



**The Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China
49-51 Portland Place
London
W1B 1JL.**

By e-mail only: press@chinese-embassy.org.uk

FAO: Mr. Liu Xiaoming
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United Kingdom

EXTREMELY URGENT

Dear Sir

Release the five feminists

The Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers was founded in 1930. We are an organisation that provides a forum for the discussion and analysis of law and the legal system both nationally and internationally, from a socialist perspective. We are independent of any political party. Our membership comprises individuals who are lawyers, academics or students and legal workers, and it also has trade union and labour affiliates.

We write in order to protest most profoundly against the arrest and continued detention of Wu Rongrong, Zheng Churan, Li Tingting, Wang Man and Wei Tingting.

As you will be aware they have been held for over a month amid reports that at least two of the women have suffered worsening health problems in detention (Wu Rongrong suffers from Hepatitis B while Wang Man has a heart condition). Zheng Churan, who has poor eyesight, has reportedly had her glasses confiscated.

As lawyers and campaigners based in the UK we can see that their case has thrown a spotlight on the vindictive treatment that is widespread in China when security officials try to extract confessions from dissidents and social activists. Court cases in China rely heavily on confessions, and therefore an attempt to break down the women's resolve is what is taking place.

On 12 March, the five were reportedly officially charged by police with "creating a disturbance, picking quarrels and provoking troubles". This is a catch-all charge widely used by the dictatorship to silence and incarcerate regime critics – including workers' representatives and 'political reform' activists. A guilty verdict can carry a sentence of up to five years in prison. The five can now be held in detention for 37 days before the authorities decide whether to press ahead with formal charges.

Reports from the women's lawyers suggest they have been interrogated with the focus shifting from the original 'offence' – their plans to hand out flyers against sexual harassment on International Women's Day (8 March) – to investigate earlier activities. Liang Xiaojun, a lawyer helping with the women's case, said that Wu Rongrong had been questioned intensively about the

2012 "Occupy Men's Toilets" campaign, an activity designed to showpiece the unfair allocation of facilities in shopping malls and other public places. Some of the other women were interrogated about the "Bloodstained Bride" campaign against domestic violence, which took place in 2013 and 2014.

Since the five women activists were arrested there have been petitions organised throughout China calling for their release. Such is the support that in many schools and universities these actions have been stopped by the authorities with school officials threatening reprisals against students.

We call on you to:

1. Release the 5 feminist activists.
2. Drop all charges.

We look forward to a prompt reply.

Yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Russell Fraser". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Yours".

Russell Fraser
Chair, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers.