

Friday, 25 January 2019

Law Council holds ‘grave concerns’ for Australian detained in China

The Law Council of Australia has expressed deep concerns regarding the detention of Australian citizen, Mr Yang Hengjun, in China.

Mr Yang has been detained under residential surveillance on suspicion of ‘endangering national security’, a form of detention which permits authorities to interrogate suspects for several months without access to lawyers, family members or Australian embassy officials.

Law Council President, Arthur Moses SC, said the use of extended pre-trial or pre-charge detention was an affront to the rule of law, and was particularly concerning given reports Mr Yang had been denied access to legal counsel and Australian embassy officials.

“While the Law Council acknowledges the Australian Government’s efforts to ascertain the reasons for Mr Yang’s detention and ensure his wellbeing, diplomatic representations to China must continue as a matter of urgency at the highest levels,” Mr Moses said.

“We hold grave concerns for Mr Yang and offer any assistance the Australian Government may require in order to ensure he is treated in a fair and transparent manner.

“The Australian legal profession would not tolerate our government treating a Chinese citizen in the manner Mr Yang, an Australian citizen, is being treated in China.

“I hope my colleagues in the Chinese legal profession and judiciary will ensure that Mr Yang is treated in a fair and transparent manner, including not being subject to arbitrary detention and having access to lawyers. Australian embassy officials should be permitted to see him without further delay.

“This type of conduct by a foreign government towards an Australian citizen cannot and should not be tolerated,” Mr Moses said.

In December, the Law Council also raised concerns regarding the detention of Chinese human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang, in a letter to Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator Marise Payne.

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