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CHINA: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS: DING ZILIN ARRESTED, HARRY WU
SENTENCED

The Chinese authorities should immediately and unconditionally release two human rights activists, Harry Wu and Ding Zilin, who are currently detained in China, Amnesty International said today.

The human rights organization is also calling on the Chinese authorities to ensure that human rights are fully respected during the Fourth United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing early next month.

"The arrests of Ding Zilin and her husband Jiang Peikun appear to be an attempt by the Chinese authorities to keep "trouble-makers" out of the way during the UN Conference," Amnesty International said. "It contributes to a pattern of arrests happening prior to major events and anniversaries in China."

Over 50 people were arrested throughout China prior to the sixth anniversary of the suppression of democracy protests in June 1989. The recent arrests also follow a "cleaning-up" operation in the capital, removing vagrants and executing at least 16 people in Beijing to ensure "public order" during the Conference.

Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun were arrested on 18 August in Wuxi city, Jiangsu province, south-east China, just before they had intended to return to Beijing and are reported to be accused of "economic irregularities". Ding Zilin, who has been outspoken in her campaigning on behalf of the families of those killed or injured in connection with the government suppression of democracy protests in June 1989, had not intended to participate in the Conference or associated non-governmental organizations' forum.

Another human rights activist, Harry Wu, was sentenced today to 15 years' imprisonment by a court in Wuhan city for "stealing state secrets" and "posing as a state functionary". The court also sentenced him to expulsion from China. Court officials said that his expulsion would depend on his "attitude and behaviour", but Harry Wu's lawyer said today that he thought the expulsion could happen before the end of August. The lawyer also said that Wu is in good spirits and in good health, but his wife is said to have serious concerns about a back problem for which he needs medical attention.

Wu is reported to have been represented by two lawyers, and a US diplomatic representative was present during the four-hour trial. He was convicted on two charges: one receiving a 13-year sentence, the other 3 years, and the two sentences were amalgamated into 15 years' total. Wu has waived his right to appeal against the sentence.

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