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**Statement: Human rights lawyer still in detention one year after secret trial without verdict**

9 May 2020 marks one year since the Xuzhou Municipal Intermediate Court in Jiangsu province held a one-day secret trial of human rights lawyer **Yu Wensheng (余文生)**. The court has neither publicly announced a verdict nor has it informed his family or lawyers of any decisions to delay the verdict announcement. Xu Yan (许艳), Yu Wensheng's wife, has been campaigning for his release and as a result has been subjected to harassment and surveillance.

[Yu Wensheng](#) is a Beijing-based human rights lawyer who had provided legal counsel to petitioners, activists, and other human rights lawyers, including [Wang Quanzhang](#), who was released last month after completing his prison terms. Yu Wensheng was also outspoken on social justice issues and political reforms and prior to his detention on 19 January 2018, he faced a [series of reprisals](#) for his human rights work. Yu Wensheng is a [laureate](#) of the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights in 2018.

In March 2018, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and two other UN experts sent an [urgent appeal](#) to the Chinese government raising concerns about his detention and its legal bases. In April 2019, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [found](#) his detention to be arbitrary because Yu Wensheng's fair trial rights were seriously violated and his detention was in retaliation of his human rights work and his political opinion. Following the secret trial, the European Union issued a [public statement](#) stating that Yu Wensheng's fair trial rights, including access to a lawyer of his own choice, were not respected and called for his immediate release. The EU reiterated its call for his and other detained human rights defenders' release in [September 2019](#) and [March 2020](#).

Since the secret trial, Xu Yan and Yu Wensheng's lawyers have made multiple attempts to contact the court and the procuratorate in Xuzhou to determine the outcome of the trial. In December 2019, a judge responsible for the case eventually responded to say that the court had not yet reached a verdict. On 8 May 2020, the family contacted the Xuzhou procuratorate again and was told that no verdict has been reached.

Front Line Defenders believes Yu Wensheng should never have been detained in the first place, let alone prosecuted and tried in secret without due process. His prolonged detention before and after the secret trial, without access to his lawyers, raises serious concerns regarding the risk that he has been subjected to ill-treatment. Front Line Defenders calls on the Xuzhou Municipal Intermediate Court to uphold China's human rights obligations under the Chinese Constitution and international human rights law and, without delay, exonerate Yu Wensheng and release him unconditionally.