

7 November 2017

## **China: Human rights defender Li Yuhan detained incommunicado by Shenyang police**

On 31 October 2017, family of disappeared human rights lawyer **Li Yuhan (李昱函)** learned, following a call to an informal police contact, that she is currently under criminal detention in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province. On 9 October 2017, the human rights defender sent a text message to her younger brother reporting that she was being “taken away” by Shenyang police. She has been held in incommunicado detention since.

[Li Yuhan](#) is a Beijing-based human rights lawyer and advocate for victims of human rights violations, known to many in China’s human rights community as “big sister”, a reference to both her age and her compassionate demeanour. In her capacity as a human rights lawyer, Li Yuhan has represented sensitive cases on freedom of belief and access to government information. In 2015, during China’s “709” crackdown on human rights lawyers, Li Yuhan defended [Wang Yu](#), a fellow human rights lawyer who was targeted as one of the central victims of the crackdown. Wang Yu was officially released on bail on 22 July 2016 and allowed to return home on 20 July 2017.

On 9 October 2017, Li Yuhan sent a text message telling her younger brother, Li Wensheng, that she was being “taken away” by Shenyang City Public Security Bureau, Heping Branch police. Despite regulations under Chinese law that family members must be notified within 24 hours of an individual’s arrest, Li Yuhan’s family have still received no official communication from Shenyang police. On 31 October 2017, Li Wensheng learned from an informal phone call to a police officer contact from Shenyang City, Heping Branch, that Li Yuhan had been placed under criminal detention at the Shenyang No. 1 Detention Centre, “most likely” on charges of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”. The family has not been allowed any communication with Li Yuhan. On 6 November 2017, Li Yuhan’s lawyer was denied a meeting with his client by facility staff of the Shenyang No. 1 Detention Centre, in further violation of Li Yuhan’s legal rights.

Due to her work defending sensitive cases and drawing attention to government and police wrongdoing, Li Yuhan has frequently been the target of acts of retaliation by Chinese authorities including threats to her family, verbal harassment, and violent, physical assault. Associates of Li Yuhan believe that Shenyang authorities have in this case used nation-wide “stability” measures in the lead-up to China’s 19th Party Congress as a pretext for targeting Li Yuhan and depriving her of her liberty.

Front Line Defenders calls on Chinese authorities to drop any charges against Li Yuhan and to end her illegal incommunicado detention, as it believes that these acts are solely attempts to deter the defender’s peaceful work as a human rights lawyer.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in China to:**

1. Drop any charges against Li Yuhan, restore her liberty and allow her to contact her family and legal representative;

2. Comply with Chinese and international law in upholding Li Yuhan's procedural rights, including notifying Li Yuhan's family of her current whereabouts and any criminal charges against her;
3. Take steps to guarantee the health and well-being of Li Yuhan while she is in detention;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in China are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.