

URGENT ACTION

LAWYER JAILED FOR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights lawyer Wang Yonghang has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in connection with his work representing Falun Gong practitioners. He has appealed. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Wang Yonghang was detained on 4 July in his home city of Dalian, in the northern province of Liaoning. The police never allowed him any contact with his lawyers, on the grounds that his case involved "state secrets." He was tried behind closed doors at the Shahekou District People's Court, in Dalian City, around 14-16 October: the court announced the sentence on 27 November.

Police beat him while he was in custody awaiting trial, breaking his ankle. They told his wife on 27 July that he had a broken ankle, but did not take him to hospital until 11 August, by which time the fracture was seriously infected. His ankle was operated on but remained infected. According to his wife, who met with him briefly just before the sentencing hearing, for the first time since he had been detained, he could not walk properly.

His lawyers only found out about his trial after it was finished, and they asked the court to allow them to meet with him. The court turned down their request, quoting a Dalian City regulation which requires lawyers taking up cases involving Falun Gong to provide written evidence that they have reported the case to the All China Lawyers' Association (ACLA) and that the ACLA endorses their meeting with their clients; and also an assignment letter from the law firm they work for. According to Wang Yonghang's lawyers, this Dalian City regulation violates Chinese laws, including Criminal Procedure Law, which allow defence lawyers to meet with criminal suspects in custody, as soon as the People's Procuratorate begins to examine their cases for prosecution.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Chinese or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to release Wang Yonghang immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience;
- urging them to ensure he has access to legal assistance of his choosing, his family and any medical attention he may require;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that Wang Yonghang will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on them to end the use of vaguely-defined charges relating to "state secrets" to crack down on human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JANUARY 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

Director of the Liaoning Provincial
Department of Justice

Zhang Jiacheng Tingzhang
Liaoningsheng Sifating
28 Jia Chongshan Donglu
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 24 86906792
Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

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. This is the second update of UA 201/09 (ASA 17/17/036/2009). Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/036/2009/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/050/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As a lawyer, Wang Yonghang has represented several Falun Gong practitioners. In May 2008, he also 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. This is the same legislation under which he has now been convicted.

Wang Yonghang had his licence to practice law revoked in May 2008 after the Dalian City judicial authorities did not renew his licence. He did, however, continue to provide legal advice to Falun Gong practitioners and represented them in court.

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 law firms in China but only a few take the risk of representing victims of human rights violations.

Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained since the spiritual movement was banned as a "threat to social and political stability" in July 1999. People accused of being Falun Gong leaders or organizers have been jailed. Others have been held in psychiatric hospitals, but the vast majority have been held in Re-education Through Labour facilities, in a form of administrative detention imposed without involving the courts.

Further information on UA: 201/09 Index: ASA 17/068/2009 Issue Date: 04 December 2009

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