

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER DETAINED, TORTURED

Human rights lawyer Wang Yonghang, who has represented Falun Gong practitioners, has been held incommunicado since 4 July and reportedly beaten during interrogation. He is at risk of further torture and other ill-treatment.

Around 20 plainclothes police broke into Wang Yonghang's home on 4 July and took him and his wife to a detention centre. The police, who had no warrant, also searched their home, and confiscated their computer, camera, printer, and several books. His wife was released the next day, and Wang Yonghang was moved to another place of detention. Wang Yonghang lives in the north-east of the country, in Dalian city, Liaoning province. His wife has learned from sources that he has been beaten during interrogation.

Following her release, Wang Yonghang's wife went to several detention centres in Dalian to look for him. On 6 July, she learned that he was being detained at Dalian City Police Detention Centre; however, the police would not allow her to meet with him. She complained to the police that they had not informed his family within 24 hours that he was in custody, as required by law. Dalian City Police Detention Centre gave her a detention notice which said that Wang Yonghang had been detained on suspicion of violation of Article 300 of the Criminal Law, which deals with "superstitious sects, secret societies and evil religious organisations" and has been used to imprison many Falun Gong practitioners. His wife hired two lawyers to represent him. However, when they tried to visit him at the detention centre on 14 July, they were turned back. On 20 July, a Dalian City internal security police officer called the two lawyers and again told them that they were not allowed to meet with Wang Yonghang. This violates article 33 of the Law on Lawyers of the People's Republic of China which provides for lawyer-client meetings in detention facilities as long as lawyers bring with them an appointment letter establishing client representation, their own professional licence and a certification document issued by the law firm which employs them.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Mandarin or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Wang Yonghang immediately and unconditionally;
- Asking them to guarantee that he will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and to ensure that he has immediate access to legal assistance of his choice, his family and any medical treatment that he may require;
- Urging them to take effective measures to ensure that all human rights defenders can carry out their peaceful activities without fear of arbitrary detention, imprisonment or intimidation, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

Director of the Liaoning Provincial
Department of Public Security

LI Wenxi Tingzhang
Liaoningsheng Gong'anting
2 Qishan Zhonglu
Huangguqu
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

Acting Governor of Liaoning
Province

CHEN Zhenggao Daili Shengzhang
Liaoningsheng Renmin Zhengfu
45 Beilingdajie
Huangguqu
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Email: Insfxc@ln.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Governor

Prime Minister

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 65961109
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Wang Yonghang had his licence to practice law revoked in May 2008 after the local judicial authorities failed to renew his licence, which all lawyers are required to have in order to continue working in their profession. He has, however, continued to provide legal advice to Falun Gong practitioners and represented them in court. By law, any Chinese citizen can act as a legal representative without a lawyer's licence but with certain limitations that do not apply to licensed lawyers. On 16 June 2009 he represented a Falun Gong detainee at court. Police then followed him and told him to drop his involvement in the case.

In May 2008, Wang Yonghang published an article online in which he explained his views on the authorities' persecution of Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of China's Criminal Law. Many Falun Gong practitioners have been charged under Article 300, which states that:

"Whoever organises and utilises superstitious sects, secret societies and evil religious organisations, or sabotages the implementation of the state's laws and executive regulations by utilising superstition is to be sentenced to not less than three years and not more than seven years of fixed-term imprisonment; when circumstances are particularly serious, to not less than seven years of fixed term imprisonment."

Human rights lawyers in China are harassed, assaulted, kept under surveillance and face criminal charges for protecting the rights of others. There are more than 140,000 lawyers and 14,000 law firms in China but few take the risk of representing victims of human rights violations, such as Falun Gong practitioners. They risk having their licenses revoked and could even face imprisonment.

In the May 2009 assessment, at least 20 lawyers had their licences revoked.

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