

Church of Almighty God couple arrested, drugged and tortured during their detention

HRWF (14.12.2017) - On 24 October 2016, two members of the Church of Almighty God from the Pukou District in Jiangsu Province, 46-year-old Yang Jun and his wife, 47-year-old Li Mei (aliases), were arrested by the Chinese police. During their detention, police allegedly put drugs into their food and tortured them, leaving them unconscious at times. Both Yang Jun and Li Mei have suffered serious mental and physical scars.

Timeline: The arrest

According to Yang Jun, on 24 October, at approximately 10:00 a.m., six officers forcefully entered his home.

Included in the six was: Jiang Congzhou, the chief officer of social security from the Longjing Community of Tangquan Street, accompanied by one other policeman from the office, Zhao Huagui, the head of the Comprehensive Management Office of Tangquan street, accompanied by the deputy-head, Yuan Lianghong, the community director of the Women's Federation, and Gao, the chief officer of the National Security Group of Pukou Public Security Bureau of Nanjing City.

The officers issued an arrest warrant for Yang and Li, allowing them to only examine the document for a quick moment. They confiscated a laptop, tablet, and two cellphones from their home. The officers then proceeded to forcefully take Yang and Li to the Tangquan Police Station of the Pukou District, Nanjing City on charges stating that "believing Almighty God is a violation of the State law and a disturbance of social security".

Upon their arrival to the police station, they were separated and put into cells with a glass wall between them.

Around 18:00 that very day, officers placed hoods on the heads of Yang Jun and Li Mei, escorted them onto a bus and transferred them to a nearby basement belonging to the Shixing Hostel, where they were separated and secretly interrogated by the National Security Group.

The brutal torture of Yang Jun & Li Mei

Yang was kept in a small room. Officers ordered him to remain standing against the wall. They deprived him of sleep and provided him three meals per day.

Yang reports that on the third day, he noticed a strange taste in his breakfast and felt groggy - soon after his vision went blurry.

While partially unconscious, Yang Jun was interrogated by four policemen, asking for information about the church. When he refused to answer the questions, they beat him - slapping and punching his face at first before turning to kicking his body on the ground.

Over the following days Yang Jun reports that he continued to eat the food provided, but often had hallucinations, blurred visions, and experienced mental abnormalities, such as uncontrollable vocalizations. The torture continued over the days, beatings, being subject to freezing temperatures, and being forced to strip and stand in front of an air conditioner while guards watched and laughed.

According to Yang, a medical examination after his release showed scapula ligament injuries, a broken rib, many bruises and general swelling.

In a nearby room, Li Mei, Yang Jin's wife, suffered similar torture. During the first two days, she was forced to remain standing - not allowing her to sleep. They repeatedly asked her questions about the Church, to which Li Mei did not reply. The following day, she noticed a difference in the taste of her food and felt groggy. Li Mei reports that she was unable to control her speech or actions - often acting in strange ways, uncontrollably laughing and asking questions to the guards, as if she was under the influence of a drug.

One day, she fell unconscious. When she awoke, she cried out 'Almighty God!'. One policeman then covered her mouth while another began to slap her face. They shouted at her and beat her, knocking her head against the floor until she fell unconscious again. When she awoke again, officers asked her for information about the Church and fellow church-goers, to which she did not reply.

Li Mei soon experienced hallucinations as well and the beatings continued.

In the afternoon of 2 November 2016, Li Mei was taken back to the Tangquan Police Station and then to the Pukou Hospital for blood tests. The police then escorted her to Shifosi Detention Jail in the Nanjing district of Pukou. During her physical examination, one doctor at the detention center noticed her injuries. A male officer at the detention jail was reluctant to admit her into their facility in the case that she died while there, leaving the detention center with the responsibility of her death. After negotiations with the officers, the Shifosi detention center allowed her to stay temporarily.

The next morning, Li Mei felt sick and was vomiting. Officers took her back to the hospital. The medical report from this visit reported that she was suffering from a lung infection, hypo-leukemia, acute coronary syndrome, and acute muscular injury - the doctor ruled her in urgent need of hospitalization.

The officers however, took her back to the prison. The prison doctor, however, vetoed her re-admission into the prison after seeing her medical report. Reluctantly, the officers took her back to the National Security Group.

During the following hours, her health began to deteriorate. At 15:00, she was returned to the hospital.

Due to her life-threatening condition, the hospital required a signature of a family member. The police had no choice but to release Yang Jun and Li Mei on that same day.

The couple still suffered from grogginess and physical pains in the coming days. They reported that they had physically fully recovered in February 2017. However, the couple reports that they remain under the surveillance of authorities and residents in their community.

Li Mei reports that her hospitalization resulted in a 3,800 RMB [approximately 485 Euro] bill - which she herself had to pay.

Trends of torture & drugging

Many other members of the Church of Almighty God have suffered inhuman punishment, including arrest, beating, torture, even drug torment, etc. at the hands of the Chinese authorities solely because of their faith.

In February of 2005, one member of the Church from a city in Henan was arrested while on her way home. On the 12th day of her detention, the police forcefully fed her drugs, even though they knew she was pregnant. The drugs and inhumane treatment during her imprisonment resulted in a miscarriage. In the following weeks and months, police

continuously gave her injections of an unknown substance. It is reported that she became schizophrenic for three months.

On 9 December 2012, another member was arrested in Beijing. He reportedly was force-fed drugs, which caused mental problems for eight months.

On 29 June 2013, a member of the church from Helong City was arrested, brutally tortured, burned, and force-fed drugs.

Many other cases of mental and physical torture, including the use of forcefully-administered drugs, have happened to members of the Church of Almighty God.

Human Rights Without Frontiers calls on EU member states to grant asylum to members of the Church of Almighty God and not to send them back to China where they will be arrested and tortured.