

URGENT ACTION

GRASSROOTS WOMEN ACTIVIST HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Chen Jianfang, a devoted grassroots human rights defender has been held in incommunicado detention since 20 March. A well-known activist, she led a campaign in 2013 with late activist Cao Shunli to demand that the government allow civil society participation in China's preparations for its UPR at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Denied access to her family and a lawyer of her choice Chen Jianfang is at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Branch Chief Xu Zhanghua
Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau Pudong Branch
655 Dingxianglu, Pudongxingqu
Shanghai 200135
People's Republic of China

Dear Branch Chief Xu,

Chen Jianfang and her husband were taken away by police in the early morning of 20 March 2019 from their home in Shanghai. According to sources, Chen Jianfang's neighbour witnessed approximately seven police cars of the Shanghai Municipal Public Security Bureau parked outside their home that same morning. Amnesty International has been told that police did not inform the couple of the offence they were suspected of committing when they were arrested. While Chen's husband was released on bail on 3 April, authorities have guarded their home and put pressure on family and neighbours not to speak publicly about her situation.

Four months since her arrest, the authorities have not yet provided a reason for Chen Jianfang's detention, nor revealed details about where she is being held. Friends of Chen have speculated that her detention was related to her online article, posted on 14 March, commemorating the 5th Anniversary of Cao Shunli's death.

In June, Chen Jianfang's lawyer went to Pudong Public Security Bureau to obtain information about her case, however the national security officers in charge refused to communicate with him about her situation as they claimed that the lawyer's representation was not valid. According to an unconfirmed report, Chen Jianfang has been formally arrested on suspicion of the charge of "inciting subversion of state power" in June. She could face up to 15 years behind bars if convicted of that charge. Chen Jianfang has not had access to a lawyer of her choice or her family, raising fears that she is at real risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Therefore, we call on you to:

- **immediately and unconditionally release Chen Jianfang as she is a prisoner of conscience, deprived of liberty solely for exercising her human rights peacefully;**
- **pending her release ensure that Chen Jianfang is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment and has immediate, and thereafter regular and unrestricted access to a lawyer of her choice, and is able to communicate with family members, without undue interference.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Chen Jianfang was formerly a farmer in Chenxiang village, Shanghai. In early 2000s, she began petitioning the government for reparation as farmland in her community was forcibly seized for redevelopment. Over a decade of petitioning, Chen Jianfang has faced relentless persecution by authorities and has been beaten up by police and thugs, arbitrarily detained and sentenced to “re-education through labour” for 15 months.

Since 2008, Chen Jianfang has started to advocate for the civil and political rights of grassroots activists and petitioners. She worked with Cao Shunli, another well-known activist in China, to campaign for a genuine civil society participation in drafting China’s national report for the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2013. Beginning in June 2013, they staged a two-month sit-in along with other grassroots activists outside the foreign ministry in Beijing to press for the public to contribute to the report. On 14 September 2013, authorities barred Chen Jianfang and Cao Shunli from leaving China to attend a human rights training in Geneva, Switzerland. Chen Jianfang was released after brief detention while Cao died from organ failure on 14 March at the hospital after six months in detention. Cao’s death caused an international uproar, but to this day the authorities have yet to initiate or allow an independent investigation. Subsequently, Chen Jianfang has been under close surveillance and banned from travelling abroad.

Activists and human rights defenders in China continued to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest, detention and prosecution

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 September 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Chen Jianfang (she/her)