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China: Uphold appeal of Zhuo Xiaojun

Over ten years ago on 26 December 1989, Zhuo Xiaojun was caught up in a fight outside his home in Changle County during which three people were wounded, two fatally.

He was initially sentenced to death by Fuzhou City Intermediate People's Court on 7 September 1990 after the case had reportedly been returned to investigators several times due to insufficient evidence. On appeal, on 23 January 1992, Fujian Province Higher People's Court decided that the principal facts of the case were unclear and overturned the conviction, returning the case to the original court for a retrial. The retrial began in January 1993 but was adjourned without judgement for seven years while it was claimed 'supplementary investigations' were carried out.

The conviction was based on confessions Zhuo testified were extracted from him under torture including being hung by the hands from the bars of a door with his feet locked in 50kg shackles whilst he was beaten, kicked and attacked with electric batons. The witnesses in the trial also allege that they gave testimonies under duress. The confessions are also reportedly contradicted by the forensic evidence and other key evidence is also reportedly missing from files.

Zhuo Xiaojun was found guilty by the Fuzhou City Intermediate People's Court on 14 January 2000, after an unfair trial in which he was sentenced to death once more on evidence previously described by a higher court as insufficient.

Zhou Xiaojun's appeal against his sentence took place yesterday, 28 November 2000 and as yet there has been no announcement made about his fate. If his appeal is rejected he faces imminent execution. It is believed he is being held with his hands and feet shackled together continuously.

Amnesty International urges the Chinese authorities to uphold the appeal of Zhou Xiaojun, urgently review the case, institute proceedings which are in accordance with international standards for fair trial, and fully investigate the allegations of torture.

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