

7 March 2017

### **China: Human rights defender Li Xiaoling illegally detained during China's "Two Sessions" meetings**

On 4 March 2017, human rights defender **Li Xiaoling** was illegally taken into custody by a force of over thirty police and placed under forced residential surveillance in the 2000 Year's Hotel in Zhuhai City, Guangdong Province. Li Xiaoling had fled to her daughter's home in the city of Zhongshan, after escaping an earlier surveillance detention initiated on 27 February 2017. Soon after reaching her daughter's house, local police arrived with a force of thirty or more officers to take Li Xiaoling back to the 2000 Year's Hotel.

[Li Xiaoling](#) has worked for years to support the human rights and just treatment of petitioners, prisoners, and other groups at risk of rights violations. Most recently, Li Xiaoling engaged in a campaign to promote the cause of Chinese petitioners during China's "Two Sessions" meetings, posting a photo on Twitter and other platforms of herself holding a banner requesting that petitioners be represented in the conferences.

The "Two Sessions" meetings consist of China's legislative body the National People's Congress and the advisory Chinese People's Political Consultative conference. The meetings are held annually each spring, and human rights defenders are frequently targeted for detention while the meetings are in session.

No charges have been raised against Li Xiaoling, nor has any reason been given for the deprivation of her personal liberty, saying only that she was suspected of criminal activity. Arresting officers also informed Li Xiaoling that her detention was the result of an "order from above", but they refused to answer questions of what higher office was issuing the order.

Front Line Defenders demands the immediate release of Li Xiaoling from illegal detention. Front Line Defenders further believes that this deprivation of Li Xiaoling's liberty is solely an attempt by local authorities to silence Li Xiaoling's advocacy work during the "Two Session" meetings.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in China to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Li Xiaoling;
2. Allow Li Xiaoling immediate and unfettered access to lawyers;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in China are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.