

## **Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition Statement on the Detainment of Women Human Rights Defender Mao Hengfeng**

*16th October 2012*

The Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD IC) condemns the detaining of Mao Hengfeng, a housing and reproductive rights defender, who was taken away by men in plain clothes believed to be Shanghai police officers in Beijing on 30 September. She was subsequently taken from Beijing to Shanghai, and is now being held in the Yangpu district police detention centre. We believe her to be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

According to legal documents shown to Mao Hengfeng's family, the decision by local authorities to detain her was made on 24 September and relates to her participation in a commemorative activity for deceased petitioner (someone who is seeking redress for perceived injustices from the Government) Teng Jingdi earlier this year. However, AWID believes her detention is aimed at preventing her from carrying out campaigning work during the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party scheduled to convene on 8 November.

On 30 September, Mao and several other human rights activists met in Beijing to celebrate the Mid-Autumn festival. According to her family, as the group was waiting for a bus at Shiliqiao bus station in Beijing, they were targeted by two men in plain clothes who were believed to be Shanghai police officers. The group split up as the two men approached the activists. Mao got on to a bus but was tailed by a police car. Shortly after this she was apprehended and taken away.

On 2 October at around 1am, Mao was taken from Beijing to Shanghai, her home city. Later that day, at 2pm, the Shanghai police notified Mao's family that Mao was detained in the Yangpu district police detention centre in Shanghai under suspicion of "gathering to disturb order at a public place" under article 291 of the Chinese Criminal Code.

The WHRD IC supports the right of women human rights defenders to conduct their activities free from violence, threats, or intimidation and would like to express its deepest concern that Mao Hengfeng has been detained solely for her human rights campaigning.

The WHRD IC urges the authorities of China to:

1. Release Mao Hengfeng immediately and unconditionally;
2. Guarantee that Mao Hengfeng is not subjected to torture or other ill treatment;
3. Ensure that Mao Hengfeng has access to the necessary medical assistance and treatment she may require.

*The **Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD IC)** is a resource and advocacy network for the protection and support of women human rights defenders worldwide. All cases referred to in the statement can be found on the WHRD IC website <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org>*