

7 April 2021

Open Letter

We, the undersigned, represent a small part of a much larger group of victims of severe human rights violations perpetrated by the People's Republic of China. We were forced to record confessions by the Chinese police and these were then broadcast by Chinese State-owned, Chinese Communist Party-controlled, television network – CGTN and CCTV-4 – which you air.

As direct victims of this practice, we appeal to you to carefully examine the information provided below, and to consider whether TV providers in democratic societies should continue to be morally complicit in airing such intentionally distorted information obtained through torture, threats and deprivation.

Many of us suffered through this ordeal because of our work to defend basic human rights, values taken for granted in your country. The Chinese government, and these Chinese TV stations, denied us the right to a fair trial, the right to see a lawyer, and the right not to be tortured. Instead, via threats to our family, to ourselves and through torture, we were paraded on camera in these **forced confessions**.

It has come to our attention that you are allowing these very same Chinese Party-state TV stations to broadcast. We are but a little over a dozen victims able to speak up, but we know more than 100 victims of forced confessions that were aired by Chinese TV since Xi Jinping came to power in 2013. The real number is certainly much higher. Many victims remain in prison. **A few have been executed.** Many others are at direct risk of being taken by the police again if they speak up.

Most victims are rights lawyers, NGO workers and journalists, who stand up for the rule of law and human rights. As punishment, we have been placed in solitary confinement, held incommunicado and been subjected to physical and mental torture. All this to ensure that when the camera faced us, we had no choice but to repeat the lines given to us by the Chinese police. Our footage is used, often without our knowledge, to spread fake news and fear among the rights communities we belong to.

When torture did not work, threats to loved ones were used to extract filmed confessions. One of us was shown a video of her teenage son being beaten up by police to force her to comply. Another was told his girlfriend, who had been locked up in a secret prison, would be given a 10-year sentence on fabricated charges if he did not cooperate.

These “confessions” happen long before trial, and often long before charges are laid. They are trial by TV and not only TV in China, but also trial by TV in your country, because you air them. Chinese police script every word, direct the delivery, and decide on the clothes. Chinese media collude with the police in their production. The vast majority of victims are never told these recordings are for public airing, and that it will be put on TV, instead we are told its for internal use by the police or courts. Most victims are entirely unaware these have been broadcasts until after they are released from either detention, secret detention, or imprisonment.

As a response to the broadcast of these forced confessions, Australia's public broadcaster has suspended airing of CGTN and CCTV-4 pending an investigation. In Norway, and earlier in Sweden, TV providers took CGTN and CCTV-4 off the air. In the UK, the TV regulator has imposed significant fines

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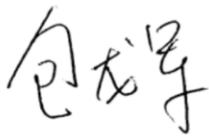
on CGTN for the confession broadcasts and for related invasions of privacy (separately, it has taken CGTN off the air because of a violation over editorial ownership). TV regulators in France have issued a warning while regulators in Canada and the US are currently investigating the TV stations.

You continue to air these channels despite these grave human rights violations. Victims have no way to seek redress. The only way to stop this is for TV regulators to investigate, and TV providers to stringently apply internal codes of conducts and rules.

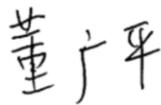
As TV regulators took steps against CGTN, Chinese Party-state TV has reduced the number of forced confessions it has aired. Clearly, we can help to curb these human rights violations by prohibiting China's media from airing until it promises to stop broadcasting forced confessions.

We therefore respectfully urge you to discontinue the airing of CGTN and CCTV-4 on the understanding that allowing such offensive broadcasts to be aired is to facilitate grave human rights violations.

We ask you to consider whether anyone should be assisting the Chinese police in crushing the attempts to secure basic human rights in China. Allowing China's Party-state media to broadcast these confessions is essentially tantamount to assisting the police of a one-party State destroy the small part of Chinese society that is fighting for rights so basic that that everyone in your country takes them for granted every day.



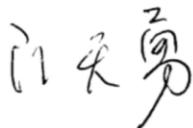
Bao Longjun



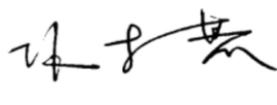
Dong Guangping



Angela Gui (on behalf of Gui Minhai)



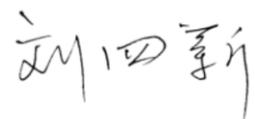
Jiang Tianyong



Lam Wing-kee



Li Gang



Dr Liu Sixin



Peter Dahlin



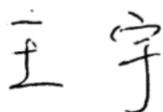
Peter Humphrey



Simon Cheng



Liu Xing



Wang Yu



Xie Yang



Zhai Yanmin



For more information, details on broadcasts, copies of broadcasts, reports and testimonies, please contact Safeguard Defenders.

Info@safeguarddefenders.com | +34 658 680 863 | <https://safeguarddefenders.com>

A comprehensive study of this practice has been filed for review by relevant organs of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), including the bodies dealing with disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, independence of judicial system, and for right to privacy. The review has been attached as an appendix to this letter.