

8 November 2017

## China: Human rights defender sentenced to one year imprisonment

On 16 October 2017, the Xinfu District Court declared human rights defender **Zhao Zhenjia (赵振甲)** guilty of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” and sentenced him to one year’s imprisonment. He has been in detention for eight months, since his arrest on 9 February 2017.

On 31 January 2017, [Zhao Zhenjia](#) and fellow rights activist [Ding Lingjie](#) sent a signed petition to Chinese President Xi Jinping requesting action against China’s systematic persecution of “petitioners”, citizens who travel to central government offices to seek remedies for instances of local injustice. Nine days later, on 9 February 2017, while Zhao Zhenjia was visiting Beijing from his home city of Fushun, Liaoning Province, he was taken into custody following an inspection of his identification documents by police of Beijings’ Fengtai District, and sent back to Fushun, where he was detained by Fushun authorities on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”. On 7 March 2017, the Xinfu District Court accepted his case. On 11 August 2017, the Xinfu Court tried Zhao Zhenjia in a courtroom inside the Fushun No. 1 Detention Centre, in a trial attended by almost twenty human rights activists. According to media sources, the presiding Judge was forced to close the court session after Zhao Zhenjia’s supporters’ repeated interruption of the trial with bursts of applause for the human rights defender.

On 16 October 2017, two months after his trial, the Xinfu District Court announced a guilty verdict for Zhao Zhenjia, sentencing the human rights defender to one year’s imprisonment, dated from the defender’s arrest on 9 February 2017.

According to individuals familiar with the Zhao Zhenjia’s case, his current incarceration is an act of retaliation by Chinese authorities for the petition sent to President Xi Jinping on 31 January 2017. Front Line Defenders condemns China’s conviction of Zhao Zhenjia and impels Chinese authorities to release the defender and quash the conviction against him.

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

1. Immediately release Zhao Zhenjia and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. 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.

#### Front Line Defenders Board of Trustees

Denis O’Brien, Noeline Blackwell, Jim Conway, Maria Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real, David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga

#### Front Line Defenders Leadership Council

Hanan Ashrawi, Robert Badinter, Bono, His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, Indai Lourdes Sajor, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Desmond Tutu

#### Front Line Defenders Advisory Council

James L. Cavallaro, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Maina Kiai