



**March 2021**

**Our Next Meeting:  
Thursday, March 11th,  
7:00pm via Zoom.**

**Contact Ron for information  
on attending the virtual  
meeting.**



*It's Better to  
Light a Candle  
Than Curse  
the Darkness*



## **Urgent Action: China**

### **ACTIVIST SUBJECTED TO TORTURE AND CHARGED WITH SUBVERSION**

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Xu Zhiyong (He/Him)

Prominent legal scholar and activist Xu Zhiyong, who has been detained since February 2020, has for the first time been allowed to meet with his lawyer through two video calls on January 21 and February 5, 2021. During these conversations, Xu told his lawyer that he was subjected to torture when he was detained under “residential surveillance under designated location” and described harsh conditions in the current detention center. According to Xu, he was bound to an iron chair and his limbs were restrained for more than 10 hours a day for more than a week. He found himself very exhausted and struggled to breathe while restrained. Originally detained for “inciting subversion of state power”, the People’s Procuratorate of Linyi City informed Xu’s lawyer on January 20 that he is now charged with “subversion of state power”. Given Xu’s treatment over the last year, there are grave concerns that he could be at risk of further torture and other ill-treatment.

Xu Zhiyong was among dozens of lawyers and activists who attended an informal gathering held in Xiamen, a city on China’s southeast coast, in December 2019. Many presents at this private gathering had been active in the New Citizens Movement, a loose network of activists who aimed to promote government transparency and expose corruption in the early 2010s. At the meeting, they discussed the situation of civil society and current affairs in China. Since December 26, 2019, police across the country have been summoning or detaining participants of the Xiamen gathering.

Friends of Xu Zhiyong say he went into hiding after the meeting in December 2019. In early February 2020, Xu criticized President Xi Jinping’s handling of the coronavirus crisis and the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests and called on him to resign. On February 15, 2020, Xu was detained while staying at the home of a fellow activist and held incommunicado until January 21, 2021.

Xu Zhiyong’s situation is very similar to human rights lawyer Ding Jiayi, who was detained at the same time after attending the Xiamen gathering. The authorities investigated their cases together until January 20, 2021, after which their charges were changed to “subversion of state power” and their lawyers were informed that their cases would be handled separately. No trial dates have yet been confirmed.

Li Qiaochu, a labour rights and feminist activist and Xu Zhiyong’s partner, was held in secret detention from February to June 2020. As a result of

her continued call for Xu's release and better treatment, Li was again detained by the authorities on February 6, 2021 and is currently being held in the same detention centre as Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi. It is currently unclear whether her case is being handled together with either Xu or Ding.

Xu Zhiyong is a prominent Chinese legal scholar and rights activist known for his work on behalf of disadvantaged groups and his promotion of a "New Citizens' Movement", a loose network of activists founded by Xu to promote government transparency and expose corruption in 2012. He has been jailed previously for his peaceful activism, spending four years in prison on trumped-up public order charges from 2013 to 2017.

Since the massive crackdown on lawyers and activists in 2015, the Chinese authorities have been systematically using national security charges with extremely vague provisions, such as "subverting state power" and "inciting subversion of state power", to prosecute lawyers, scholars, journalists, activists and NGO workers.

#### TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter to one or both government officials listed by April 27, 2021 urging the authorities to:

- release Xu Zhiyong immediately and unconditionally unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offense and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;
- pending his release, ensure that Xu Zhiyong has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;
- ensure Xu Zhiyong is provided adequate food and allow him prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 119.20. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### Chief Procurator Wang Qinjie

People Procuratorate of Linyi City  
Jiefang East Road, Hedong Qu,  
Linyi Shi, Shandong Sheng, 276034  
People's Republic of China

#### Ambassador Cui Tiankai

Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
3505 International Place NW, Washington DC 20008  
Phone: 202 495 2266 | Fax: 202 495 2138  
Email: chineseembassyspokesperson@gmail.com  
Twitter: @ChineseEmbinUS  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

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<https://aipdx.org>

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\$1.20 - Up to 1 oz

## Urgent Action: Guatemala

### ATTACKS AGAINST XINCA LEADERS CONTINUE

NAME AND PRONOUN: Luis Fernando García Monroy (he / him); Julio David González Arango (he / him); Xinca People Defenders (they / them)

On February 7th, 2021, Luis Fernando García Monroy, member of the Xinca Parliament, received a death threat by a man in Aldea El Volcancito (east Guatemala). Three weeks earlier, another member of the Xinca Parliament, Julio David González Arango, was shot by an armed man in Mataquesuintla (south east Guatemala). Luis Fernando and Julio David have been defending the rights of the Xinca people from the impact of the Pan American Silver's Escobal mine and faced attacks in the past due to their work. We call for a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into these attacks and any other previous aggressions against the Xinca People.

In April 2013, the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines granted to the company Tahoe Resources an exploitation license for the Escobal mining project. After that, the conflict around the mine escalated. On April 27th, 2013, security guards at the mine site fired tear gas and rubber bullets on community members protesting outside the mine's entrance, injuring some of them. For more information, see: Mining in Guatemala: Rights at risk (AMR 34/002/2014).

In 2019, the Canadian based mining company Pan American Silver completed the acquisition of Tahoe Resources, adding the Escobal mine to its portfolio. However, mining activities in Escobal have been paralyzed since 2017. After several appeals from the Centre for Environmental, Social and Legal Action (CALAS), who previously defended the rights of communities affected by the San Rafael mining company, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) of Guatemala ordered a provisional suspension and the completion of a community consultation with the Xinca people.



Members of CALAS reported reiterated acts of intimidation and harassment against them. For more information see Urgent Action: Smear Campaign against Human rights defenders (AMR 34/6680/2017). Lawyer Quelvin Jimenez, defender of the rights of the Xinca indigenous people, reported that on June 23rd, 2020 a group of armed people disrupted a meeting of the Xinca Indigenous People authorities, which he also attended, threatening and beating some of the participants (see Urgent Action AMR 34/0733/2019). He has faced smear and stigmatization campaigns on social media, judicial harassment, and received death threats and other forms of intimidation due to his work (see Urgent Action AMR 34/0336/2019).

According to Amnesty International's research, human rights defenders in Guatemala carry out their activities in an extremely hostile environment. Defenders are also regularly targeted with smear campaigns aimed at stigmatizing and discrediting them by private actors and the Guatemalan authorities. The criminal justice system is regularly misused, defenders are falsely accused and prosecuted trying to keep them silent and break up movements and organizations.

Those working on rights related to land, territory and the environment are particularly at risk. With continuous threats, intimidation, and attacks against them. For more information, see: We are defending the land with our blood: Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala (AMR 01/4562/2016).

The Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA) reported more than a thousand of attacks against human rights defenders in 2020, including 15 killings, and 22 attempts of killings.

Guatemala has yet to adopt a public policy for the protection of human rights defenders, which was



ordered by the Inter- American Court of Human Rights in 2014 in the judgement Human Rights Defender et al. vs Guatemala.

### Sample Letter

*I am writing to express my concern about the recent attacks against Xinca defender Luis Fernando García Monroy in Aldea El Volcancito, in the Santa Rosa department, east Guatemala. According to the defender, on February 7th, 2021, a man allegedly linked to a mining company operating in the region and two other men intercepted him on the road. The man insulted and threatened him and his relatives, and together with the other two men tried to force Luis Fernando to get out of his car. Luis Fernando García's 17-year-old brother, who arrived in a motorcycle at the scene shortly thereafter, was hit and injured by the same man. These events occurred after a series of attacks against other members of the Xinca Parliament. On January 16th, 2021, Xinca defender Julio David González Arango was shot and seriously injured by an armed man on his property in Mataquescuintla, a town in the Jalapa department, south-east Guatemala.*

*I call on you to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into the attacks against Luis Fernando García Monroy and Julio David González Arango and any previous aggression against the Xinca People, taking into account the fact that these crimes may have been linked to the victims' work defending human rights, and to bring those responsible to justice.*

*Yours sincerely,*

### TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 21.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### **Attorney General Consuelo Porras**

Email: [secretariageneral@mp.gob.gt](mailto:secretariageneral@mp.gob.gt) Twitter: @MPguatemala

Dear Attorney General Porras,  
Ambassador Manuel Espina  
Embassy of Guatemala  
2220 R St. NW,  
Washington DC 20008

Phone: 202 745 4953

Fax: 202 745 1908

Email: [infoembaguateuu@minex.gob.gt](mailto:infoembaguateuu@minex.gob.gt)

Twitter: @EmbaGuateUSA

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 12th, 2021

## **Urgent Action: Iran BRITISH-IRANIAN LABOR ACTIVIST DETAINED**

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Mehran Raoof (He; him)  
Mehran Raoof, a British-Iranian national and a labor rights activist, is being arbitrarily detained in Tehran's Evin prison. Revolutionary Guards agents arrested him on October 16th, 2020. He is being held in prolonged solitary confinement, in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

The efforts of workers, trade unionists and labour rights activists in Iran to raise concerns about unpaid wages, precarious working conditions, staggering inflation and poor living standards have consistently led to crackdowns by the Iranian authorities. Despite undue restrictions on the right to freedom of association and a ban on independent trade unions in Iran, many workers and their allies continue to courageously form such unions and workers' rights organizations. Their efforts have often led to dismissals without justification or being forced into early retirement, attacks and beatings by security forces policing workers' protests, reprisals for organizing or participating in peaceful protests, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and long prison sentences on spurious national security charges. At least one labour rights activist, Arash Johari, who was arrested during the crackdown in October 2020, has since been sentenced to 16 years in prison in connection with his labour rights activism, leading to fears that others, including Mehran Raoof, could also face harsh prison sentences.

Amnesty International has documented a pattern of systematic violations of the right to a fair trial in Iran, beginning from the time of arrest right up until when defendants stand trial. Individuals detained, investigated and prosecuted, especially those who are dual nationals or who are arrested on politically motivated charges, including human rights defenders, are subjected to grossly unfair judicial proceedings. Most are arrested without warrants and held in undisclosed locations without access to their families

or lawyers. Prosecution authorities and interrogators belonging to security and intelligence bodies, including the Revolutionary Guards, systematically deny detainees their right to access a lawyer from the time of arrest, including even lawyers vetted and approved by the judiciary, and during the investigation phase of their case. Torture and other ill-treatment against individuals arrested in politically-motivated cases is widespread and systematic, especially during interrogations, and prison and prosecution authorities also deliberately deny prisoners of conscience and other prisoners held for politically motivated reasons access to adequate health care, including medication.



Intelligence and security agents often hold detainees in poor and unsanitary conditions in prolonged solitary confinement, including in section 2A of Evin prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, for up to 24 hours a day for weeks or months and only remove them from their cells for interrogations. Detainees in solitary confinement are held without any access to natural

light and fresh air, often in filthy cells that are infested with insects. Such cells often lack adequate sanitary facilities and products for detainees to maintain personal hygiene, detainees sleep on the floor with typically one blanket and are given meagre rations of poor-quality food. Former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International have consistently said that detention in prolonged solitary confinement caused them immense psychological pain and suffering and was used to coerce them to make "confessions". Under such circumstances, prolonged solitary confinement in and of itself amounts to torture. Forced "confessions" obtained under torture and other ill-treatment and without a lawyer present are consistently used as evidence by courts to issue convictions.

International human rights law prohibits the arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has found that detention can be arbitrary even when allowed by domestic law if it contravenes international standards or is incompatible

with other human rights such as the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Detainees have a right to communicate with the outside world and to receive visits. Prolonged solitary confinement, that is solitary confinement imposed for periods beyond 15 days for 22 hours or more a day, violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Torture is an international crime and its use is prohibited under all circumstances. Statements elicited as a result of torture, ill-treatment or other forms of coercion must be excluded as evidence in criminal proceedings, except those brought against suspected perpetrators of such abuse. The right to a fair trial is legally binding on all states as part of customary international law. Those facing criminal proceedings must have the right to access legal counsel of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout the pre-trial and trial proceedings; not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt; not to be detained on vague charges; to receive a fair, public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal; and to be provided with a public, reasoned judgement.

*Dear Mr Raisi,*

*I am writing to express serious concern at the continued arbitrary detention of labor rights activist Mehran Raoof, 64, in Section 2A of Evin prison since his arrest on 16 October 2020. Agents from the intelligence unit of the Revolutionary Guards raided his home in Tehran, searched it and confiscated personal items including his computer. He was subjected to incommunicado detention for a month following his arrest, after which he was allowed to make a brief telephone call to a distant relative in Iran. He has been denied calls with his immediate family, all of whom live outside Iran, and the right to access legal counsel, even from the judiciary-approved lawyers that his family have retained on his behalf. He has been held in prolonged solitary confinement for months. Amnesty International fears that he is at serious risk of further torture and other human rights violations.*

*Mehran Raoof is a dual British and Iranian national and lives between Iran and the UK. Amnesty International understands that his friends have tried to retain an independent lawyer of his choice on his behalf, but the authorities have refused to grant the lawyer access to his case file until trial. Mehran Raoof was detained around the same time as several other labor rights activists across the country in October 2020 in a coordinated crackdown to quash advocacy on workers' rights. One of those arrested has since been sentenced to 16 years in*

*prison on spurious national security charges, leading to fears of long sentences against them all. Mehran Raoof is among dozens of dual nationals arrested and detained in Iran in recent years. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran has expressed concern at the continued arbitrary detention of dual nationals and has said that the authorities have subjected them to "sham trials", convicted them based on "fabricated evidence or...no evidence at all" and "attempted to use them as diplomatic leverage."*

*I ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Mehran Raoof, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights through his labor rights activism. Pending his release, I ask you to ensure that he has regular access to his family outside Iran, a lawyer of his choosing and any health care he needs.*

*Yours sincerely,*

#### **TAKE ACTION:**

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to the government official listed below. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 26.21. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### **Head of judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi**

c/o H.E. Majid Takht Ravanchi  
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
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New York, NY 10017  
Phone: 212 687-2020 I Fax: 212 867 7086  
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**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 20th, 2021**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.