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Ninth UA: 19/18 Index: ASA 17/7861/2024 China of March 22, 2024

CHINA ACTIVISTS APPROACHING ONE YEAR IN DETENTION

On April 13, 2023, Yu Wensheng, a well-known human rights lawyer, and his wife, Xu Yan, were detained by police as they headed to the European Union's delegation in Beijing. By October, both faced charges of "picking quarrels" and "inciting subversion of state power." In January 2024, they were moved from a Beijing detention center to one in Jiangsu Province. Since her detention, Xu Yan has lost 14kg, and the conditions she endured in Beijing could amount to torture or other forms of mistreatment. Their son, who turned 18 shortly before their arrest, has experienced significant mental health challenges, including depression, over the past year.

Write to the Prosecutor and Director of the Suzhou City Procuratorate urging him to:

- Release both Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan immediately and unconditionally, as they are being detained solely for peacefully exercising their human right to freedom of expression;
- Pending their release, ensure they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Ensure their son and other members of their family are not subjected to harassment and threats.

Write to:

Chief Li Jun
Suzhou City People's Procuratorate,
No.388 Jiefang East Road,
Gusu District, Suzhou City
Jiangsu Province, 215000,
P.R. China

Salutation: Dear Chief Li,

And copy:

His Excellency Peiwu Cong
Ambassador
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
515 St. Patrick Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 5H3
Tel: (613) 789-3434,3513,8422/762-3769 (24h) Fax: (613) 789-1911
Email: chineseembassy.ca@gmail.com

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2020, Yu Wensheng, a distinguished human rights lawyer, was sentenced to four years in prison and stripped of his political rights for "inciting subversion of state power," a charge stemming from his use of free speech. Since his initial arrest in 2018, Yu's health has significantly declined due to the poor

conditions, alleged torture, and mistreatment he faced while detained. Despite these challenges, Yu was recognized for his activism with the 2021 Martin Ennals Award, a prestigious honor awarded by a coalition of leading human rights NGOs. He was released on March 1, 2022, but his freedom was short-lived. On April 13, 2023, Yu and his wife, Xu Yan, were detained on their way to a meeting at the European Union delegation in China and were formally arrested in May for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a vague charge frequently used against dissenters.

Throughout Yu's imprisonment, Xu Yan was an unwavering advocate for his release, enduring constant surveillance and harassment from authorities, including house arrests and detentions. In late 2023, Amnesty International reported that Xu's detention conditions in Beijing might have amounted to torture, citing inadequate warmth, forced sitting causing physical ailments, bullying, and significant weight loss due to substandard food. In response to her mistreatment and the denial of her legal rights, Xu began a hunger strike in November. Authorities also threatened her with the arrest of her son if he engaged in advocacy for his parents.

Their son, who became an adult just before their latest detention, has been struggling significantly with his mental health, reportedly attempting suicide due to the stress of his parents' situation and the intense surveillance he faces. The family's ordeal was compounded by Yu and Xu's transfer to a detention center in Suzhou, over 600 miles from their son, severely limiting any possibility of visitation or mutual support.

Please take action as soon as possible until May 17, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.