

NGOs and Lawyers Groups Call on Governments & Lao Authorities to Ensure the Immediate Release of Chinese Human Rights Lawyer Lu Siwei

A Joint Statement

For Immediate Release

(1 August 2023) Lao authorities have reportedly arrested and detained well-known Chinese human rights lawyer **Lu Siwei** since 28 July 2023. We are gravely concerned that he is at serious risk of forced repatriation to China where he faces the high likelihood of torture and other ill-treatment.

Southeast Asian governments have frequently been pressured into forcibly returning vulnerable individuals back to China, where they have faced arbitrary detention, unfair trials, torture, enforced disappearances, and other ill-treatment. Our organizations have documented numerous cases, ranging from the [2009 forced return of Uyghurs from Cambodia](#) to the [August 2022 disappearance](#) of Chinese democracy activist Dong Guangping from Vietnam into Chinese custody. Gui Minhui, a bookseller, was disappeared in [Thailand in 2015](#) only to resurface in China without his passport. These [individuals](#) are effectively disappeared for extended periods, with family members and colleagues unable to obtain information until months or years after.

We urge third party governments to:

- 1. Ask Lao authorities to immediately halt Lu Siwei's repatriation and to move quickly to ensure he has access to the relevant UN authorities and a lawyer of his choice; and**
- 2. Publicly call on Chinese authorities to drop any potential charges against Lu Siwei.**

By handing Lu Siwei over to the Chinese authorities, the Lao government would be putting Lu Siwei at grave risk of torture and inhuman treatment. UN rights experts have found that the Chinese government frequently subjects rights defenders and lawyers to torture and inhuman treatment.^[1] Under international customary law and as a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) since September 2012, the Lao PDR government has a non-refoulement obligation as stipulated in Article 3 of the CAT not to return a person to a state where they are at high likelihood of being subjected to torture.

We urge the Lao government to:

- 1. Halt all processes of repatriation for Lu Siwei and release him immediately according to its international human rights obligations;**
- 2. Arrange for him to meet with the relevant UN authorities and a lawyer of his own choosing;**
- 3. Allow him to meet with diplomats from the United States and other countries, as needed, to help him resume his journey to reunite with his family currently in the United States; and**
- 4. Pending the above, to disclose his whereabouts and ensure his personal safety as well as his physical and mental well-being.**

Lu Siwei is a renowned rights defender and lawyer in China, advocating for vulnerable groups and representing numerous political dissidents. As the Chinese authorities have become increasingly intolerant of independent rights advocacy, they have targeted Lu with intimidation and harassment, including disbarment in January 2021 for online speech that allegedly “endangered national security”. Lu Siwei was also physically attacked while traveling to the hearing for his disbarment. Since then, Lu has been closely monitored by the Chinese authorities and subject to an exit ban since May 2021. It is understood that Lu was in Laos en route to joining his family in the United States.

Undersigned, in alphabetical order

1. Amnesty International
2. ALTSEAN-Burma
3. Asia Democracy Network (ADN)
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. ARTICLE 19
6. Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales
7. Bytes For All, Pakistan
8. Campaign For Uyghurs
9. ChinaAid
10. China Change
11. Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
12. Civic Initiatives
13. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
14. Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM)
15. Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation
16. CSW
17. Exile Hub, Thailand, Myanmar
18. FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
19. Focus on the Global South
20. Foundation for Media Alternatives
21. Freedom Seekers International
22. Free Expression Myanmar
23. Freiheit für Hongkong e.V.
24. Fresh Eyes, United Kingdom
25. Front Line Defenders
26. Georgetown Center for Asian Law

27. Gill H. Boehringer, Professor, Chair, Australian Branch, IAPL
28. Hong Kong Watch
29. Hongkonger in Deutschland e.V.
30. Humanitarian China
31. Human Rights in China
32. Human Rights Online Philippines (HRonlinePH)
33. Human Rights Watch
34. HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
35. ILGA Asia
36. Indonesia Save Uyghur
37. Innovation for Change-East Asia
38. Innovation for Change South Asia
39. International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL) Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers
40. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
41. International Society for Human Rights
42. International Tibet Network Secretariat
43. Internet Policy Observatory Pakistan
44. Japan Hong Kong Democracy Alliance (JHKDA)
45. Judicial Reform Foundation
46. Lady Liberty Hong Kong (LLHK)
47. Lamp of Liberty
48. Lawyers for Lawyers
49. Manushya Foundation
50. Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)
51. New School for Democracy Association
52. Open Net (Korea)
53. PakVoices.pk
54. PEN America
55. Public Virtue Research Institute
56. Safeguard Defenders
57. Social Innovations Advisory
58. Society of Young Social Innovators (SYSI)
59. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)
60. Taipei Bar Association Human Rights Committee
61. Taiwan Bar Association Human Rights Protection Committee

62. Taiwan Support China Human Rights Lawyers Network
63. Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy
64. Tibet Initiative Deutschland e.V.
65. 29 Principles
66. Uyghur Human Rights Project
67. Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
68. Wang Dan, Dialogue China
69. We The Hongkongers
70. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
71. Young Leadership for Social Change Network
72. Winnipeg Hong Kong Concern
73. Saskatchewan stands with Hong Kong
74. Chicago Solidarity with Hong Kong
75. New Yorkers Supporting Hong Kong (NY4HK)
76. Innovation for Change
77. Comité pour la Liberté à Hong-Kong
78. Texans Supporting Hong Kong (TX4HK)
79. Girl Up Southeast Asia

[1] E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, CESCR Concluding observations on the third periodic report of China, including Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, 2 March 2023; and CAT/C/CHN/CO/5, CAT Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of China, 3 February 2016.