

URGENT ACTION

FEARS GROW FOR DETAINED LABOUR ACTIVISTS

Seven labour activists could be facing up to 15 years imprisonment solely as a result of their activities defending labour rights in China. They have not been granted access to their lawyers, putting them at increased risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Their continued detention forms part of a coordinated crackdown on the labour movement in Guangdong Province, at a time of escalating industrial tensions in the region.

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 4 December on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disturb social order" at Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre. Labour activist **He Xiaobo** was detained on the same day for alleged embezzlement at Nanhai District Detention Centre in Foshan. Activists **Deng Xiaoming**, **Peng Jiayong**, and **Meng Han** are also detained at Guangzhou City No. 1 Detention Centre, although the charges against them are currently unknown. Activist **Tang Jian** is also known to be detained, but his location and charges are unclear.

The authorities have prevented lawyers from meeting any of the detained, claiming that they are under suspicion of "endangering national security". This is a far more serious charge which could lead to a sentence of up to 15 years imprisonment. All detainees should have access to a lawyer, regardless of the charges against them. The authorities have a maximum of 37 days from the date of detention to decide whether to formally arrest them, and if so, on what charges.

Zhu Xiaomei applied for bail, which was denied on 13 December. She was breastfeeding her one-year-old daughter before she was detained. Thirty-three activists were also questioned as part of the crackdown, and then released, including **He Minghui**.

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

- Demanding the authorities immediately and unconditionally release Zeng Feiyang, Zhu Xiaomei, He Xiaobo, Deng Xiaoming, Peng Jiayong, Meng Han and Tang Jian,
- 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 27 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. This is the first update of UA 281/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/3015/2015/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 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

Further information on UA: 281/15 Index: ASA 17/3089/2015 Issue Date: 16 December 2015

