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CHINA Blind activist Chen Guangcheng beaten after release of leaked video

Blind Chinese human rights activist Chen Guangcheng and his wife have been beaten by police after a video that was smuggled out described their conditions under house arrest as "prison."

The video, which can be found on [YouTube \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2YB2EjRZso\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2YB2EjRZso), features Chen and his wife Yuan Weijing describing constant surveillance. "I have moved from a smaller prison to a bigger prison" says Chen. A man, believed to be from the police, is featured peering into the family home through a window in the video which was released yesterday by US-based China Aid, who obtained it through a "sympathetic government source". Reports today on Chinese citizen journalism site, Boxun, suggest that the couple have been seriously beaten by state security police as a direct result of the video, and that they are being denied access to medical treatment.

Twitter users from within China have begun tweeting reports that Chen's older brother, Chen Guangfu, was taken away by police at 3:00 pm on February 10th.

There has been little news from Chen Guangcheng since he was placed under strict house arrest in September 2010 after his release from prison. Chen's wife, Yuan Weijing managed to send a message on November 24, 2010 describing how the couple's home was guarded by 12 police and thugs day and night. The five-part video confirms the family is being denied their most basic freedoms. "They have put surveillance cameras around the house and at the village entrance. I'm harassed all day long and I can't leave my house" says Chen. His wife is seen speaking of the family's difficulty in obtaining food, relying on Chen's mother who is in her seventies to shop for groceries for the family. Mobile phone jamming equipment has been installed around the home to prevent the family communicating with the outside world for most of the time. Friends and fellow activists who have tried to visit Chen's village have been turned away and roughed up by thugs. In the video Chen pays tribute to his friends and supporters saying, "Let me express my gratitude to my friends all around the world for their concern in the past few years and for their various types of help to my family."

Chen Guangcheng, a self-taught lawyer who has been blind since childhood, has been under attack by Chinese authorities since 2005 when he began to expose human rights abuses related to China's one-child policy. He was sentenced to four years and three months imprisonment for "intentionally damaging property" and "gathering crowds to disturb transport order". Lawyers who worked to defend him during his trial in 2005 and 2006 were regularly beaten and intimidated.

There has been an increase in the Chinese authorities' use of house arrest to suppress human rights activists in recent months since Chinese activist, Liu Xiaobo was announced as winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Dr Fan Yafeng, head of the Chinese Christian Human Rights' Lawyers Association has been under house arrest since October 12, 2010 and was reportedly severely beaten during questioning.

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "The treatment of Chen Guangcheng shows the lengths to which the Chinese government will go to suppress the freedom of individuals whom it views as a threat. CSW calls upon the international community to do all it can to press China to release Chen Guangcheng and Dr Fan Yafeng and end the practice of house arrest, which has no basis in Chinese domestic law."

