

2007

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CHINA

Fear of torture or ill-treatment

Liang Wenjian (f), aged 39
Lin Zhiyong (m), aged about 40, her husband
Li Dongmei (f)
Wang He (sex unknown)
Wu Jiangyan (sex unknown)
Three others (names unknown)

Seven of the eight Falun Gong practitioners listed above have reportedly been assigned to two years' "Re-education through Labour" (RTL), a form of administrative detention imposed without charge, trial or judicial review, in connection with their Falun Gong activities. One, an elderly woman (unnamed), has reportedly been assigned to one-and-a-half-years. They are reportedly being held at Panyu detention centre in Guangzhou city, Guangdong province, awaiting transfer to an RTL facility. They are at risk of torture and ill-treatment. Amnesty International considers them prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of religion.

All eight were detained on 10 February by around 10 plainclothes police officers, for participating in an "illegal gathering" at the home of Liang Wenjian and Lin Zhiyong. The police also searched their home, and confiscated Falun Gong literature and their computer.

According to unofficial sources, the eight were assigned to RTL about a month later. However, their families have not been officially informed, and have not been allowed to meet with them.

Liang Wenjian had previously been assigned to RTL at Guangzhou Chaitou Xiaodao RTL facility from February 2000 to April 2001. During this, she reportedly suffered torture and ill-treatment, which included being hung by her wrists so that her feet could barely touch the ground for two hours for doing Falun Gong exercises in detention. She was also reportedly required to work up to 14 hours a day making artificial flowers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained in China since the spiritual movement was banned as a "threat to social and political stability" in July 1999. Those accused of being Falun Gong leaders or organizers have been imprisoned, while others have been held in psychiatric hospitals. The vast majority, however, have been held in RTL facilities. Many detained Falun Gong practitioners have reportedly been tortured or ill-treated, particularly those who refuse to renounce their beliefs.

Overseas Falun Gong organizations have recorded the deaths in custody of over 2,000 Falun Gong practitioners since the crackdown began. It has recently been alleged that many Falun Gong detainees who died in custody had been used to provide organs for transplant through "organ harvesting". Amnesty International is investigating these reports, but is not yet able to verify them.

RTL is used extensively in China despite repeated calls from overseas and within China for the system to be abolished. The Beijing authorities have reportedly approved the use of RTL to target vagrants and petty criminals in their attempts to "clean up" the city before it hosts the Olympics in 2008. China's National People's Congress is reportedly considering new legislation known as the "Illegal Behaviour Correction Law" (IBCL) to replace RTL. A draft is not publicly available but it appears to fall short of international fair trial standards. Amnesty International is continuing to urge the authorities to abolish the system altogether by bringing all offences punishable with deprivation of liberty within the scope of the Criminal Law.

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

- expressing concern that the eight Falun Gong practitioners were detained in violation of their fundamental human rights to freedom of expression, association and religious belief, and calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee their safety while they remain in custody;
- calling on the authorities to clarify their names and legal status and allow their families to conduct regular family visits while they remain in custody;
- urging the authorities to ensure they have access to lawyers and any necessary medical treatment while they remain in detention;
- calling on the authorities to end the political crackdown against the Falun Gong spiritual movement, which has

resulted in numerous human rights violations;
- urging the authorities to abolish "Re-education through Labour" (RTL) and ensure that all offences punishable with deprivation of liberty are brought within the scope of the Criminal Law.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of the Guangdong Provincial People's Government

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Salutation: Dear Governor

Director of the Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Public Security

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Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee

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Salutation: Dear Secretary

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 May 2007.
