

President Xi Jinping
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China

Brussels, 27 June 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the detention of Pu Zhiqiang, a human rights lawyer

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concern over the situation of Mr Pu Zhiqiang, a human rights lawyer who has been in detention since 6 May 2014 after attending a meeting to discuss the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre.

The CCBE has been informed that Pu Zhiqiang was detained on 6 May on suspicion of "picking quarrels". He previously attended a meeting on 3 May which called for an investigation into the suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen protests. His lawyer was able to meet with him on 9 June after repeated requests, and expressed concern about Mr Zhiqiang's health condition as his legs were swollen. Mr Zhiqiang suffers from diabetes and it is unclear whether he is receiving adequate treatment. His lawyer also reported that Mr Zhiqiang said that he is being questioned every day, sometimes for up to 10 hours.

Four other activists, including academics Hao Jian and Xu Youyu, activist Liu Di and writer Hu Shigen, were also detained after attending the meeting, but were released on bail on 5 June 2014. Mr Zhiqiang applied for bail on 6 June; however, this was rejected.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to urgently and unconditionally release Mr Zhiqiang, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice. The CCBE also asks the Chinese government to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in China are able to carry out their professional activities in all circumstances, without fear of reprisal, intimidation or judicial harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
President