

# Job inequalities, sexual Harassmen and #MeToo in China

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**CHINESE WOMEN STILL face perilous conditions in society and the workplace, often falling victim to sexual harassment and discrimination of various kinds.**

- **Women are discriminated against in job applications.** Research conducted by Human Rights Watch found that almost 20% of civil service positions released in early 2018 either required job applicants to be male or expressed a preference for male candidates, whereas only one job post indicated a preference for females.

Since Xi Jinping's coming to power five years ago and the slowing economic growth, the economy has been reconfigured. Thousands of factories have moved away from the Pear River Delta.

Accompanying the rise of new infrastructure, businesses and services in inland China has been the rise of more precarious patterns, particularly in the service industry. By the end of 2016, workers' collective actions in the service industry surpassed those in industry.

Along with the changing economy and lax enforcement of labor laws, the state has cracked down on labor-oriented NGOs and is more likely to shut down labor protests. Nonetheless, China's labor shortage continues. It is unclear how this change is affecting women workers.

- **Sexual harassment exists in universities and in the workplace.** Since 2018 there have been more than 4.5 million hits on a #MeToo hashtag. This has led to accusations against multiple high-profile men, including activist Lei Chuang, environmentalist Feng Yongfeng, and journalists Zhang Wen and Xiong Peiyun.

Recently, accusations against two other well-known men have emerged — Buddhist Master Xuecheng and billionaire Richard Qiangdong Liu, founder and CEO of JD.com. campaign.

By mid-August, Xuecheng resigned from his tenure as head of China's government-run Buddhist Association. A 95-page dossier, compiled by two supervisory chancellors at Beijing's Longquan Temple, contains several reports of Xuecheng sending sexually aggressive texts to nuns and disciples, with one woman accusing him of rape.

Liu was arrested at the end of August following allegations of rape from a Chinese student at the University of Minnesota. If found guilty, he faces up to 30 years in prison.

The #MeToo movement, predominantly led by student activists, resonated across university campuses throughout the country. At Peking University (PKU) their campaign included the demand for the university to disclose information on a rape-suicide case that occurred two decades ago. Gao Yan, a student at PKU, had committed suicide after being sexually assaulted by Shen Yang, at that time a professor at the university. In fact he would keep the position until 2011.

Having failed to intimidate the activists, PKU pledged to re-investigate the case and introduce regulations on anti-sexual misconduct. It is significant that the #MeToo movement has not been repressed.

Although the movement so far has stopped short of attacking powerful figures in the party-state apparatus, the downfall of such high-profile and influential individuals represents a series of victories for China's #MeToo movement.

*(Compiled from updates in Made in China, a quarterly journal on Chinese labor, civil society and rights.)*

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**P.S.**

- Against the Current n° 200, May-June 2019:  
<https://solidarity-us.org/atc/200/chinese-maoists-debate/>