

IAPL Monitoring Committee on Attacks on Lawyers

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China: The last missing lawyer: a victim of China's new willingness to flout international human rights norms

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Some five years ago my friend Wang Quanzhang – China's last missing lawyer – came over to my Beijing apartment for a Swedish-style Christmas.

By this time he had learned to tolerate, if not appreciate, the meatballs, as it was his second Christmas at my house. Since then, I've been deported from China and banned for ten years under the Espionage Act.

I am unlikely to spend any more Christmases in China. Wang might never be allowed to spend any Christmas anywhere, outside of prison.

Wang disappeared on 5 August 2015. For two and a half years his family, wife Li Wenzu and their young son, and the lawyers Wang had chosen for himself should he ever be detained, have not seen nor heard from him. There's no trial in sight.

It may strike anyone reading this that his case is simply another victim's story. Frankly, there are so many that it's hard to keep track or become engaged.

However, his case represents something far worse, and is a window into the new China envisioned by Xi Jinping and the CCP.

China's attempts to weaken UN mechanisms put in place to monitor how countries implement or follow basic rules and rights are well documented. What is happening in China now – an unprecedented disappearing of critics, lawyers and human rights defenders, goes far beyond being just another crackdown on civil society.

It is another step towards weakening a core part of the international law system.

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