

China's Linfen Church Leader Beaten, Threatened

Li Shuangping, a leader at Linfen Church in China, was beaten and threatened by unknown assailants on the night of Aug. 13, according to reports from ChinaAid.

Li had been driving to his home in Shanxi Province and was forced to stop his car when a man who seemed to be intoxicated staggered into the road. Li was then dragged into a black car that had pulled up alongside his car, then tied up, blindfolded and pinned down while three men beat him around his head and body. One man also threatened to kill Li and his family members, including his children. Li was then thrown out of the car.

Li believes the perpetrators were working for the local government, and he sees this as an attempt to threaten house church leaders. During the incident, one of the men asked Li how he would like to die as a result of being a house church leader.

In 2009, the 50,000-strong Linfen Church was raided by several hundred police and plainclothes officers, after which Li was sentenced to two years of re-education through labor. During the raid on the property, Bibles and the building itself were damaged and a number of church members were beaten and injured.

Some church leaders attempted to travel to Beijing to lodge a formal complaint after the 2009 incident but were arrested on the way. Li and several other leaders were released in July 2011; others were released in 2012 and 2013. Some remain in prison, including Yang Rongli, who is serving a seven-year sentence.

Benedict Rogers, East Asia team leader at Christian Solidarity

Worldwide (CSW) says, "This [latest] attack appears to be an attempt to intimidate the Linfen church leaders and their congregations. The Chinese authorities have a responsibility to protect all citizens from attacks on their personal safety and to investigate serious threats against them and their families by both state and non-state actors.

"We call on the Chinese government to immediately put an end of all kinds of attacks and restrictions on Linfen church leaders and urge the authorities to immediately release those leaders still in prison."