

U.S. raps China on dissident sentencing

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The United States, criticizing China's imposition of a 3 ½-year jail sentence on a noted human rights activist, has demanded his immediate release. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, responding to a Chinese court ruling against Hu Jia, 34, said the United States would launch new human rights talks with Beijing, CNN reported. Hu, who has drawn international attention for his writings on human rights abuses in China, was accused of libeling "the Chinese political and social systems" and instigating "subversion of the state." The ruling comes as Chinese authorities carry out widespread arrests in a crackdown on Tibetans protesting Chinese rule of their homeland. "It is a decision that is deeply disturbing to the United States," said Rice, who is attending the NATO summit in Bucharest. She said such decisions do not serve the interests of human rights and the rule of law, CNN reported. Rice said restarting the human rights dialogue would allow the United States "to have a place where we can bring up not just individual cases but also structural issues about what kinds of things are considered criminal in China that in most of the world would not be considered so." State Department spokesman Tom Casey said Hu had consistently worked within the Chinese legal system to protect the rights of his fellow citizens.

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