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Famed freelance photographer Lu Guang detained in Xinjiang, China

The following statement is from Xu Xiaoli, the wife of Lu Guang. As Lu Guang's archival representatives we are providing this statement both for clarity and because Xu Xiaoli will not be conducting any interviews at this time. Please respect her request for privacy and channel all media requests or interest to us via our main email: **mail@contactpressimages.com***. Lu Guang's bio follows.*

My husband, Lu Guang, the famed Chinese photographer, winner of several major international awards such as three World Press Photo awards since 2004; the 2009 W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography; the 2010 National Geographic Grant in Photography; and a 2013 Prince Claus award, in addition to many of the most prestigious awards in China, was recently invited by a friend to participate in an informal workshop for local and mainly amateur photographers in China's northwestern Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. I have lost contact with him since the evening of November 3, 2018. I am extremely concerned about his health and his whereabouts, and I do hope that he will return home soon and safely.

On October 23, Lu Guang was invited by a friend to fly from Beijing to Urumqi and spend the week with the local photographers. On October 30, Lu Guang went by train, on his own, to Kashgar where he arrived the following day, and returned to Urumqi on November 3 after another twenty-hour train ride. During that time, we were in contact with each other, until the evening of November 3. Lu Guang was planning to fly from Urumqi to Sichuan province on November 5, to join other friends and travel to the Daliangshan mountain area to donate money they fundraised and gifts to poor children and their families. However, his friends did not see him show up as planned. They tried to reach me to know what had happened and we connected on November 6 which is when suddenly I became alarmed.

I knew that Lu Guang would not cancel an appointment so meaningful to him. I tried to contact the friend who invited him to Urumqi, but he could not be reached. I finally was able to briefly contact the friend's wife. She told me that both of them had been taken away by the security police back to Kashgar, but she did not know the reason why, nor their status. Since, there has been no information of any kind.

Lu Guang and I have been out of touch for almost four weeks now, since that evening of November 3. As his closest relative, I was never informed about any arrest. I tried calling official numbers that I found online to get in touch with the Xinjiang police, but found none that allowed me to do so.

In the past two years, my son and I have respectively attended high school and college in New York. I am aware that Lu Guang cannot interrupt his work as a professional photographer, nor can he abandon the children in Daliangshan he is helping. He cannot give up either his responsibilities towards the Yongkang Photographers Association. We do spend time on as many occasions as possible. This coming December 4th will mark the 20th anniversary of our marriage, and he is supposed to be with us here, in New York. Since I lost contact with him, the days have felt like years. I can only hope that he but also the friend from Urumqi will both return soon and safely.

Xu Xiaoli, New York, November 28, 2018

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Lu Guang: a short biography

Lu Guang was born August 23, 1961 in Yongkang, an industrial city in Zhejiang province. He is one of the rare freelance photographers working in China who has garnered acclaim both at home and abroad. He began his interest in photography as an amateur photographer in 1980 when he was still a factory worker. He would later open his own small photo studio and advertising agency in his hometown. In August of 1993, he went to Beijing to take continuing education in photography at the Central Academy of Crafts and Fine Arts (now the Fine Arts Academy of Tsinghua University).

Drawn to in-depth documentary photography, he has produced insightful and powerful work that primarily focused on the harsh social realities of those living at the poverty level. His acclaimed work deals with health issues in relation to industrial development and pollution: the gold rush in western China; drug addicts in Yunnan province, near the Burmese border; AIDS villages in Henan province; and the human costs of manufacturing effluents across China.

His work has been widely published in magazines and shown in major international photography festivals such as: Perpignan's Visa pour l'Image (2004, 2017) and Paris Photoquai biennale (2009) in France; Daegu Photo Biennale (2006) and World Water Forum (2015) in South Korea; Photo España in Madrid, Spain (2011); Chobi Mela biennale in Bangladesh (2013); Singapore International Festival of Arts (2015). His photographs have also frequently been presented in China at major annual festivals such as those in Lianzhou (2005, 2009) and Pingyao (2003**,** 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013), and at Photo Beijing (2013, 2018).

He has won some of the most prestigious awards in his native country: China's 'Gold Statue Award for Great Achievements in Photography' given in 1996 by the Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Chinese Photographers Association, and the 'Outstanding Photographer Award for Technical Excellence and Integrity' given in 1998 by the Chinese Photographers Association. In 2009, the Chinese Culture Promotion Society bestowed its highest accolade naming Lu Guang a "Chinese Cultural Figure". Around the world, Lu Guang also earned many of photography's most important awards with the first of his three World Press Photo awards in The Netherlands beginning in 2004. In 2008, he received Germany's Henri Nannan Prize and a year later, in the United States, was the recipient of both the W. Eugene Smith 'Grant in Humanistic Photography' (2009), and of the National Geographic's 'Grant in Photography' (2010). In 2013, he received an eminent Prince Claus Award, again in The Netherlands.

His archival work has been represented outside of China by Contact Press Images (New York & Paris) since 2008.