

EXTERNAL

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Health concern / Prisoner of conscience 28 November 1995

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**Zeng Jingmu, Roman Catholic Bishop, age 76**

76-year-old Bishop Zeng Jingmu, detained on or around 22 November 1995, is reported to be suffering from a serious case of pneumonia which he contracted while previously detained in Chongren Detention Centre, Jiangxi province, between 4 and 18 October 1995. He reportedly did not receive medical treatment for his pneumonia while in detention in October, heightening concern that he may not be receiving adequate medical care now.

Zeng Jingmu, unofficial Bishop of Yujiang diocese, Jiangxi province, has been detained for short periods several other times over the past two years: on 14 August 1994 he was detained and held for three days; he was detained again on 17 September and released in December; in April 1995 he was detained briefly a third time. His health appears to have steadily declined and he has reportedly been frail and in poor health for some time.

Amnesty International believes that Zeng Jingmu is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his religious beliefs and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Zeng Jingmu is a bishop of the "underground" Catholic church in China which refuses to break ties with the Vatican and join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Many "underground" Catholics in Yujiang diocese, Jiangxi province, have been harassed, detained and fined during 1995. In April 1995, during Easter celebrations in Yujiang diocese, between 30 and 40 "underground" Catholics were detained after a mass prayer meeting held on Yujiashan mountain. Most of those detained were released after payment of a large fine, but four people have been sentenced to between two and five years' imprisonment for their peaceful religious activities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/airmail letters in Chinese or English or your own language:

- demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Zeng Jingmu;
- expressing concern that 76-year-old Zeng Jingmu was reported to be suffering from a serious case of pneumonia before his most recent detention and that he contracted the illness while in detention in October 1995;
- demanding that he be given immediate medical treatment;
- expressing concern that Zeng Jingmu has suffered routine harassment by the authorities resulting in his being detained on several occasions over the past two years.

APPEALS TO:

Director of the State Council Bureau of Religious Affairs

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Telegrams: Director, State Council Bureau of Religious Affairs, Beijing, China

Salutation: Dear Director

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Salutation: Dear Governor

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Jiangxisheng

People's Republic of China

and 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 10 January 1996.