Yu Ning
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Dear Sir:

writing to express our concern regarding ongoing reports of harassment and detention of, and even personal assaults on, lawyers in China.

The ability to practice law means at its core that lawyers must act independently and cannot be punished for carrying out their professional duties. Lawyers cannot be subjected to harassment, beatings, or deprivations of liberty while representing clients. Furthermore, legal practitioners and their clients must be guaranteed procedural protections, including the right to meet and prepare a client's defense.

The detention or harassment of lawyers in China for providing a zealous defense of their clients is of serious concern. More serious, however, are reports of physical attacks carried out on lawyers in China. In 2007, lawyers continued to be targeted for attacks. For example, Li Heping (李和平), a Beijing-based rights-defense lawyer, was kidnapped, beaten, and tortured with electric rods by a group of unidentified masked men on September 29, 2007, the weekend before National Day celebrations in China. Li was held in a basement outside Beijing until early September 30, when he was dumped in the woods outside the city. As he was beaten, Li was told to leave Beijing with his family or face the consequences. When he returned home, Li discovered that his license to practice law and other personal belongings were missing. His computer had also been completely erased.

This attack and others like it appear to be linked in some way to the authorities, which raises serious concerns about the will and ability of the government to protect lawyers' personal safety and right to practice law.

urge the All-China Lawyers' Association to issue a resolution condemning these attacks and other forms of intimidation and harassment as one means of advocating for the legal profession in China, and to support a stronger, more independent and effective Bar.

Sincerely,