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IHLO-HTUR/DM-JK/FW

26 November 2007

Dear Mr. Xu,

Brutal stabbing of local labour-advice and support centre worker in Shenzhen

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 168 million unionised workers through its 305 national affiliated union centers in 153 countries and territories, including China's Hong Kong SAR, I am writing to express our strong condemnation of the brutal attack on a workers' representative and advisor, **Huang Qingnan**, in Shenzhen.

The ITUC has been informed of the brutal stabbing of Huang Qingnan, a worker from a local Shenzhen based labour-advice and support centre – the *Dagongzhe Centre*. I understand that he remains in a serious condition and may lose one of his limbs. This attack, while of grave concern in itself, has I understand been preceded by two other violent attacks on the *Dagongzhe* centre. These attacks appear to be part of a larger campaign directed towards the centre and in particular its work with migrants in the run-up to the implementation of the new Labour Contract law.

We understand that the initial attacks took place on the 11 October and 14 November 2007, when a group of unknown people came to destroy the property and furniture of the centre. On 20 November 2007, Huang Qingnan, who we understand is the legal representative of the centre, was attacked and severely injured by two men with knives near the *Dagongzhe* offices. He was stabbed repeatedly and left with knife wounds of more than 10 centimeters long. His muscle, bones and nerves were reportedly cut apart – and he has just recently been moved out of intensive care. It is not yet clear if he will regain the use of all his limbs. Prior to his work at the centre, Huang Qingnan was a previous victim of an occupational injury several years ago and his old injuries pose additional complications for treatment.

In addition, according to workers from the Longgang District, Baoan District and Dongguan City, many workers are being beaten or verbally threatened when they try to claim unpaid or missing wages. It is clear that the events and the attack on Huang are not an individual instance but part of a larger, violent campaign.

As you may know we wrote to the Chinese central authorities on 25 May 2007 about the new law. While we remain concerned that core issues such as freedom of association

have not been addressed in the new law, we regard many of the provisions in the law to be an improvement on previous legislation. It is for this reason that we have been monitoring the situation over the past few months with concern. As you will no doubt be aware, there have been increasing reports of mass lay offs of workers by companies in an apparent attempt to shed longstanding workers before the new provisions - which protect their employment status with their companies - come into force, on 1 January 2008. A case in point is the ongoing protest by more than 700 workers of the Shixin Electronics Company in Tangxia town (Dongguan, Guangdong province), who took to the streets last Thursday, 22 November 2007, over their severance package and demanded to be paid in accordance with the new law, which would give them an amount proportional to their years of service instead of six weeks' pay. It now appears that the practice of massive dismissals in order to avoid more extensive responsibilities after the new legislation enters into force is being mirrored by more violent means to intimidate and threaten workers who try to resist these moves.

However, at the same time these attacks also appear to be consistent with the reports of increasing harassment, monitoring and surveillance of workers rights groups throughout China, but predominantly in the Pearl River Delta. We understand that many are facing quiet but continued harassment from local officials as well as from miscellaneous sources who have been pressured to withdraw support for them [for example in the form of official registration, tax matters and rental issues]. The media also notes an increase in the number of journalists and lawyers being detained and harassed because of their work regarding labour rights issues and related civil society defense work.

We urge you to ensure that your government and the relevant Public Security Bureaus ensure the safety of these organizations which play a vital role in the well-being of local society and the welfare of the workers.

We understand that the Dagongzhe Centre has sent letters requesting a thorough investigation into the attacks by the local public security officials – we hope that a careful and comprehensive investigation is concluded and those responsible are brought to justice. In addition we urge your government to recognize the role which civil society groups – including labour rights' groups – play in the creation and development of a harmonious society, one which your government is so eager to form.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy Ryde". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'G' and 'R'.

General Secretary

Cc President Hu Jintao, People's Republic of China
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