

02/10/2025

Li Jun  
Suzhou City People's Procuratorate  
No.388 Jiefang East Road, Gusu District, Suzhou City  
Jiangsu Province, 215000  
P.R. China

Dear Chief Li,

I am writing to express my grave concern for prominent human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng (余文生) and his wife Xu Yan(徐艳). The couple, both well-known activists in China, were taken into police custody while en route to the delegation of the European Union to China in Beijing on 13 April 2023, where they were to attend a meeting with the EU's Ambassador to China. They were detained in Beijing Shijingshan Detention Centre from that date until January 2024, after which they were transferred to Suzhou Detention Centre in Jiangsu province, some 1000km away.

Yu and Xu were arrested for „picking quarrels and provoking trouble”, an overly broad crime which is widely used for targeting human rights defenders, journalists and dissidents. In October 2023, Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan were indicted on those charges, as well as an additional and more serious charge of „inciting subversion of state power.” There is no date set for their trial.

Xu Yan has reportedly lost 14kg since being detained and the conditions of her detention in Beijing may have constituted torture and other ill-treatment. She has been subjected to verbal abuse, including being intimidated by police who threatened to arrest her son if he undertakes advocacy on her and Yu's case. Their son, who turned 18 just before their detention, has faced a serious deterioration of his mental health over the last year, and currently suffers from depression. Xu and Yu's transfer to Suzhou, nearly 1000km away from their home in Beijing, has exacerbated his isolation and the risk of further mental health impacts.

Yu Wensheng, a prisoner of conscience, and his wife Xu Yan are being detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression.

I therefore call on you to:

- Release both of them immediately and unconditionally, as they are being detained solely for peacefully exercising their human right to freedom of expression;
- Pending their release, ensure they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Ensure their son and other members of their family are not subjected to harassment and threats.

Yours sincerely,