

“Two Years Later: The Ongoing Detentions of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Liu Xiaobo and His Wife Liu Xia”

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Statement by Liu Min

My husband Yu Jie and I met Liu Xiaobo and his wife in 1999. Shortly after we became very close friends.

Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia began their romantic relationship in the early 1990s. After the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, Liu Xiaobo was imprisoned for the first time, resulting in the breakup of his first marriage. After his release, Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia fell deeply in love. During this time, Liu Xiaobo was imprisoned for a second, and then a third time. In the period when Liu Xiaobo was sent to Dalian to be re-educated through labor, Liu Xia went to see him every month from Beijing, traveling back and forth 38 times over three years. The trip between Beijing and Dalian was 1,250 miles.

Then, after fighting for it time and again, they had a wedding in prison. Afterward Liu Xia told me their only celebration was a simple lunch: the labor camp cafeteria made a couple of dishes for them. In these three years, it was the only time they had eaten at the same table.

The pressure faced by Liu Xia was even greater than that on Liu Xiaobo. She was originally a poet, painter and photographer who kept her distance from politics. Simply by being Liu Xiaobo's wife, she was included on the list of “enemies of the state.” Permanently unable to live a normal person's life, she developed eye problems, endocrine disorders, insomnia, nervous breakdowns, skin illnesses, and severe depression. She had to take large doses of sleeping pills to fall asleep every night. After Liu Xiaobo was arrested, a friend asked her about how she was sleeping. She said, now that Liu Xiaobo is gone, I can actually sleep more peacefully. “A shoe had fallen down from the ceiling long ago. For many years, I was like the person waiting for the other shoe to drop. Now, the shoe has finally dropped, and I can finally feel at peace.”

Liu Xia and Liu Xiaobo have been married for many years, and they have never had children. Liu Xia said, “A long time ago, we agreed not to have children. Having a father in prison in any case is a cruel thing to a boy or a girl. So, we are still a DINK family.”

In December 2008 Liu Xiaobo was arrested; on Christmas, 2009, Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years in prison, and was later sent to the prison in Jinzhou, Liaoning, to serve his term. If Liu Xiaobo is to serve his term in full, Liu Xia will have traveled back and forth between Beijing and Jinzhou more than a hundred times. The trip between Beijing and Jinzhou is approximately 600 miles. In total, her trek will have been more than 8,000 miles!

Liu Xia also told me about the severe winters in Jinzhou, and because of the lack of heating in prison, Liu Xiaobo felt very cold and asked Liu Xia to bring him some thick wool pants. In September 2010, after visiting the prison Liu Xia returned to Beijing and asked me to buy wool pants for her, so she could bring them the next time she visited.

To our surprise, on October 8, 2010, the news of Liu Xiaobo receiving the Nobel Peace Prize broke. The night before, I even went out eating and shopping with Liu Xia, and picked out a piece of clothing for her. She said it was too expensive. I said, if Xiaobo wins, you have to go and accept the award on his behalf, and you don't even have any formalwear. So she finally bought it. Yet, she lost her freedom shortly after, and could not go to Oslo to accept the award on her husband's behalf.

Just five days after news of Liu Xiaobo receiving the Nobel Prize became public, my husband Yu Jie finished a lecture at the University of Southern California and hurried back to Beijing because he wanted to finish Liu Xiaobo's biography. As soon as Yu Jie arrived in Beijing, he was immediately placed under house arrest by the secret police.

The first week in the beginning, I could still go to work freely. I had bought the wool pants for Liu Xiaobo, but I could not get in contact with Liu Xia, and so I got in touch with Liu Xia's younger brother and brought the pants to him. Subsequently, when Liu Xia's brother came out from visiting her, he was searched by the police, who found on him a note written by Liu Xia with my name and telephone number on it. And so, that day, as soon as I came home from work, I was immediately placed under house arrest. Since then, my husband and I had been under house arrest, until mid-December. On December 9 Yu Jie was kidnapped by the police from home to the outskirts of town, and was beaten and tortured, and almost died. Soon after I lost my job as well.

In January 2012, our family of three finally escaped China, and came to America. Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia's predicaments weigh on our minds constantly, especially Liu Xia's being under house arrest and isolated from the world for over two years. We worry about her physical and mental state. In my own personal experience, when my husband and I were put under house arrest for two months, we were together, but a life where all our means of contact were cut off, where we could not take one step out of our own door, where we could not see a single other person on the outside, drove us nearly insane. And Liu Xia is alone, under arrest for more than two years! That kind of suffering is unbearable. I hope the American government, especially President Obama, who is also a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, can personally and directly put out a strong call to the Chinese government, and demand that they release Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia immediately.