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**LABOUR ACTIVISTS IN  
CHINA**

**Trade Union Action  
Appeal Cases**

1 May 1996  
AI Index: ASA 17/13/96  
Distr: SC/CC/PG

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM**

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## **Zheng Shaoqiang, Chen Rongyan and Hu Yunquan**

Zheng Shaoqiang, aged 31, Chen Rongyan, aged 60, and Hu Yunquan, aged 30, are taxi drivers in the city of Zhuhai. On 15 January 1996 they held a half-day strike to protest against traffic police who were allegedly imposing high fines for minor traffic offences and impounding cabs for months if the drivers failed to pay the fines. Zheng Shaoqiang and Chen Rongyan were sentenced without charge or trial, to two years "re-education through labour". Hu Yunquan was sentenced to one year's detention, also without charge or trial. Five other taxi drivers were sentenced to terms ranging from 10 to 15 days, and were fined.

*A Labour Camp in China*  
© SRKC/Katz Pictures

The Zhuhai Public Security Bureau said in a statement that the eight drivers were sentenced because their strike action on 15 January "seriously disturbed social security and road traffic management order".

According to press reports, more than 300 taxi drivers took part in the strike on 15 January.

Re-education through labour is applied to people considered to have "anti-socialist" views or those whose "crimes" are "too minor" to be prosecuted under the Criminal Law. This punishment is imposed by administrative authorities, without formal charge or trial. According to Article 48 of the Criminal Procedure Law, no one may be detained without charge for more than 10 days. Yet according to official figures, well over 100,000 people are held in labour "re-education" camps at any one time. This system provides a convenient way for the authorities to arbitrarily jail dissidents and others without having to justify their detention through the judicial process. It is a clear breach of international human rights standards, notably the principle that no one may be kept in detention without being given an effective opportunity to have his or her case heard promptly by a judicial or similar authority.

Since 1989, many activists who have tried to defend the rights of workers or organize independent labour groups in China have been imprisoned or detained without charge or trial. Others have been tried in unfair trials and received long prison sentences. Some are reported to have been tortured.

There is one official trade union in China, the *All China Federation of Trade Unions* (ACFTU). Under the Trade Union Law of 1992, all trade union organizations across China are part of the ACFTU. Trade unions can only be organized as part of the ACFTU and grass-root trade unions are placed "under the leadership" of trade union organizations at a higher level. The ACFTU is itself placed "under the leadership" of the Chinese Communist Party.

China is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO has criticised China's repression of independent workers groups. China has not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which guarantee workers the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

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## **ACTION    ACTION    ACTION    ACTION ACTION**

**Write to the address below**

- Expressing concern that Zheng Shaoqiang, Chen Rongyan and Hu Yunquan have been sentenced to terms of “re-education through labour” in January 1996 for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. Urge that they are released immediately and unconditionally as they are prisoners of conscience.
  
- Calling for an end of the use of arbitrary detention as a means of suppressing labour rights activity or attempts to form independent trade unions.

**WRITE TO:**

Zeng Hong, Director,  
Guangdong Justice  
Department

**Send copies to:**

Guangdong Province  
Federation of Trade  
Unions

Guangdong Province  
Bureau of Labour, Kong  
Lingyuan, Director

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## Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang

In May 1994 three labour activists, Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang, and Liao Hetang were arrested by the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau. It is not known whether they have been charged or tried nor are their whereabouts known.

*Person covering face* © Lin Muchen

Li Wenming and Kuang Lezhuang, two journalists, and Liao Hetang, a worker, are believed to have been arrested in connection with attempts to form an independent labour rights group in Shenzhen, the producing of various publications including the *Workers Square*, and advising workers of their legal rights. Working conditions in Shenzhen are often poor and workers do not have recourse to the most basic labour protection rights. Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang were among many labour rights activists who were arrested in 1994.

Since 1989, many activists who have attempted to organize independent labour groups or to defend the rights of workers have been imprisoned or detained without charge or trial. Others have been tried in unfair trials and received long prison sentences. Some are reported to have been tortured.

There is one official trade union in China, the *All China Federation of Trade Unions* (ACFTU). Under the Trade Union Law of 1992, all trade union organizations across China are part of the ACFTU. Trade unions can only be organized as part of the ACFTU and grass-root trade unions are placed “under the leadership” of trade union organizations at a higher level. The ACFTU is itself placed “under the leadership” of the Chinese Communist Party.

China is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO has criticised China’s repression of independent workers groups. China has not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which guarantee workers the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Amnesty International is concerned that Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang are reported to have been detained arbitrarily since May 1994 for their activities in favour of workers’ rights, that the charges against them, if any, have not been made public and that their whereabouts remain unknown.

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**ACTION ACTION ACTION ACTION  
ACTION**

**Write to the address below:**

- Expressing concern that Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang were reportedly detained in May 1994 in Shenzhen for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.
- Expressing concern that they are still reportedly missing and that the authorities have not disclosed any information about their legal status or whereabouts.
- Calling on the authorities to disclose information on Li Wenming, Kuang Lezhuang and Liao Hetang and to release them immediately and unconditionally unless they have been charged with recognizably criminal offences in accordance with international standards.
- Calling for an end to the use of arbitrary detention as a means of suppressing labour rights activity or attempts to form independent trade unions.

**Write to:**

Zeng Hong, Director,  
Guangdong Justice  
Department

**Copies to:**

Guangdong Province  
Federation of Trade  
Unions

Guangdong Province  
Bureau of Labour, Kong  
Lingyuan, Director

## **The League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People**

Several founding members of an independent labour rights group, the *League for the Protection of the Rights of Working People* (LPRWP), were arrested in Beijing during the first half of 1994. At least nine people associated with the LPRWP were detained and five of them have either been sentenced or remain detained without charge or trial.

The LPRWP was intended to be a "corporate social body established according to the law" to unite people devoted to the protection of the rights of working people. The League's founders wanted, among other things, to establish a nationwide information network to promote the protection of labour rights and to help negotiate and settle labour disputes. When its existence became known in 1994, the LPRWP was reportedly described by Jiang Zemin, the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, as "the biggest threat to stability in the country".

The League's sponsors had intended to submit the League's Charter on 9 March 1994 to the Ministry of Civil Administration but several members were arrested just a few days before they were able to formally register the LPRWP. Below is a list of some of the founding members who remain detained or sentenced. All are labour activists. Several have also been active over the years in various democracy activities. Amnesty International considers them all to be prisoners of conscience detained for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.

There is one official trade union in China, the *All China Federation of Trade Unions* (ACFTU). Under the Trade Union Law of 1992, all trade union organizations across China are part of the ACFTU. Trade unions can only be organized as part of the ACFTU and grass-root trade unions are placed "under the leadership" of trade union organizations at a higher level. The ACFTU is itself placed "under the leadership" of the Chinese Communist Party.

China is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO has criticised China's repression of independent workers groups. China has not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which guarantee workers the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

**Zhou Guoqiang**, a lawyer, was arrested on 3 March 1994 in Beijing. He was accused of "collaborating with hostile organizations and elements both inside and outside the country to carry out anti-government activities" and in September 1994 was sentenced without a formal charge or trial to three years' re-education through labour. In July 1995, Zhou Guoqiang had an extra year added to his sentence for reportedly going beyond the boundaries of his labour camp. Zhou Guoqiang is now serving a four-year sentence and is not due for release until March 1998.

**Liu Nianchun**, a school teacher, was first detained in Beijing on 26 May 1994 and released five months later on 17 October 1994. He was redetained on 21 May 1995 by Beijing police without a warrant and his whereabouts are unknown. It is probable that Liu Nianchun's first arrest in May 1994 was in connection with his LPRWP activities and his recent arrest may

have been linked with the petitions he signed before the sixth anniversary of the 4 June 1989 crackdown.

**Zhang Lin**, a physicist, was first detained on 28 May 1994 in Beijing. On 2 June he was sent back to Bangbu, his home town in Anhui province. Zhang Lin was charged with “hooliganism” and sentenced on 7 August 1994 without charge or trial to three years’ re-education through labour. Zhang Lin is being held at the Nanhu Labour Camp where he has reportedly been ill-treated by guards.

**Liu Huanwen**, a member of an unofficial Protestant church in Beijing, was detained on 10 July 1994 in Beijing. In August 1994 he was sentenced to two years’ reeducation through labour. It is believed that Liu Huanwen, who is in poor health, was sentenced under administrative procedures without charge or trial. Liu Huanwen is being held at the Tuanhe Labour Camp (a Labour Reform Agricultural Farm) in Daxing Country, Beijing Municipality.

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## ACTION ACTION ACTION ACTION ACTION

### Write to the addresses below

- Calling for the release of Zhou Guoqiang, Liu Nianchun, Zhang Lin and Liu Huanwen as they are prisoners of conscience who have been held for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.
- Expressing concern that Liu Nianchun has been detained without charge or trial since 1994 and that his whereabouts are still unknown.
- Expressing concern that Zhou Guoqiang, Zhang Lin and Liu Huanwen have been sentenced without charge or trial to terms of re-education through labour. Request further information on the reported increase in Zhou Guoqiang’s sentence. State that arbitrary detention without charge or trial goes against internationally accepted human rights standards. Urge the authorities to review existing legislation relating to administrative detention to ensure that it can no longer be used to imprison prisoners of conscience.
- Expressing concern about the reports of ill-treatment by guards at the Nanhu Labour Camp against Zhang Lin. Urge that these reports be promptly investigated and that the methods and findings be made public.

### Write to:

Li Qiyang, Mayor, Beijing Municipal People’s Government

Sun Changli, Director, Beijing Municipal Justice Bureau

Zhang Siqing, Procurator-General of the Supreme People’s Procuratorate (for appeals for Zhang Lin)

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## **Liu Jingsheng: "Principal culprit in the crime of counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement"**

Liu Jingsheng, a worker at the Tongyi Chemical Plant in Tong county, Beijing municipality, was detained on 28 May 1992. Four months later on 27 September 1992, he was charged with "organizing and leading a counter-revolutionary group" and "carrying out counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". He was accused of being one of the founding members of the *Preparatory Committee of the Free Labour Union of China* (FLUC) and of allegedly helping to print and distribute copies of FLUC's political charter. He is also accused of having drafted the "counter-revolutionary" handbill "Propaganda Material on the Preparatory Committee of the Free Labour Union of China" and then helping to distribute it to factories and mines in Beijing. It is said that Liu Jingsheng joined another "counter-revolutionary" organization, the *China Progressive Alliance* (CPA).

The *Preparatory Committee of the Free Labour Union of China* (FLUC) is reported to have been set up in late 1991. In January 1992, leaflets publicizing the existence of the FLUC Preparatory Committee were distributed in Beijing encouraging workers to form free labour unions. After some of its members were secretly arrested in June 1992, the group sent a letter to the International Labour Organization to publicise the grievances of workers in China. It documented workers who were deprived of their rights to free speech, assembly, strike and employment in China. It also spoke of the deterioration of workers' rights since the start of the economic reforms in the late 1970s, including a lack of provisions to defend workers' rights. The letter included a commitment to "building an economic and political system of justice and human rights".

Liu Jingsheng was finally tried at a closed trial on 4 July 1994 and sentenced on 16 December 1994, over two and a half years after his initial apprehension. Liu Jingsheng was one of 15 men who were tried; nine of the 15 were sentenced to some of the longest prison terms to be passed against political dissidents in China for several years. The sentences ranged from 3 to 20 years. Liu Jingsheng was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and four years' deprivation of political rights. On 14 June 1995, the Beijing Higher People's Court rejected the appeals of nine of the defendants, including Liu Jingsheng's, and upheld the original sentences. Appeals rarely succeed in China. There is one official trade union in China, the *All China Federation of Trade Unions* (ACFTU). Under the Trade Union Law of 1992, all trade union organizations across China are part of the ACFTU. Trade unions can only be organized as part of the ACFTU and grass-root trade unions are placed "under the leadership" of trade union organizations at a higher level. The ACFTU is itself placed "under the leadership" of the Chinese Communist Party.

China is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO has criticised China's repression of independent workers groups. China has not ratified Conventions 87 and 98, which guarantee workers the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Liu Jingsheng

It is not known where Liu Jingsheng is being held but he may have been sent to a prison or reform-through-labour camp. Liu Jingsheng is



a veteran pro-democracy activist. He took part in the "Democracy Wall" movement of the late 1970s and was one of dozens of people arrested in connection with their peaceful pro-democracy activities in early 1992.

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ACTION ACTION ACTION ACTION  
ACTION

**Write to the addresses below:**

- Urging that Liu Jingsheng be released immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience held for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association.
- Expressing concern that many workers, including Liu Jingsheng, have been arbitrarily detained for long periods without access to lawyers or family. Point out that Liu Jingsheng was held for over two and a half years before being tried - a trial which did not meet with internationally-agreed standards of fairness.
- Inquiring about Liu Jingsheng's whereabouts and his general well-being.

**Write to:**

Li Qiyang, Mayor, Beijing  
Municipal People's Government

Sheng Liangang, President,  
Beijing Municipal High  
People's Court

**Send copies to:**

All China Federation of Trade  
Unions, Director

Minister of Labour - Li Boyong