

## [China: Release arbitrarily detained women human rights defenders](#)

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(**Update - 14 April 2015**) - ISHR welcomes [reports](#) that the five Chinese women human rights defenders detained on 12 March 2015 in association with their work to promote women's rights and combat sexual discrimination and harassment were released without charge on 13 April 2015.

ISHR is concerned, however, at reports that criminal investigations into the women's activities are ongoing and that they will be monitored and may be subject to travel restrictions.

'ISHR welcomes the decision of the Chinese authorities to release Wei Tingting, Wang Man, Li Tingting, Zheng Churan and Wu Rongrong without charge. ISHR unequivocally condemns, however, the fact that they were arbitrarily detained for over a month in connection with the work to defend human rights and in violation of international human rights standards. In accordance with both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, China should respect the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and immediately and unconditionally release all persons detained in connection with the exercise of those rights,' ISHR's Pooja Patel said.

The women's release came after a concerted campaign by both international and Chinese human rights groups, including ISHR and its partner organisation [Chinese Human Rights Defenders](#), and public statements by high-level officials including [US Secretary of State John Kerry](#).

(Geneva) - China should immediately release five women human rights defenders that remain in pre-trial detention following the arrest of at least 10 activists over the weekend, ISHR said today. The arrests seem to be part of a move to prevent a [national campaign against sexual harassment on public transport](#) that was intended to overlap with International Women's Day on 8 March.

ISHR understands that the arrests were coordinated, taking place in various places across China, and targeting prominent women human rights defenders.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly while, among other things, the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders enshrines the right to advocate the acceptance of human rights ideas and principles (Article 7).

'We are deeply disturbed by the Chinese authorities' blatant breach of its international human rights obligations in arresting these courageous women human rights defenders,' said Michael Ineichen, Programme Manager at the International Service for Human Rights.

'No person should face arrest or detention for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. We call on the Chinese authorities to immediately release the women human rights defenders that remain incarcerated'.

These arrests come after the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women expressed its concerns to the Chinese government over [excessive restrictions on the work of women's rights organisations](#) and called for the protection of women human rights defenders late last year. In May 2014, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reminded China of its obligation under international law 'to protect human rights and labour activists, as well as their lawyers, [against any form of intimidation, threat and retaliation](#)'.

'The Chinese government has not responded adequately to any of these concerns. It has continuously allowed the systematic harassment and intimidation of women human rights defenders and failed to hold perpetrators accountable. The arrest of these women human rights defenders is a stark example of this,' commented Phil Lynch, Director of the International Service for Human Rights.

'We urge the international human rights community to intervene to safeguard the fundamental human rights of these women human rights defenders. The Human Rights Council's discussion with the [Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders](#) taking place today provides an excellent opportunity for States to speak out for defenders, in an effort to hold China to account for the arrest of these women human rights defenders and the flagrant abuse of the rights to freedom of expression, association or assembly of women human rights defenders in China,' Mr Ineichen said.