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REPORTS OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF FOLLOWERS OF THE FALUN GONG



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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

REPORTS OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF FOLLOWERS OF THE FALUN GONG

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by reports that detained followers of the Falun Gong have been tortured or ill-treated in various places of detention in China. In early October 1999, one member of the group, a 42 year-old woman, was reportedly beaten to death in police custody in Shandong province. Many followers of the group remain in detention across China and it is feared that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Many Falun Gong practitioners are middle-aged or elderly people, with a large proportion of women among them.

The Falun Gong - a movement which combines teaching of meditation and exercises as a method to improve health and moral standards - was banned by the Chinese government in July 1999. The government, apparently concerned by the large number of followers in all sectors of society - including government departments, declared it was a "cult" and a "threat to stability" and launched a nationwide propaganda campaign against it. The campaign was described as an important "political struggle". Thousands of Falun Gong followers who attempted to protest peacefully against the ban or who continued to practice exercises were arbitrarily detained across China in the days and weeks which followed the ban. Many were reportedly beaten by police in the process. At least hundreds are believed to remain in detention. Some are now being brought to trial on politically motivated charges. They are likely to be sentenced to long prison terms after unfair trials.

The following are some of the reports of torture and ill-treatment of Falun Gong practitioners received by Amnesty International. Some are accounts of police brutality against people arrested in the immediate aftermath of the ban on the Falun Gong in July 1999. Many other cases have been reported. While in the current climate of repression it is difficult to verify these reports, they contain specific and often detailed information about the places and circumstances in which torture is reported to have occurred, including the names and details of many of the alleged victims, and in some cases their photograph. Most of these reports describe patterns of torture which are known to be common in China. They contain serious allegations which should be impartially investigated. Under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which China ratified in 1988, China has the obligation to investigate all reports and complaints of torture, bring those responsible for torture to justice and compensate the victims.

While this document focuses on reports concerning the Falun Gong, Amnesty International is also concerned by other recent reports of torture in China, some of which concern Tibetans arrested or imprisoned for political reasons. Amnesty International is particularly concerned by reports of the death due to torture of Tashi Tsering. A 39 year-old Tibetan, Tashi Tsering is reported to have died in early October 1999 of injuries sustained during beatings by People's Armed Police at the time of his arrest. He had been arrested in Lhasa on 26 August 1999 after trying to replace the Chinese flag by the Tibetan flag in a public place. (For further information, see T.I.N. News Update and TCHRD press release, both of 13 October 1999). Another Tibetan, who had been repeatedly tortured in prison after his arrest in 1996, died earlier this year shortly after he was released from prison "on medical parole" in a critical condition. (See Amnesty International's "Open Letter to the President of the People's Republic of China", 27 September 1999, AI Index: ASA 17/50/99).

These recent reports add to a wealth of evidence that torture of criminal or political suspects and convicted prisoners remains widespread in China. While torture is prohibited by Chinese law, the law is routinely ignored. many cases of torture are covered up, and few of those responsible for torture are punished.

THE DEATH OF ZHAO JINHUA:

Zhao Jinhua, female, a 42 year-old farmer from Zhaojia village, Zhangxing county, Shandong province, is reported to have died on 7 October 1999 in a police station of Zhangxing county. A Falun Gong practitioner since 1995, Zhao Jinhua had been taken away by Zhangxing county police on 27 September 1999 while she was working in the fields. While in police custody, she was reportedly put under pressure to renounce her Falun Gong practice and repeatedly beaten with clubs and electric batons when she refused to do so. On 7 October, she was sent twice to the county hospital for emergency recovery, but she was dead before arriving at the hospital the second time. On 11 October 1999, a police spokesman in Zhangxing county confirmed her death but declined to comment on the cause, according to an Agence France Presse report from Beijing on that day.

Unofficial sources report that local police informed Zhao Jinhua's family of her death on 8 October, warning them not to discuss it. According to the sources, an autopsy carried out on 8 October by medical experts from Zhaoyuan city and Yantai city found that Zhao Jinhua had wounds and haematoma on many parts of the body, except the head. The

autopsy report indicated that her death had been caused by beatings with blunt instruments. It appears that the police or other authorities arranged for her body to be cremated immediately after the autopsy. Her ashes were given back to her family on 9 October. The speed with which the body was cremated suggests that the authorities were trying to cover up the circumstances of her death, as is often the case with deaths in custody in China.

Another Falun Gong practitioner detained in Liaoning province, **Zhu Shaolan**, reportedly died on 7 October 1999 several days after going on hunger strike to protest at her arbitrary detention. Zhu Shaolan, a 50 year-old woman from Jinzhou city, had been detained on 28 September together with other Falun Gong practitioners who had collected signatures for an appeal to the authorities against the ban on the group. While in police custody, 40 of the detained practitioners reportedly went on hunger strike on 29 September, including Zhu Shaolan. She reportedly soon became very weak and started to vomit after being on hunger strike for four days. On 5 October, police sent her to hospital and she is reported to have died there on the morning of 7 October. As far as is known, there has been no public enquiry into the circumstances of her death.

OTHER REPORTS OF TORTURE:

Most of the allegations cited below come from Falun Gong (FLG) sources in various places in China.

- **Dalian city, Liaoning province:**

In Dalian city, as in other places, groups of FLG practitioners were arrested on various dates in the past three months for appealing against the ban on the FLG or practising FLG exercises in public parks. Many were held for 15 days of "administrative" detention - a punishment imposed by police under public order regulations. Some were reportedly tortured or ill-treated in police custody. The following cases concern people detained at the Yaojia Detention Centre, located in Nanguanling in Dalian, in late August and September 1999.

Zhang XiaoHong, a 38 year-old woman from Dalian, was arrested on 30 August 1999, when she was practising the exercises in Youjia Village of Shahekou District. She was charged with "disrupting social order by using feudal superstition", served with a 15 day detention order and detained at the Yaojia Detention centre. On 9 September, when she asked permission to do FLG exercises, she was reportedly tied to another practitioner with handcuffs and they had to sit back to back on a hard bench for 23 hours. During that period, they were not allowed to eat, sleep or go to the toilet. When they were untied in the evening

of 10 September, they were handcuffed individually with their hands tied behind their back, remaining tied in this fashion until 14 September. During that period, they could lie on their sides but could not sleep, because the handcuffs had automatic tightening devices, and tightened and cut into the skin if they fell asleep. They had to rely on the help of fellow inmates to eat and pass stool. On 14 September, the handcuffs were moved to the front. They were released on 15 September.

Sun Lanfang, a 28 year-old woman from Dalian, who was also detained in September at the Yaojia Detention Centre, is reported to have been tortured because she practised FLG exercises in her cell. She was reportedly shackled in a device known as the "Di Lao" (meaning literally "underground prison"), which includes a pair of handcuffs and foot-shackles linked together with crossed steel chains. Such instruments, which make it very difficult and sometimes impossible to walk or sit down, are known to have been used in prisons in various places in China. In Sun Lanfang's case, the device was reportedly further tied to a steel plate, so that she could not move for about 99 hours.

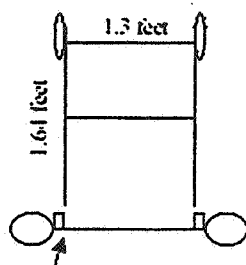


Fig. 1

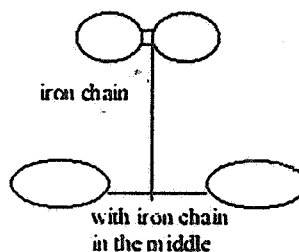


Fig. 2

Diagram showing two types of "Di Lao"

Zhang Chunqing, a 58 year-old woman from Dalian, was arrested on 3 September 1999 for practicing FLG exercises in a public park and detained for 15 days at the Yaojia



Detention Centre for "disturbing public order". While held there, on 5 September, she was reportedly shackled in the "Di Lao" device when she said that she wanted to practice FLG exercises. According to an account she gave after her release, she could not walk with the device and had to crawl back to her cell when it was put on her. She remained shackled in this way for two days and nights and was put in the device again on 9 September when she and other women

were found doing the exercises in their cell at night. According to her account, on 10 September, 30 of the women detained were beaten when they started reciting passages from a FLG book. Many of them were handcuffed to window bars in the corridor for many hours, while others were handcuffed in pairs back to back. They were freed from the handcuffs on 11 September.



Sa Yusong, a 36 year-old woman held at the Yaojia Detention Centre in Dalian in September 1999, was reportedly tied with handcuffs to a pipe of the heating system from 11 am on 4 September till 8 am the next day; then she was tied to a window rail until 4 pm on 5 September. Considered by police to be stubborn, she was reportedly handcuffed again with her hands tied behind her back from 9 September until her release on 11 September.

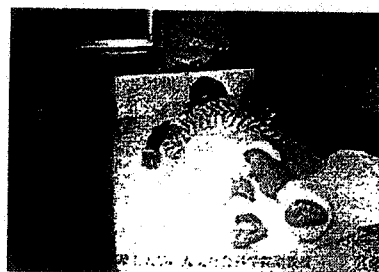
Yi Xingqin, a 34 year-old woman who had also been detained in Dalian on 30 August 1999, was reportedly made to stand up for 21 hours handcuffed to a window rail from 8 to 9 September 1999. She was then tied back to back with another practitioner for about 24 hours on 9-10 September. Following this, she reportedly continued to be handcuffed at night until her release on 15 September.



Yang Xiujian, a 33 year-old woman detained in Dalian on 30 August 1999 and held at the Yaojia detention Centre, was reportedly handcuffed to a window rail on 4 September and made to stand up tied there continuously for about 30 hours, after she told the guard that she wanted to do FLG exercises. As she later repeated the request, on 8 September she was reportedly put in the "Di Lao" device (see above), sitting on bricks in a cell until the evening of 9 September. Her menstrual period started that evening but she was not allowed to change or removed from the "Di Lao" device. Instead, she was reportedly made to walk fast by the guard from one cell to another while wearing the device which poked a hole on her foot. In the evening of 10 September, the "Di Lao" was removed, but she remained handcuffed until she was released.

Zhu Hang, female, an Associate Professor at the Department of Humanity and Social Sciences of Dalian University of Science and Technology, was arrested when practising the FLG exercises in a park on 30 August 1999, charged with "disrupting social order with feudal superstition" and detained at the YaoJia Detention Centre. She too was reportedly tortured by being shackled in a "Di Lao" device in such a way that she could not move. As a result, she was not able to use the toilet or feed herself. She reportedly started fasting

because she did not want to make difficulties for other detained practitioners and there was not enough food for everyone. Seven days later, the detaining authorities apparently started to worry about possible "life accidents", and ordered several guards to force feed her by pricking her mouth open with spoons, which caused severe injury in her mouth. Later, they reportedly installed a pipe in her nose to feed liquid in her. She eventually lost consciousness and was sent to the People's No. 2 Hospital of Dalian City for recovery. Because of the shackles, her left foot had become swollen to almost double its normal size and she had injuries on her right foot. She could not open her mouth properly and had difficulties speaking.



Huang Hongqi, male, a 29 year-old doctorate student from the Dalian Mechanical University in Liaoning province, was taken into police custody with 10 other FLG practitioners on 28 August 1999 for doing exercises in a park in Dalian. He was held without charge for two weeks. In an interview with the news agency Agence France Presse (AFP) after his release, he reported that they were beaten on several occasions in detention. The first time was on 6 September when they did their exercises at night in their cell. "The guards took our trousers down and gave each of us 15 lashes with a leather whip. Our buttocks were covered in blood," he reported to AFP. According to his account, on 12 September, the guards also forced them to take off their shoes and hit them in the face before handcuffing them to a window for hours. Two days later, they were beaten with rubber coshes, he said. He was released after his university intervened (AFP, Beijing, 6 October 1999).

In a separate account which largely confirms the one above, **Wang Renguo**, male, another FLG practitioner from Dalian who was detained at the same time as Huang Hongqi, reported that he and five other practitioners were beaten with rubber sticks when they tried to talk to the director of the detention centre. They were also slapped on the face with shoes and tied to a window for five hours, he said, while another FLG practitioner held on a different floor was chained for four or five days for doing FLG exercises.

- **Hunan province:**

When the FLG was banned in July 1999, police in Hunan province reportedly enrolled people described by dissident sources as "thugs" into the Joint Defence Teams, to assist in the searches of the numerous FLG teaching centres and practice sites in the province and in the arrest of key FLG members. Many incidents of violence reportedly occurred during the searches and arrests. The following allegations have been made in connection with such incidents:

On 22 July in Changsha city, a Special Police Unit of the Changsha Public Security (police) Bureau, escorted by an armed police unit, raided the FLG General Assistance Centre of Hunan Province and reportedly beat and injured all the FLG contact persons present there.

On 24 July in Yueyang city, during a police raid on a publishing company which had printed FLG books, the owner of the company, identified as Mr. Yu Hanxin from Hubei province, allegedly had his legs broken on the spot by a senior officer from the Yueyang Public Security Bureau.

On 25 July in Anhua county, Ms. Li Juhua, a FLG practitioner at the Meicheng Town practice site of Anhua County, was allegedly taken away by the local Joint Defence Team and raped by members of the team, suffering severe mental trauma as a result.

On 25 July in Changde city, Zhou Zhi, male, a FLG practitioner at the practice site of Dingcheng District in Changde City, was allegedly brutally beaten by police when he argued with them while they were searching his home. All his money and other belongings were reportedly taken away by police.

On 26 July in Xiangtan city, Mr. Yang Junhua, the contact person of the FLG Shaoshan practice site in Xiangtan City, was allegedly beaten and injured by members of the No. 7 Joint Defence Team of Xiangtan City.

- **Changchun city, Jilin province:**

In Changchun, FLG practitioners detained in late August 1999 at the Yushu County Detention Centre were allegedly beaten with electric batons, kicked in the stomach, shackled, and forced to swallow dirty water. Details about those reportedly subjected to such treatment are not available. Several hundred FLG practitioners were reportedly still held in various detention centres in Changchun in early October.

- **Jiaozhou city, Shandong province:**

Over 50 FLG practitioners were taken into police custody in Jiaozhou city on 8 September 1999. Some among them were allegedly beaten, deprived of sleep for five days and of food for three days, to dissuade them from appealing to Beijing against the ban on the FLG and force them to "confess" their wrongdoings. Before being released, they were reportedly warned by police against telling others about their treatment in custody.

Some FLG practitioners in Jiaozhou were allegedly sent by police to a mental hospital and held with mental patients. Two of them have been identified as Wei huayu, an employee of the Jiaozhou Accounting Firm, and Tan Guihua, a worker at the Third Shoe Factory of Jiaozhou. Both were allegedly forced to take sedatives in the hospital where they were held for over 20 days.

- **Beijing municipality:**

Many women, practitioners of the FLG who had gone to Beijing in August 1999 to appeal to the authorities against the ban on the group, were reported to be detained in late August and September in the women's section of the Qiliqu Detention Centre, Changping county, Beijing. Some 60 of them reportedly started a hunger strike on 7 September and were punished as a result in the following days. On 9 September, having fasted for two days, some were forced to stand in the burning sun and were reportedly beaten when they could not stand up any more. One woman identified as Ms Zhang Xihong, after ten days on hunger strike, reportedly had her feet and hands chained closely together so that she could only walk bent double. Ten other women were reportedly handcuffed for three days. Others were beaten with belts and various objects, or forced to stay for long periods with their body bent at a 90 degree angle and their arms raised high behind their back. One woman, identified as Ms Guo Fenren, was reportedly beaten on the face with a string of keys until blood covered her face.

Gao Shanshan, a 16 year-old girl from Qiqihaer, in Heilongjiang province, was reportedly detained in Beijing on 24 September 1999 after being denounced to the police for possessing a FLG book. In an appeal which circulated in early October, her mother, Zhou Yingjie, said her daughter had come to Beijing from Qiqihaer on 20 September in order to meet her. Zhou Yingjie was on a visit to Beijing from Japan, where she resides. The mother alleged that the young girl had been ill-treated by police, including by having food in which some unidentified substance was mixed poured down her throat while her hair was being pulled back by a policeman. The appeal indicated that Gao Shanshan was still being arbitrarily detained as of 2 October. It also said that her father, Gao Deyong, a 50 year-old

engineer in Qiqihaer and FLG practitioner, had been illegally detained in that city since 23 September 1999.

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Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to launch without delay impartial investigations into the reports of torture and ill-treatment cited in this document and other reports or complaints of torture. It is also calling on the authorities to publicly disclose the results of the investigations, to punish those found responsible for torturing or ill-treating detainees, and to take measures to ensure that people who remain in detention are protected from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS GROUPS1 / TORTURE ILL-TREATMENT1 / WOMEN1 / DEATH IN CUSTODY / TORTURE TECHNIQUES / FORCIBLE FEEDING / FARMERS / ACADEMICS / STUDENTS / JUVENILES / PHOTOGRAPHS
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