

URGENT ACTION

TWO CHINESE LABOUR ACTIVISTS RELEASED

Two Chinese labour activists have been released, but three remain in detention, solely as a result of their legitimate activities defending workers' rights in Guangdong province, south-east China. These releases suggest that the attention on their situation may be having an influence, but more appeals are needed for those still behind bars.

Zeng Feiyang, the director of Panyu Workers' Centre and one of the region's most influential labour rights leaders, and activist **Meng Han**, were formally arrested for "gathering a crowd to disturb social order" on 10 January. Activist He Xiaobo has also been formally arrested for embezzlement. They were first detained on 4 December, alongside **Zhu Xiaomei**, who was released on bail on 2 February, and **Tang Jian**, who has also been released. Activists **Deng Xiaoming** and **Peng Jiayong** were released on 10 January.

Zeng Feiyang and Meng Han are detained at Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre, while He Xiaobo is held at Nanhai District Detention Centre in Foshan. None of them have had access to their lawyers since they were first detained, in violation of Chinese law.

Their detention and arrest forms part of a coordinated crackdown on the labour movement in Guangdong Province, at a time of escalating industrial tensions in the region. Thirty-three activists were also questioned as part of the crackdown, and then released. Official state media appears to be conducting a smear campaign against the activists, with several outlets accusing them of inciting workers to strike and of accepting funding from foreign organizations.

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

- Demanding the authorities immediately and unconditionally release Zeng Feiyang, He Xiaobo and Meng Han;
- Pending their release, urging them to grant all the detainees regular, unrestricted access to their family and lawyers, and ensure they are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 MARCH 2016 TO:

Procurator-General of Guangdong

Provincial People's Procuratorate

Guangdong Provincial People's
Procuratorate

Huaqianglu, Tianhequ,

Guangzhou, Guangdong province

People's Republic of China

Tel: +86 20 8711 8999 (Chinese only)

Salutation: Dear Procurator-General

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

Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Premier

Li Keqiang Guojia Zongli

The State Council General Office

2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu,

Beijingshi 100017,

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of

Foreign Affairs

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. This is the third update of UA 281/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/3346/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 of major global industries including 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 decades 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 beginning in the summer of 2015, in which over 250 were targeted, to date 18 have been formally arrested.

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

Further information on UA: 281/15 Index: ASA 17/3435/2016 Issue Date: 15 February 2016

