

Pro-Life Activist Chen Guangcheng to Leave New York University Shortly

Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng, who left his home country last year and became a visiting scholar at New York University, will leave the school this summer, but will likely remain in the United States, university officials said on Thursday.

Chen made international headlines last year when he escaped house arrest in China's Shandong province, after campaigning for farmers and disabled citizens and exposing forced abortions in China. Chen spent 20 hours on the run before finding refuge at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, prompting urgent negotiations between the two countries and, finally, China's agreement to let him travel to the United States.

Chen, who has been blind from childhood and taught himself law, may head to Fordham University Law School, also in New York City, according to a Fordham spokesman who said negotiations were still underway.

Chen could not immediately be reached for comment, but Danica Mills, an interpreter for Chen, said he may release a statement later.

Since moving with his wife and children to New York, working at NYU's Law Institute and working to learn English, Chen has continued to criticize China's human rights record, both through NYU forums and elsewhere.

On Thursday, the *New York Post*, citing an anonymous professor, reported that NYU had asked Chen to leave the school earlier than agreed at the behest of the Chinese authorities for fear that displeasing them would disrupt the construction of an NYU

campus in Shanghai.

NYU confirmed that Chen would leave the school, but a spokesman called the *Post's* report "fanciful and false."

"If it were true, why would NYU have taken Mr. Chen in at the height of the public fervor, and why would the Chinese authorities have given us permissions to move forward with our Shanghai campus AFTER his arrival here?" spokesman John Beckman said in an email. "The plain fact is that these are unrelated matters. In countless hours of conversations involving the establishment of our Shanghai campus, this matter has never come up."

Jerome Cohen, an NYU law professor and friend of Chen who helped broker his departure from China, stated in May 2012, before Chen left Beijing, that he would be at NYU for a year at most.

Cohen had said, in an interview with PBS, "The idea would be, they could come for up to a year. And, at that point, he will be more comfortable with himself. He will be more adjusted to freedom. And he will have to decide, 'What next?'"

Cohen, who is traveling in China, said in a statement that: "No political refugee, even Albert Einstein, has received better treatment by an American academic institution than that received by Chen from NYU, and I am grateful to the university administration for its extraordinary generosity, which could not reasonably be expected to go on indefinitely."

In an interview with Reuters last month, Chen criticized China in the wake of reports that his relatives there had been harassed and mistreated by local authorities, and urged the United States to intervene, saying China had promised that his family would not be targeted.

Editing by Barbara Goldberg and David Gregorio

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