



6.17.2011

CHINA CSW renews call for state to cease persecution of blind activist Chen Guangcheng and his family under house arrest

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is today renewing its call for an end to the persecution of blind Chinese activist Chen Guangcheng, as a letter from his wife, Yuan Weijing, details horrific beatings and the poor medical condition of Chen's family, who are facing severe conditions under house arrest.

The letter, released by China Aid, explains that, "70–80 guys stormed through our house and beat and tortured ... Chen and me for more than two hours... they plundered almost everything from my home. My husband and I were severely wounded and yet not allowed to leave home for medical assistance". Yuan Weijing goes on to describe being bundled into a blanket and kicked repeatedly for half-an-hour. She cannot stand up straight as a result. Chen had his arms twisted around, and, according to the letter "passed out after two hours of torture". The couple is reportedly confined to bed due to their injuries and, apart Yuan receiving an injection, they have not been allowed access to medical treatment. Many of the family's belongings have been taken away, including toys belonging to their five-year-old daughter. She reportedly said "I am such a girl to be pitied. They robbed everything from me."

In February this year, a video was released showing the severe conditions in which the Chen family was being kept in their home in Shandong province, including surveillance cameras watching their house and mobile phone jamming equipment preventing the family communicating with the outside world. Following the video's release, the family was reportedly beaten up by police and plain-clothed thugs.

Despite international attention on Chen's case, his situation has deteriorated. He has been under severe house arrest, itself illegal under Chinese law, since September 2010 when he was released from prison. Fellow lawyers, friends, diplomats and journalists have been roughed up and denied access when trying to visit the 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". Mr. Chen, who is known as the "barefoot lawyer", has been an outspoken proponent of human rights through his legal work. Lawyers who worked to defend him during his trial in 2005 and 2006 were regularly beaten and intimidated.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW calls upon the international community to do all it can to condemn the treatment of Chen Guangcheng and urge the Chinese government to release the family from house arrest, which has no basis in Chinese domestic law. While China's geopolitical influence is increasing, so too should its respect for fundamental, internationally-recognized rights."