

**Mr Li Keqiang**  
**Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China**  
**The State Council General Office**  
**2, Fuyoujie, Xichengqu**  
**Beijingshi 100017**  
**People's Republic of China**

Brussels, 3 September 2013

**Re: Concerns regarding the arrest and detention of Mr Xu Zhiyong, 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 twelve 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 Xu Zhiyong, a prominent academic, human rights lawyer and anti-corruption activist. As the founder of the Open Constitution Initiative, an NGO, Mr Xu and other fellow activists have protested in the streets to urge citizens to combat corruption and used the internet to call for officials to disclose their assets.

According to the information that we received, Mr Xu Zhiyong was detained on 16 July and then arrested in Beijing on 22 July on a charge of "*gathering a crowd to disturb order in a public place*". The CCBE was also informed that Mr Xu was detained last month on the same charge and, before that, he had been under house arrest for three months, with no reason given by the authorities.

The CCBE is alarmed by these facts, which indicate a repressive environment for human rights lawyers in China and a crackdown on anti-corruption activists.

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 effective steps to ensure that Mr Xu Zhiyong is immediately and unconditionally released. The CCBE also implores you to take all the necessary measures to guarantee in all circumstances that lawyers and human rights defenders in China are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, intimidation and harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', written in a cursive style.

EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS  
CCBE President