

PUBLIC

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Torture/Medical concern/Prisoner of conscience

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA Chen Guangcheng (m), aged 35, human rights defender

Jailed human rights defender Chen Guangcheng was severely beaten by other prisoners on the orders of prison guards on 16 June, and denied medical treatment. He has begun a hunger strike in protest, refusing water as well as food. Amnesty International believes his life is in danger, and that he is at risk of further torture and ill-treatment.

His wife visited him at the Linyi City Prison on 19 June. He told her that after he refused to have his head shaved, six other prisoners had pushed him to the floor, encouraged by prison guards, and hit and kicked him hard. He said his ribs hurt and thought one might be broken. He began his hunger strike that day.

He said he was being punished for "being disobedient" due to his insistence on filing an appeal to the provincial higher court. Since Chen Guangcheng has been blind since birth he requires the assistance of his lawyer or his wife to help him draft his appeal. However the prison authorities have refused to permit either his lawyer or his wife to visit him for longer than 30 minutes per month, making it impossible for Chen Guangcheng to prepare an appeal.

The prison authorities have refused his family's request to give him medical attention, including an X-ray to check for broken bones.

Chen Guangcheng is a self-taught lawyer. He helped villagers to take legal action against the Linyi city authorities, who had allegedly been forcing women to have abortions so as to meet birth quotas set by central government. He had been under house arrest since September 2005. (See UA 271/05, ASA 17/037/2005, 14 October 2005 and follow-ups.) In August 2006, after a grossly unfair trial, he was sentenced to four years and three months in prison for "damaging public property and gathering people to block traffic".

Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for his peaceful activities in defence of human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Chen Guangcheng is one example of a disturbing pattern of Chinese lawyers and activists being subjected to conviction and imprisonment after unfair trials. The pattern continues despite promises by the Chinese authorities to improve human rights in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in August 2008.

Despite several measures introduced to curb the practice, torture and ill-treatment remain widespread in China. Common methods include kicking, beating, electric shocks, suspension by the arms, shackling in painful positions and sleep and food-deprivation.

Amnesty International remains deeply concerned that human rights defenders who attempt to report more widely on violations, challenge policies which are deemed politically sensitive or try to rally others to their cause face serious risk of abuse.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Chinese, English or your own language:

- expressing deep concern at reports that Chen Guangcheng was severely beaten by other prisoners on the orders of prison guards on 16 June, and urging the authorities to ensure that he is given all the medical treatment he needs;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Chen Guangcheng will be given access to a lawyer of his choice, and given a fair hearing if he appeals against his sentence;
- calling on the authorities to launch a full, independent and impartial investigation into the serial abuse suffered by Chen Guangcheng, and bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing deep concern that Chen Guangcheng received a grossly unfair trial, and urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli

The State Council, 9 Xihuangcheng Genbeijie

Beijingshi 100032, People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 65292345 (c/o Ministry of Communication)

Email: gazette@mail.gov.cn

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of the Shandong Provincial People's Government

HAN Yuqun Shengzhang

Shandongsheng Renmin Zhengfu, 1 Shengfuqianjie, Jinanshi

Shandongsheng, People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 531 86062047

Salutation: Dear Governor

Director of the Shandong Provincial Prison Management Bureau

CHEN Hui Juzhang

163 Lishanlu

Jinanshi 250014

Shandongsheng

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 531 6943010

Email: zhw@xssjy.com

Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Mayor of Linyi City

Lian Chengmin Shizhang

Linyishi Renmin Zhengfu Ban Gong Shi, Shandongshen, People's Republic of China

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and to diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 August 2007.