

# China releases Nobel Peace Prize winner from prison on health grounds

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China's only Nobel Peace Prize winner and famed dissident Liu Xiaobo has been released from prison on medical grounds to treat his liver cancer, his lawyer has revealed.



Mr Liu, 61, who participated in the 1989 pro-democracy Tiananmen Square demonstrations, became the first citizen of the People's Republic of China to win the Nobel Prize in 2010 for advocating greater

freedoms in his country – and is the only laureate currently serving a prison sentence.

He was arrested in 2008 and subsequently sentenced to 11 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power” and has been held incommunicado since – in hopes of erasing any memory of him say colleagues and rights activists.

“Liu was diagnosed with liver cancer on 23 May, and the parole application was approved last week,” said his lawyer, Mo Shaoping. “He is now in a hospital in Shenyang. Some family members have already visited him.”

Many, however, weren't even aware he was sick. “We are shocked and devastated to learn that our dear friend and mentor Liu Xiaobo, China's jailed Nobel Peace Prize winner, has been suffering from cancer in China's brutal prison environment,” said a statement by Wuer Kaixi and Wang Dan, former student leaders from 1989 and his friends. Liu Xiaobo was an important partner in our democratic

movement of 1989. He was – and continues to be – our personal mentor. We are convinced that his strength and optimism will make it possible for him to overcome the disease.”

Back in 2010 when he won the Nobel Prize while in prison, his family was prevented from traveling to Norway to accept the award. His wife Liu Xia has also been under house arrest since then. The award was presented to an empty chair, which later became a symbol of China's repression.

“Adding injury to insult, Liu Xiaobo has been diagnosed with a grave illness in prison, where he should never have been put in the first place,” said William Nee, China researcher for Amnesty International. “The Chinese authorities should immediately ensure that Liu Xiaobo receives adequate medical care, effective access to his family and that he and all others imprisoned solely for exercising their human rights are immediately and unconditionally released.”

Mr Liu was arrested in 2008 for his role in the writing of Charter 08, a manifesto calling for China's democratic transition that was signed by thousands of people inside the country. His publications have since been banned in China.

When the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded him the prize in 2010, they cited his “his long and nonviolent struggle for fundamental human rights in China”. Beijing condemned the award and relations with Norway suffered for years.

“That he was ever in prison at all says all one needs to know about Chinese leaders' profound hostility toward peaceful expression and the rule of law,” said Sophie Richards, China director at Human Rights Watch. “It appears highly unlikely that his release will equal real freedom – for him, or for all others who simply seek peaceful, positive change in China.”