

PUBLIC

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Torture/ill-treatment/denial of medical care 20 June 2001

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

ZHANG Shanguang, aged 47

Other prisoners at Hunan Province No.1 Prison

Former teacher and labour activist Zhang Shanguang, who is serving a 10-year sentence at a prison factory in Hunan Province, has reportedly been severely beaten by prison guards and put in solitary confinement, after he circulated a petition demanding an end to torture and long working hours. Other prisoners who signed the petition were also reportedly beaten, and all are at risk of reprisals from the prison guards.

The petition, dated 15 March 2001, was smuggled out of the prison in April. It describes appalling conditions at the Hunan No.1 Prison, an electrical machinery factory in Yuanjiang city, central Hunan Province, and punishments amounting to torture for prisoners who are unable to do the heavy work required of them or who complain:

"The prison guards are like gods, they are the law. They can turn right and wrong upside down, and they can make white into black... They punch and kick prisoners, flinging them to the floor, trampling on them with their leather shoes, beating them with electric batons while they are handcuffed... Prisoners have no way to resist or they will be beaten till they are covered with scars, till their body is changed to a pulp, till they spit blood, till their teeth fall out, till they go mad, till they are half dead, or till they jump off buildings to commit suicide...

"Prison guards frequently handcuff prisoners to basketball hoops, windows or pillars, often with their hands over their heads and with their feet, or only their toes, barely touching the ground. Some were handcuffed for over 30 days, and became extremely skinny... Some were handcuffed for such a long time that they couldn't take it any more and attempted to commit suicide. [The guards] also often tie prisoners together like dead pigs so that their flesh becomes soft or rotten. Many prisoners have scars from the ropes that never go away for the rest of their life...

"... every day they are forced to work for 12-13 hours, or even 15-16 hours. Sometimes prisoners work through the night and once they get off work they hardly have time to close their eyes before the bell sounds to wake them up for breakfast and work. It's common to see prisoners so tired that they split blood and go into some kind of coma. Tuberculosis is widespread."

Former prisoners confirmed this description of prison conditions in a 14 June article in the Washington Post. The article reports on the decreasing income of Chinese prisons in an increasingly competitive market, as a result of which some of them have cut costs and forced prisoners to work longer hours.

Zhang Shanguang was convicted of "endangering state security" on 27 December 1998 by a court in Hunan and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. He was accused of revealing "secret" information for speaking about peasant and worker unrest during an interview with Radio Free Asia. He had also started a group to help laid-off workers. Arrested on 21 July 1998, he was reportedly severely beaten during his pre-trial detention because he failed to answer questions about the group he had formed and his overseas connections.

He is believed to have contracted tuberculosis while serving a previous sentence of seven years' imprisonment for forming an independent trade union during the 1989 pro-democracy protests. He is now reported to be suffering from a "lung illness" and to be often spitting blood. Despite this he has been denied a medical examination and the treatment he needs, and has reportedly been forced to do heavy physical work in shackles, and beaten when he tries to stop working. In late 2000, he reportedly spent four months in solitary confinement as

punishment for "refusing to confess his crimes", and was denied family visits for several months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under Chinese law and prison regulations prisoners have a right to medical examination and care, but Amnesty International has documented many cases where prison authorities routinely refuse to provide proper medication and access to doctors. They also frequently refuse to give medical information to prisoners' relatives or allow them to pass on food and necessary medication.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Chinese, English or your own language:

- expressing grave concern at reports that Zhang Shanguang and other prisoners at the Hunan No.1 Prison have been tortured and subjected to conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- calling on the authorities to order a thorough and independent investigation into conditions at the prison, to remedy the situation and punish prison guards involved in ill-treating prisoners.
- urging the government to ensure that Zhang Shanguang and other prisoners at Hunan Province no.1 Prison do not face retaliation by the prison or other authorities for signing a petition complaining about conditions at the prison;
- expressing concern that Zhang Shanguang is reportedly in poor health, and urging the authorities to ensure that he and other prisoners receive appropriate medical treatment as recommended by competent doctors;
- urging the government that Zhang Shanguang, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his fundamental human rights, be released immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Premier of the People's Republic of China

ZHU Rongji Zongli

Guowuyuan

9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie

Beijingshi 100032

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Premier Zhu Rongji, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China

ZHANG Fusen Buzhang

Sifabu

Xiaguangli

Beijingshi 100016

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN

(Please forward to the Minister of Justice)

Telegram: Minister of Justice, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of the Hunan Provincial People's Government

CHU Bo Shengzhang

Hunansheng Renmin Zhengfu

7 Wuyizhonglu

Changshashi 410011

Hunansheng

People's Republic of China

Telex: 98182 CSPG CN (Please forward the governor)

Telegram: Governor, Changsha, Hunan Province, China

Salutation: Dear Governor

Prison Director

Jianyu Zhang

Hunan Provincial Prison No.1

Hunansheng di yi Jianyu

PO Box 101

Xinyuan Lu, Nanzui

Yuanjiangshi

Hunansheng 413104

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Director, Hunan Provincial Prison No 1, Hunan Province, China**Salutation: Dear Director****COPIES TO:**

Xinhua News Agency: xhdb@xinhua.org

xinhua@xinhua.org

People's Daily Online (English): english@peopledaily.com.cn

China Central Television: ae00@mail.cctv.com

Hunan Province Government: WebMaster@hunan.gov.cn

and 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 August 2001.