

Chief Procurator Wang Qinjie

People's Procuratorate of Linyi City
North side, West Section, Jiefangdonglu,
Linyi Shi, Shandong Sheng, 276000
People's Republic of China

Dear Chief Procurator Wang,

I am writing to express my concern for **Xu Zhiyong** (许志永), who has been formally indicted and charged with “subversion of state power” (颠覆国家政权) for peacefully exercising his human rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

It is distressing to learn that, according to the indictment, the procuratorate charged him with “subverting state power” for allegedly having published online commentaries, initiated online chat groups, and conducted online workshops on non-violent activism. As has been repeatedly raised by United Nations human rights experts, there are concerns that Chinese authorities consistently use national security provisions to target human rights defenders.

I find it alarming that the authorities have routinely obstructed Xu's lawyers in the exercise of their professional duties. According to the wife of Ding Jiayi, another human rights defender indicted in the same case, the authorities forced the lawyers representing Xu and Ding to keep silent about the progress of the case and the details of the indictment.

Further to my concern is Xu's testimony that he was subject to torture and ill-treatment while in detention last year, when he was bound to an iron chair with his limbs restrained for more than 10 hours a day for more than a week. Given his previous treatment, and the lack of unrestricted access to his lawyers, I fear that Xu could be at risk of future human rights violations while in custody.

International human rights laws and standards guarantee the rights to liberty, freedom of association and freedom of expression. Therefore, I call on you to:

- **Release Xu Zhiyong immediately and drop all charges as he has been charged and detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression,**
- **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, arresting, and threatening other human rights defenders, including human rights lawyers, who peacefully exercise their right to freedom of association and other human rights.**

Yours sincerely,