

Whereabouts remain unknown for Church of Almighty God member arrested upon return to China

Returning to China to seek medical care, Yang Shihua was arrested in the Beijing Capital International Airport

HRWF (05.06.2018)- On 23 May 2018, Yang Shihua, member of the Church of Almighty God in South Korea, was arrested in Terminal 3 of the Beijing Capital International Airport (BCIA) upon her return to China from South Korea. Since her arrest, her family has been unable to locate her.

Yang Shihua, born in 1968, joined the Church of Almighty God in 2008, and often hosted church meetings in her home in China. Following the intense persecution by Chinese authorities, Shihua was forced to flee China for South Korea – a stressful move for someone who suffers from various physical ailments including diabetes, hypertension, ulcers, and herniated spinal discs.

On 23 May 2018, Shihua flew back to China for medical treatment. Upon her arrival in the airport, she was detained by the Tianjin Public Security Bureau police in the airport. Her husband waited for her at the arrivals gate for three hours, before seeing her being escorted out of the airport by police. The police did not allow Shihua and her husband to talk and instead also detained her husband. Ten police officers were sent to their home to confiscate laptops, tablets, and cell phones.

When Yang Shihua's husband inquired about the reason for her detention, they said that she was being detained upon suspicion of 'membership of an 'evil cult''. The police did not give any prior warning or show an arrest warrant. Her husband informed the police about her medical conditions, but they refused to let her leave.

The next day, Shihua's husband was called at 9:00am to the Baoping Police Station of the Tianjin Public Security Bureau Baodi Branch to collect his wife's suitcase that had been confiscated. When he arrived, they did not allow him to see his wife. He attempted to bribe the police officers with 3,000 RMB, requesting for them to give his wife her medications. The police refused, and additionally would not allow her husband to take her passport, ID card or bank cards.

In the following days, Shihua's husband was repeatedly denied contact with his wife. He contacted a lawyer from the Tianjin law firm, who informed him that it would be impossible to see his wife, or have her released on bail, if the charges involved her being a member of an 'evil cult'. Her husband continued to contact two more lawyers, but they would not adopt her case once they heard her charges. Lawyers told him repeatedly, that a member of the Church of Almighty God had no chance of being released on bail – that a murderer would have better chances.

Yang Shihua, was wrongly arrested and detained by the police for her activities with the Church of Almighty God, and is now held in an unknown location without any communication with her family.

Human Rights Without Frontiers strongly advises countries to grant Church of Almighty God members asylum status in order to avoid their imminent arrest

upon deportation and return to China.