt, [the court] should rule for the acquittal of the defendants.’ I call on you to support and not to oppose the seven defendants’ requests for their release from prison pending the determination of their appeals.

Sincerely,