

The Challenges Rights Defense Attorneys in China Face and Its Future Prospect

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We are now living in the China set against such a dramatic background of the times: First, the economic system is fast evolving while its political system has seen little changes over the years. Second, its legal system is increasingly improving, but the public power is often not restrained by the law. Third, the citizens' awareness of their rights is increasing and the more the awareness to defend one's rights, the more prominent the abuse and the shirking of responsibilities by the public power becomes.

With the advent of the Internet in China, the first widespread and passionate participation by the citizens in political matters occurred in 2003 during the "Sun Zhigang Incident," which successfully made the State Council announce the annulment of the system of "internment and deportation." In the next year, "The State respects and safeguards human rights" was solemnly written into the Constitution. In the next five years, right defense attorneys have, as a professional social group committed to promoting rule of law and safeguarding human rights, presented themselves before the world.

Certainly, in a country where rule of law is still far from realized and where there is full of terrible things against ordinary citizens, the work and life of right defense attorneys must be full of obstacles and frustrations. Just because we engage in work involving human rights, government departments not only do not understand the significance of our existence, they also regard us as the targets of their domestic defense. We seem to have become personae non gratae in the eyes of the government and we are often treated unfairly. Some of us have been beaten and kidnapped. The personal freedom of some of us is illegally restricted and some of us are illegally stalked by force. Some of us are forced to report our activities and some are driven out by our landlords due to pressure from the government. Some are threatened and given a disciplinary warning by Bureau of Justice and lawyers' associations. Some are simply fired by their law firms due to pressure from the government.

This year, the right defense attorneys as a social group are enduring more pressure than ever before. As far as I can confirm, 19 attorneys at this time are unable to practice law. They are Jiang Tianyong, Li Heping, Li Xiongbing, Li Fuchun, Wang Yajun, Guo Shaofei, Cheng Hai, Tang Jitian, Yang Huiwen, Tong Chaoping, Liu Guitao, Xie Yanyi, Wen Haibo, Liu Wei, Zhang Lihui, Zhang Chengmao, Zhang Xingshui, Wei Liangyue and Sun Wenbing. These attorneys have always persisted in providing legal assistance or defense services for clients to safeguard their legitimate rights. They include victims of Sanlu poisonous milk powder, parents of children victimized in the earthquake, HIV carriers, peasants who have lost their land, detained Tibetans, house church Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, right defense activists, political dissidents, victims of violent family planning policies and clients from other various areas.

Judicial administrative departments in Beijing and other places have terminated attorneys' rights to practice on the ground that these right defense attorneys have not passed the so-called "annual evaluation" or that the law firms where they work have not passed the "annual inspection." However, the "annual evaluation" for attorneys and the "annual inspection" for law firms themselves are not the administrative penalty that can terminate the right to practice of the attorneys or of their law firms. We can see that the "annual evaluation" for attorneys and the "annual inspection" of law firms have degenerated into an illegal, disorderly and remediless administrative penalty in disguised form that overrides the disciplinary penalty in the industry and administrative penalty on the practicing attorneys.

What delights us is that on the one hand, the right defense attorneys have not given up their idea of safeguarding rule of law and human rights. Each time they negotiate with judicial administrative departments, they express their criticism on the illegal administration and their firm belief that China will certainly develop into a country under rule of law. On the other hand, the disadvantaged social groups whose rights are harmed also express their desire of "attorneys for us, and we for attorneys." It is my belief that the appeal for rights by the ordinary people whose rights are harmed, and the sense of mission of the attorneys, will combine to form a powerful synergy in promoting the progress of our country in human rights and rule of law.

Though the road to rule of law and human rights in China will be hard and long, yet the long march of this time is attracting more and more people, including you, us and them. Given this situation, I, as a member of this social group of defense attorneys, personally am full of confidence for the "Same World, Same Human Rights."

Finally, let me express my gratitude for all my friends who are concerned about the rule of law in China and the progress in human rights.

Joint Declaration of Rights Defense Attorneys

Zhang Kai and Li Fuchun

Night, July 6, 2009

Some of us rights defense attorneys hereby ask ChinaAid Association to publish the following declaration to the international community on our recent sufferings and the worsening prospect for the rule of law in China:

Recently, the rights defense attorneys in China are suffering unprecedented large-scale repression. Rights defense attorneys are a particular social group in China, and they can also be referred to as human rights attorneys. The work the rights defense attorneys do is mainly using the relief of law to safeguard citizens' basic rights within the framework of the Constitution such as freedom of speech, freedom of belief, personal freedom and freedom of property from illegal infringement by the public power, etc. In such a country as China where there is a tradition of thousands of years of autocratic rule and where law is not clearly defined, rights defense attorneys have always been regarded by the authorities as aliens to be expelled and suppressed. Recently, the authorities have become more and more brazen and wanton in such attacks and suppression that the professional licenses of some attorneys were unreasonably rejected during the annual inspection, resulting in their inability to practice their law. A few attorneys were even violently beaten.

The prominent human rights attorneys from Beijing Zhang Kai and Li Chunfu were besieged by over 20 local policemen and met with violence and beatings at the residence of their client when they were in Jiangjin, Chongqing, Sichuan province to investigate the case of Jiang Xiqing who died an abnormal death during custody at a labor camp. Zhang Kai and Li Chunfu were taken away in handcuffs and were detained for six hours. The police illegally examined the computers and the materials the attorneys brought with them as evidence. They tried to force the attorneys to cancel the contract with their clients. As of today, the two attorneys still have not recovered from their injuries. The two attorneys are still trying to talk with relevant departments with reasonable and legal means that they have always used in defending the rights of other people. So far, however, they have not given any official explanations.

We expect the international community to show more concerns on the rights defense attorneys in China. Because the legal system in the Chinese society advances so slowly or even goes backwards, the social conflicts are increasingly intensifying and the ways by which the people seek relief thereof are full of barriers. Given this situation, rights defense attorneys are making great efforts and are paying a great price for the progress of the Chinese law, for which they have made indelible achievements in the history of the progress of rule of law in China. They not only provide legal relief in individual cases, but rights defense attorneys have also played a role in neutralizing social conflicts and in easing tensions between the government and the people. They provide legal assistance and moral support for the miserable Chinese people and are truly promoting the balanced and orderly development of the society.

We also hope the Chinese government can correct its errors in its administration out of its own will and give the rights defense attorneys a legal and sufficient professional environment. Law is the bottomline in guaranteeing that a government wins the support of its people. It is also the last line of defense with which the people can enjoy the freedom and safety in their life. They should give the rights defense attorneys more encouragement and support, not suppression or injury. Otherwise, such an injury can affect the image and dignity of the Chinese government itself.

Doubtlessly, every human being created in the image of God the Creator enjoys the rights of freedom and equality. The Constitution is the reality of protection of such rights which no one or no government has the right to deprive the people of. This type of rights is natural and has universal values. Rights defense attorneys adhere to the basic spirit endowed by the law and plead on behalf of the people for freedom and equality. And such rights originated from the authorization of God and transcend all countries and races, whether they are Chinese, Americans or tribes in Africa. When man's rights and dignity are hurt, it is the loss on the glory of the Creator. Every one of us has the obligation to strive for improvement on this issue. We hope there will be changes in the Chinese society and we are willing make our efforts in building a free and democratic country under rule of law based on the law of China and the spirit endowed by the law.

Zhang Kai, attorney (Yijia Law Firm of Beijing)

Li Fuchun, attorney.

Human Rights Attorneys in China Very Active but Find Themselves in a Dire Situation

Jiang Tianyong

Since 2005, the social conflicts in China have been intensifying, but people are fast awakening in the awareness of their rights. Given such a background, the rise of the right defense movement has produced a group of human rights defenders such as Gao Zhisheng, Chen Guangchen, Guo Feixiong, Hu Jia, Li Heping, etc. Human rights attorneys are an important group of these people. The human rights attorneys in China work in a wide range of fields such as the freedom of religious belief, freedom of speech, freedom of association, residential rights (objection to forced removal), land rights, rights of ethnic minorities (such as Tibetans), etc. On the one hand, they are becoming more and more active and are more and more needed and depended upon by victims whose human rights are abused. On the other hand, they suffer harassment, repression and persecution from the government.

Following is my experience to demonstrate this situation:

My name is Jiang Tianyong, and I'm a male of Han nationality. I was born in Henan province, PRC in 1971. Currently, I'm residing in the Haidian District of Beijing, China. Because I wanted to engage in work of defending human rights, I quit my work at a middle school in Henan province and came to work at Beijing Globe-law Firm in 2004. In 2005, I got my attorney's license and became a practicing attorney. After that, I've taken a large number of human rights cases, both individually or in partnership with my associates. As a result of this, I've suffered various forms of persecution from the government. Except 2007, I met troubles in renewing my attorney's license at Beijing Bureau of Justice during the annual inspection/registration/annual evaluation in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

In 2006, as I was involved in right defenses cases of migrant workers, Gao Zhisheng's case, victims of violent family planning policies in Linyi, Chen Guangchen's case, I was harassed and threatened by the secret police of Domestic Security Protection Squad of Beijing. They tried to prevent me from participating in these so-called sensitive cases, claiming that it was not good for me. They also said that if I wanted to make a fortune, they could help. Their demands were not unfulfilled. People from Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice found me through my law firm and told me they forbade me to get involved in some cases. They even used special means in getting to know that I had bought a train ticket to go to Linyi for the violent family planning case. They called me many times and forbade me from going there. Even my wife who was living far away in Zhengzhou, Henan province was harassed on the phone by them in the middle of the night. In the meantime, as my landlord could not endure the pressure from the secret police, and he refused to continue renting the house to me. I had to move out. In the same year, the registration of my attorney's license and Li Heping's license got into trouble and were delayed. Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice illegally forced me and my law firm to write a statement of guarantees.

Starting from August 2006, I was illegally stalked because of Gao Zhisheng's case and was placed on house arrest for five months.

In 2008, I continued engaging in cases of human rights and began to provide legal assistance to people sentenced to re-education through labor and HIV carriers. I also provided legal support for NGO organizations that defend human rights---for example, Aizhi Research Institute of Beijing (www.aizhi.net) and Open Constitution Initiative (OCI) (www.gongmeng.cn). After the March 14 Incident in Tibet, I signed a declaration to express my willingness to represent the arrested Tibetans. In that year, I met with serious troubles from Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice during the annual inspection and registration of my attorney's license. They unequivocally told me the reason: "You have gotten involved in sensitive cases." They said they wanted to "unleash their wisdom" and "break the livelihood" of us human rights attorneys. Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice tried illegally to force me to write a statement of guarantees in which I would promise not to get involved in sensitive cases again and not to have interviews with the media. Because their demands lack legal basis, they were rejected by me. After widespread concerns from people both in China and abroad, I finally passed the annual inspection and registration on June 30 of that year. At this time, I have not been able to engage in attorney's work for a month now.

From July 2008 to May 2009, I represented a large number of people in cases ranging from Falun Gong, HIV carriers in defending their rights, earthquake victims (such as Hong Chun case), Tibetans (such as Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche the living Buddha and Jigma Lama). I also participated in the direct election of Beijing Lawyers Association. Because of this, I was seriously persecuted by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice and Beijing Lawyers Association. They joined forces in trying to force the law firm where I worked not to renew our contract. From the end of 2008 to March 2009, the head of Globe-Law Lawyers where I worked talked with me on many occasions and told me that "since we work under them, we have to yield." "We really can't endure the pressure from the above (referring to Bureau of Justice and Beijing Lawyers Association) and "We shouldn't be closed (by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice and Beijing Lawyers Association) just because of you (representing people in cases involving human rights), etc." In the 2009 "Annual Evaluation" of attorneys, the great majority of Chinese human rights attorneys who strictly adhere to law have failed to pass. Six human rights attorneys from our law firm are all among these attorneys who have failed to pass. They are myself, Li Heping, Li Xiongbing, Li Fuchun, Wang Yajun and Guo Shaofei. May 31, 2009, the expiration date for the annual evaluation and we haven't been able to engage in jobs as an attorney since then. Now, we not only can't accept new human right cases, but we also have to stop on cases that we have already accepted before this date, such as the case of Li Zhigang of Shenyang (Falun Gong), He Hongchun case (a case from the earthquake disaster areas), the case of Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche (case involving Tibetan issues) and other human rights cases. When human rights attorneys themselves are bogged down in a difficult situation, the rights of the clients in human rights cases also lose their protection instantly! Other human rights attorneys and I myself have made inquiries at the relevant people at Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice and Beijing Lawyers Association, but nobody has given us an official reply. So far, we still have not received any documents in writing related to the result of our annual evaluation results. Yet, the hints we have received from Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice, Beijing Lawyers Association and our own law firm show that our current predicament has something to do with the cases we have accepted. At about 11:20 a.m. on July 3, Attorney Zhang Xuebing, president of Beijing Lawyers Association told us in the capacity as an "attorney

of our own kind”:

“I know something about your issues. This issue is actually very complicated. As the old saying goes: ‘Rome was not built in a day. Doubtlessly, every human being enjoys the rights of freedom and equality because of the creation by God’ and it is not that easy to solve this problem. You’d better talk with your superiors, and I’m afraid you still have to find a way to win the trust of the Party and the government!”

Starting from 2006, I have always been placed on house arrest on June 4 anniversaries, October 1, the Beijing Olympics and state visits by important diplomats (including China—Africa Forum on Cooperation, visit in 2008 by Congressmen Wolf and Smith). Though I was in America when U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited China, my family was harassed on many occasions by the police. From June 3 to June 7 of 2009, the police were deployed at my door and prohibited me from leaving the house. They threatened me with my personal safety and the safety of my wife and my daughter.

No matter how we suffer, we the human rights attorneys will still adhere to our own belief and will never give up our efforts in winning and defending human rights. In the meantime, we also call on the people who live in the free world and under rule of law to show concern to the efforts made by Chinese people in winning and defending human rights. This is because as long as there are still members of the human race who live in fears and lack of freedom, the enjoyment of freedom and human rights is very likely to be short-lived.

Fighting for Rights Continues Even as Persecution Escalates
——A human rights attorney's experience and perseverance

Tang Jitian

My name is Tang Jitian. I am male of Han nationality. I was born in Jilin, China, on September 1, 1968. I am currently residing in Chaoyang District, Beijing Municipality, China. I started practicing law in 2005 and relocated from Guangdong to practice law in Beijing in 2007. I am now a practicing attorney with Anhui Law Firm of Beijing.

Since August 2008, my normal law practice has been seriously interrupted. At the beginning, I was notified several times by my former law firm (Beijing Haodong Law Firm) that my contract would be terminated ahead of schedule or I should cease my practice. The reason was that the Beijing Municipal Judicial Bureau and Beijing Lawyers Association were infuriated by my and other colleagues' call for direct election of Beijing Lawyers Association. I found my current law firm before my contract of employment expired, but during the course of transfer, my case was unreasonably delayed for nearly twenty days by the judicial administrative department and Beijing Lawyers Association. (The processing clerk said in private that the same thing happened to all those on the blacklist.) Since June 2009, the government has again, in a disguised form, deprived me of my right to practice law. But I have not committed any violation of law or regulations. And my work as an attorney has never been criticized or complained about by my clients. On the contrary, many people, including my clients, often spoke to me directly or on the phone or in their letters about my work, praising me for defending human rights in accordance with law. They encouraged me to overcome the pressure and oppression from the government by giving me their support. They, of course, also felt worried about my situation.

The reason I was suppressed and persecuted by the government is that as an attorney I was involved in quite a lot of work defending human rights. About a week before I was forced to stop practicing law, a police officer named Wang from the General Domestic Security Protection Squad of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau called to make an appointment for a talk with me. His demand was rejected by me. (In April, Wang, together with Sun Di, head of the Domestic Security Department and a police officer surnamed Han, had already talked with me regarding the issues such as Charter 08, representation of cases, and the direct election of Beijing Lawyers Association.) After that, Sun Di again called me, demanding that we have a talk. After he was rejected by me, he threatened me by saying that he could find me through other methods.

Soon afterwards, after six o'clock on the morning of June 3, 2009, under the pretext that we needed to cooperate with an investigation of a case of so-called burglary that had taken place, Attorney Lan Zhixue and I were first prohibited from going out freely. Then we were taken to the Sijiqing Police Station in Haidian District, Beijing Municipality. After they had interrogated me and taken a written record, the police officers at that station unreasonably and illegally detained me till eight o'clock in the evening. That night when I was on my way back to my residence, I was followed and stalked by police officers Lu

Yonghui and Zhang Jian from the Domestic Security Protection Squad of Public Security Branch of Haidian District, Beijing Municipality as well as police officers Li Jing and Shi from Sijiqing Police Station. This continued till dawn on the 4th. Later, these police officers sent for additional police officers. Blocking attorney Dong Qianyong, who was with me, they forcibly pushed me into the car and drove me to their secret detention spot. (It is now known that this place is called Kao Fu Te Sports Training Center and is in the vicinity of the Linglong Bridge in Haidian District.) In the few days that followed, they arranged police officers and security guards to keep watch over me, forbidding me to contact the outside world. Furthermore, I was not allowed to step out of the room at all. During my detention, Lu Yonghui from the Domestic Security Protection Squad and the police officer named He who later joined him held several rounds of what they called exchange of communications, asking me not to get involved with human rights cases (such as the cases of Falun Gong), and not to demand rights from the Judicial Bureau and the Lawyers Association, and not to take part in any social affairs that will irk the government. They stated several times that if I did not cooperate, I could have trouble living and working in Beijing. On June 6, I was transferred to a hotel (I later learned that it was called Dong Lun Xin Xing Hotel) in Chaoyang District where I was held in custody till the evening of June 7 when I regained my freedom. In the past few days, at the request of the police, the owner of the house that I have been renting has asked me to move out and relocate somewhere else.

Over the past few years, as an attorney I have been mainly engaged in defending citizens' right to freedom of expression, right to freedom of religion, right to housing, right to land, and other fields of human rights. It is exactly for these works that I was repudiated and treated with hostility by the government. These works include legal defense for persecuted believers such as Falun Gong practitioners, representation of Wang Zhaojun whose right to freedom of speech and expression was infringed upon by Sina.com (Wang's blog site was shut down by Sina.com because he published 'A Letter to the Chinese People'), and advocacy of the rights of the farmers who have lost their land as well as advocacy of the right to equal employment.

With regard to defending our own rights as attorneys, my efforts focusing on pushing for direct election of Beijing Lawyers Association have also become one of the major reasons why some officials have identified me as a "non-mainstream" attorney.

Since April 2009, making illegal use of the annual evaluation, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice and Beijing Lawyers Association have instructed the Judicial Bureau of Chongwen District several times to have the law firm under its jurisdiction fire me, stating that if attorneys like me were not fired, then the law firm would be subject to rectification and reform indefinitely.

As of today, there has been no change whatsoever in my situation where the government, by subjecting me to an illegal annual evaluation, has in a disguised form, deprived me of my right to practice law.

Practicing Law under Ubiquitous Pressure

Li Xiongbing

My name is Li Xiongbing, and I am male of Han nationality. I was born in Hubei, China, on September 18, 1973, and I'm currently residing in Tongzhou District, Beijing Municipality, People's Republic of China. Since 2005 I have been working as a practicing attorney at Beijing Globe-law Firm.

After the registration of my attorney license was postponed in 2008 by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice on the grounds that I had "handled sensitive cases," my qualification as an attorney and my right to practice law has again been arbitrarily revoked by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice since June 2009. However, I have never committed any violations of law or regulations, and my work as an attorney has never been blamed or criticized by my clients. On the contrary, many of my clients and members of the general public often call me or write to me to praise my work, encouraging me to overcome the pressure from public powers and become an outstanding human rights attorney.

The frequent suppression and persecution I have suffered while working as an attorney are directly linked with my advocacy for human rights. Precisely on the morning of May 31, 2009, the day when my work as an attorney was about to be illegally terminated, two police officers from Domestic Security Protection Squad from the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau made an appointment to talk with me. They expressly gave me two warnings. First, that I should not defend Falun Gong practitioners ever again. Second, that I should not participate again in the relevant work of a non-governmental organization dedicated to pushing for the rule of law and human rights progress. I persisted in practicing my profession independently in accordance with law and rejected their unreasonable demands.

As expected, soon afterwards, I failed to pass the annual evaluation for my attorney license, and I was unable to practice law. Starting from June 2, I was monitored and followed by police officers or police cars for eight days in a row and was not allowed to go to any place without prior approval from the police and meet with anyone without prior approval of the police. It was not until the evening of June 9 that I regained my freedom. In addition, on the evening of June 5, at the request of the police, the owner of the house that I was renting came to my home, asking us to move out and leave Beijing. The kindergarten my child was attending was also harassed by the police and had to relocate to a place far away from my residence. My pregnant wife was also questioned and investigated several times by the relevant departments due to her lack of a so-called "pregnancy permit" and, she received warnings and threats.

Over the past few years, my work as an attorney has been mainly concentrated on these areas: advocacy of civil rights such as citizens' right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of religion, and equal rights as well as public legal services. It is exactly for the work in these areas that I was repudiated and treated with hostility by the government. My work includes the case of Qi Chonghuai, a journalist for Legal Times, involving the freedom of speech; the case of Yuan Xianchen, a human rights worker in Heilongjiang province, involving instigation of the subversion of the government; the case of providing

legal assistance to victims of Sanlu poisonous milk powder; the case of providing legal assistance to victims of child slavery in "illegal brick kilns" in Shanxi, as well as legal defense cases involving religious persecution of believers such as those of "Falun Gong" and the faction of "Three Grades of Servants."

At the end of 2008, because I provided legal assistance to the victims of toxic Sanlu milk powder, I was warned and threatened several times by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice, Beijing Lawyers Association, and other departments. In the summer of 2008, I was also suppressed and threatened several times by Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice, because I had provided legal assistance to the families of children victimized in the earthquake disaster area, and was forced to stop providing legal aid.

As recently as the morning of June 30, 2009, Huang Weizhong, a believer of Falun Gong in Jiamusi Municipality of Heilongjiang Province, was detained and tried. I took the case in April 2009 and acted as a defense attorney for Huang Weizhong. However, when the court trial started on the morning of June 30, the People's Court in the suburbs of Jiamusi Municipality blocked me from entering the court to perform my job as an attorney on the grounds that I failed to pass the annual evaluation Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice. Without having me present as his defense attorney, Huang Weizhong was sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

Defending Rights in Hardship and on a Thin Line

Wen Haibo

Personal resume: Wen Haibo is a male of Han nationality. He was born in Liaoning, People's Republic of China in 1980. Currently, he resides in Chaoyang District, Beijing Municipality, PR China. He started his career as an attorney in 2004 and once worked at Shengzhi Law Office and Yitong Law Firm. Currently, he is a practicing attorney in Shunhe Law Firm of Beijing.

From November 2005 to March 2009, Shengzhi Law Office and Yitong Law Firm, both places where I once worked, were given administrative penalties of "suspending business for reorganization" due to different but groundless reasons given by judicial authorities of Beijing. The true reasons were none other than that these law firms had gotten involved with or had participated in some cases and incidents with which the authorities were not pleased.

I started working with Attorney Gao Zhisheng in April 2004 until the law firm was shut down in November 2005, and I was forced to leave. During this time, both Attorney Gao and I represented a large number of people from socially disadvantaged groups in defending their rights. When we began to defend the rights of Falun Gong adherents in 2005, the suppression we suffered escalated gradually. At first, the judicial authorities or the people working in Beijing Lawyers Association constantly made appointments with us for talks where they gave us a warning of "not allowing you to accept Falun Gong cases." After that, the police constantly harassed, stalked us and videotaped us without permission. At the end of 2005, after Attorney Gao launched a campaign of "hunger strike to fight against violence," I and several other people working in the law firm were one by one placed under house arrest. When I was under house arrest, several plainclothes policemen stayed downstairs 24 hours a day, and they did not allow me to go out. When I had to go out (such as for shopping), someone shadowed me closely. This lasted 45 days.

I left Shengzhi Law Office at the end of 2005 and went to work at Yitong Law Firm. During this time, besides defending the rights of Falun Gong adherents, I also signed in with the attorneys' delegation to provide legal assistance for the Tibetans arrested during the March 14 Incident in Tibet. The signatures for that delegation brought such a great repercussion that about 10 attorneys who joined the delegation all received warnings from the judicial authorities and the police. The police station in charge of my area also made an appointment with me for a talk. They threatened me and told me to leave Beijing. I flatly refused. In the second half of 2008, I also joined the movement of calling for "the direct election of Beijing Lawyers Association." The mention of "direct election" obviously touched the frail nerves of some people in the judicial departments. They counterattacked in a high profile way, and denouncing us as "linking up with each other in private, using democratic election as a signpost, publishing seditious remarks, spreading rumors among the lawyers in Beijing to bewitch the people," "attempting to break away from the supervision and guidance of the judicial administrative departments and the administration of the Lawyers Association in order to deny full-scale the current administrative system on attorneys, the judicial system and even the political system."

As many attorneys from Yitong Law Firm joined in calling for “direct election,” the judicial authorities intended to “kill one as a warning to many others” and suspended Yitong Law Firm for reorganization.

When Yitong Law Firm was shut down at the end of 2008, I was again forced to transfer, this time to Shunhe Law Firm. Since I did not stop getting involved in various cases of human rights and mass groups defending their rights, I brought suppression here, too. Since I did not pass the annual evaluation by Beijing Lawyers Association, I cannot practice normally at this time, and several cases I have accepted before were forced to stop.

Though I have met temporary (possibly long-term or permanent) difficulties in my work, I have received the encouragement and support from my clients and other friends. With this encouragement and support, I do not feel lonely and will continue walking along this road!