

18 May 2018

China: Lawyer Xie Yanyi assaulted, detained during impending disbarment proceedings

On 16 May 2018, human rights lawyer **Xie Yanyi** (谢燕益) attended a formal review hearing at the Beijing Lawyers' Association to determine whether infractions allegedly committed by the defender are sufficient to warrant the revocation of his license to practice law. He stands accused of unspecified violations in connection to his representation of a client in a freedom of religion case. Before entering the building, police physically assaulted the defender. After the review hearing, Xie Yanyi and his wife were detained for several hours. Based on recent persecution of China's human rights lawyers, Xie Yanyi is likely to face imminent revocation of his legal license.

[Xie Yanyi](#) is a Beijing-based human rights lawyer who works for the Beijing Kaitai law firm. In 2008 he highlighted the government's attempts to install surveillance equipment on all computers sold in China by bringing a case against the Minister for Industry and Information Technology for violating citizens' rights. He has also represented a number of Falun Gong practitioners who have faced persecution for their beliefs and for challenging local authorities' abuse of power.

In April 2018, Xie Yanyi first noticed that his legal license had been marked "void" on the Beijing Justice Bureau's website, after which he was legally unable to practice. On 4 May, the Beijing Lawyers' Association notified the human rights defender that a hearing would be held on 16 May to discuss the alleged violation of regulations in the course of his legal representation of client accused of "using an evil religious organization to undermine the rule of law". On 13 May, Xie Yanyi requested that the hearing be postponed on the basis that he had not been given sufficient access to the evidence being used to support the government's allegations. His request was denied.

On 16 May, at the entrance to the Beijing Lawyers' Association, a journalist accompanying Xie Yanyi was stopped and his identification was taken by police. When the officers refused to return the identification, Xie Yanyi took the identification from the officer's hand. The officer responded by grabbing the lawyer by the throat, thus injuring him and tearing his shirt. Officers then brought Xie Yanyi to the review hearing.

After the hearing, lawyer associates of Xie Yanyi, who had attended the hearing, announced that Xie Yanyi had been taken away by police. He was released approximately five hours later.

The Chinese government is entering a new phase of persecution of human rights lawyers and authorities are using trumped-up allegations of "violating regulations" to smear the reputations of human rights lawyers and to justify the suspension and revocation of their legal licenses. Authorities are forcing law firms to terminate these lawyers' contracts, exploiting a Chinese regulation that allows justice bureaus to suspend lawyers' licenses if they remain unaffiliated with a law firm for a period of six months. Earlier this year, lawyers [Sui Muqing](#) and [Yu Wensheng](#) both lost their legal licenses. In the past month, lawyer [Li](#)

[Heping](#) has also been summoned to a similar hearing as that of Xie Yanyi. Lawyer [Wang Yu](#) also found her license listed as “void” on the website of the Beijing Justice Bureau.

Front Line Defenders condemns the Chinese authority’s blatant attacks on human rights lawyers, who operate lawfully to protect the rights and interests of Chinese citizens.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in China to:

1. Quash all charges against Xie Yanyi, Yu Wensheng, Li Heping, and Sui Muqing;
2. Desist from intimidating law firms and from using other tactics to attack human rights 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.