

Chief Procurator Zhang Yukun
Beijing No 2 People's Procuratorate,
18, Zhifang Lu,
Fengtai Qu,
Beijing Shi, 100078
People's Republic of China
Dear Chief Procurator Zhang

I am writing to express my concern for Australian-Chinese writer, Yang Hengjun (杨恒均), who was taken into police custody at Guangzhou airport on 19 January 2019. Detained without charge for more than a year, it was only in March 2020 that an official statement was made that he would face charges of espionage. Yang is believed to be detained at the Beijing State Security Bureau Detention Centre.

An Australian citizen since 2002, Yang had been living in the United States as a visiting scholar at Columbia University at the time of his arrest. Prohibited from seeing his family or a lawyer of his choice, Yang was initially allowed a monthly, half-hour visit from a representative from the Australian consulate. However, I find it distressing to learn that since 30 December 2019, no one has seen or heard from Yang at all, as authorities have suspended the consular visits due to COVID-19.

Yang Hengjun has denied all allegations of espionage. Asserting his innocence, he has told the Chinese authorities that he has never been spy for any government. I also worry that Yang is not getting the proper medical care that he needs. Suffering from memory loss, dizziness, blood pressure related issues and several other serious health conditions, it is crucial that he get immediate and proper care.

Because Yang is currently being held incommunicado without access to consular visits, lawyer of his choice or his family, I am gravely concerned for his wellbeing and fear that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

I therefore call on you to:

- Release Yang Hengjun 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 Yang Hengjun has regular, unrestricted access to consular visits and family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- Allow him prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request, or as necessary.

Yours sincerely,