

URGENT ACTION

FALUN GONG MAN RELEASED FROM DETENTION

Falun Gong practitioner Zhou Xiangyang was released from prison on 1 April. This followed a combination of international and domestic pressure on the Chinese authorities.

Zhou Xiangyang had been held in Gangbei Prison in Tianjin City, east of Beijing, since 5 March 2011. The campaign for his release included a petition which was written and signed by more than 2,300 villagers from his hometown and surrounding area. His parents also protested outside the prison gates. Following his release from prison on 1 April, Zhou Xiangyang returned home.

Before his arrest in March 2011, Zhou Xiangyang had already spent eight and a half years in detention, comprised of two and a half years in re-education through labour from 1999, and six years in Gangbei Prison from 2003-2009, in both cases for speaking out about the persecution against Falun Gong practitioners by the authorities. While in prison, Zhou Xiangyang experienced torture, including being shocked with electric batons being subjected to the "floor anchor" torture, and being regularly beaten by other inmates. He was also kept in solitary confinement.

Falun Gong is a spiritual movement which gained large numbers of supporters in China during the 1990s. After a peaceful gathering was staged in Tiananmen Square in July 1999, the government outlawed the group and launched a long-term campaign of intimidation and persecution, directed by a special organization called the 610 Office. Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained as a "threat to social and political stability" since the spiritual movement was banned. Practitioners have been held in psychiatric hospitals, re-education through labour facilities - a form of administrative detention imposed without charge, trial or judicial review, sentenced to long prison terms, and been held in specialized detention centres whose mission is to "transform" Falun Gong practitioners, through coercion into renouncing their spiritual beliefs, often through the use of torture and ill-treatment.

Many thanks to those who sent appeals. No further action is required from the UA network.

This is the second update of UA: 357/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/005/2012/en>

Name: Zhou Xiangyang
Gender m/f: Male

Further information on UA: 357/11 Index: ASA 17/018/2012 Issue Date: 12 July 2012

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