



## PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Dept. Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering  
Room D329B Engineering Quad., Olden Street  
Princeton, NJ 08544

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Dear Princeton Chinese Students, Scholars, Faculty, Parents, and Friends:

On behalf of the Princeton Free Xiyue Wang Volunteer Group, we, as Chinese American professors at Princeton University, are writing this open letter to call for your unity and full support to Mr. Xiyue Wang and his family.

Mr. Xiyue Wang, a 4<sup>th</sup> year graduate student in the History Department of Princeton University was unjustly sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by the Iranian judiciary department and his appeal was recently denied. He was charged of espionage and collaboration with a hostile government against the Iranian state, while he was conducting archival research for his dissertation in relation to the late 19th and early 20th century Eurasian history. Xiyue, an innocent student, has become another political victim of the deteriorating US-Iran relation just because he is a US citizen and a Princeton student. Xiyue's wife, Mrs Hua Qu, and their 4 year old son, both are Chinese citizens, have not seen Xiyue for one year and a half since his detainment and the family is in a desperate situation.

After Xiyue's case was made public by Iranian judiciary in July of this year, many Chinese communities at Princeton have expressed their strong support to Xiyue and his family. A Free Xiyue Wang support group was immediately formed by volunteers of Princeton Chinese scholars, students, parents, friends, and Chinese communities. Several Chinese American associations such as the United Chinese Americans (UCA) and the Committee of 100 also immediately expressed their concern and support in many different ways.

At the same time, it has also drawn to our attention that some members in our Chinese community still reserve their support because they may have some additional questions about this complex and sensitive case. Such questions include: Why didn't Princeton University timely release Xiyue's detention to the media and the public? What was Xiyue's previous employment by the International Committee of the Red Cross as a Pushto interpreter? How did he obtain a US citizenship when he was still a student? Was his visit to Iran instructed by the US security department and Princeton University? These questions represent reasonably prudent response to this case and is fully understandable.

Xiyue is a Ph.D. student who has linguistic talents and strong interests in Eurasian history. He took the risk to visit Iran solely driven by his academic passion in Eurasian studies and the need to read first hand local archives for his dissertation. Before traveling to Iran, he sent letters explaining his research plan to the Iranian government and had received approval necessary to carry out his archival research at libraries and archives in Tehran. Princeton University and Xiyue's family kept the case confidential on the recommendation of knowledgeable advisers of the University with the

concern that publicity would likely impede efforts to secure Xiyue's release. Xiyue was born and raised in Beijing, China. He immigrated to the US with his mother when he was 20 years old. He obtained his green card in 2001. Then, he received a bachelor's degree in South Asian studies from the University of Washington in 2006, and a master degree in Russian and Eurasia studies at Harvard University in 2008. After graduated from Harvard, he worked as a Princeton in Asia fellow between 2008 and 2009 at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, a law firm in Hong Kong. In 2010, motivated by his passion to use his language skill to help the wounded in Afghanistan, a war torn country, he joined the International Committee of Red Cross and worked for the organization as a Pushto interpreter at a Chinese-funded hospital in Kandahar. His service in Afghanistan saved a lot of lives.

Xiyue's dream, since young age, is to become a historian in Eurasian studies. In 2013, he applied for and was accepted by the PhD program of History Department at Princeton University and studied Eurasian history under the guidance of Prof. Stephen Kotkin, a world-renowned historian. To complete an excellent thesis with great distinction, Xiyue applied for a visa from the Iranian Interest Section in Washington, D.C., and went to the libraries and archives in Tehran, Iran for his dissertation thesis research, with necessary approval of his research plan by the relevant Iranian authority. Unfortunately, the arbitrary detention of Xiyue and groundless accusations against him by the Iranian state are serious blow to his personal life and academic career. Since the detention from more than a year ago, his physical and mental health have been deteriorating very fast. An urgent help is needed.

At this difficult time of Xiyue Wang, we would like to call for our Chinese community to unite and support Princeton University's efforts to secure a speedy release of Xiyue. Your kind support to Mr. Xiyue Wang's freedom and his family's well-being is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Princeton Free Xiyue Wang Chinese Volunteer Group ([FreeXiyueWang.org](http://FreeXiyueWang.org))

Yiguang Ju, Ph.D., Robert Porter Patterson Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Yibin Kang, Ph.D., Warner-Lambert/Parke-Davis Professor of Molecular Biology

Sau-Hai (Harvey), Lam, Ph.D., Edwin Wilsey '04 Professor Emeritus of Mechanical and  
Aerospace Engineering

James Wei, Ph.D., Pomeroy and Betty Perry Smith Professor of Chemical Engineering, Emeritus  
Dean Emeritus of the School of Engineering and Applied Science

Reviewed by Xiyue Wang's wife, Qu Hua