

# URGENT ACTION

## Chinese Labour Activist Held Incommunicado

Wei Zhili, an editor of “New Generation” (*xinshengdai*) a website which monitors and reports on internal migrant workers in China, has been transferred to secret incommunicado detention since 20 April 2019. Under this form of detention, he does not get access to a lawyer of his choice. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

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

**Song Yiyang**

Director of Shenzhen City Pingshan District Public Security Sub-Bureau  
1 Longping Lu, Pingshan Qu, Shenzhen, 518118,  
People's Republic of China

Dear Director Song,

*Wei Zhili* has been taken away by police along with another colleague since 20 March, amid a crackdown on students and activists advocating for workers' rights. No arrest or search warrant was shown by the police while they were searching his home in Guangzhou and questioning him before his arrest.

On 27 March, Shenzhen City Ping Shan Public Security Sub-bureau informed Wei's families that he was criminally detained on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” in Shenzhen City No. 2 detention centre. The detention authorities allowed Wei to meet his family-appointed lawyers on 28 March, 8 April and 18 April. In one of the visits, Wei Zhili told his lawyer that he had not been tortured, but the police had verbally humiliated him and threatened him that they would bring his family to the interrogation room if he continued to “refuse cooperation with them.”

However, on 20 April, police informed Wei's parents that, since 19 April, Wei had been put under residential surveillance at a designated location - a form of secret incommunicado detention that allowed the police to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system. Individuals placed under this form of detention would have no access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, and be subject to the grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The police also requested Wei's parents to dismiss their lawyers immediately and threatened them not to cause any trouble.

Wei Zhili's wife, Zheng Churan, who is a well-known feminist activist, has faced continued harassment for merely speaking out publicly about her husband's detention. Her WeChat accounts, which she used to release information about her husband's situation, have either been deleted or blocked. In April, her landlord, who has been under police pressure, requested her to move out from her rented apartment.

**Therefore, I call on you to:**

- **immediately and unconditionally release Wei Zhili unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offense and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;**
- **ensure that Wei Zhili is not subjected to any torture or other ill-treatment and has regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and is able to communicate with family members, without interference unless justified in line with international human rights law; and**
- **end all harassment against Wei Zhili's family.**

Yours sincerely.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Wei Zhili is an editor of “New Generation” (*xinshengdai*), a website on monitoring and reporting the situation of rural migrant workers in China. New Generation also uses other mainland Chinese social media platforms to disseminate information about employment and labour laws and occupational safety and health. A lot of his recent work was focused on the plight of the workers from Hunan province who contracted silicosis due to lack of occupational health safety protection in the factories.

Wei Zhili has been committed to labour rights and feminist issues since he graduated from university in 2010. Upon his university graduation, he worked in Hand-in-Hand Workers’ Activity Centre (手牵手工友活动室) in Shenzhen providing legal advice, representation and organizing support to workers. A blog by Tian Yu, who had tried to commit suicide while working at Foxconn, recalled that Wei Zhili was so attentive and kind and that he and a group of students had supported and accompanied her and her family to get through the hardest time of her life. Wei Zhili was also previously threatened by police about his work on labour issues. In that incident, police reportedly told him and other labour activists that labour activism is “disturbing social order” and “speaking for workers is anti-Communist and counter-revolution”.

Activists and human rights defenders continue to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest and arbitrary detention. Police hold an increasing number of human rights defenders outside of formal detention facilities, sometimes without access to a lawyer for long periods, exposing the detainees to the risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Since July 2018, China has arbitrarily detained and questioned dozens of student organizers, labour rights activists and factory workers in at least five cities in what appears to be intensified repression against the emerging labour movement in the country.

Over the years, China has made further efforts to reinforce its already oppressive internet censorship architecture. Thousands of websites and social media services are forced to censor their content, while some platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are blocked. In addition, a number of citizen journalists and directors of local news outlets that publicize articles and information about human rights incidents in China have been detained and imprisoned.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Chinese, English.

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 June 2019**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Wei Zhili (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/0115/2019/en/>