



Hang Tung Chow



Xu Zhiyong



Ding Jiayi

CCBE Human Rights Award 2023

Chinese Lawyers Hang Tung Chow, Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi receive the CCBE Human Rights Award 2023

The CCBE decided to grant the CCBE Human Rights Award 2023 to Chinese Lawyers **Hang Tung Chow**, **Xu Zhiyong** and **Ding Jiayi** for their courage, determination and commitment to defending human rights and the rule of law in China.

The CCBE President, Panagiotis Perakis, will present their awards during the CCBE Plenary Session on Friday 24 November 2023 in Athens. With this Award, the CCBE wishes to highlight the long-standing and outstanding commitment and sacrifice those three lawyers have demonstrated in upholding the fundamental values of the legal profession and in defending and advocating for human rights and the respect for the rule of law.

The purpose of the CCBE Human Rights Award:

Highlighting the work of one or more lawyers or lawyers' organisations which have demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding fundamental values. The award is granted to one or more lawyers or to a lawyers' organisation which have brought honour to the legal profession by upholding the highest values of professional and personal conduct in the field of human rights.

The CCBE President, Panagiotis Perakis, declared today:

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Hang Tung Chow, Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi deserve the respect and recognition of the entire legal profession for their outstanding courage and commitment in support of human rights in China despite the judicial harassment they have endured. The CCBE is concerned that the situation of lawyers in China who advocate for human rights and the rule of law has still not improved, and has even worsened in some cases, which is even more worrying in a country considered to be one of the world's largest power and economy. Through the CCBE, European lawyers will continue to closely monitor the situation and support their Chinese colleagues who need help. We will never accept that lawyers are targeted because of their legitimate activities as lawyers.

The award winners



Hang Tung Chow

Hang Tung Chow is a practising lawyer and democracy activist who has been imprisoned at the Tai Lam Centre for Women since 8 September 2021 on charges brought against her in four different cases, all of which were for completely peaceful acts and related to the work of the Alliance or commemoration of the 4 June Tiananmen Massacre.

She has worked in both China's and Hong Kong's legal systems to promote democracy and protect fundamental rights. She was the vice-chair of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (the "Alliance"), and served on the board of Amnesty International Hong Kong.

Hang Tung Chow risks to face a sentence of 10 years of imprisonment for "inciting subversion" with no guarantee of a fair trial, as well as to be disbarred by the Hong Kong Bar Association. The only hope of mitigating the PRC's retaliation against Chow is by increasing her visibility and drawing the free world's awareness to her unfair treatments, since it is a huge milestone to endorse her constant efforts in promoting human rights.



The CCBE sent a **letter** to the Chinese authorities on 16 June 2022 to request her release.



Xu Zhiyong



Ding Jiayi

Xu Zhiyong first came to prominence in 2003 when he and two other legal academics took up the case of a university student who was beaten to death in Guangzhou and advocated for abolishing the detention and repatriation system. This campaigning led the Chinese government to abolish a system in which rural migrants were arbitrarily detained, fined and expelled by police in big cities.

Xu acted as a ‘citizen representative’ representing many clients and was one of the founders of the Open Constitution Initiative, a non-profit legal centre, in 2003. In 2009, the Open Constitution Initiative was fined for tax evasion and was shut down by the authorities for being an illegal organisation. Xu was arrested on charges of tax evasion, but the charges were eventually dropped. He was prohibited from teaching classes at Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications. Alongside these efforts, Xu has been a prolific essayist writing on issues including access to fair education, governmental mistreatment and repatriation of migrant workers, corruption and wasteful government spending.

After 10 years as a business lawyer, in 2010, **Ding Jiayi** began investigating human rights cases and issues, and campaigning for greater governmental transparency, the rule of law and the rights of migrant workers.

In 2010, Xu and Ding initiated the New Citizens’ Movement, a civil society movement that campaigned for constitutional reform, government transparency and greater institutional concern for human rights. The Movement strived to promote a citizenry among Chinese citizens rooted in democratic ideals of freedom and societal responsibility. Amongst other issues, the Movement campaigned for equal social and education benefits for migrant workers in Beijing.

In December 2012, the New Citizens’ Movement organised an anti-corruption campaign demanding that more than 200 high-ranking Communist Party officials, including President Xi Jinping, publicly disclose their financial wealth. The campaign involved peaceful demonstrations throughout China in March and April 2013. The Movement also called for the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China had signed in 1998.

Xu Zhiyong was arrested in 2013 and was sentenced in 2014 to four years in prison (including time served in pre-trial detention) on the charge of “gathering a crowd to disrupt public order”, before being released in July 2017.

Likewise, in April 2013, **Ding Jiayi** was arrested on the charge of “gathering a crowd to disrupt public order”. He was disbarred and sentenced on 18 April 2014 to 3,5 years in prison (including time served in pre-trial detention) on this charge, before being released 2,5 years later.

In 2019 and 2020, both were held incommunicado in “residential surveillance at a designated location” (RSDL).

During their detention in RSDL, both were subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including sleep deprivation, loud noise torture, prolonged interrogation, being bound to an iron “tiger chair” for several days at a time, and a lack of adequate food and hygiene facilities. In 2021, they were charged with “subversion of state power”, and on 10 April 2023, Xu Zhiyong was sentenced to 14 years in prison plus 4 years of deprivation of political rights, and Ding Jiaxi was sentenced to 12 years in prison plus 2 years of deprivation of political rights by Linyi Intermediate People’s Court, both on the charge of “subversion of state power”. Their families have been unable to get a copy of their verdicts from the defence lawyers on account of additional confidentiality agreements signed by the lawyers. This sentencing came after more than three years in detention, and their sentences have been among the harshest handed to Chinese rights lawyers since the crackdown on the profession in 2015.

The CCBE wrote several letters in their support:



Conviction of lawyers Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong (20/04/2023)



Unfair trial continued detention and torturing of lawyers Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong (06/07/2022)



Continued detention of lawyers Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi (27/01/2022)



Continued detention and judicial harassment of lawyer Ding Jiaxi (26/05/2021)