

26 January 2018

China: Yu Wensheng detained incommunicado and charged with “disrupting public service”

On 19 January 2018, human rights defender and lawyer **Yu Wensheng (余文生)** was detained by several police officers as he accompanied his son to school. On 20 January 2018, Yu Wensheng’s wife received official notice that he is being held under criminal detention on the charge of “disrupting public service” at Shijingshan District Detention Centre. The defender has not had access to legal counsel or been able to communicate with his family since being detained.

[Yu Wensheng](#) is a human rights lawyer based in Beijing. He has taken on several cases deemed highly sensitive by the Chinese authorities, most notably that of human rights lawyer [Wang Quanzhang](#) who has been detained for three years.

On 18 January 2018, Yu Wensheng published an open letter recommending amendments to the Chinese constitution, calling for fair elections and an oversight system for the Chinese Communist Party, amongst other reforms.

On 19 January 2018, Yu Wensheng left his family home to walk his son to school. Yu Wensheng’s son returned home shortly afterwards, and reported to Yu Wensheng’s wife that the defender had been taken by a dozen law enforcement officers, including police and armored vehicles. Yu Wensheng was forced into a police vehicle after a physical altercation between the defender and at least one officer: a heavily edited video recorded by a police officer at the scene shows Yu Wensheng with one of his arresting officers.

Since the time of his arrest, neither Yu Wensheng’s wife nor his appointed lawyers have been allowed to see, speak to, or deposit funds for the defender at Shijingshan District Detention Centre, where the defender is reportedly held.

Yu Wensheng has faced government harassment and intimidation at several points throughout his career, such as when he was detained for ninety-nine days in 2014 for expressing support for Hong Kong’s Occupy Central movement.

Additionally, in 2017, Chinese judicial authorities refused to allow Yu Wensheng to pass his annual license review, ultimately forcing him to leave his position at the Beijing Daoheng Law Firm. Lawyers in China are not allowed to practice law independent of affiliation with an established law firm. Yu Wensheng attempted to establish his own independent law firm but in January 2018, the human rights lawyer was informed that his application to establish a law firm had been denied. Yu Wensheng was subsequently informed that his legal license would be revoked, on the basis that he had not been employed by a law firm in over six months.

Front Line Defenders calls on the Chinese authorities to immediately release Yu Wensheng as it believes that the arbitrary arrest and detention of Yu Wensheng is solely an attempt to silence the defender and interfere with his work protecting the legal rights and freedoms of China’s citizens. Front Line Defenders further calls on the Chinese authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Yu Wensheng, grant him unfettered access to legal counsel of his choosing and communication with his family.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in China to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Yu Wensheng and drop the charge against him;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Yu Wensheng, while in detention, adheres 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. Reinstate Yu Wensheng's legal license;
4. 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.