

OPEN LETTER

His Excellency Mr Xi Jinping, The President
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His Excellency Mr. Guo Shengkun
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Date: 21 July 2015

Your Excellency,

Re: The recent arrest of a large group of human rights lawyers in China

The undersigned organisations strongly condemn the recent unprecedented and seemingly well-coordinated detention of a large number of human rights lawyers in China. It followed the disappearance of Lawyer Wang Yu on 9 July 2015 and included inter alia:

- the criminal detention of lawyers and legal assistants Wang Yu, Zhou Shifeng, Wang Quanzhang, Huang Liquan, Sui Muqing and Xie Yang, Bao Longjun, Liu Sixin, Ge Ping and Li Heping;
- searching of the offices of Fengrui Law Firm and of Xiyuanwang, a network set up to work on wrongful criminal conviction cases, in Beijing.

As of 19 July 2015, a total of at least 233 lawyers, law firm staff, and human rights defenders have been detained, arrested, held incommunicado, summoned, or otherwise had their freedom temporarily restricted.

Many of those detained were part of a group of over 100 lawyers and rights activists who signed a public statement on 9 July 2015 condemning Wang Yu's disappearance.

Furthermore we have noted that official media reports have pro-actively portrayed a number of detained 'suspects' as criminals, including a recent CCTV 13 news report describing recent human rights lawyer advocacy campaigns as 'rights-defence-style trouble-making'.

These events make it impossible to take President's Xi Jinping's recent claims to be promoting the rule of law seriously, as they rigorously violate many international standards, including but not limited to: the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders), and the UN Body of principles for the protection of all persons under any form of detention or imprisonment.

All these lawyers, law firm staff and human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty should be immediately released. If they are not immediately released, we urgently request that you immediately confirm the whereabouts of those currently in detention and that you ensure that they have prompt and regular access to their lawyers and family.

Furthermore we request that those arrested will be protected from any future control measures typically used against human rights lawyers in China such as: tracking and following; violent attacks; soft detention; 'being travelled'; being asked to have 'chats'; being placed under criminal, administrative, or judicial detention; being subjected to enforced disappearance, torture or psychiatric incarceration.

We request your urgent attention for this matter and will continue to closely monitor the fate of the lawyers concerned in the near future.

Yours sincerely,





BAR COUNCIL OF IRELAND
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE



Encl: Chinese translation of this letter

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