

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

21 September 2023 Index number

CHINA MUST RELEASE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HUANG XUEQIN AND WANG JIANBING NOW

The trial of Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing will begin on 22 September 2023, a few days after the second anniversary of their arrest.

We, the undersigned civil society groups, are deeply concerned about this case and call for the two activists' immediate and unconditional release, as they have been detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association. Pending their release, the Chinese authorities must respect and protect their rights in detention, including by providing regular, unrestricted access to their family and lawyers of their choice; prompt, adequate and necessary medical treatment; and ensuring that they are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

On 19 September 2021, independent journalist and #MeToo activist Sophia Huang Xueqin and labour rights activist Wang Jianbing were detained by the police in Guangzhou, China. They were formally arrested on the charge of 'inciting subversion of state power' a month later. In January 2023, they were transferred to Guangzhou City No 1 Detention Centre awaiting trial at the court. Their continued detention is believed to be related to the weekly gatherings hosted by Wang Jianbing in the year prior to their detention, at which they discussed the challenges activists faced due to the shrinking space for civil society.

The health condition of Sophia Huang Xueqin is alarming as she is believed to have experienced significant weight loss and amenorrhea (no menstruation) for at least five months. Credible reports indicate that her sleep is often interrupted and that she has been subjected to interrogations in the middle of the night.

Sophia Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing should have not been detained for peacefully exercising their human rights. Ahead of their trial, we call on the Chinese government to uphold its international human rights obligations. It must:

- Release Sophia Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing immediately and unconditionally;
- Pending their release, ensure that Sophia Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing have regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of their choice; prompt, adequate and necessary medical treatment; and are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- Stop harassing, arresting and threatening other human rights defenders who peacefully exercise their right to freedom of association or other human rights.

BACKGROUND

Sophia Huang Xueqin is a journalist who has been involved in several #MeToo campaigns to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and harassment. She was previously detained between October 2019 and January 2020 and charged with “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after writing about the 2019 mass protests in Hong Kong.

Labour activist Wang Jianbing (known to friends as “Pancake”) has provided legal support for people with disabilities and workers with occupational diseases. He is also a prominent supporter of the #MeToo movement in China.

Undersigned, in alphabetical order

ACAT-France

Amnesty International

Asia Citizen Future Association

Beijing Yirenping Center

Changsha Funeng

China Against the Death Penalty

China Labour Bulletin

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Covenants Watch/人權公約施行監督聯盟

Front Line Defenders

Georgetown Center for Asian Law

HKers United

Hong Kong Labour Rights Monitor

Hong Kong Outlanders in Taiwan

Human Rights in China

Human Rights Now

Humanitarian China

Index on Censorship

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

International Tibet Network

Judicial Reform Foundation

ME2Allies

PEN Canada

PEN International

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Safeguard Defenders

Taiwan Association for Human Rights

The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)

The Rights Practice

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

World Uyghur Congress

For further information please contact: Kevin Darling, Kevin.Darling@amnesty.org.