Workers’ rights in China: Whose responsibility?

Date: Thursday May 29, 2008
Time: 09.00 - 12.00
Venue: Konferensesenteret Høyres hus, Stortingsgata 20, Vika, Oslo
Seminar language: English

The China Programme at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) and the Norwegian Network for Asian Studies welcome you to an open seminar on political, legal and practical challenges in the field of Chinese labour rights. Experts from Hong Kong, Denmark and Norway will share their views on the topic from a legal-, business- and grass root perspective.

In its effort to build a “harmonious society”, the Chinese leadership is gradually recognising the need for more effective means and channels for resolving the growing number of labour disputes that the country is facing. The PRC Labour Contract Law and the Employment Promotion Law, both came into effect in January this year with the intention to establish fair employment conditions and ban employment discrimination.

Internationally, it is being debated how companies operating in China can contribute to a strengthened rights protection, for example by demanding compliance with international human rights and labour standards from its Chinese partners and suppliers.

At grass root level, increased rights awareness among Chinese workers is leading to a growing number of campaigns and protests. Meanwhile, the active approach taken by the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) in recent legal reform work and the trade union conflict with Wall-Mart might be seen as indicators that the role of China’s only legal union is changing.

The seminar aims at discussing how these complex processes and initiatives are interacting and affecting each other and what impact they have on the labour protection on the ground in China.

The seminar is open for all, but please register your participation by May 27.

For more information please contact Programme Officer Maria Henoch: maria.henoch (a) nchr.uio.no, tel: 22 84 20 54
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PROGRAMME

8.30-9.00: Registration, coffee

9.00 - 9.05: Welcome by the NCHR China Programme and the Network for Asian Studies
Harald Bøckman, Coordinator, Norwegian Network for Asian Studies,

Cecilie Figenschou Bakke, Director, China Programme, NCHR

9.05 - 9.20: Screening of BBC reportage: “The Workers That Changed the World”

9.20 – 9.40:
Workers’ Rights in China: International Human Rights Standards and Domestic Legal Reforms
Cecilie Figenschou Bakke

9.40-10.00: Corporate Social Responsibility in China – Problems and Prospects
Mads Holst Jensen,
Advisor Human Rights and Business, Danish Institute for Human Rights

10.00 – 10.10: Questions and discussion

10.10: 10.30: Coffee break

10.30 - 11.10:
The Workers’ Movement in China: Civil society and the role of the All China Federation of Trade Unions
Apo Leong and Diana Beaumont, Asia Monitor Resource Centre, Hong Kong

11.10 - 11.20: Questions and discussion

11.20-12.00: Panel Discussion:
Chairs: Harald Bøckman and Cecilie Figenschou Bakke

Participants:
Mads Holst Jensen
Apo Leong
Diana Beaumont
Gunnelie Winum, Project Manager, Ethical Trading Initiative, Norway
Diis Bøhn, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)
Vidar Lindefjeld, Senior Advisor, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO)
ABOUT THE PARTICIPATING EXPERTS

**Harald Bøckman** is researcher at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo, where he coordinates the Network for Asian Studies as well. He is also Associate Professor II at the NTNU in Trondheim. Bøckman has a broad interest in China studies, focusing on regional cultures, political cultures and national identities. He has also translated classical and modern Chinese poetry and literature into Norwegian.

**Cecilie Figenshou Bakke** is Director of the NCHR China Programme, and has been connected to the Programme since 2002. Cecilie Bakke holds a Cand. Polit degree in Political Science from the NTNU/UIO, with specialisation in human rights, UN and international relations. She studied at Fudan University in the mid 1990s and was a visiting scholar at the CASS Institute of Law in Beijing in 2005. Cecilie Bakke is a member of the working group on labour rights under the Human Rights Dialogue between Norway and China and sits in the Steering Committee of the Network for Asian Studies. She has previously worked at NORAD, the State Information Centre, and SUM.

**Dr. Mads Holst Jensen** is an adviser at the Human Rights & Business Department, Danish Institute for Human Rights. In addition to Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Rights & Business in China, the topics of Mads Holst Jensen's research and publications include social deviance, juvenile delinquency, public security, human rights and legal system reform in China. Mads Holst Jensen graduated from the University of Copenhagen and holds a Ph.D. degree in Modern Chinese Studies from the University of Aarhus.

**Apo Leong** has served as the Director of Asia Monitor Resource Centre since 1994. Previously, he worked as a Union Education Officer and Union Organiser of the HK Trade Union Education Centre and as a Chief Researcher of the HK Confederation of Trade Unions. His publications include various journals and books in Chinese and English on labour, welfare, trade unionism, CSR and globalization. Apo Leong is the Chair of HK Social Security Society, Advisor of the Industrial Relations Institute of the People’s University, Advisor of the Labour Law and Social Security Law Institute of the Peking University and Committee member of the China Labour Law Society.

**Diana Beaumont** is an intern at the Asia Monitor Resource Centre in Hong Kong. She also volunteers for a Shenzhen-based workers' centre, and co-ordinates the China Labor News Translations project - a collection of English translations of Chinese language materials on labour issues. She attained her Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies and Politics from the University of Melbourne, and Honours in Development Studies from the Australian National University.

**Senior Advisor Diis Bøhn**, International Department, Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) is responsible for LO's cooperation with trade unions in Asia, hereunder also the cooperation with the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). Diis Bøhn is a member of the working group on labour rights under the Human Rights Dialogue between Norway and China.

**Vidar Lindefjeld** is a Senior Advisor at the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and a member of the working group on labour rights under the Human Rights Dialogue between Norway and China.

**Gunelie Winum** is Project Manager at Ethical Trading Initiative Norway (ETI-Norway). She is responsible for training and capacity building of members and project activities in producing countries. The latter implies identifying and co-operating with local ethical trade resources. She holds a Bachelor Degree in cross disciplinary development studies and a Master Degree in Business Administration. Before joining ETI-Norway, Gunelie Winum worked with several development aid organisations.
ABOUT THE ORGANISING AND PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The NCHR China Programme was established in 1997 as an academic complement to the Human Rights Dialogue between China and Norway. The Programme seeks activities which promote the development, understanding and application of international human rights standards. Programme activities have included the publishing of the first Chinese textbook on international human rights law, translation of key human rights literature, visiting scholar programmes, support of Norwegian and Chinese students and researchers and the implementation of a large number of human rights training courses and seminars.

http://www.humanrights.uio.no/english/research/programmes/china/

The Network for Asian Studies is a Norwegian research network for the study of the Asian region (except for West Asia). The Network which was established in 1996 focuses mainly on the social sciences and the humanities. The Network is financed by a grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and administered through The Norwegian Research Council. The Network has a steering committee of fifteen Norwegian Asia scholars, and is located at The Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo www.asianettverket.no

The Human Rights & Business Project at the Danish Institute for Human Rights strives to combine the expertise of the human rights research community with the experience of business in order to develop concrete achievable human rights standards for companies, and to help companies live up to those standards in practice through training and advisory services. The Project was jointly started in 1999 by the Confederation of Danish Industries, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, and the Danish Industrialization Fund for Developing Countries, in cooperation with the Danish Government.

http://www.humanrightsbusiness.org/

The Asia Monitor Research Centre (founded in Hong Kong in 1976) is an independent NGO which focuses on Asian labour concerns. The Centre provides consultation, publications and documentation and conducts research, training, advocacy, campaigns, labour networking, and related services to trade unions, pro-labour groups, academics, and professionals on labour issues.

http://www.amrc.org.hk/

The China Labor News Translations is a free collection of English translations of Chinese-language reports, commentaries and blogs on labor issues. These materials are chosen from amongst the most informative and significant mainland Chinese media reports, academic publications, activist writings, internet discussions and so on. New translations are posted monthly.

http://www.clntranslations.org/

Ethical Trading Initiative Norway (ETI-Norway) is a resource centre and an advocate for ethical trade practices. ETI-Norway’s objective is collaboration to ensure that international trade does not contravene human rights, labour rights, economic development and the environment. This shall be undertaken by strengthening the support for ethical trade issues and by supporting members in developing ethical trade practices. ETI-Norway was founded in 2000 by Coop Norway, HSH, Norwegian Church Aid and LO. ETI-Norway is a membership organisation, members include companies, organisations and public institutions. www.etiskhandel.no

LO Norway participates in the Sino-Norwegian dialogue on Human Rights. For the past ten years LO has also cooperated politically with the All China Federation of Trade Unions. The cooperation has included the exchange of delegations and experiences, seminars on various issues (collective bargaining, the Norwegian model for cooperation in the field of working life etc.). A book about the Norwegian Experience was made in Chinese in 2002. Some of LO’s member unions (sectorial) cooperate with sister unions in China and there has also been exchange between some geographical LO-chapters and regional organisations of ACFTU. www.lo.no

The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) Norway participates in the Sino-Norwegian dialogue on Human Rights and cooperates with the China Enterprise Confederation (CEC) and the All China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC). The bilateral cooperation was initiated in the beginning of the 1990s, and involves Corporate Social Responsibility training of Chinese managers and exchange between Norway and China. www.nho.no