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## **Human Rights Now**

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Secretary General, Kazuko Ito

**For Immediate release**

### **HRN requests release of Mr. Pu Zhiqiang, human rights lawyer in China**

1. Human Rights Now (HRN), a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO, expresses its deep concern about long-term detention of the prominent human rights lawyer Mr. Pu Zhiqiang and strongly requests immediate release of Mr. Pu and establishment of freedom of expression in China.

2. In May 2014, before the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “Tiananmen Square protests of 1989” on June 4<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Pu and more than 10 other prominent human rights lawyers held a private study event at home in Beijing to commemorate the bloody suppression of the occurrence. However, the next day of the study event, the police took five participants, including Mr. Pu, away on a charge of provoking furor.

Although four participants were released after a while, Mr. Pu was formally arrested on June 13<sup>th</sup> on charges of provoking furor and illegally obtaining personal information. According to the press report, Mr. Pu's case was sent to prosecution office in November, which currently discusses whether he be indicted with reviews four crimes, including inciting state subversion and other two charges.

3. At the time when Tiananmen Square protests occurred, Mr. Pu was a graduate student and joined launching student-led organization and participated hunger strike. He obtained a qualification as a lawyer and has worked for people suffered by the government suppression. Mr. Pu has been committed for the abolishment of Re-education through labor system, and as a result of his tireless commitment of activities, the government of China indicated a policy which officially abolish the system in November 2013. In the same year, he was selected as one of the “Foreign Policy Top 100 Global Thinkers.”

Since Mr. Pu was arrested with ambiguous charges such as provoking furor and illegally obtaining personal information, there is widespread of disappointment as “retrogression of rule of law” all over the world as well as in China. If he is charged with inciting state subversion, serious political crimes will be prosecuted.

4. Mr. Pu's arrest obviously violates the global human rights protection established and recognized, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freedom of assembly and speech and protection of human rights activists are the most fundamental guarantee of human rights. The Article 35, Chapter two, of Constitution of the People's Republic of China also states "citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession, and of demonstration." Mr. Pu's freedom of speech should be guaranteed even from the point of view of the Chinese Constitution.

Recently, it is increased that confinement, arrest and conviction of people, such as lawyers, activists, journalists, and researcher, who are engaging for society, with charges, like mayhem, inciting state subversion, provoking furor, and leaking national confidential information. Lawyers' missions are to guarantee fundamental rights of peoples and achieve and maintain social justice. Nations need to guarantee their freedom of body and mind.

Besides, there should be no arrests, confinements and suppressions of journalists, researchers and activists, who have social responsibility and are working for human rights, without any clear and accountable reason. It cannot be said that there is contribution for fair and robust development in China by having had the position of suppressing development of civil society with dire penalties.

Hence, HRN calls on the government of People's Republic of China to:

1. Make the information regarding the case, in which Mr. Pu is detained, available to the public.
2. Cease the prosecutions of and releasing the people, including Mr. Pu, in custody by the activity of peaceful speech and assembly.
3. Under the global standard of human rights, treat them in humane manner, allow them to interview with attorney, and allow them to receive sufficient medical treatment as needed.

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***Human Rights Now ~Protecting Human Rights for All~***

Human Rights Now is a Tokyo based international human rights NGO comprising a body of experienced legal professionals dedicated to protecting and promoting human rights around the world, with a special focus on Asia. The activity includes monitoring/ fact-finding of human rights, human rights education and advocacy work. Human Rights Now has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since August 2012.

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