

# CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATES

## NOVEMBER 2011

### 7 Updates

1.

#### **China police question Ai Weiwei's wife**

**AFP**

**29 November 2011**

**By Marianne Barriaux**

Ai Weiwei's wife said Tuesday she was summoned by police and interrogated for three hours as a "criminal suspect", becoming the latest person close to the Chinese artist to be pulled in for questioning.

Lu Qing's interrogation comes after police also questioned two of Ai's assistants. She said police had asked her about Fake Cultural Development, the company at the centre of a tax row that Ai founded but which she legally owns.

Ai, whose widespread activism has made him a thorn in the side of China's Communist authorities, disappeared into secret police custody for 81 days in April this year.

After his release he was charged with tax evasion related to dealings by Fake Cultural Development, and this month he was handed a bill for 15 million yuan (\$2.4 million).

The 54-year-old has denied the charges, calling them "politically motivated", and said he intends to appeal.

Within weeks of receiving the bill, he was able to pay an 8.45 million yuan guarantee needed to challenge the charge thanks to donations from fans.

Lu -- who was last questioned by police when Ai was in detention -- told AFP after she was released that police had summoned her as a "criminal suspect" and told her not to leave Beijing for the time being, though she was not sure why.

"What they asked me was very similar to what they have asked me before -- who family members are, what my job is," she said.

She added they had also asked her about Fake, with questions revolving around design costs and money surrounding construction projects.

"But why is Beijing police asking me about this? It should be the tax bureau," she said.

Beijing's municipal police department would not comment on her case when contacted by AFP.

Ai said this month that police were also investigating possible charges of pornography against him, centred around pictures taken of the artist and four women -- all naked -- although Lu said police had not asked her about that.

The artist's problems with authorities started when he began investigating the collapse of schools in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and a 2010 fire at a Shanghai high-rise that killed

dozens.

But until his detention he had been left relatively unscathed thanks to his family background. His father is the late Ai Qing, a famous poet who was disgraced and later rehabilitated by the Communist regime.

Speaking to AFP earlier, Ai said he was worried about Tuesday's turn of events.

"If I have done anything wrong, it has nothing to do with her (Lu). They should directly come to me, not to her," he said.

"We paid the bond, they seemed very happy with it, but maybe they're trying to threaten her, or to tell her authorities are there. I have no idea."

---

2.

## **Tales from the prisons of China**

**The Australian**  
Rowan Callick

**28 November 2011**

THERE'S nothing exquisite or refined about Liao Yiwu. The exiled Chinese writer, currently visiting Australia, wears workmen's rough khaki clothing, and talks in a blunt Sichuan manner.

His subjects are mostly what he calls "social outcasts". And when Melbourne's Wheeler Centre produced a decent bottle of red, he called out ganbei and sculled a glass in an impressive motion.

For Liao, life changed when he was jailed after writing and producing an audiotape of Massacre, a long poem about the events in and around Tiananmen Square in 1989. In prison, he says, "I met all these characters I have been writing about" -- the kind of figures who appear in his latest book, *The Corpse Walker and Other True Stories of Life in China*.

In the beginning, he didn't enjoy the presence of the other prisoners. "But after a time, they became part of my life," and continue to be. In the jail were two men sentenced to death. One was a murderer who killed his wife, then raped her and ate the body. The other managed to escape once, and told Liao about how he had escaped through a toilet.

Free trial

"They kept telling me their stories," he says, "because they believed I would be the last person to listen to them. Maybe tomorrow they would be pulled out and shot dead."

He continues: "I didn't want to hear, but they kept talking to me. They came into my life, and even into my dreams. I became the recorder. When I came out of jail I was already a changed person.

"The Communist Party really changed me by putting me in that jail. Before, I was a poet. When I came out, I became a recorder of the era. The entire Chinese society was to me just a big jail, so I kept listening to the stories of these prisoners on the outside too."

Sometimes his fellow prisoners would repeat themselves as many as ten times, so he could remember their words without a notebook, "and even though I didn't want to write

their stories."

In *Corpse Walker*, he talks to a public toilet manager, a human trafficker, a mortician, a blind erhu player, a safe-cracker, a migrant worker among others on the margins. Eventually he could no longer be published in China, and was mostly barred from leaving the country -- finally deciding to stay in Berlin in July, when he visited for a writers' festival.

He is now seizing his newfound freedom to travel, and is on the road until April.

Lu Xun (1881-1936), the figure widely viewed as China's greatest author of the 20th century, also wrote about people in struggle street. But while Lu is lionised by the Communist Party for raising consciousness about social dislocations in the pre-socialist era, Liao is treated as a pariah for writing about them in today's world of "socialism with Chinese characteristics".

"We wrote our stories from different angles," Liao says. "Lu Xun was an intellectual with high social status, who wrote criticising society from that viewpoint. I am different. I think I am one of those marginalised people."

He says the party wishes the West to see China as a developed country advancing swiftly -- as it appears from the building of high-speed trains, and hosting the Olympic Games.

"I have been writing about the underground," he says. "The government wants to show what is on the ground. In this underground world, people's hearts are dark, shadowed or polluted, and people live like rats, with no direction. They're just running around."

He would sit in his home in Chengdu -- the capital of the vast, mountainous province of Sichuan -- looking out at the new high-rise buildings starting to hem it all in.

"I wondered, who could afford to live in these new places? Nobody I knew. No one who sells vegetables in the markets. Even if a family had saved up since the Qing dynasty for an apartment in downtown Chengdu, they wouldn't be able to afford one."

Liao has also written of other marginalised people -- Christians, whose religion is thriving in China today -- in *God is Red*.

"When I first approached them, my attitude was a kind of suspicion," he says.

"I had no idea what they were doing. I went to Yunnan province, and visited places where Western ministers had been before, and heard some stories.

"Many people had died for their belief. I felt shocked about what had happened there. Jesus was someone who had different views from those in power, in his time, and paid the highest price for his belief."

One story centred on a Christian named Wang Zhimin. During the Cultural Revolution he was arrested and asked if he placed his faith in Mao Zedong or in God.

"He said God, and was put in jail for four years," Liao says. "There, they kept asking him the same question, and offered to let him go if he answered, Mao. At the end of the four years, he was executed in front of thousands of people."

Wang is one of ten "modern martyrs" memorialised in statues in Westminster Abbey in London.

"When I heard all these stories, I felt that I too believed, and was a Christian. But when I went to a church I felt quite far away from God. My belief was in the truth, in history. When I read the story of a Buddhist who was 100 years old and died during the Cultural Revolution for his belief, I also felt at that moment that I was a Buddhist."

After he came out of jail, Liao had no money and lived from playing music -- especially the traditional bamboo flute -- for some time, travelling between bars to perform.

"It was a very valuable experience for me. There, I was often drunk, and mixed in with other people drunk on bai jiu (white spirit). And I discovered there that Chinese people have two sides. During the normal day, they would never say bad things about the party. But later, after a couple of drinks, they would say everything," he says. "So I say that if all Chinese people were drunk, we would be a democracy."

The current period of enhanced party control of artists, writers and lawyers in China is not, he says, a temporary crackdown. "It is a long-term policy. The moment of change came on June 4, 1989, when the government shot people.

"Before that, the party promoted the ideology of loving your country. Afterwards, they started to promote the love of money. They want people to choose money, and not their rights."

Does Liao have enough stories stored in his head and his notebooks to feed his writing, even though he has left China?

"Life is changing every day. I just feel that the present is a shameless time in history. It's like a rubbish tip, over which people scuttle about like rats. If people in the next generation can sense what I am trying to write about, that's all I want to achieve."

---

3.

## **Protesters shout "No to dictatorship" in Guangdong**

**AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)**

**22 November 2011**

**CHINA**

About 5,000 residents in Wukan, a town in the rich southern province, take to the streets to protest against government election fraud and forced land seizure. For the first time, they call for an end to the Communist regime's 'dictatorship'. Increasingly, social unrest is besetting China.

Beijing (AsiaNews) – About 5,000 people from Wukan, a town in the rich southern province of Guangdong, took to the streets yesterday to protest against the lack of democracy and the government's failure to keep its promises. For the first time, demonstrators openly labelled the Communist regime a "dictatorship", demanding a reckoning for the seizure of their land and fraud in local elections.

According to a series of messages on Weibo (microblogging) services (others like Twitter are censored in China), thousands of people have demonstrated against corruption and land grabs. Pictures posted on line show banners saying 'No to dictatorship'.

Every year, tens of thousands of episodes of social unrest are reported in China. Local authorities are the usual target because of embezzlement and land speculation. The

central government is usually not criticised.

One of the Wukan demonstrators is quoted as saying that a petition against the land grab was signed by 4,500 people. Another anonymous microblogger said that more than 10,000 people took part in the protest.

The event was peaceful. So far, there have been no reports about arrests or charges. In previous episodes, protests often ended in violence with attacks against government offices and police.

After the protest started, local authorities said they would task a special team to hear the demonstrators' grievances. However, that was not good enough for protesters who want justice for the 12,000 residents who had their farmland seized and sold off without compensation.

Seizing land is the main source of income for municipal and provincial governments. In China, land formally belongs to "the people", but in fact, they are managed by local politicians.

They are often seized for resale to private interests to fuel the booming real estate market, which for economists has not become a bubble ready to burst.

In the past two months, housing prices have in fact started to drop in many cities, including Beijing and Shanghai.

Under Chinese law, local authorities must pay farmers compensation for land they expropriate. Too often however, the amounts paid out are inadequate. In many cases, land is seized for infrastructural projects funded by big banks.

---

4.

## **Massive propaganda campaign against the house arrest of blind activist Chen Guangcheng**

**AsiaNews - [www.asianews.it](http://www.asianews.it)**  
by Wang Zhicheng

**11 November 2011**

Millions of people sign petitions, publish photos' on the Internet, visit the village of Chen risking police beatings and threats. Chen, his wife and their six year old daughter are isolated for reporting forced abortions and sterilizations by local authorities in Shandong.

Beijing (AsiaNews) - Groups of Chinese activists have launched a campaign to criticize the house arrest of blind activist Chen Guangcheng and his family. In a few months the campaign has reached tens of thousands of people, not only among those engaged in campaigning for human rights, but also among ordinary people: this is an unprecedented effort that will set a standard. The campaign is titled "Let there be light (guang), let there be sincerity (cheng)", playing on the characters of his name (Guangcheng).

Chen Guangcheng, 40, blind since childhood, was sentenced in August 2006 to four years and three months for "disturbing traffic and illegal public gathering." In fact, he was helping the farmers of Linyi (Shandong) to protest against local government that forced abortions and sterilizations. Chen, who studied law on his own, offered legal advice, filling

in protests and complaints to the courts.

Released from prison in September 2010, he has since been forced under house arrest in his hometown, the village of Dongshigu (Linyi County, Shandong), along with his wife Yuan Weijing and their six year old daughter.

In recent months, because he succeeded in getting a message through to the outside world, Chen and his wife were beaten for hours by security forces.

The House of Chen in Dongshigu is controlled day and night by six cameras. Groups of thugs (police in civilian clothes) ensure that no outsider can visit the prisoners. In recent weeks, journalists, activists, friends and even relatives were beaten and driven away.

Nevertheless, since January of this year, groups of activists have decided to visit the village of Chen, trying to get to his house, later publishing evidence of police violence on the internet: Cars smashed, beatings, threats, ...

In September a group of activists in Beijing produced a T-shirt with Chen's photo and the slogan "Release Chen Guangcheng." Circumventing censorship, their message - and their picture, wearing the shirt - has spread to millions of Internet users who see in the blind activist's arrest yet another case of injustice and contempt for human rights in China .

On October 13 in Shanghai's People's Square, a group gathered signatures in support of Chen, launching the slogan "Let there be light, let there be sincerity." Immediately on the Internet a campaign was unleashed in which each member is photographed with heavy dark glasses (similar to those Chen wears because of his blindness).

Until now, the central government seems to be deaf to the fate of Chen, but on 12 October an editorial appeared in the Global Times, a newspaper linked to the People's Daily, where he is described as "a local activist for the people who have suffered unfair treatment under the family planning policy".

CHRD (China Human Rights Defenders) has prepared a large dossier on Chen and the support campaign for him (see here). It asks the government to release Chen and Beijing to take action against local authorities in Linyi.

CHRD also asks the international community not to forget the blind activist, a UN inquiry into human rights in China, by visiting Chen Guangcheng, and it calls on governments to block entry visas to people connected with his forced detention. Chen Guangcheng is very famous in the world. In 2007, Chen won the Magsaysay Philippine Human Rights (the Nobel Prize of Asia), but neither he nor his wife have ever received permission to go pick it up.

---

5.

## **Panel Analyzes Rights in China**

**The Hoya**

By Lily Westergaard - Special to The Hoya

**10 November 2011**

Georgetown University USA

Panelists, including Chinese pro-democracy dissident Wei Jingsheng, discussed the country's human rights record and the implications of the university's relationship with Chinese governmental organizations Wednesday night.

The panel, which took place in McShain Lounge, was cosponsored by the International Relations Club, the Lecture Fund and the Georgetown University Students Association. GUSA is spearheading an initiative for Georgetown to engage in dialogue with Chinese human rights activists and the Chinese government.

The event included Huang Ciping, a human rights activist who translated for Wei, as well as Amnesty International Director of Advocacy T. Kumar and Director of Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, & World Affairs and associate professor Tom Banchoff. Fr. Steven Fields, S.J., monitored the spirited discussion.

Wei, who spent 18 years in Chinese prisons before being exiled to the United States, voiced criticism of his home country's approach to human rights.

"In China, there is only one political party — the Communist Party — and no one can compete," he said. "With only one party, human rights cannot be well respected," he said.

Kumar added that half a million people are currently detained by the Chinese government, some for up to 40 years. Religious minorities are especially targeted, according to Kumar.

"No religion is allowed. Only the state-sponsored religion is accepted," he said.

The most controversial topic of the evening was the Chinese government's denial of a visa to Georgetown professor James Millward related to his contribution to a book concerning a Muslim area in China. Wei, Kumar and Huang criticized Georgetown's lack of action on behalf of professor Millward.

"You do not have to be champions, but you must not do damage," Kumar said. "Georgetown has damaged its own reputation."

Banchoff defended Georgetown's handling of the situation and relationship with Chinese governmental organizations, such as the State Administration of Religious Affairs.

"Principles are important, but we live in a complex world," he said. "We shouldn't put the relationship [between Georgetown and China] at stake for one scholar's visa."

Student opinions were somewhat divided about Chinese-U.S. relations. One student demanded to know what Wei had done for the Chinese people, aside from making speeches.

"You have mentioned that I have often criticized the Chinese government," Wei said. "That is what I have done for the Chinese people."

Other students came away with warmer feelings toward Wei.

"I thought he was hilarious," Sophia Weng (MSB '15) said. "He's hoping for a change, and you can tell it through his words."

The panel concluded on an optimistic note, when Wei was asked about the future of the regime in China.

"If they don't reform, Chinese people will uprising," Wei said. "The final conclusion is, China will change."

---

6.

## **Government-backed human rights studies boom in China**

**English.news.cn**  
CHENGDU

**9 November 2011**  
Xinhua

The study of human rights has experienced a boom in China over the past few years as the government pushes for development of the country's own rights theory, officials said Wednesday.

The number of institutes for studying human rights in China has grown to nearly 50 since the first were set up in the early 1990s, said Luo Haocai, president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies, at a workshop held in the southwestern city of Chengdu.

The Ministry of Education in April also approved the establishment of human rights education and training centers at three key universities in Beijing, Tianjin and Guangzhou. Law schools in more than 100 universities and colleges have set up rights courses, Luo said.

Dong Yunhu, deputy head of the State Council Information Office, said it is an important principle for the Communist Party of China and the government to respect and protect human rights, which form a key part of "socialist core values."

Dong said rights scholars should strive to be innovative and develop China's own rights theory based on its history, cultural tradition and experience.

\* Editor: Wang Guanqun

---

7.

## **Democracy Candidates Barred from Beijing Elections**

**VOA - Voice of America**  
Peter Simpson

**8 November 2011**  
Beijing

Pro-democracy candidates hoping to take part in a round of district-level elections in the Chinese capital Beijing Tuesday have been barred from running. The central government has showcased the grass roots elections as proof that its tight grip on China's political process is being gradually loosened.

The Chinese government often claims to the world it is gradually introducing democracy to its people at grass-roots level.

An increasing number of political office seekers have responded by launching bids as independent candidates. Factory workers, housewives, students and journalists have tried to run for office in local elections and challenge the ruling Communist Party's practice of hand-picking candidates.

In Beijing's municipal elections this week, independent candidates complained that authorities are cracking down on their campaign by erasing their names from ballots, preventing them from taking part.

Independent candidate Ye Jinghuan is among 13 people who campaigned and applied to

participate in the ballot.

She says despite applying, she and the other members of the group have been told by the authorities they are not allowed to run for office.

Ye says they have not been told why they cannot run to become independent members of China's 30,000 local People's Congresses.

She says she wanted to take part because current local government officials rarely listened to the concerns of residents in her district.

Ye says the treatment has made independent candidates angry.

She says the way the authorities choose candidates is completely undemocratic and they have no chance of being elected.

Most independent candidates have turned to the internet to seek-out political support, and there are signs that the success of the online platforms has authorities worried.

Earlier this week the central government earlier ordered the bosses of China's most popular Web sites - including Sina Corporation - to attend workshops where they were told to tightly enforce censorship directives.

Many of the independent candidates' web and social network sites have subsequently been shut down.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said Tuesday he was unaware of the barring of candidates in Beijing's election.

But he claimed all Chinese citizens have their rights guaranteed by the Chinese constitution and the country's laws.

Voting for the local Congresses began months ago and is scheduled to finish in mid-2012.

Not all independent candidates who have campaigned have failed to get elected.

Two candidates have managed to win elections in southern Guangdong province.

60-year-old Foshan farmer Guo Huojia won 7,000 out of 9,000 votes in his district in September.

He lobbied for the rights of villagers who had their land grabbed by local government officials and property developers.

But he was given no time to act on behalf of his constituents because he was arrested the day after winning.

---

**End**