

Director Li Dengquan

Linyi Shi Public Security Bureau
7 Shanghai Lu, Lanshan Qu
Linyi Shi, Shandong Sheng
People's Republic of China

Dear Director Li,

I am writing to express my concern for **Xu Zhiyong** (許志永), who has been held in custody with no access to a lawyer of his choice, or his family, since 15 February 2020. It was only recently, on 19 June, that he was formally arrested for “inciting subversion of state power” (國家顛覆煽動) and has been placed under residential surveillance at a designated location (指定居所居住監視).

Xu Zhiyong is one of several human rights defenders detained and arrested for participating in a private social gathering in Xiamen in December 2019 in which participants are said to have merely discussed current affairs and the situation of civil society in China.

International human rights laws and standards guarantee the rights to liberty, freedom of association and freedom of expression. No one should be detained or arrested for peacefully exercising their rights. The United Nations human rights experts have repeatedly [expressed concerns](#) about the Chinese authorities continuously using national security provisions to target human rights defenders who peacefully exercise their rights.

It is distressing to learn that Xu Zhiyong has now been held incommunicado for more than five months, with no way for his family or lawyer to check his physical and mental wellbeing. Given the limited safeguards protecting those held incommunicado, I am very worried that Xu is at imminent risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

I call on you to:

- **Release Xu Zhiyong 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 Xu Zhiyong has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**
- **Stop harassing and arresting other human rights defenders who peacefully exercise their right to freedom of association and other human rights.**

Yours sincerely,