

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/medical concern

CHINA

Wang Guofeng (m)
Li Suzhi (f), his wife
Two men, names not known

Four people, all HIV positive, have reportedly been detained in Shangqiu city, Henan province after they tried to protest at inadequate healthcare and other services for those infected with HIV/AIDS in the city. They may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment, and Amnesty International fears that they may not receive the medical treatment they may need while they are in custody.

Wang Guofeng and Li Suzhi were detained on 12 July as they were about to travel to Beijing to petition the national health department, according to local HIV/AIDS activist Li Dan. The couple were reportedly concerned that they had not received the medical treatment that the central authorities had promised. They were also angry that the school their children attended had recently been closed down by the local authorities.

The school had been set up by Li Dan for children whose parents were HIV-positive or had died of AIDS, but was reportedly shut down on 7 July after Li told the authorities that he was going to Thailand to participate in the 15th International AIDS conference, now in progress in Bangkok.

The two others were reportedly detained on 9 July after getting into an argument with police at a hospital. They had apparently come to the hospital to petition President Hu Jintao after rumours spread that he was visiting the premises.

In April at least six people with HIV/AIDS were detained in Shangcai county, Henan province, after seeking help from the local authorities. (See UA 161/04, ASA 17/018/2004, 30 April 2004). Similarly, in June last year, police reportedly detained several people with HIV/AIDS, and beat some of them, in connection with protests and disturbances relating to lack of access to medical care also in Shangcai county. (See UA 210/03, ASA 17/030/2003, 11 July 2003 and *Continuing abuses under a new leadership – a summary of human rights concerns*, ASA 17/035/2003, October 2003).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to official statistics, there are around 840,000 people infected with HIV and 80,000 AIDS patients in China, but the real figures are believed to be much higher. It is thought that up to one million people may have been infected with the HIV virus in Henan and other provinces through selling their blood to government-sanctioned blood-collecting stations in the 1990s. The blood-collection schemes became a useful source of income for villagers, but were often poorly managed and unsafe.

The extent of the spread of HIV/AIDS in China has become better known after campaigning by Chinese AIDS activists, who risk arbitrary detention, harassment and other abuses. Li Dan, who runs a charity called *Orchid*, which helps AIDS orphans in Henan, has made numerous public statements criticising official policy on HIV/AIDS in China, including official statistics on the extent of HIV infections in China.

Pressure from both domestic and international sources has prompted the central authorities to take more concrete measures to tackle HIV/AIDS over recent months. A number of positive measures have been announced, including the provision of antiretroviral drugs to the poor and free HIV tests. However, implementation has reportedly been patchy and discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS remains

entrenched. The United Nations has estimated that China could have 10 million AIDS patients by 2010 if the authorities do not take effective measures.

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

- urging the authorities to reveal where Wang Guofeng, Li Suzhi and the two others detained in Shangqiu city, Henan province are held, and to guarantee that they will not be ill-treated;
- expressing concern that they appear to have been detained solely for attempting to engage in peaceful acts of protest, and calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they receive full and adequate medical treatment while they remain in detention;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all human rights defenders in China, including Li Dan and other HIV/AIDS activists, can carry out their work without fear of arbitrary detention, harassment or other abuses;
- urging the authorities to fully investigate the extent of HIV/AIDS infection in Henan and other provinces caused by blood-collection centres, and to make the results public.

APPEALS TO:

Director of the Henan Provincial Department of Justice

Guo Junfeng Tingzhang

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Salutation: Dear Director

Premier of the People's Republic of China

Premier Wen Jiabao

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Beijingshi 100032

People's Republic of China

Fax: + 86 10 6596 3374

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Mayor of Shangqiu City People's Government

Mao Fenglan Shizhang

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Henansheng

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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 25 August 2004.