

Concerns about harassment of Song Yusheng, Wang Yu and Xie Yang

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Lawyers for Lawyers has learned that Chinese lawyers Xie Yang, Wang Yu and Song Yusheng have been detained, disbarred or harassed in January 2022.

Beijing-based lawyer Song Yusheng was summoned to a disbarment hearing in Beijing on 11 January 2022. Song Yusheng defended human rights lawyer [Yu Wensheng](#) in 2018, and was until recently engaged in the defence of (some of the) 12 Hong Kong citizens that were arrested at sea whilst trying to flee to Taiwan after their involvement in protests against the National Security Law in Hong Kong. According to news reports, he faces disciplinary action for his speech in defence of his client(s). Mr. Song is the [fifth lawyer](#) who faces disciplinary sanctions after involvement with the case of the 12 Hong Kong citizens.

Beijing lawyer [Wang Yu](#), a victim of the [‘709-crackdown’](#) has not only lost her license to practice law in November 2020, she is also forbidden from applying for a passport and traveling overseas. After her disbarment she continued handling legal cases and giving legal advice as a “citizen agent”. It has been reported she was publicly assaulted outside a court house on 13 January 2022 because of a case she was handling in Suzhou. The police have reportedly failed to make a report or to seek out surveillance camera footage of the assault. This comes after Wang Yu went missing for a week in March 2021 after being given an International Women’s Day Award by the United States government.

Furthermore, according to the information received, human rights lawyer [Xie Yang](#) was detained by national security police on 11 January 2022 for “inciting subversion of state power” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”, often used as catch-all charges to detain lawyers and human rights activists in China. According to his wife, who lives in the United States, his phone was operational but calls were forwarded to voicemail. Xie Yang was first detained in Changsha No. 1 Detention Centre, but his current whereabouts could not be determined with certainty. Xie Yang had been detained previously after being targeted during the ‘709-crackdown’ and [lost his license](#) to practice law in 2020.

Lawyers for Lawyers stresses that the right to practice law independently, and free from judicial harassment, is an essential component in upholding the rule of law. Lawyers play a fundamental role in ensuring the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, governments must ensure that lawyers are able to perform all their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference (Principle 16). In addition, lawyers must not be identified with their clients or their clients’ causes as a result of discharging their functions (Principle 18).

Lawyers for Lawyers urges the government of the People’s Republic of China:

- Immediately and unconditionally repeal the decisions to revoke the licenses of Song Yusheng, Wang Yu and Xie Yang;
- Ensure that proper investigations will be carried out into the physical assault against Wang Yu;
- Release Xie Yang and drop all charges against him unless credible evidence is presented in proceedings that respect fair trial guarantees and put an end to all acts of harassment against him, including at the judicial level;
- Ensure that disciplinary proceedings against lawyers shall not be taken in response to their legitimate activities as lawyers and, when such proceedings are taken, that they shall be brought before an impartial body which is independent of the executive power, with possibility to appeal to an independent body;
- Guarantee in all circumstances that all lawyers in China, including human rights lawyers, are able to carry out their legitimate professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of restrictions.