

URGENT ACTION

TAIWAN NGO WORKER HELD INCOMMUNICADO IN CHINA

Lee Ming-cheh is the first foreign NGO worker to be detained after the new Foreign NGO Management Law went into effect and is under investigation for “endangering national security”. No direct contact has been made with him since he first went missing on 19 March 2017 after crossing the border into China. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Lee Ming-cheh’s detention was only officially confirmed on 29 March 2017, ten days after he first went missing, by Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesman for the State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office. Answering questions at a press conference, Ma Xiaoguang stated that Lee Ming-cheh is under investigation on suspicion of “engaging in activities to endanger national security”.

Manager of an NGO in Taipei, Wenshan Community College, Lee Ming-cheh has supported civil society organizations and activists for many years in China. However, on this occasion, Lee Ming-cheh was visiting China for personal matters as he was arranging medical treatment for his mother-in-law.

Lee Ming-cheh first went missing on 19 March 2017 after crossing the Gongbei border from Macao to Zhuhai, China. After a few days of no communication, his wife contacted the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Macao for assistance, however they were only able to confirm that he had left Macao. In addition to Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation, Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council also got involved and was able to confirm that Lee had entered China at 23:51 on 19 March 2017 and found no subsequent record of a hotel check-in or official arrest.

Lee Ming-cheh’s wife repeatedly asked the Chinese government to disclose Lee Ming-cheh’s whereabouts but she has not received any response to date. She indirectly learned from Taiwan officials late on 27 March 2017 that Lee Ming-cheh was being held by state security officers.

According to Ma Xiaoguang, Lee Ming-cheh is in good health however no further details such as where he is being detained and whether his wife will be allowed to visit him were provided.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Immediately disclose Lee Ming-cheh’s whereabouts;
- Immediately release Lee Ming-cheh unless there is credible evidence that he may have committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international human rights standards;
- Ensure that Lee Ming-cheh is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that he is allowed access to his family, a lawyer of his choice and adequate medical care.

Contact these two officials by 30 June, 2017:

Minister of State Security
Chen Wenqing
14 Dong Chang’anjie
Dongcheng Qu
Beijingshi 100741
People’s Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Cui Tiankai
Embassy of the People’s Republic of China
3505 International Place NW, Washington DC 20008
Fax: 1 202 495 2138 | Phone: 1 202 495 2266
Email: chinaembpress_us@mfa.gov.cn
(If you receive an error message, please try calling instead!)
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 71.17*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Lee Ming-cheh is the first foreign NGO worker who has been detained under the Foreign NGO Management Law, which came into effect on 1 January 2017.

The Foreign NGO Management Law created additional barriers to the already limited rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Although the law was ostensibly designed to regulate and even protect the activities of foreign NGOs, it transferred to the Ministry of Public Security – the state policing agency – the responsibility to oversee the registration of these NGOs, as well as supervise their operations and pre-approve their activities. The wide discretion given to police to oversee and manage the work of foreign NGOs raised the risk of the law being misused to intimidate and prosecute human rights defenders and NGO staff.

The law would restrict the activities or existence of numerous organizations and have a chilling effect on Chinese civil society. It would also give police new unchecked powers over foreign NGOs, with the very real risk that the law could be misused to intimidate and prosecute human rights defenders and NGO workers for their legitimate work. During the consultation period, Amnesty International made a submission to the Chinese government, urging that the draft law be withdrawn or substantially amended in order to make it compatible with international human rights law and standards, see:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/1776/2015/en/>.

Name: Lee Ming-cheh

Gender m/f: m

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