

UA 132/95

Torture / Ill-treatment

9 June 1995

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Yu Zhijian

Li Wangyang, aged 36, worker

Zhang Jingsheng

and other political prisoners at Hunan province No.1 Prison

In a letter smuggled out of Hunan No. 1 Prison on Chishan Island, Hunan Province, a prisoner of conscience has told of the routine use of beatings and ill-treatment in the prison, and of the likelihood of the "disastrous consequences" that its publication may have for him.

In his letter, dated 23 May 1995, Yu Zhijian represents 54 political prisoners imprisoned for their activities during the pro-democracy movement in 1989. The letter takes the form of a petition to the National People's Congress (NPC), and gives two examples of the beatings and ill-treatment that it alleges are commonplace at Hunan No. 1 Prison:

- Li Wangyang, sentenced in 1990 to 13 years' imprisonment for "counter revolutionary propaganda and incitement" was reportedly beaten up in late January 1995 by a guard who took him to a small room and beat him so severely that one of his teeth was knocked out.

- Zhang Jingsheng, a prisoner of conscience and veteran pro-democracy dissident imprisoned in December 1989 for 13 years for "counter revolutionary propaganda and incitement" had his mouth forcibly taped up in March 1995 by a guard for teaching his cell mate to sing a prison song he had written.

The letter contains the names and case details of 12 political prisoners who are all serving sentences ranging from 10 years to suspended death sentences. Another 41 political prisoners asked Yu Zhijian to represent them in the petition but were too fearful of reprisals to have their names published. Yu Zhijian reiterates his belief that his actions in 1989 were peaceful expressions of opinions and not "counter-revolutionary sabotage". The letter requests that the NPC ensures that the new Prison Law (promulgated in December 1994) be implemented so that "political prisoners no longer receive frequent beatings".

The letter also calls for an improvement in prison conditions and for a review of the cases of 34 prisoners tried in the repressive climate tainted by the 4 June 1989 crackdown. It also calls for the early release of the political prisoners, a number of whom are suffering from chronic Hepatitis B.

The Chinese authorities have responded to the letter by questioning its authenticity. Amnesty International believes there is cause for action because of the seriousness of the allegations in it, and in view of past reports of the ill-treatment of prisoners in Hunan Province (see Torture in China, ASA 17/55/92, December 1992, pp 20-25).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Yu Zhijian was arrested with two others, Yu Dongyue and Lu Dechang, on 23 May 1989, exactly six years from the date of the letter. All three were charged with "counter revolutionary sabotage" and "counter revolutionary propaganda and incitement" for allegedly throwing paint at a portrait of Mao Zedong in

Tiananmen Square and distributing political leaflets, 11 days before the 4 June 1989 crackdown.

Yu Zhijian was sentenced to life imprisonment and the other two received 20 and 16 year sentences. All three have reportedly been ill-treated while in prison and held in solitary confinement for very long periods. By early 1992 Yu Zhijian was reported to have become very thin and to be in a poor condition.

There have also been persistent reports that both Li Wangyang and Zhang Jingsheng have been ill-treated throughout their time in prison. Zhang Jingsheng, well-known among political prisoners for his prison songs, was held in solitary confinement for a period following a hunger-strike.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Li Wangyang, Zhang Jingsheng and other prisoners at Hunan No.1 prison have been ill-treated;
- urging that an impartial investigation be launched into the reports and that those found responsible for the beatings be punished and the results of the investigation be made public.
- seeking assurances that Yu Zhijian, the 12 other prisoners who were mentioned in the letter and the remaining 41 who supported it not be discriminated against in any manner and in particular that they not be subjected to punishment, pressure or intimidation for this peaceful appeal;
- expressing concern that Yu Zhijian and others have been sentenced for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights, in violation of international standards, and urging that all prisoners of conscience be released immediately and unconditionally.

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

Faxes: + 86 10 512 5810 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Telegrams: Premier Li Peng, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the Prison Administration Department (formerly the Reform-Through Labour Administration) of the Ministry of Justice

YAO Yunhui Juzhang

Laodong Gaizao Gongzuo Guanliju

14 Dongchang'anlu

Dongchengqu

Beijingshi 100741

People's Republic of China

Telegrams: Director, Prison Administration Department, Justice Ministry, Beijing, China

Salutation: Dear Director

Governor of the Hunan Provincial People's Government

Yang Zhengwu Shengzhang

Hunansheng Renmin Zhengfu
7 Wuyizhonglu
Changshashi 410011
Hunansheng, People's Republic of China
Telexes: 98182 CSPG CN (Please forward to Yang Zhengwu Shengzhang)
Faxes: + 86 731 47850
Telegrams: Governor Yang Zhengwu, Changsha, Hunan Province, China
Salutation: Dear Governor

Chief Procurator of the Hunan Provincial People's Procuratorate
ZHANG Shuhai Jianchazhang
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Telegrams: Chief Procurator, Provincial People's Procuratorate, Changsha, Hunan Province, China
Salutation: Dear Chief Procurator

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of 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 25 July 1995.