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## CHINA | Organizations Call for Lawyers' Release

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) joins over 45 other organizations from China, Hong Kong and around the world in calling on the Chinese authorities to stop the illegal detention of hundreds of lawyers and citizens and to release those who are still being held.

CSW previously reported the detention, interrogation and disappearance of over 100 human rights lawyers and activists beginning July 10. That number has now reached over 265. While many were released, around 30 remain in some form of detention or have been forcibly disappeared. Those detained include human rights lawyers and activists but also relatives of lawyers and staff from the lawyers' firms.

Dozens of organizations have signed on to a statement first issued July 20 in Hong Kong by the China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese and six other initiating organizations.

The statement points out that the arrested lawyers have represented numerous human rights cases and have defended "practitioners of religion and belief" as well as disabled persons, victims of forced evictions and human rights activists. According to the statement, "If the lawyers' rights are not protected, the rights of citizens cannot be safeguarded."

The statement also calls for the international community to "continue its concern" for the lawyers and citizens in China. Since July 10, a number of foreign governments, UN experts and lawyers' groups have issued statements condemning the spate of arrests.

Several lawyers are still being held incommunicado over a month since the crackdown began. In a recent update, the Concern Group reported that the wife of Christian lawyer Li Heping had been summoned and questioned for five hours after appealing for information on her husband's whereabouts and posting related information online. Li Heping was taken away by police July 10 and has not been seen since.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We join our voice with over 45 different organizations and institutions around the world in calling on the Chinese authorities to release the lawyers, activists and other citizens still in detention immediately. Human rights lawyers in China defend victims of rights abuses and injustices at great risk to themselves and play a vital role in upholding the rule of law and defending social justice. We reiterate our call for the detained lawyers' immediate and unconditional release."