

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS HELD IN CRACKDOWN ON LABOUR RIGHTS

Four prominent labour activists have been criminally detained in what appears to be a coordinated crackdown on labour rights organizations in Guangdong province, south-east China. The whereabouts of four other activists are currently unknown, and several others have been questioned. This crackdown comes at a time of escalating industrial tensions in the region.

On 4 December, **Zeng Feiyang**, the director of Panyu Workers' Centre and one of the region's most influential labour rights leaders, and activist **Zhu Xiaomei**, were criminally detained on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disturb social order" at Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre. This charge is often used to suppress human rights defenders and activists in China. Another labour activist **Deng Xiaoming** is also under criminal detention at Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre, although the charge is currently unknown. Labour activist **He Xiaobo** was detained on the same day for alleged embezzlement at Nanhai District Detention Centre in Foshan. The detention centres have prevented lawyers from meeting any of the detained.

The whereabouts of four other labour activists, **Peng Jiayong**, **Meng Han**, **He Minghui** and **Tang Jian** are unknown, raising fears that they have also been detained. Several other activists were also questioned, and then released.

This amounts to the biggest crackdown on the labour rights movement in the country for years, and comes amid rising industrial tension in Guangdong. Many factories in the region have closed or been forced to relocate, leaving workers with unpaid wages, no redundancy pay or social insurance contributions. This has led to an increasing number of protests and strikes in recent months. Panyu Workers' Centre is one of the organizations that has been assisting workers by training them to engage in collective bargaining so that they can claim their lawful rights.

Please write immediately in Chinese, English or your own language:

- Demanding the authorities immediately and unconditionally release Zeng Feiyang, Zhu Xiaomei, He Xiaobo and Deng Xiaoming;
- Pending their release, urging them to grant Zeng Feiyang, Zhu Xiaomei, He Xiaobo and Deng Xiaoming regular, unrestricted access to their family and lawyers, and ensure they are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging the authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts and legal status of Peng Jiayong, Meng Han, He Minghui and Tang Jian.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 JANUARY 2016 TO:

Director

Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre
No. 9 Shigang Beijie
Chatou Guanghailu
Baiyunqu, Guangzhou,
People's Republic of China
Telephone: +86 20 86442371 (Chinese
only)

Salutation: Dear Director

Director

Nanhai District Detention Centre
Shishan Zhaoda Guanliqu
Foshan City
Guangdong province,
People's Republic of China, 528225
Telephone: +86 757 86690318 (Chinese
only)

Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Director

Li Chunsheng
Guangdong Provincial Public Security
Department
No. 97 Huanghualu
Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province
People's Republic of China
Email: xf@gdga.gov.cn,
info@gdga.gov.cn

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The detention centres have prevented those who are criminally detained from having access to their lawyers, unless they receive permission from the public security bureau. This is in contradiction with China's Criminal Procedure Law Article 37, which only allows detention centres to request higher level approval for visits when an individual is criminally detained under charges involving endangering state security, terrorism, or serious corruption.

The industrial province of Guangdong, situated in south-east China, has been dubbed the "factory of the world" due to the numerous factories in the province that make up the supply chains in major global industries like textiles, electronics, consumer goods, and toys.

In recent years, China has enacted legislation and regulations to protect workers' rights, but there is poor implementation of the laws. Independent unions are banned, and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only body allowed to represent workers in China. ACFTU-affiliated unions at the enterprise level are often controlled by factory management, thus giving them little capacity to protect workers' interests.

Numerous labour NGOs have formed over the past decade in order to help workers protect their legal rights. Labour leader Zeng Feiyang, who is currently under criminal detention, first founded his NGO in 1998. While labour NGOs have at times faced harassment by authorities and resistance from local factories, to a large extent they have been tolerated, and even encouraged, by the local and provincial governments, because they are recognized for their ability to bring greater social stability by helping workers through legal education training, filing lawsuits, assisting workers who have suffered industrial injuries, and providing other social services.

However, over the past year or more, labour activists have faced greater harassment and even physical threats and attacks, as the economy slows down in China, and many factories leave Guangdong province due to higher costs. China Labour Bulletin, a labour advocacy group in Hong Kong, recorded 301 strikes in China in November, which was an all-time high number. A total of 56 strikes were in Guangdong province, which was more than double the number of strikes in any other province.

The crackdown on labour NGOs also comes after an unprecedented crackdown on lawyers and activists in the summer, in which 248 people were targeted and 25 remain in police custody.

Name: Zeng Feiyang (m), Zhu Xiaomei (f), He Xiaobo (m), Peng Jiayong (m), Meng Han (m), Deng Xiaoming (m), He Minghui (m) and Tang Jian (m)

Gender m/f: Both

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