

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

30 July 2009

AI Index: ASA 17/039/2009

## China: Legal scholar Xu Zhiyong in arbitrary detention

The Chinese government should immediately disclose the whereabouts and ensure the safety of Xu Zhiyong, law professor at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. He is also the founder of the legal aid and research centre Open Constitution Initiative (OCI, also known as *Gongmeng* in Chinese), which the authorities shut down on 17 July and imposed a fine of more than 1.4 million yuan (approximately USD 200,000).

According to a notice on OCI's website today, six police officers took Xu Zhiyong away from his home yesterday, 29 July, at 5am. His whereabouts are currently unknown. According to the notice, Zhuang Lu, a staff member of OPI, is also missing.

Both Xu Zhiyong and Zhuang Lu have been arbitrarily detained and are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment. They should be released immediately unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence. Moreover, in addition to clarifying their whereabouts, Chinese authorities should immediately allow them to meet their family and lawyers.

### Background

On 14 July 2009, OCI received notices from the national and Beijing taxation bureaus ordering it to pay a fine of 1.4 million yuan for tax violations, an amount that is five times the taxes that the authorities claimed that OCI owed. Three days later, on 17 July, representatives from the Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau came to OCI's office and confiscated computers and other office machines, as well as files and documents. They also delivered notification of an official decision to shut down the law research centre, saying that it is not allowed to operate because it had not registered as a civil society organization.

Since its establishment in 2003, OCI has provided legal assistance to victims of human rights violations, including those subjected to forced evictions and families of victims of the 2008 tainted milk scandal. OCI also recently used the national Regulation on Open Government Information to request various government branches to be transparent about their spending of public money.

END/

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*