



international  
publishers  
association



The Honorable Leung Chun-ying  
Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
1 Tim Wa Avenue  
Admiralty  
Hong Kong

February 17, 2016

Your Excellency Chief Executive Leung:

We, the undersigned free expression advocacy, publishing, and bookselling organizations, write to express our deep concern over the forced disappearances and detentions of four Hong Kong residents and a Chinese-born Swedish national associated with the Mighty Current publishing house. We urge your government to do everything in its power to investigate these cases and demand the release of Cheung Chi-ping, Gui Minhai, Lam Wing-kee, Lee Bo, and Lui Por, who are confirmed to be detained by mainland Chinese police.

As you know, Mr. Gui, a Swedish citizen, disappeared in October 2015, as did Mr. Cheung, Mr. Lam, and Mr. Lui, all Hong Kong residents. Lee Bo, a Hong Kong resident and a British passport holder, disappeared on December 30, 2015. On January 17, Gui Minhai made an apparently forced statement on Chinese state television that he had voluntarily returned to the mainland to help with an investigation into a fatal 2003 hit-and-run accident. On January 18, Chinese authorities

acknowledged, after Hong Kong police demanded information about his location, that Lee Bo was detained on the mainland, and on February 4, they confirmed that the other three men are also held by mainland police.

The forced disappearance and detention of Hong Kong residents by mainland Chinese authorities is a direct and fundamental threat to Hong Kong's treaty-based regional autonomy. These actions clearly violate both the "one country, two systems" policy established by the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, and Hong Kong's Basic Law. Article 28 of the Basic Law protects Hong Kong residents from arbitrary or unlawful arrest, detention, or imprisonment. It also protects freedom of expression and press freedom (Art. 27), as does the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which remains in force in Hong Kong. Your government has a legal as well as a moral obligation to defend these rights.

These disappearances and detentions pose a serious threat to free expression. Mighty Current is known for producing and selling books that are critical of the Chinese government, which are regularly banned in mainland China but available in Hong Kong, and was accused in a recent Communist Party publication of "stirring up troubles on the mainland." This case has sent a terrifying message to writers, publishers, and booksellers in Hong Kong that tackling politically sensitive topics can imperil an individual's freedom and safety. These developments offer chilling confirmation of the steady erosion of freedom of expression in Hong Kong, as documented by a January 2015 PEN America report, [\*Threatened Harbor: Encroachments on Press Freedom in Hong Kong\*](#), as well as by local watchdog groups such as the Hong Kong Journalists' Association.

Books convey culture and culture empowers citizens. Freedom of expression is a fundamental democratic principle which must be respected in all circumstances. It is the backbone of the publishing and bookselling industries.

The history, culture, and freedom of the people of Hong Kong are at stake in the outcome of this case. We respectfully urge you to insist that mainland authorities immediately release the five men they have detained. We also urge your government to request a formal assurance from Beijing that it will respect Hong Kong's autonomy and abide by the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Sincerely,

PEN American Center

Independent Chinese PEN Center

American Booksellers Association

Association of American Publishers

Authors Guild

European & International Booksellers Federation

Federation of European Publishers

International Publishers Association