



The Law Society
of England and Wales



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Joint Statement:

Detention and deteriorating health of human rights lawyer Lu Siwei

The Law Society of England and Wales, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Asian Lawyers Network, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, The Rights Practice, Lawyers for Lawyers, and Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) are gravely concerned about the detention and deteriorating health of human rights lawyer Lu Siwei while he is detained in Chengdu, China. It has been reported that his health is deteriorating due to being held in poor, cramped conditions, a lack of adequate nutrition, and a ban on his family sending him imported medicine which he was previously reliant on to control his thyroid disease.

Lu Siwei was visited by his lawyer on 14 and 24 February 2025. After these visits, Lu Siwei's wife reported several issues surrounding Lu Siwei's health and detainment conditions that are gravely concerning. It is reported that his psoriasis is worsening after not receiving proper treatment. In addition, the detention centre does not allow imported medicine, forcing Lu Siwei to rely on domestic medicine that has limited effectiveness in treating his thyroid disease. Further, the food in the detention centre is described as extremely basic, consisting only of boiled cabbage, which has exacerbated his thyroid condition and digestive issues. It has been reported that Lu Siwei was being held in a cell of about 20 square meters with 27 other detainees, before being moved to a room of similar size with 32 other detainees. The conditions he is being held in prevent him from getting adequate sleep, contributing to his deteriorating health.¹

Lu Siwei is a prominent human rights lawyer, known for representing clients in politically sensitive cases. Our organisations [wrote](#) to His Excellency Li Qiang about the arrest and detention of Lu Siwei in October 2024, summarising his experience

of ongoing intimidation and harassment by authorities for his peaceful human rights work. In January 2021, Lu Siwei was disbarred for online speech that allegedly 'endangered national security' and was subjected to an exit ban in May 2021. On 28 July 2023, Lu Siwei was arrested by police in Laos while boarding a train for Thailand. He had fled China, with the intention of flying from Thailand to the United States to reunite with his family. Lu Siwei remained in an unknown place of detention, without access to his lawyers, his family, or any other person of his choice, for over a month², in violation of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), before being forcibly repatriated to China. This occurred despite calls from UN experts for his immediate release and for Laos to respect its obligations under international human rights law, specifically the principle of non-refoulement which guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would in danger of being subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, enforced disappearance, or other irreparable harm.³

Our organisations are concerned that Lu Siwei's detention is related to his professional duties as a lawyer and that the offence he has reportedly been charged with is based on an exit ban that lacks legitimacy, rendering his arrest and detention arbitrary. We are also concerned about the conditions under which Lu Siwei is being held, and his lack of adequate health care which are causing his health to deteriorate. Our organisations consider that this treatment amounts to a violation of the [UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#).

Under the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), China has an obligation to ensure that no-one is subject to arbitrary arrest or detention. China must ensure that no-one is deprived of their liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law. Such laws must be defined with sufficient precision to avoid overly broad or arbitrary interpretation or application and must comply with international law.

The poor conditions Lu Siwei is being held in, and lack of adequate medical treatment also violate international human rights law guaranteeing humane conditions of detention and protection from ill-treatment, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

According to Article 16 of the [UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#), governments should "ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (...) and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards and ethics". Moreover, Article 23 of the Basic Principles provides that: "Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association, and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights."

The undersigned organisations urge the relevant authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Lu Siwei from detention and drop the charges against him related to international travel or legitimate professional duties.
2. Pending his release, ensure Lu Siwei is held in adequate conditions of detention that comply with international human rights standards.
3. Pending his release, ensure that Lu Siwei is provided with adequate and appropriate medication to treat his several deteriorating health conditions.
4. Halt all acts of intimidation and harassment against lawyers in China, including arbitrary arrest and detention, and ensure that all lawyers in China can carry out their professional duties and exercise their right to freedom of expression without intimidation, hindrance or improper interference.

Our organisations will continue to monitor the situation of Lu Siwei, as well as other members of the legal profession and human rights defenders in China.

SIGNED:

Law Society of England and Wales

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Asian Lawyers Network

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

The Rights Practice

Lawyers for Lawyers

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)