

Forced Abortion Opponent Escapes House Arrest in China

Blind legal activist **Chen Guangcheng** escaped from home arrest in China earlier this week. ChinaAid reports he is now safe in Beijing.

Guangcheng was being held under harsh and violent conditions since his September 2010 release from prison. Some reports indicate he was tortured for hours.

ChinaAid's founder and president Bob Fu was in touch with Guangcheng's friends and family. Sources who brought Guangcheng to Beijing told Fu that the blind forced abortion opponent is not in any danger and is "100 percent safe." There is speculation that Guangcheng is in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

"We admire Chen's extraordinary courage and his unwavering desire to fight for the fundamental rights owed every Chinese citizen," Fu says. "We urge the U.S. government and other democratic nations to show the courage of their convictions and protect this brave rights defender."

Meanwhile, police have arrested one of the friends, He Peirong, who helped Guangcheng escape. On April 22, she drove him from his home in Dongshigu village to a safe location in another province. She told Women's Rights Without Frontiers (WRWF) that his health is stable, but she fears he is in danger.

Peirong was in communication with ChinaAid when she was arrested at her home in Nanjing on Friday at 11:11 a.m. The group reports she has not responded to later efforts to reach her. She was concerned about the fate of Guangcheng's wife, mother, daughter and son.

It seems Peirong has rightful cause for concern.

ChinaAid reports that police have also taken into custody Guangcheng's older brother and his nephew, Chen Guangfu and Chen Kegui, respectively. The father and son were taken from their home early Friday morning. Chen Kegui reportedly had stabbed some government officials who broke into his home early in the morning by climbing over the back wall and Chen, mistaking them for burglars, attacked them.

"We are grateful that Chen is no longer under house arrest, but we are concerned about his safety and that of his family. We call upon Secretary of State Hillary Clinton specifically to raise Chen's case during her visit to Beijing May 3-4," says Reggie Littlejohn, president of WRWF.

"Indeed, we call upon the entire international diplomatic community to make urgent, official interventions on behalf of Chen with the Chinese government. We call upon NGOs and concerned citizens the world over strongly to support this great hero during his hour of need."