

8 December 2021

China: Human rights defenders Huang Xueqing and Wang Jianbing facing “inciting subversion” charge

Today marks 80 days since woman human rights defender **Huang Xueqin** and labour and disability rights defender **Wang Jianbing** were both taken by local police from Wang Jianbing’s residence in the city of Guangzhou, in southern China, on 19 September 2021. Between late October and early November 2021, Huang Xueqin’s and Wang Jianbing’s families respectively received a formal arrest notice, dated 27 October 2021, indicating that they were arrested on suspicion of “inciting subversion of State power” under the law of the People’s Republic of China, and are detained in Guangzhou No. 1 Detention Centre.

[Huang Xueqin](#) (黄雪琴) is a journalist and woman human rights defender from Guangdong province. She has worked to promote women’s rights, and to document and expose sexual harassment against women and girls in the workplace and in educational institutions. She was also previously [detained](#) from October 2019 to January 2020 after she published writings about the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

[Wang Jianbing](#) (王建兵) is a labour rights and disability rights defender originally from Gansu province. After graduating from university in 2005, he began to work in the non-profit sector promoting youth education and rural development. In 2014, he joined an NGO in Guangzhou and implemented projects to promote youth development and empowerment of people living with disabilities. In 2018, he began to advocate for the rights of workers with occupational diseases through legal and community support. He is also a strong supporter of China’s #MeToo movement.

Wang Jianbing had originally planned to accompany Huang Xueqin to Shenzhen where she was to travel onwards to the Hong Kong airport for a flight on 20 September 2021 to the United Kingdom for her graduate studies. In the afternoon on 19 September 2021, Guangzhou public security officers arrived at Wang Jianbing’s residence and took both him and Huang Xueqin into custody. The police also searched the two defenders’ residences and confiscated their personal belongings.

The grounds for their detention appear to be connected to multiple private gatherings at Wang Jianbing’s residence. Following Wang Jianbing and Huang Xueqin’s detention, local police in Guangzhou and in other provinces repeatedly visited and interrogated more than 40 of their acquaintances. During these interrogations, the police reportedly demanded the acquaintances to confirm the identity of people who had gathered at Wang Jianbing’s residence, to testify that the discussions at these gatherings were political in nature, and to sign pre-written testimonies falsely accusing the two human rights defenders of attending political assemblies that “subvert State power.” Many of them also had their electronic devices searched and data copied by the police.

In the weeks between the two human rights defenders’ arrest and the issuance of the formal arrest notice, neither of their families had received any legal notices confirming their arrest, their

whereabouts or the charges against them. Wang Jianbing's family visited multiple police offices in Guangzhou in an attempt to locate him, without success. They then submitted complaints to the district, municipal and provincial public security offices without receiving any meaningful response. When the family submitted complaints against the police to the Guangzhou Municipal Procuratorate, on 30 September 2021, the office refused to intervene. Also, the Guangzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau has so far rejected twice, in October and November, Wang Jianbing's lawyer's requests to meet with the human rights defender and to have him released on bail.

On 30 September 2021, three unidentified persons, suspected to be state security officers, summoned Wang Jianbing's family for interrogation at a police station without showing any official identification or warrants. They told the family that the Guangzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau is responsible for the arrest of Wang Jianbing, but they could not reveal the charges against him nor the location of his detention. They ordered the family to stop contacting government offices and warned them not to conduct public advocacy.

The latest [research](#) published by Front Line Defenders and partner organisations highlights the systematic misuse of vague national security provisions in order to arbitrarily detain human rights defenders for their peaceful activities.

Front Line Defenders believes the detention and charges against Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing are a reprisal for their peaceful and legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly and association.

Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in China to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing, drop charges against them, and end all investigative and judicial actions against them;
2. Ensure that, pending their release, Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing are not subjected to any form of torture or other ill-treatment, in strict adherence to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Ensure as well that they have immediate, regular and unrestricted access to legal counsel of their choice, and are able to communicate with family members, without undue interference;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in China are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with China's international human rights obligations and commitments;
5. Initiate a comprehensive legal reform process in genuine consultation with independent civil society and human rights defenders to review existing laws, regulations, policies and practices related to national security offences.