

## ***OPEN LETTER to the GUANGDONG GOVERNMENT***

We are a diverse group of scholars who both study and support labor movements around the world. Many of us have conducted extensive research on labor issues in China, and we are united in our belief that the future of China and its working class is of incredible global significance.

Many government and union leaders in Guangdong have recently accepted the idea that strikes are normal economic manifestations of labor-capital conflict in a marketized economy, and should be addressed through mediation and collective bargaining. Currently there is a growing practice of democratic elections of trade union officers at the enterprise level in many places in Guangdong. These trends reflect the industrial labor relations principles that have guided many countries during periods of industrialization and marketization.

We are therefore very concerned to learn about the recent cases of harassment and repression against grass-roots labor NGOs in Guangdong, as reported in the Southern Metropolis Daily, the Guangzhou Daily, the South China Morning Post, and the Wall Street Journal. These events contradict the policy direction of the new regulations in Guangdong facilitating NGO registration, and create new difficulties for the NGOs to develop.

In our view, NGOs play an important role in responding to the pressing needs – including economic, social, and educational – of the large populations of migrant workers. Trade unions have not historically been able to address this wide range of problems, and thus NGOs have a critical function in addressing worker issues. This is as true in many foreign countries as in China.

Therefore, we strongly oppose recent actions that have constrained the activities of many NGOs in Guangdong, and encourage the government to preserve the space necessary for these groups to continue their valuable work.

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