

29 August 2006

Mr. Hu Jintao
President of the People's Republic of China
c/o Ministry of Justice
1 Huajiadija, Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi
People's Republic of China

Via Fax: + 86 10 647 298 63

Dear President Hu Jintao,

As individuals and leaders in the fields of religion, bioethics, human rights and reproductive health who are deeply committed to ethical and justice-based policies that uphold the principles of informed choice and quality of care and that are voluntary and free from coercion, we write to express our deep concern about the case of Chen Guangcheng.

We have followed favorably the many efforts made by your government to institute measures in your national population program that reflect your commitment to the UN ICPD Programme of Action and advance non-coercive reproductive health services in China. We know that along the road to achieving those goals, individual and local violations of your new laws will happen. But we were dismayed to learn that from late 2004 to early 2005, three districts and nine counties in Linyi city, Shandong province, engaged in a large-scale population planning campaign that both violated the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China and included coercive and forceful actions such as imprisonment, assault and non-voluntary sterilization and abortion.

More disturbing has been the state's actions against Chen Guangcheng, who was tried without the presence of his lawyers on Friday, 18 August 2006. Mr. Chen was charged with destruction of property and disrupting traffic, although he was originally detained after he sought to gain lawful redress for those whose rights under Chinese law were violated.

In January 2005, Mr. Chen, a lawyer and civil rights defender, and his wife Yuan Weijing, launched an investigation into an illegal local population planning campaign in Linyi city. Their efforts led to the subsequent investigation and confirmation by the National Population and Family Planning Commission in July 2005 that Linyi's population planning campaign included serious violations of law. The combined efforts of Mr. Chen, some victims and other concerned citizens exposed Linyi's illegal actions and compelled local authorities to compensate to some of the victims.

We were troubled to learn that beginning in August 2005, Linyi city and Yinan county authorities used surveillance, threats, restrictions on personal freedom and other illegal methods to suppress Chen Guangcheng and other rights advocates. Among the human rights violations suffered by Mr. Chen are:

- Illegal house arrest and detention, beginning 12 August 2005;

- A 6-month forced disappearance, prior to his formal detention and charge in June 2006;
- Denial of outside contacts and visits by lawyers and family during this detention; and
- Threats, assaults upon and the detention of Mr. Chen's lawyers.

The proceedings leading up to his trial which began on 18 August 2006 are legally questionably and include violations of the defendant's rights to freedom from arbitrary detention and torture and the right to legal council. For example, on 17 August 2006, the day before the trial began, lawyers Zhang Lihui, Li Fangping and legal scholar Xu Zhiyong were detained by Yinan police after unidentified men apprehended them, accusing them of "picking pockets" in the streets of Yinan County. While Mr. Zhang and Mr. Li were released, Mr. Xu remains in detention. Activists in Shandong and Beijing have been called on the phone or visited by state security, who warned them of severe consequences if they try to go to Linyi, and a number of them have been put under house arrest or surveillance. Additionally, the Beijing lawyer Gao Zhisheng who went to Linyi in July to show support to Mr. Chen was arrested on the 15 August in Shandong, and all contacts to Mr. Gao and his family members and relatives have been cut off.

We are deeply concerned that this trial could not possibly respect the principle of fair trial and basic human rights unless the court looks into these accusations and make necessary remedies.

We ask that the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the Standing Committee of the Shandong People's Congress, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Shandong People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Supervision and the Shandong Supervision Bureau promptly form a "special issue" investigation committee, in accordance with the provisions of the Chinese Constitution and laws, to immediately begin investigative procedures into and launch legal supervision of the severe violations of the human rights of Chen Guangcheng.

We ask that the court refrain from issuing a verdict until these investigations are completed and that if any verdict is rendered before such measures have been taken, its implementation be suspended until such investigation is completed and any violations of due process and human rights are corrected.

Protracted illegal restrictions on the personal liberty of Chen Guangcheng and other local rights defenders constitute a severe violation of China's Constitution and the international human rights standards that the Chinese government has already committed to and must not be tolerated.

We ask that the central government expeditiously carry out its constitutional obligation of respecting and protecting human rights, and that judicial agencies exercise their right to judicial independence, as declared by law, to impartially consider the illegal actions of local law enforcement agencies' arbitrary detention of Chen Guangcheng, quickly restore the personal liberty of Mr. Chen, Yuan Weijing and associates, and in accordance with the law investigate the legal responsibility of those who violated people's rights. We hope this resolution will include the release of Chen Guangcheng and associates as the result of proper due process and in conformation with international human rights standards.

Respectfully yours,

(organizational affiliations are provided for purposes of identification only)

Members of Interfaith Delegation to China (Sept 2003):

- Frances Kissling, Catholics for a Free Choice, Washington, DC

- Ronald M. Green, Dartmouth College, USA
- Jim Martin-Schramm, Professor of Religion, Luther College, USA
- Maureen Shea, The Episcopal Church, USA

Additional Signatories:

- Mrs. Tigest Alemu, Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations (CORHA), Ethiopia
- Claudia Arroyo, Colectivo Juvenil “Decide” (Youth Group), Bolivia
- Dr. Charles R. Ausherman, Institute For Development Training (retired), USA
- Daniel Axelsson, The Swedish association for sexuality education, RFSU, Sweden
- Henk Baars, the Netherlands
- Hossam Bahgat, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt
- Frans Baneke, the Netherlands
- Edie Beaujon, USA
- Niall Behan, Irish Family Planning Association, Ireland
- Marge Berer, Reproductive Health Matters, UK
- Yvonne Bogaarts, World Population Foundation, the Netherlands
- Jane K. Boorstein, Partnership for Sustainable Families & Communities, USA
- Rev. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, Faith Voices for the Common Good, USA
- Heidi Bruggink, Feminist Caucus of the American Humanist Association, USA
- Leo Bryant, Marie Stopes International, UK
- Prof. Claudia V. Camp, Texas Christian University, USA
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- Sharon Danner, Call to Action of Northern Virginia, USA
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- Charles N. Davis, Catholics Speak Out, USA
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- June Jacobs, UK

- Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs, The Rabbi Steven B Jacobs Progressive Faith Foundation, USA
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- Janneth Lozano, Regina Soares & Teresa Lanza, Latin American Network of Catholics for the Right to Decide, Argentina
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- Kirsten Moore, Reproductive Health Technologies Project, USA
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- Judy Norsigian, Our Bodies Ourselves, USA
- Nancy Northup, Center for Reproductive Rights, USA
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- Maria José Rosado Nunes, Catolicas pelo Direito de Decidir/Brasil
- Jeanie Ollivierre, Network of HIV/AIDS, Women in Support of Equity, Educational and Economic Empowerment and Marion House, St. Vincent & the Grenadines
- Brigid O'Reilly, Catholics for a Free Choice/Canada
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- Gladys Parentelli, Foro Permanente por la Igualdad de Género, Venezuela
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- Chini Rueda Sabater, Spain
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- Save Our Sacrament: Reform of Annulment and Respondent Support
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- John Seager, Population Connection, USA

- Jacqueline Sharpe, IPPF - Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- Jill W. Sheffield, Family Care International, USA
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- June Keener Wink, USA
- Sara Winkowski, Uruguay
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- Harry Wu, The Laogai Research Foundation, Washington, DC
- Susan Wysocki, RNC, NP, FAANP, National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, USA
- Mr. Sylvestre K. Zounou, Human Rights Officer, Fondation Afrique Liberte (NGO), Togo

CC:

Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Standing Committee of the Shandong People's Congress
People's Republic of China Supreme People's Procuratorate and Shandong Province People's Procuratorate
People's Republic of China Ministry of Supervision and Shandong Province Supervision Bureau
Xiao Yang, President of the Supreme People's Court
Minister Zhou Yongkang, Ministry of Public Security
Minister Zhang Fusen, Ministry of Justice
Yang Aihua, Director of the Municipal Population and Family Planning Committee, President of the Municipal
Population Planning Association
Li Qun, Party Secretary of Linyi city, Chairman of Linyi Local People's Congress
Lian Chengmin, Mayor of Linyi city
Li Honghai, Member of Linyi Municipal Party Committee Standing Committee, Secretary of the Politics and Law
Commission
Liu Jie, Deputy Mayor of Linyi city, Director of Linyi Public Security Bureau
Ambassdor Zhou Wenzhong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States