



Ailing health of Chinese dissident Hu Jia worries MEPs

- Sakharov human rights winner still in jail
- MEPs call on Beijing to allow medical access

The health of Chinese civil rights activist Hu Jia is causing real fears after reports that the winner of the Parliament's 2008 Sakharov human rights prize is ailing with liver disease. China's authorities recently dismissed a request for medical parole for the 36 old from his wife, fellow dissident Zeng Jinyan. As a campaigner for civil rights, the environment and AIDS, Hu Jia was sentenced to three and a half years in jail in December 2007 for "inciting subversion of state authority".

This is the second time medical parole has been refused for a man who has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Members of the European Parliament gave him their top human rights accolade in 2008 and have been outspoken in calling on the Chinese authorities to free him.

As well as putting Mr Jia in jail the Chinese have also kept his wife and their young daughter under surveillance in Beijing.

"Should be moved urgently to hospital"

Finnish Green MEP **Heidi Hautala** chairs Parliament's sub-committee on Human Rights. Speaking to us she expressed grave concern over his condition and treatment. "He should be moved urgently to hospital and the Chinese authorities should grant permission to this end without delay", underlined Ms Hautala.

She added that "application for medical parole should be granted accordingly. Access to health care in serious cases is a human right of grave importance".

Ms Hautala also called on the Chinese authorities to abide by UN minimum standards on the treatment of prisoners. She also stressed the fact that inflicting emotional or physical pain on inmates can be constituted as tantamount to torture.

"Deep concern" over Hu Jia's health

Italian MEP **Crescenzo Rivellini** of the centre right European People's Party chairs the Parliament's Delegation with relations with China. He told us of his "deep concern about the news on the health of Hu Jia, winner of the Sakharov Prize in 2008". He went on to say that considering "the serious health condition of Hu Jia" he be given "the best possible medical care".

He restated his faith in the fact that the European Parliament is "always in favour of the battles for freedom by all human rights defenders in China as elsewhere in the world".

Many Members of the human rights sub-committee have pledged to monitor closely the treatment of people in detention in China and the extent to which Beijing honours international agreements.