

URGENT ACTION

FEMALE ACTIVIST HELD INCOMUNICADO FOR MONTHS

No contact has been made with human rights defender Li Qiaochu since she was taken away by Beijing police on 16 February 2020. Her arrest is suspected to be related to her activism against gender violence and the fact that her partner, Xu Zhiyong, attended an informal gathering of lawyers and activists in Xiamen in December 2019. Detained incommunicado under “residential surveillance in a designated location”, there are grave concerns that Li Qiaochu is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment as she is still without access to her family or a lawyer of her choice.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Director Wang Xiaohong
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Dear Director Wang:

I am writing to express my grave concern for **Li Qiaochu (李翘楚)**, who has been held incommunicado since being taken away by Beijing police on 16 February 2020. Li has reportedly been put under “Residential Surveillance in a designated location” (指定居所监视居住). However, no official information about her current situation has been communicated to her family or lawyer.

It is distressing to learn that, throughout her detention, Li has had no access to a lawyer. Most recently, on 21 April, Li's lawyer went to Dongxiaokou Police Station to seek a meeting with her and try find out any information about her case. The request was denied, meaning that her lawyer still does not know anything about her whereabouts, wellbeing or even the charges against her.

Without any access to Li Qiaochu, it is unclear whether she has prompt, regular, and unrestricted access to medical care. As she has suffered from depression since June 2019, I worry about her mental and physical wellbeing if she is not getting the appropriate care.

Li Qiaochu is a well-regarded researcher on labour rights and has been a peaceful advocate against gender-based violence for many years. As it seems that Li Qiaochu's own peaceful activism and close association with other activists is the sole reason for her current detention.

I urge you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release Li Qiaochu, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that she has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards.**
- **Ensure that Li Qiaochu has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of her choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**
- **Allow her prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request, or as necessary.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Li Qiaochu (李翘楚), born in 1991, is a feminist and researcher on labour issues. Li graduated from the School of Labour and Human Resources at Renmin University of China.

Li has long been involved in issues concerning the equal rights for workers, women and other members of Chinese society. Her research has covered topics such as policies on social protection for retired workers. When Beijing authorities cleared and evicted the “low income population” in 2017, Li worked with volunteers to compile and disseminate information about the most affected communities in order to help the expelled migrant workers find new jobs and affordable alternative accommodation. Li also actively took part in various national #MeToo campaigns. She compiled data, drafted reports and posted online messages of her support for the movement.

In June 2019, Li was diagnosed with depression and had to be on regular medication. However, this did not stop her from her activism. With the outbreak of COVID-19, Li again volunteered to help both online and offline with epidemic prevention in the small communities. She distributed face masks to sanitation workers and guided pregnant women of the affected communities to help each other out. Having observed the lack of gender perspective, especially with respect to prevention of gender-based violence in the practices of some hospitals, she immediately worked with a group of volunteers to set out recommendations.

As the result of Li’s activism, she was often harassed by the police. Beginning in early December 2019, public security officers were stationed outside her house and monitored her on her way to and from work, which seriously contravened her privacy and civil rights.

On 31 December 2019, Li was summoned by the police and held in the Beijing Public Security Bureau for 24 hours. During her detention, the police reportedly refused to give her adequate medical care. As most of the questioning related to Xu Zhiyong, Li Qiaochu decided to reveal her treatment by the police online and called for more public attention for others detained in relation to the gatherings in Xiamen.

Since 26 December 2019, police across the country have been summoning or detaining participants in an informal gathering of lawyers and activists held in Xiamen earlier that month. Dai Zhenya, Ding Jiayi and Zhang Zhongshun are just three of the many participants detained and are currently being held under residential surveillance at a designated location unknown to their families.

Residential surveillance in a designated location” (指定监所监视居住) is a measure that, under certain circumstances, enables criminal investigators to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system in what can amount to a form of secret incommunicado detention. When held without access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, suspects placed under this form of “residential surveillance” are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. This form of detention has been used to curb the activities of human rights defenders, including lawyers, activists and religious practitioners. Activists and human rights defenders continue to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest and detention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or Chinese
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 June 2020
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Li Qiaochu (She/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS OUTPUT: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/1963/2020/en/>