

## 1. "Picking quarrels und provoking trouble" — Why are we organizing this protest

Initiative: 左回声Left Echo

Homepage: <https://zuohuishengleftecho.org/>

Twitter: @LeftEchoLE

Hello and welcome to our rally today under the slogan "Picking quarrels and provoking trouble -- Solidarity with emancipatory struggles in China". We are the group LeftEcho and we are organizing today's event together with NIKA. The aim of our group is to inform about political struggles in Chinese-speaking parts of the world from a critical left-wing perspective and to stimulate discussions surrounding these topics in local left circles. In doing so, it is important for us to make the people involved and affected by these struggles visible and audible here, hence the name "LeftEcho".

Before we get to today's speeches, I would like to say a few words about the motto of the rally.

The motto of today's rally, "Picking quarrels and provoking trouble," 寻衅滋事 (chin. xúnxìn zǐshì) refers to Article 293 of the Chinese Penal Code. This article states that individuals who undermine public order "by provoking or disturbing it" are liable to imprisonment for up to five years. The criminal offense of "starting a quarrel and provoking trouble" is deliberately vague and can be interpreted arbitrarily by state authorities. As a result, critics can never know exactly at what position, they are uttering will be criminalized. Authorities are not required to specify with whom a dispute has been initiated or what exactly is being argued about. The guidelines by which the criminal offense is applied are largely kept secret and changed randomly.

Through the application of this criminal code, activists, journalists, and others who expose hardships or organize for social and political struggles have been and continue to be persecuted. It is thus one of many instruments of repression, available for the ruling class in the People's Republic of China to suppress unpopular opinions.

The last few years under Xi Jinping have brought on an intensification in the repression of oppositional opinions and political organizing, as well as an extremely inhumane crackdown the efforts in striving for autonomy in colonized regions on the borders of the People's Republic of China, such as in Hong Kong or Xinjiang. We will hear speeches about these places later.

Against the background of these totalitarian tendencies and the brutal persecution not only of oppositional opinions, but also of individual people because of their ethnic or religious identities, we have organized today's rally.

In the following, we would like to briefly introduce some activists who have been arrested or convicted under the criminal offense of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble".

Delivery driver Chen Guojiang was arrested in February of this year on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and has been in custody ever since. On social media he reported about the working conditions of delivery drivers and established contact with over 14000 suppliers to coordinate strikes. While record revenues are being made in the food delivery business during the Corona pandemic, the workers who deliver the food do not share in the profits and are forced to work under extremely poor conditions. The wages paid per delivery were reduced and the drivers tried to compensate for their loss in income by working longer and faster, which led to more and more accidents.

One of the ways in which the authorities ignored existing law, was by arresting Chen Guojiang without informing his family. Only a month later his relatives came to know of the arrest. Chen Guojiang's family then launched an online appeal for donations to pay for legal fees. This received widespread support and the costs covered after only one day, even though the appeal was already censored one hour after going online. We will hear a speech about Chen Guojiang's case later today.

Another example is that of Huang Xueqin. Huang Xueqin is an independent journalist and played a central role in the Chinese #metoo movement. In 2017, she helped a group of female students make public their experiences of assault, which they had experienced at the hands of a university lecturer. One of the female students filed a formal complaint against the lecturer, which sparked a broad social discussion about sexual violence. As a result, Huang Xueqin was contacted by other victims of sexualized violence who wanted to bring their experiences to the public. In the summer of 2019, she also blogged about the mass protests in Hong Kong against the proposed extradition law. Subsequently in October of the same year, she was arrested on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and detained at an unknown location. Sadly, we could not find out whether she has been released yet.

Another case is that of Lu Yuyu. Lu Yuyu founded a blog in 2012 on which his partner Li Tingyu and he meticulously documented strikes and other forms of protest taking place throughout China. In doing so, they created one of the largest collections of data on activist work in China. They lived underground to keep the blog running and financed themselves through anonymous donations. Mostly they lived in hostels, which they

changed frequently to avoid detection. Nevertheless they were arrested in 2016, also on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Lu Yuyu was sentenced to four years in prison. Li Tingyu was detained for one year, and the sentence against her was not made public.

The criminal code has also been used in the past to crack down on lawyers who advocate for the rights of those imprisoned for their struggles and activist work. This puts people in the line of fire of the authorities who continue to show solidarity with detainees and leads to activists being further isolated in their emancipatory endeavours as access to legal aid is made more difficult.

[short pause]

With this rally we want to look for possibilities to show solidarity with activists in China on one hand. On the other hand, we want to break up the distorted image of Chinese society that is increasingly drawn in German and European news reporting. The motto of the rally was chosen to put a focus on resistant actions within the Chinese majority society, and not to limit ourselves to the protests in Hong Kong, for example. In doing so, we want to challenge the one-sided image of a completely egalitarian society, the portrayal of China as a structurally inferior counterpart to democratic states.

Not least because of the undifferentiated reporting on China in times of Corona and the increased friend-enemy portrayals, are stereotypes, racism, and discrimination against East and Southeast Asian people, including Asian-read people living in Germany, being reinforced. We say reinforced because racism has always been a major problem in our society, not just in 2020. At this point we would also like to express our anger and sadness about the racist attacks in Atlanta and New York City last month. Racism against Asian-read people is also on the rise in Germany, especially in the context of the Covid19 pandemic. There is an increase in violent brutal attacks against Asian-read individuals, verbal aggression, as well as structural discrimination. As a reaction to this, the hashtag #IchbinkeinVirus (I'm not a virus) emerged on social networks. Under this hashtag those affected talk about their experiences of violence. We would like to point out the important work of groups like *KorIENTATION e.V.*, *Deutsche Asiat\*innen* and *Make Noise!* who point out such grievances and the importance of acknowledging racism and discrimination in our direct environment, as well as how crucial it is to actively try and overcome it. Today's contributions include voices from the group *Free Guojiang*, comrades in Hong Kong, a contribution from the group *Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK*, from our co-organizers from *NIKA* and the group *Utopie und Praxis*.

With this rally we call for more solidarity with global struggles and the development of counter-narratives that reject the neoliberal, geopolitical and nationalist rhetoric of the mainstream media. There is a need for a differentiated engagement with emancipatory struggles worldwide, in which we take an active role.

## 2. Solidarity support on the Chinese delivery workers organizer Mengzhu

Initiative: Free Chen Guojiang

Twitter: @FGuojiang

We want to draw your attention to the persistent crackdowns on worker's collective actions and organizing effort by the Chinese authority. The authority has detained many labor activists and labor NGO staff in the last years.

More recently, the suppression is targeted towards a prominent worker organizer of the food delivery riders, Mengzhu, who have made an extraordinary effort to organize the gig workers and raise the public awareness on the harsh working conditions in China's rising platform economy. The food delivery platforms deployed 6 million workers in China, and these workers fulfilled some 60 billion orders across China last year.

Mengzhu was detained by the Beijing police in Feb. 25, and is charged with the crime "picking quarrels and causing troubles" and facing a sentence of up to five years in prison. His detention ignite a wide public attention in China, because he has become famous due to his voice up for the exploitative practice of the platform companies on social network since last 2 years. But online discussion of his case in March was censored and shut down by the police, who questioned several social media users who had forwarded posts on Mengzhu's situation in WeChat groups. Some lawyers and students involved in helping Chen's family were also investigated and harassed by the national security force.

Mengzhu's real name is Chen Guojiang. In the second half of 2018, he started to deliver food for Eleme, a food delivery firm controlled by Alibaba, and became a crowdsourced delivery worker. After witnessing people being kicked out of the instant chatting group for questioning the food delivery platform's practices, he decided to establish his own Wechat group of delivery riders. In 2019, Cheng Guojiang, together with his rider friends, established a mutual aid organization for riders in Beijing, the "Delivery Riders' Alliance", and began to actively help other delivery workers. For example, he ran a free shelter for other delivery workers who were new to the city. He started to be known as Mengzhu-- the leader of the delivery riders' alliance.

In March 2020, Mengzhu started posting short videos related to delivery riders' working experience on major Chinese social network and video sharing platforms, like WeChat, Weibo, Bilibili, and Tiktok. He's videos have drawn tens of thousands followers, and some of his clips have been viewed for several million times. Until he was detained in Feb. 2021, the number of the WeChat groups of delivery workers managed by Mengzhu was 16, reaching more than 14,000 delivery riders in Beijing. The groups also have connections with other self-organized groups of delivery workers in other cities.

This organization is extraordinary given the particular situation of gig workers. Organizing delivery workers is difficult, particularly in food delivery. They are often freelance contractors or work for third-party services, which then bid against one another to fulfill orders from bigger e-commerce platforms.

Now, this hard-achieved organization and influence is almost destroyed. Mengzhu's social media accounts have been deleted since his arrest in February, with more than 300 videos he created and published vacuumed. Some delivery workers are forced to quit the groups, many have quitted out of fear.

The message of these crackdowns is clear: A worker who is creating a collective understanding among workers that they faced common challenges, an activist who claims and addresses the need of solidarity and organization of workers to fight against exploitation, is a threat to the Chinese authority. The state is betting on consumerism and the service industry to buoy economic growth and allies with large companies to shut down labor organizing activities.

But we can also learn a message from the experience of delivery riders in China, and Mengzhu's case that, the gig work looks very alike globally, with workers having no basic employment protection, less organizing capability, degrading working conditions and payment. For instance, Mengzhu described the working condition of the delivery workers like this: " ..... we're all trapped in the (delivery) platforms' tricks. All the rules are set by them and the delivery workers have no control at all. From the perspective of the platforms, if one person quits, countless others will come in" This is the situation confronted by many gig workers in the West.

For another instance, during widespread lockdowns imposed during China's coronavirus epidemic, delivery workers became a lifeline, shuttling anything from food to medicine to millions of people trapped at home. Similarly, in Germany, couriers and logistic workers also became essential workers in the pandemic, carrying crucial yet also dangerous work responsibilities. Their contribution however does not bring them an equally valuable status or income, regardless they are in China or in Germany.

With this understanding, we call for transnational solidarity among the delivery riders, and other gig workers, to support each other on struggle against capital exploitation and state repression. For Mengzhu's case in China, international support is specifically needed, when people trying support Mengzhu after his arrest inside China have faced a wide range of state intimidation. They hope and welcome all forms of solidarity actions from labor activists and organizations, to support Chinese workers' struggle and organizing effort.

### **3. Solidarity with activists in Hong Kong**

Comrades from Hong Kong (Due to the constant threat of repression we do not mention any names)

Dear Everyone,

Thank you for your solidarity action. It is a great pity that we are not able to talk to you directly with our real identities due to the escalating repression, which is entirely unimaginable 2 years ago.

In the summer of 2019, the Hong Kong Government introduced the Extradition Bill which enables extradition from Hong Kong to mainland China. Millions of people went on the street to protest against this bill, in fear of being susceptible under the Chinese judicial system which is famous for human rights violation. However, in response to the government's refusal to withdraw the bill and subsequent crackdown on the protests, the movement soon developed into a continuous anti-government movement demanding the release of arrested protesters, hold police brutality accountable, and broader political reform.

The anti-ELAB movement is a unprecedented mass movement involving broad and diverse participation from society. Throughout the second half of 2019, protesters continued to turn out on the street for mass demonstrations, road-blocking, and strikes aimed at bringing the city to a standstill. In November 2019, the escalating street clashes reached its boiling point when the police used over 7000 rounds of ammunition in a single day and arrested over 1,000 protesters at an university. Hereafter, street actions declined in the fierce crackdown, but the new fronts of resistance, mostly through unionizing drives, "Yellow Economic Circles", and community-based networks, became the main spheres of activism where the protesters consolidate the connections started in the movement and continued to put pressure on the government and initiated self-organizing responses to the pandemic. In the first year of the movement, 9000 protesters were arrested, and over 600 were charged under "rioting", a charge adopted from the colonial period which could lead to an up to ten year in prison.

Since then, the political repression has continued. Using the pandemic as a pretext, the government hardened the social control, banned demonstrations, and carried out mass arrests for "illegal" protest since early 2021, which has made it extremely difficult for protesters to turn out on the streets. In the meantime, the political repression has

escalated, culminating in the passage of the "National Security Law," which the central government imposed on the 1st of July 2020. The four major offenses in the law — separatism, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign countries — are ambiguously worded and give the authorities extensive power to carry out intensifying and continuous political repression on all parts of civil society and movement networks.

In CCP's view on national security, these are severe challenges within the CCP's broader attempts to maintain national control. The National Security Law implements a number of the CCP's primary security interests. This law, according to the CCP, protects political security by securing the one party system. In addition, it asserts cultural security insofar as the law removes challenges to CCP narratives as the only permitted ideology. The law also promotes the CCP's view of social security, limiting mass movements and enforcing surveillance, particularly with respect to Internet security by way of censorship and surveillance. With this context, the Extradition Bill, National Security Law and direct implementation of political decisions are CCP's attempts to eliminate and control against these threats, while at the same time hoping that such measures won't harm its economic interests in Hong Kong, that is to serve as the most important gateway for Chinese capitals, both state owned and private to be connected to the global market.

Hong Kong civil society has faced a number of repressions since the passage of the National Security Law. The suppression is intentionally arbitrary, and being used as an intimidation campaign that limits the broad participation from civil society and stops people from reaching out and building international connections. For instance, freedom of speech is under severe attack. Several activists were arrested for social media posts and what they said on the street stands. A media company was raided and its founders were arrested under NSL. The government has also arrested people who organized fundraising to collect resources for the movement. In addition, any activists that attempted to garner international support for Hong Kong movement faced charges of colluding with foreign entities.

In addition to direct repression of activists, other spheres in Hong Kong society have faced similar limitations and repression. With respect to education, middle school teachers have had their licenses revoked for talking about independence, university teachers dismissed from their positions, the government has rolled out mandatory patriotic education curricula, student unions disqualified, and students have been arrested under NSL on campus for the rallies.

The largest and broadest use of NSL has been the mass arrest on January 6th. Over 50 political activists were arrested on "subversion" charges under National Security Law for



avowing that they will veto all bills tabled by the authorities to cripple the government after obtaining the seats. If convicted, the defendants face sentences of up to life in prison. In mid-March, the central government passed a decision which will totally diminish the unlikely hope for a positive reform of the election system in part by decreasing the number of the seats directly elected by the people and introducing a vetting mechanism for all candidates.

The national security with CCP's characteristics does not only threaten people in Hong Kong. It also represents the CCP's attempt to assert broader control throughout the region and the world. Though the tactics and level of cruelty differs from region to region, the repression in Hong Kong is in line with CCP's crimes in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia. In addition, the CCP's view on national security increasingly shows influence beyond its territory. The security of overseas interests, the polar region, deep sea, and lately space all show clear expansionist implications. The CCP has been threatening invasion of Taiwan for decades. In the recent decades, it occupies the South China Sea Islands, turning them into airbases through environmentally devastating sand mining and reclamation projects, sending maritime militia to intimidate Filipino, Indonesian and Vietnamese fishermen in violation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. In Central Asia, people protest against Chinese investment on infrastructure and industrial zones, fearing of falling in debt trap. More recently, the CCP sent troops and internet technicians to Myanmar to assist the military junta's repression of protests, while it profits from exporting sophisticated surveillance technology elsewhere. Therefore, to fight against CCP not only helps people of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, Uighur, but also the people ruled by dictators colluding with CCP. We have to take action.

In 2019, we fought in the street. In 2020, we saved ourselves from CCP's lies on the facts of Covid through massive mutual aid and strikes. In 2021, many of us are still working hard to help each others to survive in this hard time.

On one hand CCP is creating its friend zone of dictators. On the other hand the struggle since 2019 brought people in Hong Kong closer to other struggles all over the world than ever. Many of us are shocked by the striking similarities of protests and repression in Indonesia, Belarus, Thailand and Myanmar, therefore looking for different ways to share our experience and motivate each other. Now we invite you to join us.

We have two suggestions for you.

First, update the understanding on China. Even till now some people believe China is a real socialist state and regard the Hong Kong struggle and the Uyghur genocide as Western conspiracies. Such view is clearly WRONG. To understand the economic and political changes happening in China in recent years and the corresponding consequences would be the first step for you to think about what to do.

Second, reject the collusion of CCP with local institutions and business sector. Now there are plenty of evidence that the Chinese manufacturing industry, especially the automobile, electronics, garment and surveillance industries are deeply related to the force labour camps enslaving hundred thousands of Uyghur people, and a number of European industrial giants directly profit from it. Much has to be done to cut this ugly tie and to avoid further financing the Chinese companies which are directly involved in this crime.

Once again, thank you for your solidarity. We wish you healthy and safe for continuous struggles.

#### **4. Left Perspectives on the Persecution of the Uyghurs**

Initiative: Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK

Homepage: <https://uyghursolidarityuk.org/>

Twitter: @CampaignUyghur

Dear comrades

We in the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK send our solidarity to all of you protesting today in Leipzig! Our campaign exists to bring together solidarity among the workers' movement and the left for the struggle of the Uyghur people against genocidal persecution and for freedom. So we are heartened to see the growing numbers of voices raised around the world for solidarity with workers' and liberatory struggles in China and its colonised territories.

In the rising superpower rivalry between our states and Beijing, the pressure is on to pick a side. The two sides are supposed to represent two different visions for the world. And yet there are some striking parallels between these rivals.

In China, as in the West, there is gaping inequality between those - who produce the wealth - the working class as well as peasants - and the ruling classes who profit from it.

In China, as in the West, "War on Terror" rhetoric is used as cover for racist anti-Muslim policies.

In Xinjiang, or East Turkestan as the Uyghur people call their homeland, a colonising power has dispossessed indigenous people of their land and their right to self-determination, and it now wages an aggressive campaign to comprehensively suppress their culture, religion and language – much as European empires have done before it.

When Uyghurs and Kazakhs are conscripted into forced labour in cotton fields and factories, they are working not only for the profits of Chinese capitalists and state bureaucrats, but Western corporations too. And it is Western as well as Chinese tech giants who are competing to sell the police surveillance equipment and software that will put them in the camps and prisons. The same tech giants selling their wares to racist, brutal police forces the world over.

As indigenous people in Canada and the USA fight the construction of oil pipelines in their homelands, China's fossil capitalists are drilling for oil on Uyghur land. And all of us will suffer the consequences when those fossil fuels are burned.

One set of powers claims to be standing for freedom and democracy, while the other drapes itself in the red flag and calls itself socialist. But as they manoeuvre, denounce and rattle their sabres at one another, neither truly fights for any ideal higher than their own profit and power.

Against the hawks demanding we line up in support of one side against the other, it is our responsibility to build an alternative - our own side. It is our responsibility to make links and solidarity across borders between workers and oppressed people, and to mobilise the power in our own hands to fight all our rulers and exploiters and to free ourselves and each other.

In Britain, our campaign has been protesting not only at the Chinese embassy, but also at – and inside – the high street shops of the corporate giants implicated in Uyghur forced labour. We have been making our arguments within the labour movement and winning support among trade unions and leftwing political parties. We want to build links in global movements around anti-racism, state violence, police surveillance and reproductive freedom. And we hope we can work more closely with you, and with friends and comrades around the world who believe as you and we do.

And we are looking to workers' power as potentially the strongest force for liberation. Despite the harsh repression and the prohibition of independent unions, China's enormous working class continues to seethe with protests and strikes against exploitation and oppression. For our part, we can learn from trade union history: the Scottish factory workers who grounded Pinochet's fighter jets in the 1970s; the French and Italian dockers who refused to move Saudi weapons in 2019; and the tech workers whose protests pushed Google to dump both US military contracts and collaboration with Chinese state censorship. Globalised capitalism connects not only our high streets but also our workplaces to struggles all over the world, and that gives us power – so let's organise together to use it. Hoch die internationale Solidarität!

## 5. A Question of Solidarity

Initiative: Nationalismus ist keine Alternative Sachsen (NIKA)

Homepage: <https://www.nationalismusistkeinealternative.net/sachsen/>

Twitter: @nika\_sachsen

All too often the question of solidarity becomes an empty slogan when talking about the German left and global struggles. A good example is the lack of political discussions surrounding East Asia as a region and the People's Republic of China in this country.

We should ask ourselves "why" that is the case?

Is it a remaining nostalgia for the now bygone era of actually existing, albeit failed, socialism? Or is it the unsuccessful attempts to place the events and actors involved onto political categories of Left and Right

But the fact is: As the world comes together closer and closer, and economic ties between Europe and the People's Republic of China more important, the discourse surrounding the East Asia region is largely dominated by right-wing, conservative, and neoliberal protagonists.

The German Left mostly remains silent. This is a great pity, taking in account what we could learn from one another regarding forms of protest and perspectives on the fight for a liberated society beyond state, capital, and nation. It is a fact that the People's Republic of China is home to about 1.4 billion people, many of whom are also fighting emancipatory battles. They may be struggles for more self-determination, feminism or better working-conditions. The issues are as diverse as they are similar to those issue we are facing in this country.

Of course, the actors involved may not see themselves as part of the global left. But should this fact be the reason to deny them solidarity in their fights?

We say: No!

What is needed is critical discussions concerning the events in the People's Republic of China and East Asia. Because the only a global perspective on the struggles for a liberated society will bring us forward. Therefore, the emancipatory radical left should include the East Asia region and the People's Republic of China in their fight.

For a critical perspective!

Anti-national solidarity everywhere!