

URGENT ACTION

CHINESE LAWYER DETAINED FOR DEFENDING CLIENT

Ren Quanniu, lawyer for legal assistant Zhao Wei, was detained on 9 July on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after he expressed concerns about his client and asking for an investigation into her condition while she was detained. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Ren Quanniu, the lawyer who defended Zhao Wei, was criminally detained on 9 July on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a catch-all charge often used to detain activists in China. Zhao Wei, a legal assistant of lawyer Li Heping (also detained) was released on bail, according to a 7 July posting on the official social media account of the Tianjin Public Security Bureau. The Zhengzhou Public Security Bureau on 8 July announced on their official Weibo account that they had taken Ren Quanniu into custody, and that on 9 July, he confessed that he fabricated rumours that Zhao Wei had been sexually harassed in detention. Ren Quanniu met with his lawyers in Zhengzhou City No. 3 Detention Centre on 11 July. According to them, he is in good spirits and denied that he had confessed to the alleged crime. He maintained his innocence and asserted that all the actions he had taken while carrying out his professional duties as defence lawyer for Zhao Wei were completely lawful.

Ren Quanniu's wife, Hu Youling, was on the evening of 13 July taken away by three police officers for questioning, and released the same day. Zhang Zunjie, one of the lawyers representing Ren Quanniu, said that he was asked by his employer to drop the case. Chang Boyang, another lawyer of Ren Quanniu, reported that, on the morning of 14 July, two police officers stopped him while he was leaving his apartment building and requested daily visits or phone calls with him.

Ren Quanniu's detention stems from widely-discussed reports on social media that Zhao Wei may have been sexually harassed while in detention. Ren Quanniu posted a message on 27 May on his Weibo account raising his concerns about these reports. Since the authorities had denied his requests to visit Zhao Wei, he could not verify the reports himself. He posted on Weibo that he had made a formal request to the Tianjin Municipal People's Procuratorate to investigate her situation in detention.

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

- Urging Chinese authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ren Quanniu, who has been detained for carrying out his legitimate professional activities as a lawyer;
- Urging them to ensure that while in detention Ren Quanniu has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice, and that he is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.
- Urging them to ensure that Ren Quanniu's family and lawyers are free from any harassment and intimidation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO:

Zhengzhou Municipal Public Security

Bureau

Shen Qinghuai
Zhengzhou Shi Gong'an Ju
110 Erqilu 450000
Zhengzhou Shi
People's Republic of China
Tel: +86 371 66229110 (Chinese only)
Salutation: Dear Director

Zhengzhou Municipal No. 3 Detention

Centre

Zhao Yuexi
Guxu Lu, Guying Zhen, Huiji Qu
Zhengzhou Shi, 450000
People's Republic of China
Tel: +86 371 96200706 (Chinese only)
Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Minister of Public Security

Guo Shengkun
14 Dong Chang'an Jie
Dongcheng Qu, Beijing Shi 100741
People's Republic of China
Tel: +86 10 66262114 (in Chinese only)
Email: gabzfwz@mps.gov.cn

Salutation: Dear Minister

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

As of July 2016, at least 248 people had been questioned or detained in an unprecedented crackdown on Chinese lawyers and activists that began on 9 July 2015. Those detained or questioned include human rights lawyers, their support staff, associates and even family members. At least 17 lawyers or activists were formally arrested, of which 13 were formally arrested on state security charges. Almost all of those detained in the crackdown have been denied legal counsel and family visits.

Zhao Wei was an assistant of Beijing human rights lawyer Li Heping and assisted the lawyer in cases representing victims of forced land evictions and other forms of human rights violations. As part of the crackdown, Zhao Wei was taken into custody by authorities on 10 July 2015. Lawyer Ren Quanniu, who was hired by Zhao Wei's mother to represent her, was only verbally informed by a public security officer of the Hexi District Branch of Tianjin Public Security Bureau that Zhao Wei was criminally detained on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" in late July 2015. On 22 September 2015, Ren Quanniu was, again, only verbally informed by a public security officer from the same public security branch that Zhao Wei had been placed under "residential surveillance in a designated location" on suspicion of "inciting subversion of state power". During Zhao Wei's detention, the authorities rejected all of Ren Quanniu's requests to meet her, claiming that Zhao Wei was involved in a case of "endangering national security" and that allowing the lawyer's visit would interfere with the investigation. Zhao Wei's mother and Ren Quanniu were only informed by the public security authorities on 11 January that Zhao Wei had been formally arrested on suspicion of "subverting state power" on 8 January, and was being detained at Tianjin Municipal No. 1 Detention Centre.

Ren Quanniu again went to Tianjin No. 1 Detention Centre on 28 January to try and meet Zhao Wei but he was told that Zhao Wei had hired another lawyer and thus he was no longer authorized to represent her, a claim that was disputed by Zhao Wei's mother. Ren Quanniu also discovered that the authority handling Zhao Wei's case was changed to the Tianjin Municipal Public Security Bureau. On the same day, he filed a lawsuit to sue the Tianjin Municipal Public Security Bureau for interfering with his duty as a lawyer to represent Zhao Wei but he did not receive any reply from the procuratorate prior to his detention.

Amnesty International has found that this is a common practice for detained human rights defenders in China to have their lawyers switched by the authorities. They are forced to dismiss or are said to have dismissed their lawyers and are forced to use the lawyers assigned by the authorities, or simply denied access to any lawyer.

The Ministry of Public Security posted an article on 8 July on its website entitled "Lawyers who Create Rumours Should be Punished". This article appeared just one day after an announcement that Zhao Wei had been released on bail. After 7 July, a few messages have been posted on Zhao Wei's Weibo account, including a message saying that she was shocked to find out that Ren Quanniu created the rumour about the sexual harassment. However, Zhao Wei's whereabouts are unknown. A tweet from her Weibo account that thanked her supporters and the "countless helpful and sincere uniformed police officers who worked on my case" aroused suspicions that the message was dictated, or even directly sent, by police. On 10 July, Zhao Wei spoke to the South China Morning Post (SCMP) on the phone, and she reiterated the messages on her Weibo account. However, the SCMP said it could not verify Zhao's location or whether she was under surveillance during the interview, and she declined their requests for a face-to-face interview. Her husband, who has not been able to see or communicate with her since she was reportedly released on bail, told the SCMP that he did not believe that his wife was actually writing the posts, and that he believes she was forced to send them. On 13 July, Ji Huiyun, a lawyer who claimed to be Zhao Wei's defense lawyer, posted on her Weibo account a photo of a handwritten letter, where Zhao Wei authorized her to file a civil lawsuit against Ren Quanniu for defamation for spreading false reports that she was harassed in detention.

Name: Ren Quanniu (m)

Gender: m

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