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Press release | 15.07.2010

Human rights in China

Hautala calls for an end to the repression against NGOs

On the occasion of the hearing on Human rights in China organised in the premises of the European Parliament, Green MEP **Heidi Hautala** (Finland), Chairwoman of the Sub-Committee for Human Rights, deplored the deterioration of working conditions for the civil society and the harassment of human rights activists. Wan Yanhai is one of China's most prominent defenders of the rights of people living with HIV. His organization Aizhixing, has together with many other independent organizations faced increased restrictions from the authorities and has been threatened with closure. Apart from having been under close police scrutiny over the last decade and detained several times, Wan cites visits by up to twelve different government departments to his organization this spring. The fiscal authorities are still investigating the activities of Aizhixing and Wan fears that fines will be imposed.

"By restricting civil society, the Chinese government turns on itself" says Wan in Brussels, where he delivered a speech to the European Parliament's Human Rights Committee. He believes his work does enjoy widespread support in China. "It is worrying that the government force us to self-censorship".

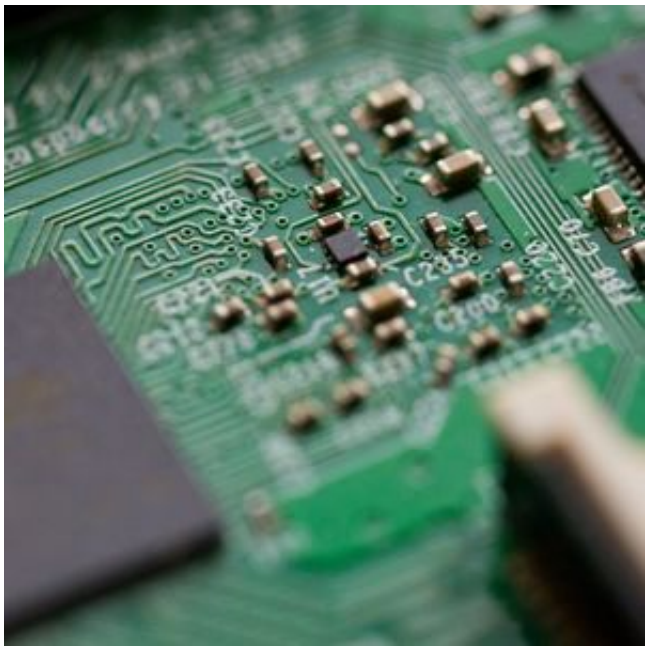
Heidi Hautala stated that the Chinese authorities, that attach great importance to collective rights, should rather endorse the work of Wan Yanhai as a community service. Wan was involved in uncovering the blood-selling scandal in Henan, where up to 150 000 people became HIV-positive as a result of local government maladministration of blood donations. He is also known for advocating the rights of the lesbian, gay and transgender communities in his country.

From abroad, Wan is developing new ideas for engaging Chinese in civil society activism. "Social media is very popular, but people should connect to pursue a cause, not just entertainment. Existing communities should be mobilized into social forces."

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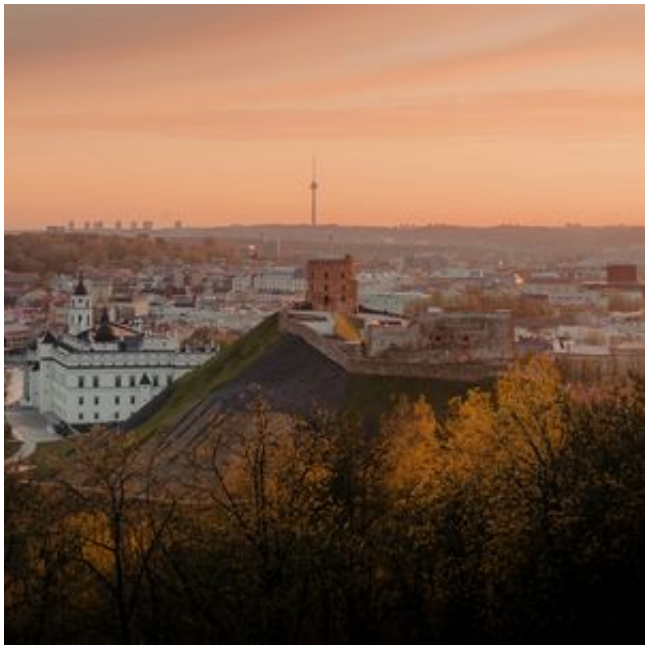
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