

URGENT ACTION

FALUN GONG MAN CLOSE TO DEATH

Falun Gong practitioner, Zhou Xiangyang (周向阳), is said to be close to death in prison hospital. He is on a hunger strike and urgently needs to be released on medical parole.

Zhou Xiangyang has been held in the Gangbei Prison in Tianjin City, north of Beijing since 5 March 2011. His family saw him a few days ago and say that he is in very bad physical condition and seems close to death. Some days ago prison officials called Zhou Xiangyang's family to come to the prison to see him. He asked his family for 200 RMB (around 32 US dollars) to purchase clothes. They believe this may be because he feels himself close to death and wants to be properly dressed when he dies. During the visit, he told his family that the suffering inside the prison was beyond people's understanding and that he could no longer take the torment.

Before this recent visit by his family, Zhou has only ever been allowed one visit, from his mother, and has been allowed no other contact with his family or his lawyer since March 2011. When his mother visited last year, Zhou Xiangyang told her that he was being tortured. Prison authorities told the family that he began a hunger strike as soon as he was incarcerated. Zhou Xiangyang's family believes that his poor physical condition is a consequence of the combined effects of the torture over many years and hunger striking. Zhou Xiangyang had earlier spent over six years in the same prison. In May 2003 he was arrested for speaking about Falun Gong to people in public and sentenced to nine years imprisonment, of which he served six years before being released on "medical parole". In April and May 2009 he was sent twice to the hospital for emergency treatment. If the prison continues to refuse to release Zhou Xiangyang on medical parole, he is at risk of death.

Zhou Xiangyang's wife, Li Shanshan, was detained on 29 October 2011, and her family was told she had been sentenced to two years' re-education through labour. However, the authorities refused to provide information about her whereabouts. On 26 June she posted an open letter on overseas websites about Zhou Xiangyang's detention. In response, more than 2300 people from Zhou's hometown and vicinities signed a petition for his release organized by his family. Five people, including Zhou Xiangyang's brother and sister-in-law were taken away by security forces on 4 November, allegedly in connection with the petition.

In China, medical parole is permitted in cases where a prisoner's health is incompatible with remaining in prison and allows for a prisoner to seek health care outside the prison. Prisoners are required to return to prison when well.

Please write immediately in Chinese or your own language:

- Calling for the immediate release of Zhou Xiangyang on medical parole.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 MARCH 2012 TO:

Prison Warden
 Xu Burong
 Gangbei Prison, Dagangqu Banqiao
 Beijingqi Xi, Tianjin City,
 Hebei Province 300270
 People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Warden

Mayor of Tianjin
 Huang Xingguo
 Tianjinshi Renmin Zhengfu
 167 Dagulu Hepingqu, Tianjin City,
 Hebei Province, 300040
 People's Republic of China,
gongkaiban@tj.gov.cn
 Fax: +86 22 8309 9933 (keep trying)

Salutation: Dear Mayor
And copies to:
Secretary of the Tianjin Municipal Party
Committee
 Zhang Gaoli
 Zhonggong Tianjinshi Weiyuanhui
 Tianjinshi 300040
 People's Republic of China

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 357/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/048/2011/en>



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On account of her open appeals, Li Shanshan was detained again on 29 October (see UA: 335/11 Index: ASA 17/047/2011: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/047/2011/en>). On 10 November the authorities informed Li Shanshan's mother and lawyer that she had been assigned to two years "re-education".

Five people, including Zhou Xiangyang's brother and sister-in-law were taken away by security forces on 4 November, allegedly in connection with the petition for Zhou. A second petition calling for Li Shanshan's release organized by her family had been signed by over 500 people by 15 November, after only a few days of its being circulated.

Falun Gong is a spiritual movement which gained large numbers of supporters in China during the 1990s. After it staged a peaceful gathering in Tiananmen Square in July 1999, the government outlawed the group and launched a long-term campaign of intimidation and persecution. Practitioners have been held in psychiatric hospitals, re-education through labour (RTL) facilities (a form of administrative detention imposed without charge, trial or judicial review), sentenced to long prison terms, and been held in specialized detention centres whose mission is to "transform" Falun Gong practitioners, a process through which they are coerced into renouncing their spiritual beliefs, often through the use of torture and ill-treatment.

Torture and other ill-treatment are endemic in all forms of detention, despite China's ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1988. Falun Gong sources have documented numerous deaths in custody of Falun Gong practitioners, believed to have been caused by torture and other ill-treatment.

Name: Zhou Xiangyang
Gender m/f: male

Further information on UA: 357/11 Index: ASA 17/005/2012 Issue Date: 8 February 2012

