

Yahoo Settles Internet Human Rights Case (11/13/07)

Bowing to intense pressure from Congress last week, and the threat of court-ordered discovery proceedings, Yahoo agreed to settle the lawsuit filed against it by Human Rights USA on behalf of internet users in China, jailed for exercising their free speech rights. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in April 2007, sought to hold Yahoo accountable for its complicity in major human rights abuses in China. Yahoo had handed over the identifying internet user information of well-known Chinese journalist Shi Tao, and pro-democracy writer Wang Xiaoning, to Chinese authorities, who sought to punish the two men for having done nothing more than expressed their free speech rights -- rights that are, ironically, recognized under the Chinese constitution.

As a result of Yahoo's cooperation with Chinese authorities, the two men were subjected to arbitrary arrest, long-term detention, abuse, and torture while imprisoned in China. Both men are serving 10-year sentences under the highly dubious charges of "subversion of state power" and "sharing state secrets" -- vague charges whose underlying purpose is to detain individuals who make statements unfavorable to the Chinese government.

While the details of the settlement agreement are private, the issues raised in the lawsuit and during last week's Congressional hearings indicate some of the key points that were the focus of concern. Some of these issues include the urgent need to secure the release, as soon as possible, of Shi Tao and Wang Xiaoning from prison, preventing further disclosures of internet user information that could lead to arbitrary arrest and torture, and the need to assist other prisoners who have been jailed as a result of the disclosure of identifying internet user information.

For additional news items on this issue, please see below:

- Associated Press, Yahoo, Jailed Journalists Settle Lawsuit, November 13, 2007
- CNet News, Yahoo Settles Lawsuit With Jailed Chinese Journalists, November 13, 2007
- CNN, Yahoo Settles Dissident Suit, November 13, 2007
- IT World, Yahoo Settles Chinese Dissident Lawsuit , November 13, 2007
- Marketwatch, Yahoo Settles Wlth Jailed Chinese Dissidents , November 13, 2007
- PC World, Yahoo Settles Chinese Dissident Lawsuit, November 14, 2007
- San Francisco Chronicle, Yahoo Settles With Jailed Chinese Dissidents , November 13, 2007
- The Washington Post, Yahoo Settles With Chinese Families, November 14, 2007
- Wired, Yahoo Settles With Chinese Writers , November 13, 2007

