

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

10 May 2010
AI Index: ASA 17/022/2010

China: No Rule of Law when Defence Lawyers Cannot Perform their Legitimate Role

Amnesty International condemns as an erosion of human rights and the rule of law the Beijing Municipal Justice Bureau's decision to revoke the professional licence of two lawyers, Liu Wei and Tang Jitian following an administrative hearing on 22 April.

According to the decision which was posted of on the Bureau's website on 7 May, the two had withdrawn from the courtroom without due cause, "disobeyed court personnel...disrupted court proceedings and interfered with the regular litigation process" during a trial in April 2009 at which they defended Falun Gong practitioners.

Liu and Tang had testified that the court judge had repeatedly interrupted and attempted to intimidate the defence team. During the administrative hearing Teng Biao, also a lawyer, defended Liu and Tang by saying that they were simply doing their job when they put forward a defence statement for their clients.

Liu Wei and Tang Jitian intend to appeal the decision.

Among the more than 160,000 lawyers in China, only a small proportion is willing to take the risk of representing victims of human rights violations. These lawyers constitute an important part of the *weiquan* ('rights defense') movement, which is using Chinese law to protect rights of individuals.

Like other human rights defenders in China, these individual *weiquan* lawyers have been harassed, assaulted, kept under surveillance and prosecuted for protecting the rights of others.

The Chinese authorities have also imposed arbitrary administrative sanctions such as fines and asserted political pressure on law firms that employ *weiquan* lawyers.

For more information see:

Amnesty International - China: Ensure rule of law by ending harassment of lawyers
(Index: ASA 17/018/2010, 21 April 2010) Available online at:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/018/2010/en>

Amnesty International - Breaking the Law: Crackdown on human rights lawyers and legal activists in China
(Index: ASA 17/042/2009, 7 September 2009) Available online at:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/042/2009/en>

ENDS/

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org