

Joint letter calling for the safe release of Jiang Tianyong

Jiang Tianyong, a Chinese rights defence lawyer, was tried on 22 August 2017 by the Changsha Intermediate People's Court of the crime of 'inciting subversion of state power'. His family-appointed defence lawyer did not receive notice of the trial, and yet his father was forced to appear, calling into question the court's impartiality and transparency. Jiang was convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and three years' deprivation of political rights.

Finally, on 28 February of this year, Jiang Tianyong is due to be released. We will be paying careful attention to ensure that his release and treatment after release are in line with Chinese law and with international human rights standards. Specifically, we urge the Chinese government to:

- Respect Jiang's request to return to his home in Beijing upon his release
- Respect Jiang's right to leave the People's Republic of China freely, should he choose, in order to be reunited with his family
- Cease harassment, surveillance and continuing persecution of Jiang Tianyong, his family and his colleagues.

Who is Jiang Tianyong?

Jiang Tianyong has a long and impressive history, starting in 2004, of tirelessly working on rights-related cases. He took on so-called 'sensitive' cases, such as those of fellow lawyers Chen Guangcheng and Gao Zhisheng; documented cases of forced labour in coalmines; and defended the rights of a large number of Falun Gong practitioners and government petitioners. When the 709 crackdown happened in 2015, he was immediately active in organizing support for the families of detained lawyers.

What are the details of his trial and imprisonment?

Ever since he was disappeared in November of 2016, he and his family have been the targets of official intimidation and harassment, living in near-constant fear. For a time while in prison, Jiang was refused visits from his family. Jiang also reported that he was regularly forced to take medicine, each day two pills. As a result, his memory began to suffer, and physically, he reported struggling with swelling, lethargy and weakness. Jiang already suffered from the physical and psychological mistreatment he'd faced in detention in previous years, which exacerbates his current situation. Past experience demonstrates that Jiang, like his former client Gao Zhisheng, risks

being subject to ongoing surveillance and potentially house arrest, even after he is formally released.

We urge the Chinese government to ensure that, once Jiang is released, the authorities fully respect the Chinese Constitution, specifically Article 37 guaranteeing freedom of movement

Environment of intimidation

At the same time, Jiang Tianyong is not the only victim. His family remains at risk of harassment. His younger sister has been surveilled, and other family members have reported being temporarily stopped or detained by the authorities. This was, we believe, part of a strategy to pressure Jiang to confess. His wife, Jin Bianling, fled China for the U.S. several years ago, and has not had any way to see her husband since that time; she struggles with depression because of the difficulty of getting information about Jiang's situation. Whether it is Jiang or his family, they are the victims of an unfair trial and a lack of due process.

Despite these challenges, Jiang's family has refused to give up and continue to defend and support him. According to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Chinese government should protect the right of everyone to exercise and defend human rights, without the risk of violence, threat or reprisals.

In 2016, Jiang Tianyong supported detained rights activists Guo Feixiong and Yu Shiwen through a hunger strike. He said:

‘When we stand together with Guo Feixiong, Yu Shiwen, those detained in the 709 crackdown and those speaking out for victims, when we act for them and call for their freedom, we also come one step closer to freedom. We struggle together.

Now we commit to struggle, together, for his freedom.

Sincerely, (In Alphabetical Order)

1. Barra Mexicana, Colegio de Abogados (Mexican Bar Association) 墨西哥律師協會
2. Borderless Movement 無國界社運
3. China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group 中國維權律師關注組
4. Civil Human Rights Front 民間人權陣線
5. Covenants Watch Taiwan 人權公約施行監督聯盟

6. Demosisto 香港眾志
7. Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China 香港市民支援愛國民主運動聯合會
8. Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions 香港職工會聯盟
9. International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) 國際人民律師協會
10. International Service For Human Rights 國際人權服務社
11. Judicial Reform Foundation Taiwan 民間司法改革基金會
12. Law Lay Dream 法夢
13. Lawyers for Lawyers 律師助律師基金會
14. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada 加拿大律師權利觀察
15. League of Social Democrats 社會民主連線
16. Left 21 左翼廿一
17. LegCo Office of Au Nok-hin 區諾軒立法會議員辦事處
18. LegCo Office of Kwok Ka-ki 郭家麒立法會議員辦事處
19. Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers, International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) 國際人民律師協會監督委員會
20. New School for Democracy 華人民主書院
21. Progressive Lawyers Group 法政匯思
22. Safeguard Defenders 保護衛士
23. Student Labour Action Coalition 工學同行
24. Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty 台灣廢除死刑推動聯盟
25. Taiwan Association for Human Rights 台灣人權促進會
26. Taiwan Innocence Project 台灣冤獄平反協會
27. Taiwan Support China Human Rights Lawyers Network 台灣聲援中國人權律師網絡
28. Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association 台灣同志諮詢熱線協會
29. Taipei Bar Association Human Rights Committee 台北律師公會人權委員會
30. The Committee to Support Chinese Lawyers 聲援中國律師委員會
31. The Rights Practice
32. The Human rights commission of the Geneva Bar 日內瓦律師協會人權委員會
33. The Law Society of England & Wales 英格蘭和威爾士律師協會
34. The Leitner Center for International Law and Justice 萊特納國際法暨正義中心