

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVISTS DETAINED FOR SHOE FACTORY RESEARCH

**Three labour activists who were conducting undercover research investigations into the labour conditions at Huajian shoe factories, which supply to Ivanka Trump's brand among others, were taken away by the authorities in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province in late May. State media announced that they have been criminally detained and are under investigation.**

On 30 May, media outlets reported that Deng Guilian, the wife of labour activist **Hua Haifeng**, had received a phone call from people in the public security bureau of Jiangxi province telling her that her husband had been detained on the charges of "illegal monitoring". Hua Haifeng had been working with China Labor Watch (CLW), a New York-based organization that researches labour conditions in the supply chains of major multinationals. CLW's most recent investigation was looking into working conditions at Huajian, one of the largest shoe manufacturers in the world, which produces shoes for Ivanka Trump's brand, Coach, and Nine West, among others. Two other labour activists, **Li Zhao** and **Su Heng**, were also reported missing, and were presumed to be detained.

On 6 June, *The Paper*, a state-run newspaper, said that, according to police, the three had been criminally detained on the charge of "unlawfully using special equipment or devices for eavesdropping or secret photographing". The report claimed that the three had "confessed" to working undercover with the intent to collect information about working conditions and internal company secrets and provide the information to overseas organizations in order to gain funds.

Hua Haifeng's lawyer, who was able to meet his client on 6 June, told Bloomberg that the case was being handled by the national security unit of the public security bureau.

Deng Guilian, who has been outspoken in defending her husband, has said that her home is now under surveillance. She has been regularly visited by state security agents, and is now being followed by unidentified individuals when she leaves her home.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

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

- Immediately release Hua Haifeng as he has been detained in relation to his work in defending human rights.
- Ensure that while detained he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and has prompt access to his lawyer and family and any necessary medical treatment.

**Contact these two officials by 21 July, 2017:**

Director  
Ganzhou Shi Kanshousuo  
Yunshan Lu  
Ganzhou City, Zhanggong District  
Jiangxi Province, People's Republic of China  
**Salutation: Dear Director**

Ambassador Tiankai Cui, Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
3505 International Place NW, Washington DC 20008  
Fax: 1 202 495 2138  
Phone: 1 202 495 2000  
Email: [chinaembpress\\_us@mfa.gov.cn](mailto:chinaembpress_us@mfa.gov.cn)  
**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 136.17*

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 17 May, Bloomberg reported that China Labour Watch had sent a letter to Ivanka Trump, urging her to improve conditions in the factories that produce her shoe line. According to the report, China Labour Watch alleged that workers had to work 12 1/2 hours per day, six days a week, and that despite working with oils and glues, workers were not provided with safety training.

According to the New York Times, Hua tried to go to Hong Kong on 25 May in order to meet CLW's executive director and a journalist from the New York Times, but was denied permission to enter Hong Kong. He was then told to talk to the police, who informed him that they knew he was investigating Huajian factories. Hua later went back to Ganzhou, where he was eventually detained.

A United States State Department spokesperson called for the release of the labour activists on 5 June. However, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that, "(o)ther nations have no right to interfere in our judicial sovereignty and independence".

In recent years, China has enacted legislation and regulations to protect workers' rights, but there is poor implementation of the laws. According to China National Bureau of Statistics, only 35 percent of China's 281 million "migrant domestic workers" had labour contracts in 2016. At the same time, independent unions are banned, and the state run All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only body allowed to represent workers in China. ACFTU-affiliated unions at the enterprise level are often controlled by factory management, and have little capacity to protect workers' interests.

The government has also taken a harsher approach to labour rights NGOs in recent years. In December 2015, the government in Guangdong province carried out a crackdown against labour NGOs, targeting at least 33 individuals; 31 were later released. Labour activist Zeng Feiyang was denied access to lawyers and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, suspended for four years, in early October. Labour activist Meng Han was sentenced to one year and nine months' imprisonment on 3 November 2016. In many cases the detention centres initially denied access to lawyers on the grounds that the cases involved "endangering national security".

In recent years the Chinese government has enacted a series of new national security laws that present serious threats to the protection of human rights. 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. It also potentially criminalized any activities between overseas partners and Chinese domestic NGOs or individuals that are not expressly approved by the government.

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. 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: Hua Haifeng  
Gender m

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