

Public

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To: Health professional members

From: Medical team / Asia program

Date: 19 May 2003

MEDICAL ACTION

Ill-health of Xiao Yunliang, prisoner of conscience

CHINA

Key words ill-health / prisoner of conscience

Amnesty International's concerns

Amnesty International is concerned about the poor health of Xiao Yunliang, a prisoner of conscience, held in Liaoyang Municipal Detention Centre. In March 2003 Xiao Yunliang was reportedly moved to an isolation cell when he started coughing up blood, possibly caused by tuberculosis. In addition, following a sudden deterioration in his vision, Xiao Yunliang was recently examined by an ophthalmic doctor. The ophthalmologist reportedly diagnosed him with serious underlying damage to his eyes, which may lead to blindness unless treated. (Amnesty International does not have details of the diagnosis).

Amnesty International is calling for immediate appropriate medical treatment for Xiao Yunliang, including investigation and treatment of his respiratory and eye problems and his immediate and unconditional release.

Background information

Labour unrest has been increasing throughout China in recent years due to the closure of many State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and resulting unemployment of thousands of workers. In March 2002, Xiao Yunliang and other the workers' representatives were involved in organizing large-scale demonstrations in Liaoyang city, Liaoning Province, which involved up to 30,000 workers from around 20 factories in the city. The workers were protesting against layoffs, alleged management corruption and delayed welfare payments. The factory and the local government have reportedly met some of the demands relating to back pay and medical expenses, but a number of the protest leaders have been arrested and sentenced to prison terms.

Xiao Yunliang was detained in March 2002 together with a number of fellow activists. Along with fellow detainee Yao Fuxin, Xiao Yunliang was tried on 15 January 2003 on charges of "subversion" and "organizing illegal demonstrations".

On 9 May 2003 Xiao Yunliang was sentenced to four years' imprisonment; Yao Fuxin was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Their families had previously been harassed by the police; they were told not to participate in any public protest, nor to petition the central authorities nor to communicate with the media. Xiao Yunliang and Yao Fuxin have been denied prison visits from family members.

Recommendations

Please write letters in English to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- introducing yourself in your professional capacity and/or as a member of Amnesty International;
- expressing concern at reports that Xiao Yunliang, held in Liaoyang Municipal Detention Centre is coughing up blood and suffering from a sudden impairment of vision;
- urging the authorities to provide him with access to appropriate medical care, including an investigation and treatment of his respiratory and eye problems and any other health concerns he may have;
- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Xiao Yunliang, Yao Fuxin and all workers held in Liaoyang on charges originating from their peaceful protests;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that they have immediate access to members of their families and lawyers of their choice.

Addresses

Governor of the Liaoning Provincial People's Government

BO Xilai Shengzhang
Liaoningsheng Renmin Zhengfu
Huangguqu, 45 Beiling Dajie
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Governor

Director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Justice

LI Chengyi Tingzhang
Sifating
Chongshan Donglu 38 Jia,
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

Copies of appeals

Please send copies of your appeals to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within six weeks of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 27 June 2003, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of actions

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter writing actions. If you write one, two or more letters please send us an e-mail and let us know. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g. ASA 17/021/2003 – 2. Please also let us know about any other activity undertaken by your group/network and e-mail us at medical@amnesty.org Thank you