

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS HELD INCOMMUNICADO FOR MONTHS

Activists Zhang Zhongshun and Dai Zhenya, and former human rights lawyer, Ding Jiaxi, were all taken into police custody on 26 December 2019, following their participation in an informal meeting with other lawyers and activists earlier that month. Accused of “inciting subversion of state power”, the three are being held at an unknown location. Without access to their families or lawyers of their choice, there are grave concerns that they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Zhao Feng
Director of Yantai City Public Security Bureau
7 Changan Lu, Laishan Qu
Yantai Shi, Shandong Sheng 264003
People’s Republic of China

Dear Director Zhao,

*I am writing to express my concern for **Dai Zhenya, Zhang Zhongshun**, and former human rights lawyer, **Ding Jiaxi**, who were all taken away by police on 26 December 2019, following an informal gathering with other lawyers and activists in Xiamen earlier that month.*

The families of the three men have said they have not yet received any official documents in relation to their detentions. According to Ding Jiaxi’s wife, police have only verbally informed the family that Ding was detained.

Your bureau has reportedly denied all requests by the three men’s lawyers to meet with them, because the men are accused of “endangered state security” by “inciting subversion of state power”.

The three have been placed under residential surveillance at a designated location. Denied any access to their families and legal counsel of their choice, the three men are at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

I call on you to:

- ***Immediately and unconditionally release Dai Zhenya, Ding Jiaxi and Zhang Zhongshun, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognised offence and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards.***

- ***Ensure that pending their release, Dai, Ding and Zhang are not subjected to any torture or other ill-treatment, and have regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice and are able to communicate with family members, without interference, unless justified in under international human rights law.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dai Zhenya, Ding Jiayi and Zhang Zhongshun were actively involved in the New Citizens Movement, a grassroots political, cultural and social network that peacefully advocated for greater government transparency, the rule of law and an end to corruption. The authorities began targeting the movement in a crackdown during 2013 and 2014.

Dai Zhenya was deeply involved in assisting dissidents in detention. As a member of the New Citizens Movement, he also called for the disclosure of public officials' assets. Ding Jiayi is a former human rights lawyer, who advocated for the rights of migrant workers' children and called for government transparency. On 18 April 2014, he was sentenced to three and a half years for "gathering a crowd to disrupt order of a public place". His lawyer's license was subsequently revoked. Zhang Zhongshun is a former lecturer at Yantai University in Shandong. In 2008, he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "using a heretical organisation to subvert the law", after playing a video related to the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

Dai Zhenya, Ding Jiayi and Zhang Zhongshun were among the many lawyers and activists who joined the informal gatherings held in Xiamen in December 2019. Since 26 December 2019, police across the country have been summoning and detaining participants of the Xiamen gathering.

Another activist and human rights lawyer, Chang Weiping, was taken away by police officers on 12 January 2020. State security officers told his wife that Chang was under residential surveillance at a designated location for "endangering state security", and that his lawyer license had been revoked. Chang was subsequently released on 21 January. According to media reports, other lawyers, including Huang Zhiqiang, Liu Shuqing, Zhuang Daohe and Lu Siwei, were summoned temporarily by police for "inciting subversion of state power" or "picking quarrels and provoking troubles".

On 31 December 2019, police also raided the home of Xu Zhiyong, a prominent legal scholar and founder of the New Citizens Movement. They confiscated his safe, letters and books. Xu's partner, Li Qiaochu, was detained for 24 hours by the police from Beijing Haidian District for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". During her detention, police interrogated Li about Xu's whereabouts. Police also refused to give her adequate medical care. Since her release, Li Qiaochu has been under heavy surveillance. Xu Zhiyong, together with lawyer, Yang Bin, and Yang's family, was taken away by police in Guangzhou, at approximately 6 pm on 15 February. Yang Bin and his family were later released. Xu is still in police custody.

Apart from Dai, Ding and Zhang, activist, Li Yingjun, has also been put under residential surveillance for inciting subversion of state power.

"Residential surveillance in a designated location" is a measure that, under certain circumstances, enables criminal investigators to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system, in what can amount to a form of secret incommunicado detention. When held without access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, suspects placed under this form of "residential surveillance" are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. This form of detention has been used to curb the activities of human rights defenders, including lawyers, activists and religious practitioners. Activists and human rights defenders continue to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest and detention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 March 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Dai Zhenya (he/him), Ding Jiayi (he/him), Zhang Zhongshun (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Ambassador Liu Xiaoming, Embassy of China, 49–51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL