

# China : Citizen journalist jailed for providing information to human rights groups

dimanche 8 août 2021, par [International Federation of Journalists](https://www.ifj.org/) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 6 août 2021).

On July 29, a Chinese court sentenced Zhou Wilin, a reporter for the human rights news website Weiquanwang, to three years and six months in prison for reporting on human rights abuses in articles and on Twitter. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) condemns the sentencing of Zhou and urges the government to release him at once.

Zhou was arrested on charges of *"picking quarrels and provoking trouble"* regarding his human rights articles and Twitter posts. This charge is commonly used against critics of the Chinese Communist Party.

Zhou has already been arrested on the same charges on March 12, 2020, in Hefei city ; he has been detained since then. He was also arrested on five separate occasions between 2011 and 2014 on charges of *"fabricating facts to disrupt public order"* and *"gathering crowds to disrupt public order,"* according to Radio Free Asia.

Human rights lawyer, Liang Xiaojun, said the case was related to overseas funding, as well as his reports on Weiquanwang. The court cited that Zhou was paid for his reporting and claimed this as evidence of 'overseas funding'. The judgement said Zhou had *"repeatedly submitted posts and articles to overseas social media platforms and websites...fabricating stories and making false statements with the help of overseas funds."*

Constitutional scholar, Yao Life, said *"I'm not sure whether the sentence handed down to Zhou Weilin is an attack on Weiquanwang...but it is definitely going to increase the pressure on other Weiquanwang informants, who report on the darker side of our society, revealing its scandals and wrongdoing."*

The IFJ said : *"The sentencing of Zhou Wilin shows that the Chinese government is continuously cracking down on freedom of expression. The IFJ calls on the government to release Zhou Wilin and to repeal legislation that targets the press, destroys all opposition to the Chinese Communist Party and works to stifle quality information informing the people of China."*

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