

Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America
2300 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Sent by fax to (202) 7457473

Dear Hon. Ambassador Zhou,

This letter is to respectfully request your immediate attention to the matter of Mr. Ching Cheong, a Hong Kong journalist from Singapore's Straits Times who was detained by China's State authorities on April 22, 2005 in Guangzhou, China. Mr. Ching is Chief China correspondent for the Straits Times. According to Mr. Ching's wife, Mr. Ching went to China to meet a source who was to give him a manuscript about Zhao Ziyang, the former Prime Minister of China.

During the first months of Ching Cheong's detention, his wife complied with the advice of China's Public Security Bureau and did not go public with any information. Her last conversation with her husband was on May 29, 2005. Because so many of his friends, colleagues and relatives had been inquiring about Mr. Ching, his wife finally decided to publicize the information about his detention and on May 30, 2005, the media reported on Mr. Ching's situation.

Mr. Ching had only been performing his responsibilities as a foreign correspondent, following up on stories and verifying sources, as he had done throughout his career. The story of Zhao Ziyang, a major figure in China's government, is one of interest to the public. One manuscript about Zhao Ziyang has already been published.

What makes Mr. Ching so highly regarded as an international reporter is not only that his stories have bridged the gap between China and Singapore, but in many instances his stories have bridged the gap between China and the rest of the world.

As a member of the WTO, China is expected to deal openly in areas of trade and commerce in its interaction with the rest of the world. It is important that China recognizes that journalists like Mr. Ching should be allowed to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. International investment in China depends upon a trust that there is an unfettered access to information. It would be a great loss to the international community if China penalizes Mr. Ching from continuing to carry out his career as a respected journalist.

We respectfully request your assistance so that Mr. Ching is afforded the rights granted to him under the PRC's Criminal Procedure Code – which includes access to a lawyer. We request any assistance you may be able to offer so that his family is given access to visit him.

We respectfully request your immediate assistance with the case of Mr. Ching. We urge you to assist Mr. Ching Cheong so that he will be given an immediate and unconditional release, and so that his family may live in peace.

Sincerely,