

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 62/95 Torture / ill-treatment / arbitrary detention 14 March 1995

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA Catholic villagers in Hebei province

Catholics from two mountain villages in northern China claim they have been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and heavy fines by local officials for breaches of the government birth control policy. The claims have been confirmed by other sources.

In a letter of appeal to the international community, dated December 1994 but only recently made public, Catholics from the villages of Fengjiazhuang and Longtiangou, in Lingshou county, Hebei Province, some 200 kilometres southwest of Beijing, say that their villages have been made the "key points" of a birth control campaign. The campaign, launched by the local authorities in Spring 1994 under the slogan "better to have more graves than more than one child", is reported to be continuing, heightening fears that the human rights violations associated with it may still be occurring.

Over 90 percent of the 2000 inhabitants of the two villages are Catholic. Many are reported to have been fined in the past for having more children than permitted under the official birth control policy because they reject abortion and sterilization. According to various sources, since the beginning of the current campaign, family planning officials from nearby Ciyu town have sent teams to the two villages demanding fines from targeted individuals, including some who had paid fines previously. Those unable to pay (or their relatives) were taken away in handcuffs and jailed in Ciyu.

"They raided houses and arrested everyone, whether old or young", the appeal says. "If they could not find someone, they confiscated farm tools, animals and other things because they did not want to leave empty-handed. The confiscated goods have become their property. They even took away as hostages sick people who could not get up from their bed." Those allegedly persecuted included a 40-year-old woman who was single and sick. The appeal says she was "brutally beaten with an electric baton..., chained and tortured at night".

According to the appeal and other sources, detainees were beaten and tortured to accelerate the payment of fines. Some were reportedly hung upside down, others received electric shocks on their tongue with electric batons or live wires, and some were subjected to extremes of cold or heat, by being held in hot garages or tied to poles under the summer sun or tied outside their cells in freezing temperatures in winter.

One report cites villagers' allegations that single women detained to make families pay fines were "beaten and sexually abused" (*Union of Catholic Asian News* (UCAN), 15 February 1995). It cites several cases of ill-treatment including that of a man whose legs were tread on by officials and who was hospitalized for two weeks as a result, and that of a man present when a team came to get his relatives who was himself taken away, beaten and left with severe injuries.

One man who could not bear to see his wife tortured in a cell for days attempted to sell their children in Beijing, the UCAN report says. It cites one source as alleging that a divorced woman was forcibly sterilized and other women pregnant eight or nine months were given injections against their will to induce miscarriages.

The UCAN report goes on to say that Catholics in other villages in the area have been subjected to similar harassment, and despite complaints to the county and provincial government and to the people's procurator, the family planning teams ignored the procurator's order to stop their actions, blaming instead the Catholics for "causing problems".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or Mandarin Chinese or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Catholic villagers in Lingshou county, Hebei province, have been arbitrarily detained and tortured by local officials in connection with a birth control campaign launched in 1994 which is reportedly continuing;
- urging the authorities to put an immediate end to such actions by the local authorities and to ensure that anyone still detained be immediately released and that allegations of torture be thoroughly and impartially investigated and the perpetrators punished;
- referring to Amnesty International's concern that forced abortions or sterilizations imposed by anyone acting in an official capacity with the use of physical force, detention or other restrictions amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; expressing concern at the allegation that, during the birth control campaign in Lingshou county, one woman was forcibly sterilized and some pregnant women were given injections to induce miscarriages against their will;
- urging the authorities to investigate this report and ensure that any officials found to have used such force or restrictions be punished and that the findings of the investigation be made public.

APPEALS TO:

Premier of the People's Republic of China

LI Peng Zongli

Guowuyuan

9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie

Beijingshi 100032

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN

Telegrams: Premier Li Peng, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of the Hebei Provincial People's Government

YE Liansong Shengzhang

Hebeisheng Renmin Zhengfu

10 Weiming Jie

Shijiazhuangshi

Hebeisheng 050053

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 26229 HBFOE CN or 26232 SHMPG CN (Please forward to Governor Cheng Weigao)

Telegrams: Governor Cheng Weigao, Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, China

Salutation: Dear Governor

Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of the People's Republic of China

ZHANG Siqing Jianchazhang

Zuigao Renmin Jianchayuan

147 Beiheyuan Dajie

Donganmen, Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100726
People's Republic of China

Telexes: 210070 FMPRC CN or 22478 MFERT CN (Please forward to Zhang Siqing Jianchazhang)

Telegrams: Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate Zhang Siqing, Beijing, China

Salutation: Dear Procurator-General

Chief Procurator of the Hebei Provincial People's Procuratorate

MA Jiming Jianchazhang

Hebeisheng Renmin Jianchayuan

(address as above)

Telexes: 26229 HBFOE CN or 26232 SHMPG CN (Please forward to Chief Procurator Liu Zongxin)

Telegrams: Chief Procurator of the Provincial People's Procuratorate Liu Zongxin, Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, China

Salutation: Dear Procurator

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic 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 1995.