

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office / Asia Program
Date: 5 April 2000

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION
Wang Wanxing
CHINA

Key words: unlawful detention / psychiatric confinement / possible prisoner of conscience

Summary

On 23 November 1999 Wang Wanxing, a longstanding human rights activist, was forcibly taken to Ankang psychiatric hospital in Beijing where it is believed he is still being held.

Wang Wanxing was first detained in Ankang Public Security Hospital, managed by Beijing Public Security Bureau, on 3 June 1992. Wang Wanxing was released on 19 August 1999 for a three month trial period. On 18 November 1999 Wang Wanxing asked the authorities if he would be allowed to hold a press conference after the end of the three month trial period to discuss his confinement. It was reported that on 23 November, in response to this request, eight public security officers visited Wang Wanxing's home and forcibly took him back to Ankang psychiatric hospital. No further news has been received on his current situation.

Recommended Action

Please write polite letters in your professional capacity:

- expressing concern about the psychiatric confinement of Wang Wanxing, involuntarily detained in Ankang Public Security Hospital without suffering from any known mental illness;
- asking if Wang Wanxing has received a psychiatric examination and what diagnosis was made in line with internationally accepted medical standards;
- calling for Wang Wanxing to be unconditionally released;
- urging the authorities to unconditionally release any prisoner held in psychiatric detention for the peaceful expression of their beliefs rather than on strictly medical grounds.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 20 May 2000, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

ADDRESSES

Please send your appeals to the following addresses:

Mayor of Beijing Municipal People's Government

LIU Qi Shizhang
Beijingshi Renmin Zhengfu
2 Zhengyilu
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100744
People's Republic of China
Telegram: Mayor, Beijing, China
Salutation: Dear Sir

President of the People's Republic of China

JIANG Zemin Guojia Zhuxi
Beijingshi
People's Republic of China
Telegram: President Jiang Zemin, Beijing, China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Health of the People's Republic of China

ZHANG Wenkang Buzhang
Weishengbu
44 Houhai Beiyan, Gulou Xidajie
Beijingshi
People's Republic of China
Telexes: 210070 FMPRC CN (22193 according to FEandA 1993)
(Please transfer to the Public Health Minister)
Telegram: Minister of Public Security, Beijing, China
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES

Please send copies of your appeals to the following addresses:

The Chinese Medical Association

42 Dongsu Xidajie
Beijing 100710
China
Fax: +86 10 6512 3754
E-mail: cmafrd@public3.bta.net.cn

Human Rights (Society) of China

Fax: +86 10 6491 2961

Supreme People's Court

Fax: + 86 10 6512 5012

Ministry of Justice

Fax: +86 10 6520 5316 / 6467 7046

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MEDICAL CONCERN
Wang Wanxing
CHINA

On 23 November 1999 Wang Wanxing, a longstanding human rights activist, was forcibly taken to Ankang psychiatric hospital in Beijing where it is believed he is still being held. No further news has been received on his current situation.

Wang Wanxing was first detained in Ankang Public Security Hospital, managed by Beijing Public Security Bureau, on 3 June 1992. He was detained for trying to unfurl a banner in Tiananmen Square to commemorate the events of 4 June 1989 when forces of the People's Liberation Army used force to end demonstrations by pro-democracy activists. His wife was informed that he was suffering from a condition called "political monomania". The condition of "political monomania" does not appear in medical literature nor is defined by the World Health Organization as an illness. "Monomania" means "obsession to an insane degree with one subject". According to Amnesty International's information, there is no evidence that Wang Wanxing has any form of mental illness.

Wang Wanxing is a prominent dissident who had previously been imprisoned in the late 1970s for his support of the then disgraced Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and his support for the April 1976 demonstrations expressing discontent with the political situation at the time.

Amnesty International is concerned that Wang Wanxing is being confined to a psychiatric institution in order to suppress his right to freedom of expression and belief, and not because he is suffering from a mental illness.

On 19 August 1999 Wang Wanxing was released for a three month trial period. Numerous conditions attached to his three month trial period included being prohibited from contacting domestic and international media and dissidents. Wang Junying, Wang Wanxing's wife, stated that he adhered to these conditions. On 18 November 1999 Wang Wanxing asked the authorities if he would be allowed to hold a press conference after the end of the three month trial period to discuss his confinement. It was reported that on 23 November, in response to this request, eight public security officers visited Wang Wanxing's home and forcibly took him back to Ankang psychiatric hospital.

Amnesty International is not aware of any legal basis for the conditions set upon his "trial release period" or for returning Wang Wanxing to a psychiatric hospital after his request to hold a press conference.

In the light of the evidence that is available to Amnesty International, it appears that the Chinese government is using psychiatric hospitalization in order to suppress political dissent. Wang Wanxing has continued to write letters and has attempted to speak out against political repression, despite being confined in Ankang hospital. His wife has continuously supported her husband in his attempts to demonstrate his mental fitness.

Amnesty International is calling on the authorities to unconditionally release Wang Wanxing and any other prisoner of conscience being held in psychiatric detention for the peaceful expression of belief instead of for legitimate medical reasons.

Background information

Detention in psychiatric hospitals in China

Several cases have been reported in which political activists have been detained involuntarily in psychiatric hospitals without medical grounds. In particular, a number of recent cases have been reported in which Falun Gong practitioners, individually or in groups, were taken by police to mental institutions where they were involuntarily detained for periods varying from a few days to several weeks.¹ They did not have a psychiatric examination before being detained. They were often forced to take medication against their will.

The Falun Gong was founded in 1992 and is described by its adherents as a spiritual practice, based on various schools of Buddhism and traditional forms of self-cultivation. It centres around a practice of meditation and exercises. These exercise sessions are often held by groups in public places.

The Falun Gong movement was banned in July 1999 after the Chinese government reportedly became concerned with the movement's ability to mobilize large numbers - 10,000 followers stood quietly in front of the leadership compound in Beijing on 25 April 1999 following the detention of some Falun Gong followers. Accusations against Falun Gong supporters range from "organizing illegal gatherings" to "leaking state secrets".

On 20 January 2000, Yang Yong, a spokesman for the Changguang police station in Fangshan district in Beijing, confirmed to a foreign journalist that around 50 "extremist" followers of the banned Falun Gong movement had been involuntarily detained at Zhoukoudian psychiatric hospital near Beijing. Yang Yong reportedly said that his police force was responsible for the detention of Falun Gong practitioners, the majority of whom are women. He told the journalist that the practitioners "are not patients, they are there to be re-educated (...). Most of them are Falun Gong extremists who have been to Beijing to protest at least 10 times" (*Agence France Presse*, 20 January 2000). Further reports stated that the group members were held at Zhoukoudian psychiatric hospital for nearly two months when they were released on 26 January 2000. According to reports, their families were asked to pay 800 to 1000 yuan (1000 yuan = 73 US dollars) to cover their "living expenses" while they were detained.

Human rights, ethics and psychiatric detention

In 1991 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care*. Principle four covers the determination of mental illness. According to paragraph one of principle four, "a determination that a person has a mental illness shall be made in accordance with *internationally accepted medical standards*" [italics added]. Wang Wanxing's diagnosis of 'political monomania' is not in accordance with internationally accepted medical standards.

In addition, according paragraph two, "a determination of mental illness shall never be made on the basis of *political*, economic or social status, or membership of a cultural, racial or religious group, or any other reason not directly relevant to mental health status" [italics added].

Furthermore, according to paragraph three, "family or professional conflict, or non-conformity with moral, social, cultural or *political values* or religious beliefs prevailing in a person's community, shall never be a determining factor in diagnosing mental illness" [italics added].

Medical ethics have allegedly been breached severely in the case of Wang Wanxing by his involuntary detention in a psychiatric hospital in order to curtail his freedom of expression.

¹*The Crackdown on Falun Gong and Other So-called "Heretical Organizations"*, Amnesty International, 23 March 2000 [AI Index ASA 17/11/00].