



October 27, 2015

Mr Claudio Grossman, Chairperson  
United Nations Office of High Commission for Human Rights - Committee Against Torture  
Human Rights Treaties Division (HRTD)  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
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CH-1201 Geneva (Switzerland)  
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**RE: Mistreatment of journalists in custody in the People's Republic of China**

Dear Mr Grossman,

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) represents more than 600,000 journalists in 134 countries and we are writing ahead of the Committee Against Torture (CAT) meeting in November to again raise the issue of the situation in China in this discussion.

In 2008, CAT examined the situation in China relating to torture and issued an important report raising serious concerns and key recommendations. The IFJ Asia-Pacific regularly monitors press freedom and the safety of journalists in China. However, in the years since then, none of the recommendations raised by CAT in 2008 have yet been met or implemented. According to CAT/C/CHN/CO/4, torture is defined as the infliction of severe mental pain or suffering. The IFJ believes that by this definition, torture continues to be used as a strategic and systematic tool of repression by Chinese authorities against journalists and media workers in detention.

One case in point is that of Gao Yu, a 71-year-old, veteran Chinese journalist who was in April this year sentenced to seven years in jail for 'obtaining a state secret'. Gao was first detained in April 2014 and later faced court in November 2014, during which a forced confession was used as evidence against her. A year after her initial detention, Gao was sentenced.

The forced confession that Gao made on China Central Television (CCTV) remains one of the clearest violations of human rights and torture, as she was threatened by authorities that they would arrest her son if she did not confess to the crime. Since her sentencing, Gao has continued to be tortured through the denial of basic medical care for her pre-existing medical conditions. She suffers from heart disease, high blood pressure and Meniere's disease. In addition to this, in July 2015, she discovered a lump in her neck, which was only examined by medical professionals after repeated requests for a medical exam. Since discovering the abnormal lymph node, Gao's family and lawyers made two requests for medical parole. However, they have both been denied. In separate incidents, Gao has also been denied simple painkillers when she has suffered from headache and dental pain.

These circumstances not only demonstrate Chinese authorities ongoing violation of the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, but also show the Chinese government's indifference to implement the recommendation from the 2008 report (CAT/C/CHN/CO/4) to "ensure that all detained suspects are afforded, in practice, all fundamental legal safeguards during their detention. These include, in particular, the right to have access to a lawyer and an independent medical examination, to notify a relative and to be informed of their rights at the time of detention."



Unfortunately, Gao Yu's case is not an isolated incident. This year there has been repeated documented examples of torture and mistreatment of journalists and media workers in China. On August 25, Wang Xiaolu, a journalist for one of China's leading financial magazines, *Caijing*, was detained by Beijing police on allegations that he fabricated and spread false information about China's stock market. On August 31, Wang made a televised confession on CCTV. He has been detained for two months now in an unknown location. Police are yet to report on his case or situation. On October 8, Liu Wei, the deputy assignment editor of investigative news of the *Southern Metropolis Daily* was detained by Pingxiang police on allegations of illegally obtaining a state secret. Liu has been detained without charge for over two weeks and his family denied visitations.

The IFJ expresses its strong concern for the mistreatment of journalists and media workers who have been detained in China. These concerns have been supported by statements and testimonies of released journalists. Liu Hu, a veteran investigative journalist who was charged with criminal defamation in September 2013. He subsequently said that during his 346 day detainment he was mistreated including one instance where he was interrogated for 11 hours without access to his lawyer. Liu was also denied rest after interrogation with the interviewing officers resting bottled water on his shoulders to prevent him from falling asleep. The temperature in the room was also lowered and a fan placed in front of Liu, who was dressed only in shorts and a t-shirt. Cell conditions were overcrowded with many inmates sleeping on the floor and suffering from diseases such as pulmonary diseases and dermatitis. Shortage of food and clothes was also an issue.

The IFJ fully supports No. 44 (A/69/44) of the joint statement by the General Assembly in 2014. In the statement, Chairperson Grossman said that: "A world without torture will be achievable when prosecutors and judges refuse to rely on coerced confessions and insist on investigating acts of torture and prosecuting those responsible for them."

There seems a long way to go before this is a possibility in China. The increasing rate of torture evident in IFJ documentation clearly shows it is used a tool against media workers and others expressing criticism or dissent.

The IFJ ask the Committee Against Torture to investigate the situation in China and demand an official report from the Chinese government addressing reported allegations of torture. The IFJ also requests that CAT deploy a special rapporteur to China to conduct thorough investigations into how the CAT recommendations have been and will be implemented.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony BELLANGER". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

**Anthony Bellanger**  
**General Secretary**  
**International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)**

**For further information contact IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0946**

*The IFJ represents more than 600,000 journalists in 139 countries*

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