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Public statement

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China: Immediately release all recently detained earthquake survivors

Chinese authorities should immediately release recently detained survivors and parents who attempted to mourn for the children who died during the earthquake in Sichuan last year.

According to US-based Radio Free Asia, on 9 May, authorities in Dujiangyan unlawfully sent six parents of children from the Xinjian Primary School to the neighbouring Hubei province to prevent them from speaking to foreign journalists who came to Sichuan province to cover the first anniversary of the earthquake. These parents have not yet returned home.

Radio Free Asia further reported that on 11 May, Dujiangyan police detained two parents of children from the Juyuan Middle School, one of whom was able to telephone out and claimed to be kept in a hostel in the suburbs before the line was cut. It is unclear if the two parents have now returned home or not. On 12 May the authorities also took away approximately 50 parents from Juyuan town and Chongyi town to Pi county after they burned paper offerings for their children and released them only after Hu Jintao had completed the official commemoration ceremony for the first anniversary of the Sichuan earthquake.

The intimidation of earthquake survivors is an outrage and contradicts the notion of a “harmonious society” and “putting people first” that Chinese leaders have been promoting. Prohibiting grieving parents from mourning is completely unjustified. And detaining them to prevent them from speaking out is unlawful.

Background

On 4 May, Amnesty International released a report *Justice Denied: Harassment of Sichuan earthquake survivors and activists*, which documents instances where some parents and relatives were placed under unlawful and arbitrary detention and prohibited from petitioning to Beijing. The report also documents instances in which parents are denied access to legal remedies and obstructed from seeking investigation on the collapse of many school buildings. The report is available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/018/2009/en> and a web action to call on the Chinese authorities to provide justice to the earthquake survivors is available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/support-parents-and-survivors-sichuan-earthquake>.

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