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@Persecution of Christians in China

Appeal for Zhang Lezhi, Yan Peizhi and Xu Zhihe

JUNE 1993

SUMMARY

AI INDEX: ASA 17/23/93

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

According to information recently received by Amnesty International, eight Christians arrested last September in Shandong province, east China, were ill-treated in detention and three of them sentenced to terms of three years' imprisonment for their involvement in peaceful religious activities. One of them, Zhang Lezhi, was reportedly chained in a painful position continuously for three months, with his hands and feet tied together.

The eight Christians, most of them farmers, were members of a local group of the New Testament Church, a Protestant congregation which has been banned by authorities in various areas in China. They were arrested on 8 and 9 September 1992 in several villages of Shouguang county, located some 200 kilometres east of Jinan, the provincial capital of Shandong.

Seven of those detained have been identified. They were: Zhang Lezhi, a 32 year-old tradesman; Yan Peizhi, a 35 year-old farmer, and his wife, Zheng Yulian, aged 23; Xu Zhihe, a 50 year-old farmer, and his wife, Guo Ruiping; Zhu Zizheng, aged 30, and Hu Jinting, aged 38, both of them farmers.

According to a detailed report received by Amnesty International, Zhang Lezhi was arrested in the evening of 8 September in Nine Lanes

village, Shouguang county, after a plainclothes policeman led him away from his market stall under the pretext of discussing a business matter. He was bundled into a jeep in which other police officers were waiting, handcuffed and taken to a local police station. The following day, the other Christians were arrested in various places and taken to the police station at Beiluo, Shouguang county. On 10 September, Zhang Lezhi and the seven other detainees were transferred to the Shouguang City Detention Centre.

They were accused of engaging in "illegal" religious activities and of "restoring and expanding" the New Testament Church. Three of them had previously been detained or imprisoned for preaching: Zhang Lezhi for two years and Yan Peizhi and Xu Zhihe each for two months. Their homes were searched by police and private belongings confiscated, including Bibles, religious publications, personal letters and cassette tapes and recorders.

The eight Christians were reportedly beaten in detention and ill-treated in other ways. According to the report, shortly after his arrest, Zhang Lezhi protested that he was innocent and was assaulted by two police officers with an electric baton. After he was beaten, his legs were manacled with fetters weighing nine kilograms. His hands were also handcuffed and the handcuffs and fetters were tied together with a short chain so that Zhang Lezhi had to bend at a 180 degree angle. The beatings reportedly continued while he was thus chained and an additional fetter was later added to his legs, bringing the total weight to 13 kilograms. According to the report, he was chained in this painful position day and night for three months without the chains ever being removed, even for sleeping or eating. When the weather became cold, he reportedly requested permission to have the chains removed so as to put on additional clothes, but this was also denied.

Another of the detainees, Zhu Zizheng, was reportedly forced to sit for a whole day on a so-called "security chair" (**anquan yi**) which had spikes on the sides. This chair is reportedly used at the detention centre for punishing inmates and any movement on the chair causes severe pain. Zhu Zizheng was reportedly beaten while he was sitting on the chair and had food forced into his mouth.

Five of the detainees were held without charge for periods varying from one to three months and then released. The three others, Zhang Lezhi, Yan Peizhi and Xu Zhihe, were tried in December 1992 by Shouguang county court and sentenced each to three years of "reform through labour". The exact charges against them are not known.

They were sent to carry out their sentences at the Chang Le "Re-education Through Labour" camp, in Chang Le county, some 40 kilometres south of Shouguang. There, they have reportedly been abused by common criminal prisoners and assigned to carry out the dirtiest and most exhausting jobs.

Amnesty International has no further details about the trial of the three Christians, but it is concerned that they are reported to be jailed for their involvement in peaceful religious activities. It is also concerned about the allegations that they and the other Christians detained were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in police custody. Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to launch a public and impartial investigation into the allegations and to take all appropriate measures to ensure the victims' safety.

Many other incidents of harassment, arrest and ill-treatment of Christians have been reported in various provinces during the past year. For further information about such incidents, see Amnesty International's reports, *China: Update on Torture* (ASA 17/12/93, March 1993), *China: Gross Violations of Human Rights Continue* (Weekly Update of 27 May 1993, ASA 17/WU 05/93), and Urgent Action 149/93 *PRC: Lai Maoping and other Christians* (ASA 17/18/93, 10 May 1993).

Please send telexes/express or airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- ◆ Expressing concern that Zhang Lezhi, Yan Peizhi and Xu Zhihe, three Christians from Shouguang county in Shandong province, are reported to have been sentenced in December 1992 to three years' imprisonment for their involvement in peaceful religious activities. Urge that they be released unconditionally if they have not been charged with recognizably criminal offences in accordance with international human rights standards;
- ◆ Expressing concern that the three men and five other Christians are reported to have been severely ill-treated in police custody after their arrest in Shouguang county in September 1992. Urge the authorities to launch without delay an impartial investigation into the allegations, the result of which should be made public, and to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the alleged victims against any reprisals or ill-treatment in detention.

Please send appeals to:

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China

XIAO Yang Buzhang Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN
Sifabu (Please forward to Xiao Yang Buzhang)
Xianguangli Faxes: + 861 467 7351
Beijingshi 100016 Telegram: Justice Minister Xiao Yang, Beijing, China
People's Republic of China Salutation: Your Excellency

Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of the PRC

ZHANG Siqing Jianchazhang
Zuigao Renmin Jianchayuan Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN
147 Beiheyuan Dajie (Please forward to Zhang Siqing Jianchazhang)
Donganmen Faxes: + 861 512 6655 ext.1053
Dongchengqu Telegram: Procurator-General Zhang Siqing, Beijing, China
Beijingshi 100726 Salutation: Dear Procurator-General
People's Republic of China

Governor of the Shandong Provincial People's Government

ZHAO Zhihao Shengzhang
Shandongsheng Renmin Zhengfu
193 Jinger Lu Telegram: Governor Zhao Zhihao, Jinan,
Jinanshi Shandong province, China

Shandongsheng
People's Republic of China

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS GROUPS - PROTESTANTS / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / RESTRAINTS
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