

Director Wang Xiaohong
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Dear Director Wang:

I am writing to express my concern about human rights defender Chen Mei (陈玫), who was taken away by the police on 19 April 2020. Chen Mei is one of three contributors to Terminus2049 (端点星计划) who were arrested that day. While the families of the two other individuals have received some basic information about their arrest, Chen's family have yet to receive any details about his current status.

It is worrying to learn that Chen Mei seems to have been arrested simply for collecting and archiving public information about COVID-19. As I am sure you are aware, freedom to information is an integral part of the right to freedom of expression as recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in China, there have been worrying reports of independent journalists being taken away by the police and harassment of citizens who openly criticized the government's handling of the crisis. If there is one lesson from the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, it is that arbitrarily limiting access to information and shutting down debate serves no public health purpose and can, on the contrary, have serious consequences for people's ability to protect their health.

With no access to a lawyer, or any information about Chen Mei's whereabouts, I am gravely concerned that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

I therefore call on you to:

- Release Chen Mei immediately and unconditionally unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;
- Pending his release, ensure that Chen Mei has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;

Yours sincerely,