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## **CHINA | Human Rights Lawyers Issue Message**

A new year message calling for “rule-based governance” and “the betterment of human rights in China” has been issued by around 300 Chinese human rights lawyers.

The message, posted on ChinaChange.org, highlights multiple cases of human rights abuses in 2016, including the detention of human rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong, who went missing Nov. 21. Jiang, a Christian, is a leading member of the Chinese Human Rights Lawyers Group and has worked on a variety of rights-related cases, including representing religion or belief communities. On Dec. 23, Jiang’s family members received a notice from the police stating he is being held on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power.”

Another Christian human rights lawyer, Zhang Kai, was detained for 48 hours from Dec. 27-29, according to China Aid. Previously, Zhang was held for six months after being taken into custody Aug. 25, 2015 during a widespread crackdown on human rights defenders in which over 300 lawyers, their colleagues and family members were interrogated, detained or disappeared. He was released in March 2016 after making a televised “confession” which many of his supporters believe was coerced.

In a separate case, authorities cremated the body of Christian prisoner of conscience Peng Ming on Dec. 29 without granting his relatives’ request for an autopsy by “an international, independent medical authority acceptable to the family.” Peng's sister, Peng Xing, told RFA that the authorities had cremated the body without permission from his family despite previously saying they would give the family 10 days’ notice. Peng Ming died in prison Nov. 29 while serving a life sentence for engaging in “terrorist activities.” In a statement by the family dated Dec. 10, the family reported that organs had been removed from the body against his family’s wishes

Christian Solidarity Worldwide’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “CSW continues to call on the Chinese authorities to reverse this dangerous downward trend concerning human rights

in China. Lawyers and activists on the frontline of the defense of basic rights are still being arrested, detained and disappeared. Some, like Zhang Kai, have been released on bail only after making televised “confessions”; others, like Jiang Tianyong, remain in detention in undisclosed locations where they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment. The case of long-term Christian prisoner Peng Ming also demonstrates the lack of transparency and accountability around the treatment of prisoners of conscience. We join the Chinese Human Rights Lawyers Group in looking forward to a time “when human rights will be valued and respected”. We call on the Chinese government to uphold human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, in line with international standards.”