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## **CHINA: Suffered repeated arrests and fled to Italy**

HRWF (26.08.2020) – Mr. Zhiwen (pseudonym) was born in 1972 in Jiangxi Province, China. Already as a youngster he followed his mother in her Christian faith. He joined The Church of Almighty God (CAG) in 2000. On many occasions, the CCP tried to arrest him. The following arrest attempts and torture activities caused a fractured ankle and head injuries. In 2015 he felt forced to flee China and seek asylum in Italy. The following is a description of his experiences as shared with *Human Rights Without Frontiers*.

***Church demolished twice***

“We attended meetings of a house church and were often harassed by the CCP government. Officials of the township government would periodically burst into our meetings to restrict the topics of our sermons, as well as telling us where we could spread the gospel. They also forced us to become part of the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Church. After we refused to do that, our church was demolished. We rebuilt it but the government tore it down again, arrested the preacher of our church, and put him in prison.”

### ***First arrest attempt***

“In August 2000, I accepted The Almighty God’s message. Because I often spread the gospel, village committee officials and police officers repeatedly asked me to renounce my faith. They warned me that if I carried on believing in God and spreading the gospel, I would be sentenced to prison. One day, several officers from the local Police Station forced themselves into the home of my family without showing their credentials and searched it without a warrant. Our house was completely turned upside down. Seeing that I was not at home, they took my mother instead. Since then, I dared not go back home. I started a life on the run, moving from place to place.”

### ***Fractured ankle during escape from second arrest***

“One day in June 2005, while I was preaching the gospel in an apartment, five to six policemen suddenly arrived and

surrounded the building. Desperate as I was, I broke the wooden window frames of the restroom and escaped out of the window, letting myself fall down from the second floor. Several policemen blocked my way and one of them grabbed me by my clothes. I got myself loose and kept running, with the three policemen not far behind me. I ran through a paddy field and rough terrain. I then hid myself for some time in some thatches. I later hitched a ride to the hospital. The whole ordeal took long to recover, and to this day I cannot stand, or walk for a long time, or carry heavy objects.”

### ***Police brutality caused serious injuries***

“One day in the winter of 2012, I went to preach the gospel to a brother’s relatives. Soon four policemen showed up. They shouted at us loudly and condemned our gospel-preaching activities as disturbing the social order. Meanwhile, the police called up dozens of others to surround and attack me. When they caught me, they beat me with wooden sticks that were more than three feet long and three inches thick. I was pulled by my hair, struck near my temples, and hit in the chest. I was in shambles and fainted. The police car soon arrived and I was taken, without them showing their credentials. I had been beaten so badly that my head seemed to explode.

At the police station, I was interrogated about church information. But my pain was excruciating and my body shaking all over; I foamed at the mouth. Then I was taken to the county Public Security Bureau. As they were getting me out of the car, I could not even stand, and I fell on the ground. When they realized I was about to die, they left me in front of the gate. Later, a brother took me to hospital to give me the medical attention I needed. The recovery lasted more than

a year. However, I still have sequelae of the injuries incurred, as I remain having dreadful headaches.”

### ***Fleeing from a third arrest attempt***

“While I was recovering, two brothers with whom I had spread the gospel were arrested by the police. The officers had found a notebook with my name and address in it in their possession. I was warned by other brothers and sisters that the police were out to find me. I fled before I was arrested.”

### ***Fleeing to Italy, but no safety yet***

“Between 2013 and May of 2015, I had moved house a total of thirty different times. But wherever I went, there seemed no way to avoid arrest or persecution. In China there was nowhere safe for me any more and the only way to remain free was to flee. In 2015 I managed to get a passport and to reach Italy where I sought refuge.

Unfortunately, in December 2018, my application was rejected by the Italian Territorial Commission. In the meantime I filed for appeal. I am now deeply concerned that I might be sent back to China one day.”

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