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Amnesty International Condemns Torture and Detention of Human Rights Lawyers in China

A lawyer who was detained after he and three other lawyers investigated an illegal detention centre said he was tortured by the police. Amnesty International calls on the authorities to promptly investigate these allegations and bring those responsible to justice.

Zhang Junjie was released from Qixing Public Security Bureau Detention Centre in Jiansanjiang city, Heilongjiang province, northeast China, on the afternoon of 27 March after being held for five days.

After his release, the lawyer posted testimony online containing details about his ordeal.

Zhang Junjie was questioned at Daxing District Public Security Bureau, where he was first taken. He said the officers there slapped him and beat his head with a bottle of water and punched and kicked him for at least 3 minutes after he asked the police to show their IDs. After this beating he described the pain in his waist and his inability to sit up. He wasn't given any food or water for the whole day until he agreed to make a written statement.

He and the other three lawyers Tang Jitian, Jiang Tianyong and Wang Cheng, who remain detained, were later hooded and taken to a hospital for medical examination before they were taken to the Qixing Public Security Bureau Detention Centre. Zhang Junjie said that he saw Tang Jitian had injuries to his chest when they reached the detention centre. The police officers continued to question Zhang Junjie every day at this detention centre.

Amnesty International is concerned about the safety of the three lawyers who remain in detention and that they too may have been tortured.

Tang Jitian and Jiang Tianyong have been assigned to administrative detention for 15 days for "using an evil cult to endanger society". Wang Cheng is also still detained but the form of his detention is unclear.

According to Zhang Junjie, the four lawyers were investigating the so-called "legal education centre" in Qinglongshan farm at the time of their detention. Some of their clients, who are Falun Gong practitioners, are currently held at the "legal education centre".

Amnesty International is concerned that following the abolition of Re-education Through Labour in China at the end of 2013, the authorities are increasingly using other forms of arbitrary detention such as "legal education centres" to hold people previously detained in Re-education Through Labour. "Legal education centres" are designed primarily as places where Falun Gong practitioners are coerced into renouncing their beliefs, often through torture and other ill-treatment.