

PRESS RELEASE

20 lawyer's associations ask for the immediate release of Chinese lawyer Wang Quanzhang

Geneva, 10 December 2018 – In a petition letter addressed to the Chinese authorities on the day of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and at the initiative of the Human Rights Commission of the Geneva Bar Association, 20 lawyer's associations from all over the world call for the immediate release of Chinese lawyer Wang Quanzhang, who has been held in China for over three years for allegedly 'subversion of state power'.

Lawyer Wang Quanzhang was seized by the police on 3 August 2015 in the context of the '709 crackdown', during which 321 lawyers and human rights defenders were arrested. Charged in January 2016 for allegedly 'subversion of state power', Wang Quanzhang is the last of the lawyers affected by the '709 crackdown' not to have been tried nor released. His wife Li Wenzu has filed 30 suits against the court demanding a trial for her husband, in line with Chinese law, but to no avail. She and her son are also subjected to measures of intimidation and harassment and have been denied the right to visit him.

Wang Quanzhang has been held incommunicado for over three years and without any form of due process. He was not given access to an independent legal counsellor of his choosing and has been denied access to his family lawyer, who was allegedly intimidated into withdrawing from his case. In addition, his health condition is deteriorating due to forced medication to treat high blood pressure, even though he had no medical problems at the time of his disappearance.

The signatory groups of the letter express their concern about the situation of Wang Quanzhang and the continued harassment of many other Chinese lawyers because they exercise their mandate as legal professionals and human rights defenders. Therefore, the signatory groups call on the Chinese authorities to:

- Release without delay lawyer Wang Quanzhang and those being held for exercising their fundamental human rights or for defending the exercise of such rights by others;
- Stop any form of harassment against Li Wenzu and their child, and condemn any future harassment of families of detained lawyers by local authorities.

- Ensure due process and fair trial for all detained lawyers, and recognize publicly the important work they carry out in defending the basic rights of Chinese citizens, mostly economic, social and cultural rights;
- Protect Wang Quanzhang and all human rights defenders in China against any present or future harassment, intimidation and/or reprisal in the exercise of their profession and of legitimate human rights activities;
- Cooperate meaningfully with relevant international experts, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, to amend all laws and policies that restrict the ability of lawyers to freely and effectively exercise their profession with the aim of bringing them into compliance with international norms and China's international obligations and commitments.

Signatories list

- Ordre des avocats de Genève
- International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
- International Association of Lawyers
- Association of the Bar of the City of New York
- Barra Mexicana, Colegio de Abogados (Mexican Bar Association)
- The Swedish Bar Association
- Commission des affaires européennes et internationales du Conseil National des Barreaux français
- The Commonwealth Lawyers Association
- The Law Society of England & Wales
- Lawyers for Lawyers
- Progressive Lawyers Group Hong Kong
- China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group
- Human Rights Committee of the Taipei Bar Association
- Judicial Reform Foundation Taiwan
- Taiwan Support China Human Rights Lawyers Network
- Deutscher Anwalt Verein (German Bar Association)
- Colegio de Abogados de Costa Rica
- Ankara Bar Association
- Ordre van Vlaamse Balies (Belgian flemish bar association)
- The Bar Council of London

About the Human Rights Commission of the Geneva Bar Association

The Human Rights Commission of the Geneva Bar Association works in favor of human rights both in Switzerland and abroad through various actions such as judicial observation missions and written or oral interpellations, particularly with the authorities. It also raises awareness on human rights and the rights of defense issues through conferences, meetings and publications.

For more informations :

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