

URGENT ACTION

NGO WORKERS DETAINED FOR ‘SUBVERSION’

Human rights defenders Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze, and Wu Gejianxiong have been placed under incommunicado detention on suspicion of ‘subversion of state power’ since 22 July 2019. If found guilty, they could face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Denied any access to their family and a lawyer of their choice, they are at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

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

*Zhou Hongjun, Director of Hunan Provincial Department of State Security
300 Shanyue Lu, Kaifu Qu,
Changsha Shi, Hunan Sheng, 410000
People Republic of China*

Dear Director Zhou,

*I am writing to express my grave concern for the detention of **Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze and Wu Gejianxiong**, anti-discrimination NGO workers in Changsha. Denied any access to their families and a legal counsel of their choice, I fear that the three men are at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.*

Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze and Wu Gejianxiong are members of the public interest law NGO, Changsha Funeng, and have been criminally detained on suspicion of “subversion of state power” since 22 July 2019. The three men are being held at the Hunan Provincial State Security Bureau Detention Centre.

I also wish to raise my concern regarding the continued harassment and persecution of the families of the three activists. Threatened by the police, they have been told to not post anything online and to stop speaking to the media about the men’s detention. Cheng Yuan’s wife, Shi Minglei, was also interrogated on 22 July and has since been held under residential surveillance for “suspicion of subverting state power”. During the interrogation, the national security officers threatened to harm the couple’s three-year-old child and to detain other people she knows if she did not collaborate with them. Later, on 8 August, Cheng Yuan’s brother, Cheng Hao, was summoned for questioning after he made public appeals for his brother’s release.

Changsha Funeng is an NGO based in Changsha co-founded in 2016 by Cheng Yuan. The organization advocates for the rights of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and combats employment discrimination against people living with HIV and Hepatitis B through legal litigation.

The men are prisoners of conscience and have been detained solely for carrying out their professional work and peacefully defending human rights. Therefore, I call on you to: -

- 1) immediately and unconditionally release Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze and Wu Gejianxiong and drop the charges against them as they have been detained solely for carrying out their professional work and peacefully defending human rights.***
- 2) ensure that they have regular, unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice and their family and ensure that while in detention they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment; and***
- 3) end all harassment and persecution against their family members.***

Your sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The reason for the detention of the three NGO workers remains unclear. Changsha Funeng focuses primarily on public welfare and, according to Changsha Funeng co-founder Yang Zhangqing, is not at all a political organization. Cheng Yuan mentioned to one of his friends that police had talked to Changsha Funeng's work partners, saying that they were about to arrest him. Cheng Yuan also told another friend that police had warned him, through an intermediary, to not go to Changsha, in Hunan Province, China anymore. A week before their detention, Cheng Yuan travelled to Hong Kong, amid the anti-extradition bill protests, to handle some personal and organizational affairs.

Liu Yongze and Xiao Wu are both staff members of Changsha Funeng. They were supposed to meet with a lawyer about a litigation case in the afternoon of 22 July. The lawyer has been unable to contact the two, nor did the two appear for their scheduled meeting. About the same time, the head of Changsha Funeng, Cheng Yuan, also could not be contacted. Friends, relatives and colleagues have been unable to reach them since then. It was later confirmed that Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze and Wu Gejianxiong were arrested at their homes in Changsha on 22 July 2019.

Cheng Yuan, Liu Yongze, and Wu Gejianxiong have done outstanding work to end discrimination against people living with HIV and to advance the right to health and rights of persons with disabilities in China. Changsha Funeng was set up in 2016 to safeguard the rights of marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, as well as to promote government transparency, including the implementation of the "Regulation on the Disclosure of Government Information".

Cheng Yuan, the head of the organization, is an experienced public interest and legal activist in China. Over the past 10 years, he has represented clients in about a dozen hepatitis B and AIDS discrimination cases and contributed to the reduction of institutional discrimination against hepatitis B carriers in China. In 2013, he led a landmark lawsuit where an HIV-positive person for the first time ever received compensation for employment discrimination. Apart from that, Cheng Yuan has been working towards abolishment of the One Child Policy and reform of the household registration system through legal litigation and advocacy.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 2 October 2019

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Cheng Yuan (he,his,him), Liu Yongze (he,his,him) and Wu Gejianxiong (he,his,him)

