

PUBLIC

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Torture/arbitrary detention/legal concern

23 April 2001

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

He Kechang
Ran Chongxin
Jiang Qingshan
Wen Dingchun

The four farmers named above have reportedly been detained incommunicado since March. He Kechang has reportedly been tortured, and the others are also believed to be in danger. They are among thousands of people whose homes will be flooded by the Three Gorges Dam, and they were arrested when they tried to complain that local officials had embezzled funds intended to pay for resettling them.

All four are from Gaoyang township, Yunyang county, in Chongqing municipality. Gaoyang is in the centre of what will become a giant reservoir in 2003, when the dam on the Yangzi river becomes operational. The dam project has been plagued with problems, including reported widespread corruption, embezzlement of resettlement funds intended to compensate people whose homes will be flooded, and environmental problems.

The four were reportedly among eight farmers' representatives from Gaoyang, who planned to go to Beijing in early March to present a petition to the government, complaining that local officials had embezzled resettlement funds. The local police found out, and arrested Wen Dingchun on 8 March. Four of the others reportedly fled the area, while He Kechang, Ran Chongxin and Jiang Qingshan went to Beijing. Yunyang county police apparently followed them there, arrested them on 12 March and took them back to Yunyang.

All are reportedly held in the Yunyang county police Detention Centre. It is believed they may be charged with "disturbing social order" or "leaking state secrets". They are expected to be tried at the end of April.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Three Gorges dam will be the largest in the world. Over a million people will have to be resettled by the time the dam is completed, of whom 300,000 have already moved. The government in Beijing introduced new regulations in February this year, to try to rid the project of corruption and prevent social unrest over forced resettlement. According to some experts, even though the regulations are a positive step, they fail to address some contentious issues and are being implemented without the public scrutiny that would be required to alleviate the problems surrounding the massive displacement of people.

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

- expressing concern that He Kechang, Ran Chongxin, Jiang Qingshan and Wen Dingchun are reported to have been arbitrarily detained by Yunyang county police, Chongqing municipality, for peacefully attempting to exercise their constitutional right to petition the government in Beijing;
- expressing concern that He Kechang has reportedly been tortured in custody, and urging the authorities to take action immediately to ensure that he and the others do not face further torture or ill-treatment, and to order an impartial investigation into the allegations;
- urging the authorities to order that the men are released immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence, and to ensure that while they are in custody they have access to their families, lawyers and doctors of their choosing.

APPEALS TO:

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Telexes: 210070 FMPRC CN or 22478 MFERT CN
Telegram: Premier Zhu Rongji, Beijing, China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of the People's Republic of China

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(Please forward to the Procurator-General)

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COPIES TO:

The Sichuan Daily
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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 4 June 2001.