HRC45 l China urged to release lawyer Ding Jiaxi

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In a statement at the UN Human Rights Council today, Sophie Luo called for the immediate release of her husband, activist Ding Jiaxi, and a clear commitment by the Council to addressing rights violations in China.



In dialogue with UN experts on enforced disappearances, Sophie Luo - whose husband, human rights activist Ding Jiaxi, has been held in incommunicado detention for more than six months - emphasised the dangers of Chinese authorities' practices, including the reliance on 'residential surveillance in a designated location', or RSDL.

Luo's testimony highlighted Ding's important work in promoting human rights and universal values in China, and the impact of the crackdown on Ding and other human rights defenders on overall rule of law in the country. Luo and her daughters have been separated from Ding, and remain unable to receive information from him, or to be assured of his access to a lawyer of his or their choice.

The Working Group's annual report noted that the Chinese government has still - after more than 7 years - failed to positively respond to their request to visit the country; at the same time, the number of outstanding cases taken on by the Working Group increased by over 40% between 2018 and 2019 reporting periods, from 68 to 98. The report also raised concerns with 'the continued use of residential surveillance in a designated location' and emphasised that, as per the UN Declaration, 'accurate information on the detention of persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, should be made promptly available to their family members, to their counsel or to any other persons having a legitimate interest in the information'.

Where China has failed to do this - as in the case of RSDL - such practices, say the experts, 'amount to an enforced disappearance'. As Luo and other activists said today, China's consistent engagement in enforced disappearances demands the attention of the international community, and a dedicated effort to monitor, report and hold Chinese authorities accountable.

Luo's statement is available here; a <u>longer version of the statement</u> was also prepared for circulation.

Thank you, Madame President, Mr. Chair,

My husband Ding Jiaxi began his civil rights activities in China in 2011. He advocated for Chinese citizens to practice the rights enshrined in international conventions and the Chinese constitution. He promoted nonviolent protest, and encouraged Chinese citizens to confront social injustices.

For this work, he has been harassed, jailed, and tortured. He has been separated from me and our daughters. And from 26 December last year until now, he has been held in incommunicado detention including 6 months of "residential surveillance at a designated location", or RSDL, on the charge of 'inciting subversion of the state power'.

His lawyers' requests to meet him have been continuously denied, and our family has had no communication with him. Mr. Chair, you and your colleagues have said clearly: this kind of detention constitutes enforced disappearance. I call on the Chinese government to set my husband Ding Jiaxi free!

My husband's situation is typical of what China has been practicing against many human rights defenders in China, and other populations as well.

I call on governments and the United Nations as a whole to ensure China abides by its human rights obligations, repeals RSDL, and stops its crackdown on basic rights and freedoms, and those who defend them.

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Photo credit: Sophie Luo