

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

03 October 2007

PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC
OF CHINA

Li Heping (m), human rights lawyer

Li Heping, a Beijing-based human rights lawyer, was abducted and assaulted by a group of unidentified men on 29 September. They beat him with electro-shock batons and told him he should leave Beijing or risk further attack. He was released after about eight hours. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

A group of around 12 men in plainclothes intercepted Li Heping at around 5.30pm on 29 September in the car park of his lawyers' firm. They put a hood over his head, bundled him into a car with no license plates and took him to an unknown location. He was held in the basement of a building where he was stripped to his underwear. The men then began beating him with bottles and electro-shock batons.

During the assault, his attackers reportedly shouted: "Get out of Beijing otherwise we will beat you whenever we see you". They told him he was a criminal and should practice law 'within permissible limits'. They also warned him not to report the beating to anyone.

Li Heping was subsequently dumped in the woods in a suburb outside Beijing at around 1am on 30 September. He managed to hail a taxi, but when he returned home, he found that several of his personal belongings had been stolen, including his lawyer's identification card. His computer had been re-formatted, making it unusable, and the files had been erased.

As a result of the attack, Li Heping sustained bruises all over his face, shoulders, hands and body and lost a significant amount of hair. He also developed a headache, his face became swollen, and he suffered loss of hearing in his left ear.

The incident occurred one day after police from the National Security Protection Unit (*guonei anquan baowei zhidui, guobao*) of the Beijing Public Security Bureau verbally told Li Heping that he and his family should leave Beijing during the 17th Communist Party Congress, due to begin on 15 October. After the assault, Li Heping released a personal statement describing his experience. He firmly rejected demands that he should 'leave Beijing'.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Li Heping had built a reputation for defending sensitive cases, including Christians arrested for unofficial house church activities, members of the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, alleged victims of forced eviction and independent writers. He was defence lawyer for dissident, Yang Zili, and imprisoned environmental activist Tan Kai, and has appealed to the authorities on behalf of lawyer Gao Zhisheng. As a result of such activities, he had been placed under tight police surveillance and his freedom of movement has been restricted.

While the space for civil society activities has grown over recent years in China, activists who take on politically sensitive cases or try to rally others to their cause remain a key target for repression. Abuses against human rights activists have escalated as the authorities tighten controls in the run-up to two key events: the 17th Communist Party Congress in October, and the Beijing Olympics of August 2008. Several human rights lawyers and legal advisors have been subjected to arbitrary detention and torture or ill-treatment. Some have been imprisoned, while others have been placed under tight police surveillance in

their own homes. The crackdown flies in the face of official promises to improve human rights in the run-up to the Olympics.

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

- calling on the authorities to provide immediate guarantees for Li Heping's safety;
- urging the authorities to launch a full, immediate and impartial investigation into reports that Li Heping was arbitrarily detained, tortured and threatened by a group around 12 unidentified men with a view to bringing all those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern that Li Heping was already held under tight police surveillance and calling for all restrictions on his freedom of movement to be lifted;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Li Heping and other human rights activists in China can carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment, or other human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli

The State Council General Office

2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu

Beijingshi 100017

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Email: gazette@mail.gov.cn

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China

ZHOU Yongkang Buzhang

Gong'anbu

14 Dongchang'anjie, Dongchengqu

Beijingshi 100741

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the Beijing Public Security Bureau

MA Zhenchuan Juzhang

Beijingshi Gong'anju

9 Qianmen Dongdajie

Dongchengqu

Beijingshi 100740

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 85222320

Email: 110@bjgaj.gov.cn

Salutation: Dear Director

and to diplomatic representatives of 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 14 November 2007.