

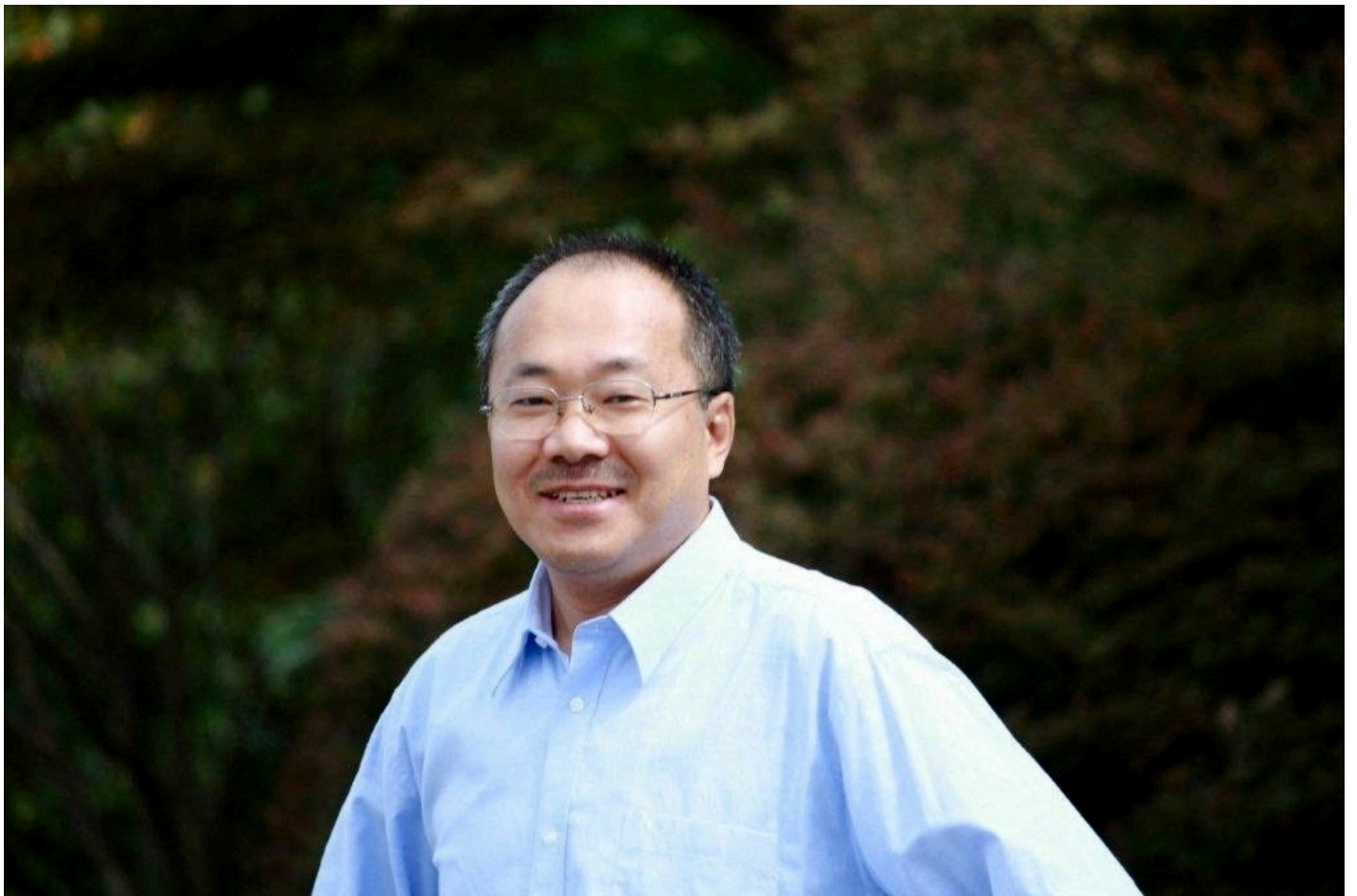
# China Sentences Journalist to 7 Years on Espionage Charges After G20 Lunch

'I condemn today's sentencing of veteran Chinese journalist Dong Yuyu to seven years in prison on espionage charges,' the U.S. ambassador to China said.

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Chinese journalist Dong Yuyu in an undated handout image provided by his family on Nov. 28, 2024. Dong Yuyu's



By Catherine Yang

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A A Print

A Chinese journalist was sentenced to seven years in prison on espionage charges on Nov. 29, according to a statement from his family given to international media.

Dong Yuyu, 62, was an editor and journalist at the state-run media *Guangming Daily* and ran the commentary section, where he published pro-reform articles.



He was detained two years ago, in February 2022 during the G20 summit, where he had lunch with a Japanese diplomat.



Beijing's No. 2 Intermediate People's Court ruled that the Japanese diplomat with whom Dong met was part of the Japanese Embassy, which Beijing designates as an "espionage organization."



The ruling implied that every Chinese citizen would be "expected to know that the Chinese government may consider those embassies to be 'espionage organizations,'" Dong's family said.

The Japanese diplomat, who had met with Dong in the past, was also detained after the 2022 lunch for several hours, sparking protest from the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Dong had been a visiting scholar and was visiting professors at Keio University and Hokkaido University in Japan.

Police guarded the court on Friday, with seven police cars parked nearby, and journalists were asked to leave the area. A U.S. diplomat said they had been barred from attending the hearing.

U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns condemned the verdict.

“I condemn today’s sentencing of veteran Chinese journalist Dong Yuyu to seven years in prison on espionage charges,” he [said](#).

“Punishing Dong for exercising his freedom of speech and the press, guaranteed by the PRC’s [People’s Republic of China’s] constitution for all its citizens, is unjust.”

The U.S. State Department also condemned the sentencing as unjust and called for Dong’s immediate and unconditional release.

“His arrest and today’s sentencing highlight the PRC’s failure to live up to its commitments under international law and its own constitutional guarantees to all its citizens, which include the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press,” stated Matthew Miller, State Department spokesperson.

International organizations have been calling for Dong’s release over the past two years, where his trial and sentencing saw numerous delays. The U.S. National Press Club stated that Dong was given a five-hour, closed-door trial in July 2023 and imprisoned without a verdict.

Dong’s family said Friday’s verdict showed a “bankrupt” justice system under the CCP and chilled free thought.

“Sentencing Yuyu to seven years in prison on no evidence declares to the world the bankruptcy of the justice system in China,” Dong’s family said in a statement.

“Today’s verdict is a grave injustice not only to Yuyu and his family but also to every freethinking Chinese journalist and every ordinary Chinese committed to friendly engagement with the world.”

Beh Lih Yi, Asia program manager at the Committee to Protect Journalists, called for Dong’s release.

“Chinese authorities must reverse this unjust verdict, and protect the right of journalists to work freely and safely in China,” Beh said.

Last year, U.S. National Press Club members published an open letter calling for Dong’s release. Journalists who had worked with him said

that Dong was pro-reform, supported a republican form of government for China, and had written a book about China's history that included calls for the regime "to address darker chapters in recent history, such as the Cultural Revolution."

Dong had regularly met with international journalists and foreign diplomats. He had several fellowships abroad, including the Nieman fellowship at Harvard (class of 2007).

"Dong Yuyu is a talented reporter and author whose work has long been respected by colleagues," said Ann Marie Lipinski, curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard. "We stand with many in hoping for his release and return to his family."

The press club members have criticized the CCP's classification of a meeting with a diplomat as "espionage."

"Who would want to come to China to meet Chinese journalists, academics, or diplomats if these meetings could be used as evidence that the Chinese side is committing espionage?" their letter reads.

*Reuters contributed to this report.*

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**Catherine Yang**

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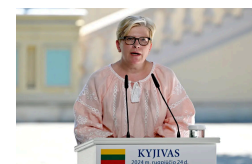
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