

URGENT ACTION



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Note: Please write on behalf of this person even though you may not have received the original UA when issued on July 28, 2009. Thanks!

4 December 2009

Further information on UA 201/09 (28 July 2009) and follow up (28 August 2009) - [Arbitrary arrest/prisoner of conscience](#)

CHINA **Wang Yonghang (m), human rights lawyer**

Human rights lawyer Wang Yonghang has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in connection with his work representing Falun Gong practitioners. He has appealed. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Wang Yonghang was detained on 4 July in his home city of Dalian, in the northern province of Liaoning. The police never allowed him any contact with his lawyers, on the grounds that his case involved "state secrets." He was tried behind closed doors at the Shahekou District People's Court, in Dalian City, around 14-16 October: The court announced the sentence on 27 November.



Police beat him while he was in custody awaiting trial, breaking his ankle. They told his wife on 27 July that he had a broken ankle, but did not take him to hospital until 11 August, by which time the fracture was seriously infected. His ankle was operated on but remained infected. According to his wife, who met with him briefly just before the sentencing hearing, for the first time since he had been detained, he could not walk properly.

His lawyers only found out about his trial after it was finished, and they asked the court to allow them to meet with him. The court turned down their request, quoting a Dalian City regulation which requires lawyers taking up cases involving Falun Gong to provide written evidence that they have reported the case to the All China Lawyers' Association (ACLA) and that the ACLA endorses their meeting with their clients; and also an assignment letter from the law firm they work for. According to Wang Yonghang's lawyers, this Dalian City regulation violates Chinese laws, including Criminal Procedure Law, which allow defense lawyers to meet with criminal suspects in custody, as soon as the People's Procuratorate begins to examine their cases for prosecution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As a lawyer, Wang Yonghang has represented several Falun Gong practitioners. In May 2008, he also published an article online in which he explained his views on the authorities' persecution of Falun Gong practitioners under Article 300 of China's Criminal Law. This is the same legislation under which he has now been convicted.

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

Wang Yonghang had his license to practice law revoked in May 2008 after the Dalian City judicial authorities did not renew his license. He did, however, continue to provide legal advice to Falun Gong practitioners and represented them in court.

Human rights lawyers in China are harassed, assaulted, kept under surveillance and face criminal charges, for protecting the rights of others. There are more than 140,000 law firms in China but only a few take the risk of representing victims of human rights violations.

Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained since the spiritual movement was banned as a "threat to social and political stability" in July 1999. People accused of being Falun Gong leaders or organizers have been jailed. Others have been held in psychiatric hospitals, but the vast majority has been held in Re-education Through Labor facilities, in a form of administrative detention imposed without involving the courts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- calling on the authorities to release Wang Yonghang immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience;
- urging them to ensure he has access to legal assistance of his choosing, his family and any medical attention he may require;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that Wang Yonghang will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on them to end the use of vaguely-defined charges relating to "state secrets" to crack down on human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Director, Liaoning Provincial Department of Public Security

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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
Salutation: Dear Director

Director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Justice

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Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 14 January 2009.