

# PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION



Tohti Tunyaz (Muzart) is an ethnic Uighur historian and writer from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China. He was arrested on February 6, 1998, and on March 10, 1999, he was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment and two years' deprivation of political rights. He was arrested in Urumchi, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where he had gone to collect research material. He had reportedly been watched by security police for some time prior to his arrest, and is said to have been arrested with allegedly sensitive material. Some reports claim that the content of this material was on ethnic relations published for classified circles only; others that it was material published for the general public. Tunyaz is said to have been formally charged with "inciting national disunity" and "stealing state secrets for foreign persons", charges that were amended by the High People's Court of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Tunyaz graduated from the history department of the Central Institute of Nationalities, Beijing, in 1984 and was assigned to work for the Standing Committee of China National People's Congress. During this time, he reportedly formed a close relationship with former Chairmen of Xinjiang regional government Seyfudin Eziz and Ismail Emet, and was involved in the translation of Eziz's works. Tunyaz began studying for his PhD at Tokyo University in 1996, specializing in Uighur history and ethnic relations.

It is thought that the charges against him may be linked to his research. He has reportedly published several papers on Uighur history in Japan and has published a book in Beijing. He has a wife and children in Japan. One son was able to visit his father in prison in 2002. Tunyaz is from Bay County, Aksu Prefecture, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, Northwest China. He adopted the name of the biggest river "Muzart" in Bay County as his pen name.

His professor, Tsugitaka Sato, backed by Tokyo University, has mounted a spirited campaign for Tunyaz's freedom. Tunyaz has exhausted his appeals and remains incarcerated in Xinjiang Third Prison, Urumqi City, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

**PEN Canada believes the detention of Tohti Tunyaz is in violation of his right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has ratified. PEN Canada calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Tohti Tunyaz as well as for all charges against him to be dropped.**

Please send appeals to:

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