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China: Chen Guangcheng is prisoner of conscience

Human rights activist Chen Guangcheng was today sentenced to four years and three months in prison. In reaction, Catherine Baber, Deputy Asia Pacific Director at Amnesty International said:

"We condemn utterly the sentence imposed on Chen Guangcheng and consider him a prisoner of conscience. Chen has been imprisoned solely because of his peaceful defence of human rights and he should be released immediately."

"The charges against Chen were politically motivated and the trial was grossly unfair from start to finish. Chen's lawyers were obstructed at every step of the way, from collecting evidence to representing him in court. By some accounts the trial lasted only two hours; and the courtroom was filled with official representatives preventing members of the public and most of Chen's relatives attending."

Chen was charged with "damaging public property and gathering people to block traffic" in June 2006, after he had been detained incommunicado for three months. He had been arbitrarily confined to his home since September 2005. Before his detention Chen had been helping local villagers in their attempt to sue the local authorities in Linyi City, Shandong province, for carrying out an illegal policy of forced abortions and sterilizations which reportedly affected thousands of local women.

Public Document

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