



For immediate release

China: Release women human rights defenders arrested ahead of International Women's Day

(Bangkok, 11 March 2015) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and Asian Development Alliance (ADA) strongly denounce the arbitrary arrest and detention of ten women human rights defenders (WHRDs) by Chinese authorities. Five were released after questioning by police, and five, Li Tingting, Wei Tingting, Wang Man, Wu Rongrong and Zheng Churang, are still in custody. They were part of a nationwide campaign against sexual harassment on public transportation that was to overlap with International Women's Day on 8 March 2015. People taking part in the campaign were supposed to put anti-harassment stickers on transit vehicles.

On 6 March, Wei Tingting and Wang Man were taken to Beijing Haidian Police Station for interrogation. That evening, police entered Li Tingting's home by force and took her away. Zheng Chuarn was taken to a local police station in Guangzhou and questioned for eight hours before being transferred to a local guesthouse and placed under house arrest. On 7 March, Wu Rongrong was arrested upon her arrival at Hangzhou airport and was immediately taken to a district police station for interrogation by Beijing National Security officials. The arrests started on the second day of the annual meeting in Beijing of the National People's Congress.

One of the women, Wu Rongrong, requires immediate medical attention. Her friends received a call from her after the arrest crying in pain. The call was cut almost instantly. She, as well as the four others, must be released immediately.

"There is no evidence to suggest that any of these women were engaging in illegal behaviour in any of these cases. All five women focused on social issues which should be recognised and tackled by the government. In doing so they adhered to peaceful and lawful means in their activism," said Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

"Failure by the Chinese law enforcement to release the five WHRDs will only add further proof to the progressively harsher suppression of civil society by the State," concluded Anselmo Lee, Co-convenor of ADA.

Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." Moreover, under Article 12 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These provisions support the fact that Li Tingting, Wei Tingting, Wang Man, Wu Rongrong and Zheng Churang were well within their rights as WHRDs to organise a peaceful action to protest sexual harassment on public transportation.

FORUM-ASIA and ADA demand the immediate and unconditional release of the five WHRDs and urges the Chinese government to guarantee in all circumstances their physical and psychological integrity and safety as well as to ensure that their legal procedural rights -including their rights to meet with lawyers and families- are strictly observed.



About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a Bangkok-based regional human rights group with 47 member organisations in 16 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta and Geneva. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

About ADA:

Asia Development Alliance (ADA) is a regional network of national & sub-national development NGO/CSO platforms in Asia -South, Southeast and Northeast Asia- to promote more effective communication, coordination and cooperation in the Post- 2015 Development Agenda process and beyond. It was officially launched in Bangkok on 2 February 2013.

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