

[China: Release Wang Yu and other detained and disappeared human rights defenders](#)

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(Geneva) - China must immediately cease its coordinated targeting of human rights defenders, said ISHR today as reports emerged as to the detention and disappearance of over 50 human rights lawyers and defenders.

'The scale and speed with which this has been carried out marks a new extreme in the crackdown on civil society under the Xi administration,' said Sarah M. Brooks, ISHR's East Asia programme manager and advocate.

'Authorities must identify those defenders who have been detained or disappeared, release all who have been detained arbitrarily, and investigate those authorities who are responsible. In light of concerns about the impact of new and pending legislation on human rights in the country, this is a clear and disturbing signal that the government feels it can act with impunity to quash criticism and dissent,' Ms Brooks said.

Earlier this week, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein issued [a statement expressing concern](#) about the human rights implications of China's new National Security Law, adopted by the National People's Congress on 1 July. Because of its broad scope and vague definitions, Zeid noted that it 'leaves the door wide open to further restrictions on the rights and freedom of Chinese citizens'. ISHR has previously expressed similar concerns regarding [China's draft anti-terrorism law](#), which seriously restricts the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

[The Chinese government's response](#) to the High Commissioner was brief and to the point. Rather than engage on the issue as a matter of substance, or welcome ongoing dialogue with international experts on the issue, on 9 July spokesperson Hua Chunying instead accused the High Commissioner of making 'groundless accusations' that demonstrated a 'lack of professionalism' and constituted an 'interference in China's domestic affairs'. News media reporting on the story [cited an expert who claimed](#) that Zeid may have sought to 'damage China's international image'. This, despite [earlier assurances](#) by the government to 'support the [High Commissioner] in activities performing his duty'.

As though to make the point even more clear, the Chinese government embarked that same day on a roundup of human rights defense lawyers in Beijing, beginning with Wang Yu. In response to her disappearance, over one hundred concerned lawyers inside the country [signed an open letter](#) demanding her release and

accountability for authorities.

In the two days since, [human rights groups](#) have documented [over four dozen human rights defenders](#) who, as of this writing, have disappeared. Some have been taken away by the authorities, while it is possible others may have been forced into hiding. ISHR continues to work with its partners to track the cases.

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