



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

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STATEMENT

Paris, April 17, 2020

### **Chinese Lawyer Wang Quanzhang Released but Still Subject to Restrictions**

**On April 5, 2020, Mr. Wang Quanzhang was released after serving a four and a half-year jail sentence. UIA-IROL remains deeply concerned about his situation, since he has not been allowed to be reunited with his family and his freedom is still strictly restricted.**

According to the information received, prominent Chinese human rights lawyer Mr. Wang Quanzhang was released in the early morning of April 5, 2020. He was, however, immediately escorted to his hometown Jinan, in Shandong province, 400 kilometers away from Beijing, and placed in “precautionary quarantine” for 14 days, allegedly as required by an official measure in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Wang is still unable to return to Beijing where his wife, Li Wenzu, and his child live, and he remains subject to heavy surveillance. According to his wife, Mr. Wang’s telephone was confiscated, and Mr. Wang is only allowed to call his family once a day via the community officer’s phone.

Since Mr. Wang’s detention in 2015, UIA-IROL has repeatedly expressed serious concerns about the circumstances of his arrest, disappearance, detention and trial, alleging a failure of due process resulting from violations of domestic and international human rights standards and laws. Therefore, while UIA-IROL considers Mr. Wang’s release as a positive development, it recalls that Mr. Wang should have never been detained in the first place, as he was targeted for the legitimate exercise of his professional duties and his defence of human rights.

UIA-IROL is further concerned that the ongoing restrictions to Mr. Wang’s freedom of movement and to establish residence will persist beyond the pretextual compulsory quarantine to become an indefinite *de facto* house arrest. It is indeed UIA-IROL’s understanding that many activists and lawyers targeted in the 2015 crackdown have been subject to surveillance and restrictions of their freedom following their release from prison or detention<sup>1</sup>.

**UIA-IROL reaffirms its support for Mr. Wang Quanzhang and his family. It requests the Chinese authorities to take all necessary steps to immediately and unconditionally put an end to all arbitrary restrictions on Mr. Wang Quanzhang’s freedoms and to facilitate access to his family.**

**UIA-IROL urges authorities to stop all forms of harassment, intimidation and/or retaliation against both Mr. Wang and his family, as well as all Chinese human rights lawyers and defenders.**

Once again, UIA-IROL reiterates the valuable role of Chinese lawyers and human rights defenders in promoting and defending the Rule of Law in their country, in accordance international human rights law and, in particular, the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

**UIA-IROL shall continue to monitor this situation closely.**

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<sup>1</sup> Among other cases, in February 2019, human rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong, along with his sister and father, was briefly detained immediately after his release from two-year prison sentence. Mr. Jiang and his family remain under surveillance and are banned from moving about freely.

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Reminder:

*Prior to his detention, Mr. Wang Quanzhang practiced at the Beijing law firm Fengrui and worked on cases of torture allegedly committed by the police, cases relating to alleged Falun Gong members, and cases involving land rights.*

*Mr. Wang was arbitrarily taken into custody in August 2015 in the context of the national crackdown on hundreds of lawyers, jurists and human rights defenders – known as the "709 Crackdown". He was held in secret for over three years and was tried behind closed doors in December 2018. In January 2019, Mr. Wang was found guilty of "subversion of state power" and sentenced to four years and six months in prison and banned from exercising his political rights for five years.*

*Since his arrest, Mr. Wang's relatives, and notably Ms. Li Wenzu, his wife, have also been subjected to repeated acts of harassment and intimidation.*

*In August 2018, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention released an opinion declaring arbitrary Mr. Wang's deprivation of liberty and urging full and independent investigation of the circumstances surrounding his detention<sup>2</sup>.*

**More about the UIA-IROL**

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*The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.*

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<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/WGAD/2018/62, October 12, 2018, available at [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session82/A\\_HRC\\_WGAD\\_2018\\_62\\_AEV.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session82/A_HRC_WGAD_2018_62_AEV.pdf)